

RESPONSE OF COUNTY CLERK-RECORDER-ASSESSOR to Santa Barbara County Grand Jury Report/ March 2002:

ASSESSMENT OF SANTA BARBARA COUNTY BUSINESS/MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

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The above-entitled Report contained two Findings and three Recommendations. The Report requested Responses to Finding 1 and Recommendation 1. Herein below are the Responses with explanation.

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: I disagree partially with the finding. In the Grand Jury’s “INTRODUCTION” to its Report it creates an analogy between large companies and the Executive Branch of the Federal Government, each to embrace common industry practices. Further, to continue the analogy, there is an inference that county executives; i.e., appointed/elected department heads are cabinet level appointees within the Executive Branch. So far, so good.

However, in playing this analogy out, if the President were in serious discussions regarding the present Mideast crisis, those cabinet members in attendance would likely be the Secretaries of State, Defense and the Attorney General. One would hardly expect the presence of the Departments of Education or Health and Human Services or Housing and Urban Development in such tense, wordly affairs. In other words, relevancy is the issue.

At the April 5, 2002 Project Review Meeting, there were a total of thirty-five very different projects listed on a seven-hour agenda. Of those projects only one (Clerk-Recorder Building) was of direct interest to me and those I serve in my elected capacity. The remaining agenda items had no direct relevance to my responsibilities. As to the relevant item, my department’s project manager, budget control manager and I were in attendance.

To date, the Clerk-Recorder-Assessor has had two projects under review by the county’s various alphabet committees. One, the Accu-vote Voting System, received financial, operational and goals approval. This successful project was shepherded through the process by members of the elections’ office and the assistant department head.

The second project, the Recorder’s “Moody-Covarrubias Building” is currently in process and has received support. This project is identified as a General Services undertaking. However, it is important to note that this project is wholly funded from Recorder’s designation funds and not county General Funds. Site acquisition, architectural and building costs have been and will continue to be funded from the Recorder’s designated funds. This is a “dirt to doorknobs” endeavor by the department. An in-house project manager as well as the department head control progress of this project.

In conclusion, when the project is relevant I am in attendance. My presence is not necessary for the Tobacco Control Ordinance Project.

Recommendation 1: The Board of Supervisors and the non-participating 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: This recommendation has been implemented and functions at various levels with respect to department head participation.

Firstly, as mentioned in the Report, the county utilizes a Strategic Plan and Project Review. This plan encompasses all projects for review by the county's internal committees and ultimate approval by the Board of Supervisors. These projects are monitored and evaluated during project review meetings.

Secondly, project status is reviewed by the County Administrator and the department head at Quarterly Operations Review Meetings. The status of the project is discussed in detail to the satisfaction of both the County Administrator and the department head.

Thirdly, all projects are incorporated into the department's General Fund budget. Monthly financial budget meetings are conducted between the department and the County Administrator's budget analysis team. Once again the financial health of a project is checked and remedial action, if necessary, is taken.

There is participation by the County Clerk-Recorder-Assessor. The outcomes of participation are to benefit the citizen-resident taxpayer and not the County Administrator or the department head. I have run for elective office four times. My campaigns never left me with a feeling about giving up control to the County Administrator's Office. As an elected official I don't fret over loss of control. I concentrate on serving the public.