



CITY of LAGUNA WOODS

Bob Ring
Mayor

September 11, 2009

Milt Robbins
Mayor Pro Tem

The Honorable Kim Dunning
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court
700 Civic Center Drive West
Santa Ana, CA 92701

Cynthia Conners
Councilmember

Bert Hack
Councilmember

RE: Response to Grand Jury Report – “Paper Water”

Marty Rhodes
Councilmember

Dear Judge Dunning:

Leslie A. Keane
City Manager

The City of Laguna Woods has reviewed the Orange County Grand Jury report titled “Paper Water – Does Orange County Have a Reliable Future?” and is responding as requested.

Findings F.1 and F.1(a)

We respectfully disagree with these findings. In our experience, the El Toro Water District has coordinated with us in an active and appropriate manner. The Water District participates in the CEQA review process; General Plan process; and development process (specifically through the issuance of “will serve” letters that speak directly to water supply issues). Furthermore, existing State law (AB 1881) requires cities to adopt a water efficient landscape ordinance that will result in greater collaboration with water districts on efforts to conserve limited water resources.

Finding F.1(b)

We agree with this finding. Water districts possess the technical expertise necessary to prepare water supply projections and, thus, those projections have not been subject to critical evaluation. It is not unusual for cities to rely on outside expertise (e.g., traffic engineers, geologists, etc.).

Finding F.2

We agree with this finding. It has been our experience that concerns such as traffic and noise generally outweigh those expressed about water supply during the development review process. As required by CEQA, the City presents information on all potential impacts created by a given project, but has no ability to control or direct public concern.

Findings F.2(a) and F.2(b)

We neither agree nor disagree with these findings. As a planning agency, we have insufficient information on which to base a response. The City does participate in ongoing public education efforts related to water conservation and water supply issues.

Recommendation R.1

We respectfully disagree with this recommendation. While we generally support the concept of a water element and of increasing the dialogue on water issues, cities should retain the ability to determine whether or not a water element is the most effective way to proceed. For instance, modifications to building codes and other measures to improve the conservation of limited water resources may be a more impactful way for individual jurisdictions to contribute. Cities such as ours would be faced with several limitations when considering a water element, including the

lack of direct control of water supply sources; the inability to establish policy for water districts or the State; and, the fact that water supply is a regional issue. It should be noted that water issues are currently discussed in the conservation element, as required by State law.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to this report. I hope that this information is responsive to your request. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can provide any additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Leslie A. Keane".

Leslie A. Keane
City Manager

cc: Laguna Woods City Council