



City of Needles

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Councilmember Larry Ford

City Manager Patrick Martinez

September 23, 2025

Riverside Local Agency Formation Commission
6216 Brockton Avenue, Suite 111-B
Riverside, CA 92506

SENT VIA EMAIL: info@lafco.org

Re: Public Hearing re Municipal Service Review for the Palo Verde Healthcare District (LAFCO 2025-06-4) – Public Comment

Dear Vargas and Riverside LAFCO Commissioners,

The City of Needles expresses strong support for the Palo Verde Healthcare District and Palo Verde Hospital.

Palo Verde Hospital serves approximately 18,000 residents across 1,022 square miles, including Blythe, Mesa Verde, and Ripley. It is the only hospital within 100 miles, and the suspension of surgical and inpatient services now forces residents to travel long distances for care. Rural California already faces severe physician shortages, with patients often driving 70 miles or more for basic specialty services.

The hospital is accredited as a **Critical Access Hospital**, a designation vital for higher federal reimbursement rates and essential to keeping rural hospitals viable. The Municipal Service Review identifies the key goal: to bring Palo Verde Hospital back to a fully operational facility for the long-term.

As a rural community ourselves, the City of Needles understands the essential role a hospital plays in sustaining quality of life, economic stability, and long-term viability. Remote communities along the Colorado River, like Blythe and Needles, share unique challenges — geographic isolation, limited healthcare access, and designation as disadvantaged areas. The loss of hospital services in Blythe would be a devastating blow, not only for its residents but as a warning for other border communities facing similar pressures.

On behalf of the City of Needles, we urge support for solutions that restore operations, reestablish services, and secure the hospital's long-term future. Reliable local healthcare is not optional — it is essential for the residents of eastern Riverside County and for all rural communities across California.

Sincerely,

Janet Jernigan, Mayor
City of Needles
jjernigan@cityofneedles.com