



July 12, 2005

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Mr. Charles Foley, Foreperson
Santa Barbara County Grand Jury
1100 Anacapa Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

Dear Mr. Foley:

The City of Goleta recently received a copy of the Santa Barbara County Grand Jury's recent report, "An Ounce of Prevention: Toward a More Transparent and Responsive Planning and Development Process." Per the Grand Jury's instructions, the City is pleased to respond to Findings and Recommendations 1, 2, and 4.

Finding 1: "Mission Statements, when available, were often outdated and did not list customer satisfaction as a goal."

City Response: The City agrees with the finding.

Recommendation 1: "Planning Departments should have mission statements specific to their department. These mission statements should have customer satisfaction as a primary goal."

City Response: The City agrees with the recommendation, and plans to implement the recommendation within the next six months. As a recently incorporated municipality, the City's first priorities have been to recruit quality employees, establish the organizational infrastructure, and provide basic services.

As the City matures, however, the importance of developing a mission statement is clear. The City will strive to develop mission statements for each of its departments, including the Planning Department, in the coming months. This mission statement will reflect the primary importance of customer service.

Finding 2: "Planning Departments did not have basic customer satisfaction procedures in place."

City Response: The City partially agrees with the finding. The Planning counter is open to the public 45 hours per week, and each City of Goleta planning project has an assigned planner who is directed to be responsive and communicate with the applicant(s) and other interested parties. The

project planner's duties include explaining the application process to the applicant, providing assistance with paperwork, providing updates regarding the status of an application, and providing other assistance as needed. Project planners are supervised closely by the Director of Planning and the Planning Manager, and Planning management immediately responds to customer complaints. The Planning Department also publishes monthly a cumulative list of major projects to help keep the community informed about important development projects. The City takes great pride in the high quality of service provided by the Planning Department.

Recommendation 2: "To increase customer satisfaction, each planning department should publicly post the agency's mission statement, post timelines and mitigating factors, provide easy access to all relevant forms with adequate explanations as to their use, post a list of key personnel involved in completing an application, and clearly define the complaint process. In addition, handouts should be provided to each customer explaining the application and complaint process."

City Response: The City partially agrees with the recommendation. The City agrees that it is important to post a mission statement along with timelines and mitigating factors, and plans to do so within the next six months.

The City currently provides easy access to required forms. The assigned planner on each project is responsible for providing relevant forms to each applicant or interested party, and provides assistance with filling out these forms. Furthermore, the assigned project planner is the key person in the application or request process, and this is made known to each customer. The project planner is also responsible for informing the Director of Planning or the Planning Manager if a customer has a complaint.

In response to the Grand Jury's recommendation, however, the City will provide information about the planning application and complaint resolution process in a handout that will be available to all customers.

Finding 4: "The complaint process in most jurisdictions was not designed for quantifiable analysis and could not be used to find strong and weak points in the planning process."

City Response: The City agrees with the finding.

Recommendation 4: "Planning agencies should track all complaints and conduct random quantifiable surveys of 10% of the customers who have used their services. Agencies should use the results of these surveys to make the planning process more customer friendly. The results should also be added on a quarterly basis to the department website for public viewing."

City Response: The City intends to implement Recommendation No. 4. The City found the Grand Jury's sample survey very helpful, and plans to develop a similar customer satisfaction survey. As the City of Goleta is a small jurisdiction and handles a relatively small number of projects, the City intends to track all responses to the survey to identify and correct weaknesses in the Planning Department. While more analysis is needed, the City may also determine that it would be beneficial to ask for customer feedback during the planning process as well as at the conclusion of a project. Because the City processes a relatively small number of planning applications, the City may choose to publish survey findings once or twice a year when sufficient data has been gathered.

The City appreciates the opportunity to respond to the Grand Jury's report. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the City Manager's Office at 805-961-7501.

Sincerely,

Len Wood
Interim City Manager

c: Judge Anderson
City Council
Ken Curtis, Director of Planning and Environmental Services, City of Goleta
Patty Miller, Planning Manager