

May 1, 2002

Honorable Rodney S. Melville  
Presiding Judge, Santa Barbara Superior Court  
312-C East Cook Street  
Santa Maria, CA 93456-5369

In accordance with California Penal Code Sections 933 (c) and 933.05, we are responding to applicable Grand Jury Findings and Recommendations contained in the 2001-2002 Grand Jury Report on Assessment of Santa Barbara County Business/ Management Practices.

Finding 1: *Several of the agencies headed by elected officials choose not to participate in the Project reviews. These include the Sheriff, Auditor-Controller, County Clerk-Recorder-Assessor, and Treasurer-Tax Collector.*

Response: We agree with the finding as it pertains to the Auditor-Controller's office.

Recommendation 1: *The Board of Supervisors and the nonparticipating agency heads should evaluate participation in these reviews. The benefit of participation in these reviews outweighs any concern that elected department heads may feel about giving up control to the County Administrator's Office.*

Response: Agree partially. While we will continue to evaluate the benefits of including future projects in the County Administrator's system as the Grand Jury recommends, we do believe that our decisions to date have not been based on the issue of control but rather on the basis of costs involved vs. benefits that may be derived.

The County Administrator's system is essentially a project *tracking* system and primarily serves to inform the CA as to project existence and project progress. While we appreciate the need for the CA to be aware of projects in departments having ten, twenty, or even more projects at any given time, the small number of projects in our department (perhaps four or five), may render the CA's project tracking venue an inefficient, time consuming, and therefore costly way for us to provide this information. Rather, we

provide in-depth presentations to the CA's office of the progress of each of our projects on a regular basis at mandatory quarterly operations meetings.

As the Grand Jury points out in Finding 2, the current Project tracking format lacks information that is critical to controlling major projects. In this regard, the Auditor-Controller's office has utilized an effective project *management* system for several years with proven results. We have not participated in the CA's Project tracking system to date because we believe that the benefits to our department in doing so may be negligible, any incremental benefits to the County organization may be marginal and, in our opinion, may not justify the added effort and associated costs required.

We appreciate the Grand Jury's interest in this subject, and we will continue to do our best to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of County operations.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert W. Geis, CPA  
County Auditor-Controller

C: Grand Jury Foreperson  
Chair, Board of Supervisors  
Aimee Hendrigan, County Administrator's Office