

CITY OF PALM DESERT STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: February 26, 2026

PREPARED BY: Chris Escobedo, City Manager

SUBJECT: COVE COMMUNITIES SERVICES COMMISSION AREAS IDENTIFIED
FOR ENHANCED COLLABORATION

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive and file report on Cove Communities Services Commission areas identified for enhanced collaboration.

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS:

In 1981, the cities of Indian Wells, Palm Desert, and Rancho Mirage formed the Cove Communities Services Commission to provide responsible, well-coordinated, and effective fire, police, and paramedic services. The Commission is comprised of six elected city council members, two from each participating city.

Although each Cove city now contracts public safety services individually, the Cove Communities Services Commission remains actively engaged in regional programs and projects that benefit all three cities. These efforts include collaboration in public safety, senior services, and recreational services.

In 2025, Commissioners expressed interest in identifying opportunities for enhanced regional collaboration. At the October 22, 2025 meeting, staff presented potential focus areas. City Managers from each city subsequently reviewed the concepts and presented refined recommendations at the January 21, 2026 meeting. These items were approved by the Cove Communities Services Commission. The following areas were identified:

Affordable Housing

The City of Indian Wells is pursuing state legislation that would allow a portion of its affordable housing funds to be used toward the construction of student-focused affordable housing at the California State University, San Bernardino – Palm Desert Campus, in exchange for Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) credit.

Additionally, the three cities are exploring the formation of a RHNA subregion. Establishing a subregion would provide a formal framework for joint planning and the creation of affordable housing units across city boundaries, offering greater flexibility and regional coordination in meeting state housing requirements.

Public Works Collaboration – Bike Route Connectivity

The three cities have a strong history of partnering on roadway projects that cross city boundaries, including improvements along Highway 111, Monterey Avenue, and Fred Waring Drive. A newly identified opportunity is enhanced coordination of bike lane additions and connectivity to create a more seamless network for residents traveling across city boundaries. Public Works and Capital Projects staff from the three cities will incorporate bike route connectivity into ongoing and future capital project coordination efforts.

Emergency Preparedness

The three cities have formalized a mutual partnership for emergency management. Under this agreement, each city has committed to:

- Sharing space, shelter, technology, and personnel during emergencies
- Providing limited staff support (up to 80 hours) when not managing its own emergency
- Retaining full control over its own operations
- Prioritizing its own emergency response needs first

While the cities have historically supported one another through informal coordination, this agreement formalizes a framework for disaster assistance while ensuring each city maintains operational autonomy. Additional collaborative efforts include joint training and coordination of Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) programs.

National Night Out

National Night Out is an annual nationwide campaign that promotes police-community partnerships and public safety awareness. Although traditionally held on the first Tuesday in August, the event is typically moved to early October in the Coachella Valley due to extreme summer heat.

For the past two years, Rancho Mirage has hosted the regional event at the Community Park and Amphitheater, most recently on October 4, 2025. The event has grown into a significant regional public safety outreach effort, featuring law enforcement and fire/EMS demonstrations, specialized equipment displays, family activities, and participation from 39 vendors.

Given that the event serves residents across all three Cove communities and involves regional public safety agencies, staff recommends formalizing National Night Out as a jointly supported and funded regional initiative moving forward.

Additional Regional Public Safety Initiative

Separate from this list, the three cities are evaluating participation in a Drone as First Responder (DFR) program through the Riverside County Sheriff's Department. Because all three cities share the Palm Desert Sheriff's Station, the Sheriff's Department and city staff are jointly evaluating vendors that deploy public safety drones, as well as exploring the development of a Real-Time Crime Center at the Palm Desert Station.

The collaborative efforts outlined above are intended to inform the City Council of current and potential areas of enhanced regional coordination among the Cove communities. These initiatives reflect a continued commitment to responsible governance, operational efficiency, and improved service delivery for residents across all three cities.

Staff will continue refining these concepts and evaluating implementation pathways, including cost-sharing frameworks, governance structures where applicable, and policy considerations. Additional updates and formal recommendations will be brought forward as next steps are developed for Commission and City Council consideration.

Legal Review:

This report has been reviewed by the City Attorney's Office.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

None at this time.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST AWARENESS CHECKLIST:

- Site-Specific Property Interest** – Councilmembers should check if they own or lease real property within 1,000 feet of the project site (Gov. Code § 87103(b); FPPC Reg. 18702.2).

- SB 1439 Applicability (Campaign Contributions)** – Applies to licenses, permits, or other entitlements for use, and to contracts or franchise agreements other than competitively bid, labor, or personal employment contracts.

Applicant(s)/Appellant(s): Not Applicable

Councilmembers should review any campaign contributions received within the last 12 months from parties or participants to the proceeding and must not accept contributions over \$500 from those parties for 12 months following the final decision (Gov. Code § 84308).

Note: These indicators are informational and do not constitute a legal determination. Each Councilmember is responsible for identifying and disclosing any disqualifying interests in accordance with the Political Reform Act and FPPC regulations.