

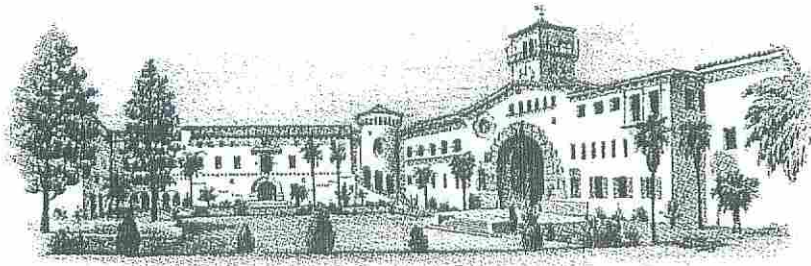
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BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

County Administration Building

105 East Anapamu Street

Santa Barbara, CA 93101

Telephone: (805) 568-2190

www.countyofsb.org

COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

October 20, 2009

Received

OCT 23 2009

Santa Barbara
Grand Jury

Honorable Judge J. William McLafferty
Santa Barbara County Superior Court
1100 Anacapa St., 2nd Floor
Santa Barbara, CA 93121-1107

Fourth District Supervisor Joni Gray Responses to Fiscal Year 2008-2009 Grand Jury Report on "SBCAG – A Road Not Taken"

Dear Judge McLafferty:

On September 1, 2009, the full Board of Supervisors responded to the Grand Jury Report, SBCAG – A Road not Taken. On June 3, 2009, the Santa Barbara County Civil Grand Jury (Grand Jury) released a report entitled: *SBCAG – A Road Not Taken*. However, at this, time I would like to reaffirm those responses and submit my individual responses as Fourth District Supervisor.

In their report, the Grand Jury discusses, analyzes, and makes recommendations regarding the Santa Barbara County Association of Governments' (SBCAG) role in regional planning matters. Generally, the Grand Jury's recommendations align with recent changes to State law requiring an expanded role for SBCAG in the area of regional land use planning. Specifically, Senate Bill 375, chaptered in September 2008, requires SBCAG's Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) to include an enhanced land use element called a Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS), which aligns regional planning for transportation and housing.

In effect, SB 375 requires participation in the California Regional Blueprint Planning Program as a strategy for reducing vehicle miles traveled and associated greenhouse gas emissions (GHG). SB 375 serves as one of eighteen measures outlined in the State's Climate Change Scoping Plan, which in total will achieve the statewide GHG emission reduction targets mandated by Assembly Bill (AB) 32. Beyond addressing GHG emission reductions, the development of the SCS will require SBCAG and member jurisdictions to utilize regional land use policy approaches for improving jobs-housing balances, addressing affordable housing needs, preserving rural resources, and minimizing commute pressures. It is hoped that SB375 will provide guidance in the long term transportation planning for the Santa Barbara County region and beyond.

Response to the Civil Grand Jury from Santa Barbara County Fifth District Supervisor Joseph Centeno.

Finding 1a – Santa Barbara County Association of Governments has authority to do regional land use planning through its Joint Powers Agreement.

Response – Agree. The Santa Barbara County Association of Governments (SBCAG) has authority in the Joint Powers Agreements, which all member agencies have signed, to address “area planning and mutual concerns.”

Finding 1b – The staff has developed recommendations for regional land use planning approved by Santa Barbara County Association of Governments

Response – Agree. As illustrated in the August 3, 2009 letter from Jim Kemp, SBCAG Executive Director to Judge Anderson (SBCAG Response), SBCAG staff has developed numerous documents, plans, and associated recommendations related to regional land use planning. SBCAG and County staff have work together to develop documents to ensure that long range planning policies are complimentary. In addition staff works collaboratively to ensure that all elements contained within community plans developed within County are effectively communicated to SBCAG so that they continue to be part of the overall long range planning process.

Finding 1c – The regional land use planning recommendations adopted by Santa Barbara County Association of Governments have not been implemented.

Response – Partially disagree. As illustrated in the SBCAG response, some of the regional land use planning recommendations adopted by the SBCAG Board have been implemented. Staff is continuing to work to achieve all items within the scope of the resources provided. Items that have been achieved should be acknowledged.

Recommendation 1 – That Santa Barbara County Association of Governments and each respective jurisdiction implement already adopted recommendations that deal with regional land use planning.

Response – The recommendation has been implemented. Through the community planning process, and general plan update process, the County regularly reviews and implements regional land use planning recommendations. In fact, the County prioritizes and funds land use policy and planning initiatives annually through the Long Range Planning Work Program. The Work Program represents the County’s tool for maximizing the use of limited fiscal resources to address high-priority land use planning issues by working with departments on implementation programs. In doing so, the County strives to protect the interests of its residents and diverse communities by managing an appropriate balance between the local decision-making process and recommendations made by other local agencies.

Finding 2 – Santa Barbara County Association of Governments has not developed a fully integrated regional plan coordinating jobs, housing, and transportation that includes all the County's jurisdictions.

Response – Partially disagree with the finding. Adoption of the 2007-14 Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) Plan represented a significant step for SBCAG and its member agencies regarding regional planning actions. The 07-14 RHNA is a regional plan that directs new housing and population growth to jurisdictions with large employment centers. In doing so, the 07-14 RHNA Plan works to preserve rural resources and agricultural land in the unincorporated area, while also minimizing commute pressures and trip lengths for workers and households. In total, the 2009-2014 RHNA established an important precedent for development of the forthcoming Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS), mandated by Senate Bill (SB) 375, which requires development of a fully integrated regional plan coordinating jobs, housing, and transportation.

This fall, SBCAG member jurisdictions will be required to incorporate and address the new housing allocations specified in the 07-14 RHNA Plan through local Housing Element updates. In these Housing Elements, local agencies are to identify housing goals, policies, implementation programs and timeframes.

Recommendation 2 – That Santa Barbara County Association of Governments develop a fully integrated regional plan.

Response – This recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future. As discussed, SBCAG is to facilitate the development of a Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS), pursuant to SB 375. The SCS is an integrated and regional housing and transportation plan, through which the RHNA process will be implemented and infrastructure investments will be identified such that State targets are met GHG emission reductions and affordable housing. As an active and ongoing member of the SBCAG Technical Planning Advisory Committee, the County regularly participates in a regional land use planning and policy dialogue with SBCAG and member jurisdictions. Accordingly, the County will be a fundamental participant and anchor partner in the development of a regional SCS.

Finding 3 – Santa Barbara County Association of Governments refused to apply for State funds for comprehensive regional planning.

Response – Partially disagree with the finding. While the SBCAG Board did not elect to pursue State funding through the Regional Blueprint Planning Grant Program, as specified in the SBCAG Letter, in 2007 the SBCAG Board supported an application for a State Blueprint Planning Grant with San Luis Obispo Council of Governments for a pilot study of the Santa Maria Valley. This grant was awarded, and the County has demonstrated leadership in this area by participating with the Cities of Santa Maria and Guadalupe to advise SBCAG's development of regional planning data.

Recommendation 3 – That Santa Barbara County Association of Governments aggressively pursue funding for comprehensive regional planning.

Response - The response will be implemented. To the extent of my ability, I support SBCAG's aggressive pursuit of funding from the State for development of the Sustainable Community Strategy, mandated through SB 375.

Sincerely,



Joni Gray
Fourth District Supervisor

cc: Fletcher Phillips, Foreperson, Civil Grand Jury
Jim Kemp, SBCAG