



TOWN OF ATHERTON

CITY COUNCIL
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October 25, 2021

Hon. Amarra A. Lee
Judge of the Superior Court
c/o Jenarda Dubois
Hall of Justice
400 County Center; 2nd Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063-1655

Subject: Response to 2020-2021 Grand Jury 8/11/21 report "San Mateo County: California's Ground Zero for Sea Level Rise"

Dear Judge Lee,

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the findings of the Grand Jury. This letter serves as the Town of Atherton response to the findings and recommendations found therein. Please note this report was approved by the Atherton City Council at its October 20, 2021, Council meeting.

FINDINGS

F1. Sea level rise will seriously damage critical San Mateo County infrastructure and assets unless the County and its cities and towns prepare now.

Town Response to F1:

The Town has not conducted its own independent research on this matter, but based on review of the studies quoted in the Grand Jury Report et al., the Town agrees with this finding.

F2. Sea level rise infrastructure projects can take more than a decade to plan, fund and build.

Town Response to F2:

The Town has not conducted its own independent research on this matter, but based on review of the Grand Jury Report the Town agrees with this finding.

F3. Complex federal and state regulations and procedures delay and increase the costs of already expensive sea level rise mitigation projects. They need to be revised.

Town Response to F3:

Based on its own experience with state and federal regulatory agencies on non-sea level rise projects, the Town agrees with this finding.

F4. Delaying sea level rise projects will increase costs.

Town Response to F4:

Based on its own experience with delayed non-sea level capital improvement projects, the Town agrees with this finding.

F5. To remain effective, OneShoreline needs steady, long-term, operational funding.

Town Response to F5:

The Town agrees with this finding.

F6. Coordination between neighboring jurisdictions is important to reduce costs and improve the effectiveness of a SLR project.

Town Response to F6:

In the case of a SLR project that is physically located in one or more neighboring jurisdictions and/or has benefits to one or more jurisdictions, the Town agrees with this finding.

F7. Competing budget priorities among the entities in a sea level rise project make the projects difficult to fund and manage, leading to risk of delays and missed deadlines.

Town Response to F7:

Based on its own experience with competing budget priorities for non-sea level projects and programs, the Town agrees with this finding.

F8. Numerous hazardous material sites in the County must be protected from sea level rise flooding.

Town Response to F8:

The Town has not conducted its own independent research on this matter, but based on review of the Grand Jury Report the Town agrees with this finding.

F9. Storm surge and sea level rise threaten the County's wastewater treatment plants affecting everyone in the County – even inland County residents.

Town Response to F9:

The Town has not conducted its own independent research on this matter, but based on review of the Grand Jury Report the Town agrees with this finding. The Town also agrees as it relates to the identified threats to treatment plants treating the County's wastewater.

F10. OneShoreline is uniquely positioned to augment San Mateo County's ability to combat sea level rise by its planning, funding, permitting expertise, and guidance.

Town Response to F10:

The Town endorsed the establishment of the San Mateo County Flood and Sea Level Rise Resiliency Agency in its Resolution No.19-19, wherein we specifically noted the need for an entity with the attributes identified in the

finding. With OneShoreline still in its nascent stage, we agree with the finding that it is uniquely positioned and remain supportive that it will eventually develop and demonstrate the identified attributes.

F11. Destruction of low-cost housing on the Bay and coast by flooding and erosion due to sea level rise will further increase inequities in communities such as Belle Haven (Menlo Park), East Palo Alto, Redwood City, and Pacifica.

Town Response to F11:

The Town has not conducted its own independent research on this matter, but based on review of the Grand Jury Report we agree with this finding.

F12. OneShoreline effectively collaborates with the Office of Sustainability and others on public engagement campaigns to educate individuals on how sea level rise will affect San Mateo County.

Town Response to F12:

As the Town is not party to communications between the Office of Sustainability (OSS) and OneShoreline, nor are we aware of what parties are identified as “others” in the finding, we neither agree nor disagree, and defer to OSS as the most qualified respondent to this finding.

F13. A loan program to provide cities and towns funds for the required preliminary engineering necessary to obtain partial state or federal funding for SLR projects would be beneficial.

Town Response to F13:

The Town agrees with this finding.

RECOMMENDATIONS

R1. At a public meeting, each city and town council, or board of supervisors should take at least one concrete action toward establishing a continuing funding source for OneShoreline, identify that action in response to this report, and potentially adopt a resolution expressing support for a parcel tax or property tax by June 30, 2022.

Town Response to R1:

The Town has committed to provide three years of funding (\$25,000 for 3-years) for the agency now known as OneShoreline, with that commitment based on the agency’s advocates representing that a first priority action would be the development of a Flood & Sea Level Rise Investment Plan (Plan). As addressed in the Town’s Resolution of support (Reso No. 19-19), in addition to mitigating sea level rise, we anticipated the agency would also develop projects to address erosion, stormwater infrastructure projects, and water quality requirements imposed by the Regional Water Quality Control Board. The Town will be able to provide a summary of how the recommendation would be considered after we have received and reviewed a Plan that incorporates all project types envisioned during the initial request for support to the formation of the agency.

R2. A coordinated lobbying strategy with participation by the County, by San Mateo County cities and towns, by OneShoreline, and by other interested Bay Area cities and counties for federal and state regulatory simplification by January 31, 2022.

Town Response to R2:

The Town is willing to participate in the implementation of this recommendation, provided that some as yet to be identified entity develops a scope and time frame for said implementation.

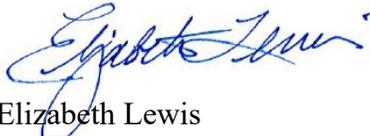
R4. The County Board of Supervisors and each city and town council, should ensure that their general plans regarding SLR protection include transportation and utility infrastructure, schools, public safety facilities, and hazardous material sites by March 31, 2022.

Town Response to R4:

Although Town infrastructure may not be directly impacted by SLR, the Town is presently updating its Local Hazard Mitigation Plan as part of a countywide effort, the San Mateo County Multijurisdictional Local Hazard Mitigation Plan – 2021 Update (Plan). The Plan was scheduled to be released to the California Office of Emergency Services (CalOES) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) on 8/31/21. Assuming a favorable review can be obtained from CalOES and FEMA within 3 months, the final document will be presented to Atherton City Council for adoption in December 2021.

Please call me at 650.752.0500 if there are any questions regarding this matter.

Very truly yours,



Elizabeth Lewis
Mayor, Town of Atherton

Cc: Grand Jury website (sent via email to grandjury@sanmateocourt.org)
George Rodericks, City Manager
Anthony Suber, City Clerk