



CITY OF DALY CITY

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September 3, 2015

Honorable Susan I. Etezadi
Judge of the Superior Court
c/o Charlene Kresevich
Hall of Justice
400 County Center; 2nd Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063-1655

RE: 2014-2015 Grand Jury Report "Flooding Ahead: Planning for Sea Level Rise"

Dear Judge Etezadi:

On behalf of the City Council of Daly City, I am submitting this response to the 2014-2015 San Mateo County Grand Jury Report titled "Flooding Ahead: Planning for Sea Level Rise." The response that follows detailing the Grand Jury Findings and Recommendations was presented to and approved by the City Council at its regular meeting on August 10, 2015.

FINDINGS

F1.

San Mateo County is at severe risk for flooding due to the gradual rise in Sea Level Rise (SLR), projected at up to 65 inches (167 centimeters) by the year 2100. Catastrophic SLR of nearly 15 feet is a possibility this century.

Response:

The City agrees with the scientific projections detailed in the finding.

F2.

SLR is a threat countywide, including the upland areas. All residents depend on public infrastructure, especially wastewater treatment plants. Also, a significant portion of countywide property tax base is within the area threatened by SLR.

Response:

The City agrees with the finding.

F3.

Although many local officials are now familiar with and concerned about the threat of SLR, there is inadequate public awareness of SLR's potential impacts on this county.

Response:

The City partially agrees with this finding. Many cities, including Daly City, have included details concerning SLR in local sustainability program information. A better job of publicizing this issue and its potential impacts should be undertaken by the County in conjunction with those jurisdictions potentially most directly impacted.

F4.

Levees, including their financing, are currently the responsibility of each individual city or special agency with jurisdiction along streams, bay, and coast (The County is responsible for unincorporated areas).

Response:

The City agrees with this finding.

F5.

Flood risk is based on topography, not political boundaries. The safety of properties in one jurisdiction often depends on levee projects undertaken by another jurisdiction.

Response:

The City agrees with this finding.

F6.

Currently, no countywide agency exists to provide planning, facilitate coordination among jurisdictions, or to assist with securing funding for existing flood control projects. The same is true for future SLR-related projects.

Response:

The City agrees with the finding.

F7.

To the Grand Jury's knowledge, no local jurisdiction has adopted SLR projections or maps for specific local land use planning purposes. No consistent SLR projection has been adopted countywide by the County and cities.

Response:

The City neither agrees nor disagrees with the finding as we are unaware of what other local jurisdictions have undertaken in this regard.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Grand Jury recommends increased public education about SLR:

R1.

The County, each city in the county and relevant local special agencies should conduct a public education effort to increase awareness of SLR and its potential effects on this county.

Response:

The City agrees with this recommendation as it pertains to Daly City.

The Grand Jury recommends identifying a single organization to undertake SLR planning:

R2.

The County, each city in the county and relevant local special agencies should identify a single organization, such as a new joint powers authority or an expanded SMC Flood Control District, to undertake countywide SLR planning. It should be structured to ensure that:

- The organization is countywide in scope
- The organization is able to focus on SLR
- Both the County and cities (and possibly relevant local agencies) are able to participate in the organization's decision-making.
- The organization is sustainably funded

Response:

The City agrees with this recommendation, particularly with respect to ensuring that sustainable funding is provided to such a proposed countywide agency.

R3.

The organization's responsibilities should include:

- Adopt consistent SLR projections for use in levee planning countywide
- Conduct and/or evaluate vulnerability assessments
- Provide a forum for inter-jurisdictional coordination and exchange of information related to SLR
- Undertake grant applications for SLR-related planning and projects
- Facilitate raising funds on a countywide basis for SLR-related projects, to be passed through to agencies with direct responsibility for project construction
- Monitor actual SLR over time and any changes in SLR projections, based upon the latest federal, State, or regional government reports and scientific studies
- Through the CEQA environmental review process, comment on major new developments proposed in the SLR floodplain

- Advocate on behalf of the member jurisdictions with federal, State, and regional agencies regarding SLR issues
- Assist the County and cities in public awareness efforts, as described in R1

Response:

The City concurs with the recommendation.

R4.

The County, cities and two relevant local special agencies should consider expanding the role of the organization beyond SLR to include planning and coordination of efforts to address existing flooding problems along the Bay, coast, and creeks that are subject to tidal action. It may be cost-effective to integrate SLR protection with other Levee-improvement programs.

The county and cities may also consider expanding the role of the new organization to include potential compatible functions such as the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES), currently managed by C/CAG, and the new (2014) State requirements for local sustainable groundwater planning.

Response:

The City partially agrees with this recommendation. While we concur that a coordinated effort should be developed through a countywide agency to address multi-jurisdictional issues and levee improvement, we are not in agreement that cities should cede control to such an agency to address issues of a localized nature such as NPDES and sustainable groundwater management. Some jurisdictions, like Daly City, have consistently addressed these latter issues effectively and should not be subject to a countywide agency exerting control over existing efforts and dictating future actions, especially if funds are not provided to implement such mandates.

R5.

The organization—its administration, staffing, and program expenses—should be funded on a sustainable basis by:

- Member contributions
- Contributions solicited from parties threatened by SLR, including corporations and agencies that operate public facilities such as wastewater treatment plants
- Grants solicited from available potential sources such as the California Climate Resilience Account
- Reducing administrative costs by contracting for services with the County or another agency

Response:

The City partially agrees with this recommendation. We concur that adequate funding should be provided to address the issue(s) associated with SLR. However, in order to focus efforts in a sustainable manner that recognizes there are a variety of local needs in the cities which need to

be balanced against this emerging need, a countywide assessment solely for this purpose should be implemented.

The Grand Jury recommends that SLR be addressed in local land use planning:

R6.

The County and each city should amend its General Plan, as needed, to address the risk for SLR. The Safety element should include a map of any areas vulnerable to SLR, as determined by measurement in the countywide Vulnerability Assessment [R3]. Further, it should identify policies that apply to areas threatened by SLR.

Response:

The City neither agrees nor disagrees with this recommendation. While addressing SLR may be important to future planning efforts and development, it cannot be accomplished simply by updating the General Plan. For coastal jurisdictions, long-term planning concerns regarding SLR must be addressed in a General Plan Coastal Element. This will require a partnership with the State Coastal Commission to address in a coordinated and consistent manner. It cannot be undertaken independently by each coastal jurisdiction.

The Grand Jury recommends that local governments champion SLR issues before regional, State, and federal governments and agencies:

R7.

The County, cities, and relevant local special agencies, through their representative on regional agencies, membership in state association, lobbyists, and elected State and federal legislators, should pursue SLR-related issues with government bodies outside SMC.

Response:

The City agrees that any future activities related to SLR must be addressed in a comprehensive and coordinated manner among governing agencies and elected representatives at all levels.

In conclusion, the City of Daly City appreciates the opportunity to provide written responses to the San Mateo County Civil Grand Jury Report on Planning for Sea Level Rise (SLR). This issue is of significant importance to the County of San Mateo and all of the local jurisdictions as we grapple with concerns related to environmental sustainability. No single agency can tackle the challenges brought on by SLR, thus it is imperative that comprehensive, coordinated planning efforts be implemented to respond to the risks associated with SLR in the San Mateo County.

Should you or the Grand Jury require additional information or clarification concerning the City of Daly City's response, please contact me directly at (650) 991-8127.

Sincerely,



Patricia E. Martel
City Manager