CAN WE SEE YOU NOW?
San Mateo County's Independent Special Districts
Website Transparency Update

Issue | Summary | Background | Methodology | Discussion | Findings
Recommendations | Requests for Responses | Appendixes | Responses

ISSUE

In 2014, the San Mateo County Civil Grand Jury issued a report concerning the lack of transparency in the websites of the 23 independent special districts operating within San Mateo County (County).[1] The jury at that time offered seven recommendations designed to improve transparency and achieve adherence to standards set forth by the California Special Districts Association (CSDA) and the Special District Leadership Foundation (SDLF). This report will discuss the progress made since 2014 by the County's independent special districts and serve as an update to the initial report.

SUMMARY

In FY 2014-15, the 22 independent special districts[2] that currently serve San Mateo County provided various services for approximately 747,000 residents and received over $107,000,000[3] in tax dollars. Special districts provide many essential services but, according to Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association,[4] residents often do not know who manages their districts, how funds are provided and allocated, or the full extent of the services provided by a district.[5]

Each of the 22 independent special districts in San Mateo County operates a website designed to provide pertinent information to its constituents.[6] Californians value the importance of transparency in government at all levels. Transparency in a governance context demands honesty, openness, and accountability for all functions and responsibilities. Designing and maintaining transparency on websites serves to inform the public as well as document effective use of their tax dollars.

The 2016-17 San Mateo County Civil Grand Jury (Grand Jury) reinvestigated the transparency of the County's 22 independent special district websites and determined that many districts have made overall, substantial improvement. About one-third of the County's independent special districts, however, still do not meet the minimum standards for transparency.

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[1], 2013-14 San Mateo County Grand Jury. *Partly Cloudy With A Chance of Information: Investigating the Transparency of Independent Special District's Websites*. www.sanmateocourt.org, Final Reports.
[2] Los Trancos Water District was dissolved in 2015, reducing the number of independent special districts from 23 to 22
[3] www.sanmateocountytreasurer.org/PropTaxHighlights/PropertyTaxHighlights14-15.pdf, 2017 Accessed 3/15/17
[4] www.hjta.org, "California Special Districts: Hiding in Plain Site", 2016 Accessed 3/20/17
[5] www.hjta.org/california-commentary/california-special-districts-hiding-in-plain-sight/ Accessed 3/20/17
[6] Appendix A

BACKGROUND

Special districts have been a part of California's landscape for over 130 years. They are a form of local government created by a community to meet a specific local need. A special district is a local governmental agency authorized by state law to provide governmental services such as sewer, water, fire protection, recreation, healthcare, police protection, mosquito and vector control, and other services. There are three main types of special districts: (1) county-governed special districts which are governed by a Board of Supervisors and operated by counties; (2) city-governed special districts that are governed by their respective city councils and operated by such cities; and (3) "independent special districts" that have their own governing boards which are either elected by the district's voters or appointed by the various city councils. Special districts are defined as "any agency of the state for the local performance of governmental or proprietary functions within limited boundaries."[7] Legislation has provided special districts with some of the basic powers afforded to counties and cities, including the power to impose certain taxes, issue revenue bonds, and levy fees and assessments.[8]

Currently, there are approximately 2,109 independent special districts in California.[9] San Mateo County has 22 independent special districts, which provide a variety of services to the residents of the county.[10]

The Special District Leadership Foundation (SDLF) is a nonprofit 501(3)(c) organization and an affiliate of the California Special Districts Association (CSDA). The SDLF's mission is "to promote and recognize excellence in the governance and management of special districts."[11]

The SDLF Board is made up of nine members: three directors appointed by the CSDA, three directors appointed by the Special District Risk Management Authority (SDRMA)[12] and three public members selected by majority vote of the designated directors. CSDA and SDRMA appoint their designated representatives to the SDLF Board every four years.[13]

The CSDA is also a nonprofit 501(3)(6) organization which brands itself "the voice for all special districts, providing members with the resources necessary to best serve their communities."[14]

Both SDLF and CSDA provide advocacy, personal development, and training programs in special district governance, transparency, and excellence to the staffs of special districts throughout the state.

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[7] California Government Code Section 16271(d), http://law.onecle.com/california/government/16271.html Accessed 5/16/17

[8] California Special Districts Association, www.CSDA.org. Accessed 3/20/17

[9] Ibid.

[10] Appendix A

[11] info@sdlf.org Accessed 3/20/17

[12] http://www.sdrma.org Accessed 3/20/17

[13] http://www.sdlf.org/board-and-staff Accessed 3/20/17

[14] California Special Districts Association, www.CSDA.org Accessed 3/20/17

The SDLF awards the District Transparency Certificate of Excellence to those independent special districts whose websites comply with a specific set of criteria. The Certificate is awarded for a two-year period after which a district must apply for recertification.

METHODOLOGY

To maintain continuity, the Grand Jury reapplied the website transparency checklist created by the SDLF which was utilized by the 2013-14 Grand Jury in their evaluation. That checklist is divided into two tiers. To achieve the SDLF District Transparency Certificate of Excellence all of the following twelve items in Tier 1 must be easily accessible on the website as well as at least four of the items in Tier 2:

Tier 1

Names of board members and their terms of office
Name of general manager and key staff along with contact information
Election procedure and deadlines
Board meeting schedule
District's mission statement
Description of district's services/functions and service area
Authorizing statute
Current district budget
Most recent financial audit
Archive of board meeting minutes for at least the past six months
List of compensation of board members and staff and/or link to California state controller's webpage with the data

Tier 2:

Post board members' ethics training certificates
Picture, biography and email address of board members
Last three years' audits
Reimbursement and compensation policy
Financial reserves policy
On line/downloadable Public Records Act Request form
Audio or video recordings of board meetings
Map of district boundaries/service area
Link to California Special Districts Association mapping program
Most recent Municipal Service Review and Sphere of Influence studies

Upon completion of the review of the websites in March 2017, the Grand Jury sent follow-up letters to those special districts whose sites lacked required Tier 1 components or whose websites lacked at least four components of Tier 2. All of these districts responded.

DISCUSSION

The Grand Jury believes the transparency of a district's website influences the perception of the work performed by board members and employees of the County's independent special districts. Taxpayers are best served when they know who administers their independent special districts, from where the districts derive their funding, how the money is spent, how the actual work of the districts is conducted, and ultimately, how the districts impact them as citizens.

The 2013-14 Grand Jury found that no independent special district in the County had received the District Transparency Certificate of Excellence (DTCE).

The review by the 2016-17 Grand Jury of the County's independent special districts' websites reveals that the majority of independent special districts in the County have markedly improved their websites. As a result, the following six independent special districts have applied for and been awarded the DTCE since 2014:

Highlands Recreation District	2014-2016
North Coast County Water District	2014-2016
Peninsula Healthcare District	2015-2017
Coastside Fire Protection District	2016-2018
San Mateo County Mosquito and Vector Control District	2016-2018
Westborough Water District	2016-2018

Additionally, the Grand Jury's review of independent special district websites revealed that eight additional special districts have websites that would qualify for the DTCE but appear not to have applied for the certificate.[15] Those districts are:

Coastside County Water District

Granada Community Services District

Menlo Park Fire District

Mid-Peninsula Regional Open Space

Montara Water and Sanitary District

Sequoia Healthcare District

SMC Resource Conservation District

West Bay Sanitary District

[15] www.sdlf.org, 4/19/17

In addition to the 14 special districts listed above, one other special district's website, Woodside Fire Protection District, fulfilled all of the first tier required components, bringing to 15 the number of independent special districts in the County that have fulfilled all of the first-tier required components.

The SDLF also awards independent special districts the District of Distinction Accreditation for those districts that demonstrate prudent fiscal practices along with other areas important to effectively operate and govern a special district. The 2013-14 Grand Jury found that no district had achieved, applied for or been awarded the District of Distinction Certificate. However, during the past three years three independent special districts in San Mateo County applied for and received this distinction: Coastside Fire Protection District, North Coast County Water District, and San Mateo County Mosquito and Vector Control District.[16]

All of these districts deserve positive recognition for their hard work achieving much needed transparency for their constituents through district websites.

Seven independent special districts, however, currently have not met an acceptable level of transparency.

The San Mateo County Harbor District's website lacks only one component to complete Tier 1, a description of their election process. The district's website currently provides a link to the San Mateo County Elections website, but the District's website lacks any detail regarding the District's internal procedure for elections.[17]

The following independent special districts require components in both tier 1 and/or tier 2 to achieve the SDLF's District Transparency Certificate of Excellence:[18]

Bayshore Sanitary District

Broadmoor Police Protection District

Colma Fire Protection District

East Palo Alto Sanitary District

Ladera Recreation District

Mid-Peninsula Water District

San Mateo County Harbor District

Woodside Fire Protection District

[16] www.sdlf.org, 4/19/17

[17] www.smharbor.com, 5/16/17

[18] See Appendix C

FINDINGS

F1. Six independent special districts have completed the requirements and been awarded the *District Transparency Certificate of Excellence* designation from the Special District Leadership Foundation over the past three years.

- Coastside Fire Protection District
- Highlands Recreation District
- North Coast County Water District
- Peninsula Healthcare District
- San Mateo County Mosquito and Vector Control District
- Westborough Water District

F2. Eight additional independent special districts have completed the requirements and been awarded the *District Transparency Certificate of Excellence.*

- Coastside County Water District
- Granada Community Services District
- Menlo Park Fire District
- Mid-Peninsula Regional Open Space District
- Montara Water and Sanitary District
- San Mateo Resource Conservation District
- Sequoia Healthcare District
- West Bay Sanitary District

F3. Three independent special districts have achieved the *District of Distinction Designation* from the Special District Leadership Foundation over the past three years.

- Coastside Fire Protection District
- North Coast County Water District
- San Mateo County Mosquito and Vector Control District

F4. Fifteen independent special districts have websites meeting the first tier of required components.

- Coastside County Water District
- Coastside Fire Protection District
- Granada Community Services District
- Highlands Recreation District
- Menlo Park Fire District
- Mid-Peninsula Regional Open Space District

- Montara Water and Sanitary District
- Northcoast County Water District
- Peninsula Healthcare District
- San Mateo County Mosquito and Vector Control District
- San Mateo County Resource Conservation District
- Sequoia Healthcare District
- West Bay Sanitary District
- Westborough Water District
- Woodside Fire Protection District

F5. Eight independent special districts websites have not met the Special District Leadership Foundation's minimum requirements.

- Bayshore Sanitary District
- Broadmoor Police Protection District
- Colma Fire Protection District
- East Palo Alto Sanitary District
- Ladera Recreation District
- Mid-Peninsula Water District
- San Mateo County Harbor District
- Woodside Fire Protection District

RECOMMENDATIONS

R1. The eight independent special districts' websites that do not conform to the current standards set by the Special District Leadership Foundation's transparency checklist shall conform to the accepted criteria on or before December 31, 2017.

R2. All independent special districts shall take the necessary steps to maintain their websites using the current standards set by the Special District Leadership Foundation so as to provide pertinent information to their constituents and to continue to qualify for the *District Transparency Certificate of Excellence*.

R3. The eight independent special districts that qualify for the *District Transparency Certificate of Excellence* are strongly encouraged to apply for it to be recognized for their efforts.

REQUEST FOR RESPONSES

From the following governing bodies:

Recommendation 1

Bayshore Sanitary District

Broadmoor Police Protection District

Colma Fire Protection District

East Palo Alto Sanitary District

Ladera Recreation District

Mid-Peninsula Water District

San Mateo County Harbor District

Woodside Fire Protection District

Recommendation 2

All independent special districts in San Mateo County

Recommendation 3

Coastside County Water District

Granada Community Services District

Menlo Park Fire District

Mid-Peninsula Regional Open Space

Montara Water and Sanitary District

Sequoia Healthcare District

SMC Resource Conservation District

West Bay Sanitary District

The governing bodies indicated above should be aware that the comment or response of the governing body must be conducted subject to the notice, agenda and open meeting requirements of the Brown Act.

APPENDIX A INDEPENDENT SPECIAL DISTRICT WEBSITES

Independent Special District	Website
Bayshore Sanitary District	http://www.bayshoresanitary.org/
Broadmoor Police Protection District	http://www.broadmoorpolice.com/
Coastside County Water District	http://coastsidewater.org/
Coastside Fire Protection District	http://www.coastsidefire.org/
Colma Fire Protection District	http://www.colmafd.org/home.html
East Palo Alto Sanitary District	http://www.epasd.com/
Granada Community Services District	http://www.granada.ca.gov/
Highlands Recreation District	http://www.highlandsrec.ca.gov/
Ladera Recreation District	http://www.lrdrec.com/
Menlo Park Fire Protection District	http://www.menlofire.org
Mid-Peninsula Water District	https://www.midpeninsulawater.org/index.php
Mid-peninsula Regional Open Space District	http://openspace.org/
Montara Water and Sanitary District	http://mwsd.montara.org/
North Coast County Water District	http://www.nccwd.com/
Peninsula Health Care District	http://www.peninsulahealthcaredistrict.org
San Mateo County Harbor District	http://www.smharbor.com/harbordistrict/
SMC Mosquito and Vector Control District	http://www.smcmvcd.org/
San Mateo Resource Conservation District	http://www.sanmateorcd.org/
Sequoia Healthcare District	http://www.sequoiahealthcaredistrict.com/
West Bay Sanitary District	http://westbaysanitary.org/
Westborough Water District	Http://www.westboroughwater.com/
Woodside Fire Protection District	http://www.woodsidefire.org/

APPENDIX B

District Transparency Certificate of Excellence *checklist*

Showcase your district's commitment to transparency

BASIC REQUIREMENTS

- ❑ **Current Ethics Training for all Board Members** *(Government Code Section 53235)*
  - ☐ Provide copies of training certificates along with date completed
- ❑ **Compliance with the Ralph M. Brown Act** *(Government Code Section 54950 et. al)*
  - ☐ Provide copy of current policy related to Brown Act compliance
  - ☐ Provide copy of a current meeting agenda (including opportunity for public comment)
- ❑ **Adoption of policy related to handling Public Records Act requests**
  - ☐ Provide copy of current policy
- ❑ **Adoption of Reimbursement Policy, if district provides any reimbursement of actual and necessary expenses** *(Government Code Section 53232.2 (b))*
  - ☐ Provide copy of current policy
- ❑ **Annual disclosure of board member or employee reimbursements for individual charges over $100 for services or products. This information is to be made available for public inspection. "Individual charge" includes, but is not limited to: one meal, lodging for one day, or transportation.** *(Government Code Section 53065.5)*
  - ☐ Provide copy of the most recent document and how it is accessible
- ❑ **Timely filing of State Controller's Special Districts Financial Transactions Report - includes compensation disclosure.** *(Government Code Section 53891)*
  - ☐ Provide copy of most recent filing
  - *SDLF staff will verify that district is not listed on the State Controller's 'non-compliance list'*
- ❑ **Conduct Annual Audits** *(Government Code Section 26909 and 12410.6)*
  - ☐ Provide copy of most recent audit and management letter and a description of how/where documents were made available to the public
- ❑ **Other Policies – have current policies addressing the following areas** *(provide copies of each)*:
  - ☐ Conflict of Interest
  - ☐ Code of Ethics/Values/Norms or Board Conduct
  - ☐ Financial Reserves Policy

WEBSITE REQUIREMENTS

- ❑ **Maintain a district website with the following items** *(provide website link; all are required)*
  - ☐ Names of Board Members and their terms of office
  - ☐ Name of general manager and key staff along with contact information
  - ☐ Election procedure and deadlines
  - ☐ Board meeting schedule (Regular meeting agendas must be posted 72 hours in advance pursuant to *Government Code Section 54954.2 (a) (1) and Government Code Section 54956 (a)*)
  - ☐ District's mission statement
  - ☐ Description of district's services/functions and service area
  - ☐ Authorizing statute/enabling act (Principle Act or Special Act)
  - ☐ Current district budget
  - ☐ Most recent financial audit
  - ☐ Archive of Board meeting minutes for at least the last 6 months
  - ☐ List of compensation of Board Members and staff and/or link to State Controller's webpage with the data
- ❑ **Website also must include <u>at least 4</u> of the following items:**
  - ☐ Post Board Member ethics training certificates
  - ☐ Picture, biography and email address of board members
  - ☐ Last 3 years of audits
  - ☐ Reimbursement and Compensation Policy
  - ☐ Financial Reserves Policy
  - ☐ Online/downloadable Public Records Act request form
  - ☐ Audio or video recordings of board meetings
  - ☐ Map of district boundaries/service area
  - ☐ Link to California Special Districts Association mapping program
  - ☐ Most recent Municipal Service Review (MSR) and Sphere of Influence (SOI) studies *(full document or link to document on another site)*

Continued on reverse

Questions about SDLF or the transparency program? Call us for more information at 916.231.2939

APPENDIX C TRANSPARENCY CHECKLIST

Agency	Ranking	1	1A	1B	1C	1D	1E	1F	1G	1H	1I	1J	1K	Total	2	2A	2B	2C	2D	2E	2F	2G	2H	2I	2J
Highlands Recreation District	1	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	11	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y				Y
Mid-PeninsulaRegional Open Space Dist.	1	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	11	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y		Y		
Peninsula Health Care District	1	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	11	Y		Y	Y			Y		Y		
Westborough Water District	1	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	11	Y	Y		Y	Y				Y		
Coastside County Water District	2	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	11	Y	Y			Y	Y	Y	Y	Y		
SMC Mosquito and Vector Control Dist.	2	Y	Y	Y	n/a	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	11	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y			Y	Y	
Granada Community Services District	2	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	11	Y	Y		Y					Y	Y	
North Coast County Water District	2	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	11	Y		Y	Y		Y				Y	
Coastside Fire Protection District	2	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	11	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y		
West Bay Sanitary District	2	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	11	N		Y	Y			Y		Y		
Menlo Park Fire Protection District	3	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	11	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y		Y
Montara Water and Sanitary District	3	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	11	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y		Y		Y
Mid-Peninsula Water District	4	N	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	9	Y	Y	Y	Y					Y		
SMC Resource Conservation District	4	Y	Y	Y	n/a	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	n/a	11	Y		Y	Y	Y				Y		Y
SMC Harbor District	4	N	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	10	Y		Y	Y		Y		Y	Y	Y	
Sequoia Healthcare District	5	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	11	Y		Y		Y	Y			Y	n/a	n/a
Bayshore Sanitary District	5	N	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	9	N	Y		Y					Y		
Broadmoor Police Protection District	6	N	Y	n/a	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	10	N		Y								
Ladera Recreation district	6	N	Y	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y		Y	Y	9	N						Y				Y
Woodside Fire Protection District	6	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	11	N			Y	Y						
East Palo Alto Sanitary District	7	N	Y			Y	Y			Y	Y	Y		6	Y	Y	Y	Y					Y		
Colma Fire Protection District	8	N					Y	Y						2	N										

Issued: June 19, 2017

Bayshore Sanitary District

36 INDUSTRIAL WAY
BRISBANE, CALIFORNIA 94005
(415) 467-1144

August 24, 2017

Hon. Leland Davis, III
Judge of the Superior Court
c/o Charlene Kresevich
Hall of Justice
400 County Center, 2nd Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063-1655

Re.: Response to Grand Jury Report "Can We See You Now? San Mateo County's Independent Special Districts Website Transparency Update"

Hon. Judge Davis:

The following response approved by the District Board on August 24, 2017 is presented in two sections. The first is our response to the Findings and the second provides our responses to the Recommendations.

Findings

F1. We neither agree nor disagree with this finding since we have no independent knowledge and are not one of the six districts cited.

F2. We neither agree nor disagree with this finding since we have no independent knowledge and are not one of the eight districts cited.

F3. We neither agree nor disagree with this finding since we have no independent knowledge and are not one of the three districts cited.

F4. We neither agree nor disagree with this finding since we have no independent knowledge and are not one of the fifteen districts cited.

F5. We offer no comment on the other seven districts listed. However, on the date this report was issued, we agree that our District website was lacking one of the Tier 1 items, i.e. election procedure and deadlines.

Recommendations

R1. The eight independent special districts' websites that do not conform to the current standards set by the Special District Leadership Foundation's transparency checklist shall conform to the accepted criteria on or before December 31, 2017.

The recommendation has been implemented. Advisory information regarding election procedure and deadlines has been added which was the one Tier 1 component missing. The Special District Leadership Foundation (SDLF) Tier 1 list referred to in this report is missing two items, both of which are posted on our website. They are compliance with SB 272 – Enterprise Systems Catalog and the District's Sewer System Management Plan (SSMP).

R2. All independent special districts shall take the necessary steps to maintain their websites using the current standards set by the Special District Leadership Foundation so as to provide pertinent information to their constituents and to continue to qualify for the *District Transparency Certificate of Excellence.*

We agree that websites should be maintained and kept current. Our site meets, and in some cases exceeds, the SDLF's current requirements. Part 2 of this recommendation is not warranted - "continue to qualify for the District Transparency Certificate of Excellence" and will not be implemented. We regularly update and review our website content and do not plan to seek SDLF validation.

Sincerely,

Iris Gallager, President
Board of Directors

j

September 15, 2017

Hon. Leland Davis, III
Judge of the Superior Court
c/o Charlene Kresevich
Hall of Justice
400 County Center, 2nd Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063-1655

Re: Coastside County Water District Response to 2016-2017 Grand Jury Independent Special Districts Website Transparency Update

Honorable Judge Davis:

This letter transmits the response of Coastside County Water District (District) to the 2016-2017 Grand Jury Report referenced above. The District is committed to transparency and appreciates the opportunity to respond to the Grand Jury Report. The District's Board of Directors approved this response at their regularly scheduled Board meeting on July 11, 2017.

Response to Findings

F1. Six independent special districts have completed the requirements and been awarded the District Transparency Certificate of Excellence designation from the Special District Leadership Foundation over the past three years.
The District does not have sufficient information about other districts to agree or disagree with this finding as stated. Coastside County Water District has not applied for the Certificate of Excellence.

F2. Eight additional independent special districts have completed the requirements and been awarded the District Transparency Certificate of Excellence.
The District is included under this finding but has not applied for or been awarded the certificate. Based on information presented on page 4 of the Update report, we believe that this finding is worded incorrectly and should read: *Eight additional independent special districts have websites that would qualify for the District Transparency Certificate of Excellence but appear not to have applied for the certificate.* As applied to the District, the District agrees with this finding because the District believes its website would qualify for the District Transparency Certificate of Excellence. The District does not have sufficient information about other districts to agree or disagree with this finding (as corrected) with respect to other districts.

F3. Three independent special districts have achieved the District of Distinction Designation from the Special District Leadership Foundation over the past three years.
The District does not have sufficient information about other districts to agree or disagree with this finding as stated.

F4. Fifteen independent special districts have websites meeting the first tier of required components.
The District agrees because the District's website meets the first tier of required components. The District does not have sufficient information about other districts to agree or disagree with this finding as stated.

F5. Eight independent special districts websites have not met the Special District Leadership Foundation's minimum requirements.
The District does not have sufficient information about other districts to agree or disagree with this finding as stated.

Response to Recommendations (as requested)

R1. Coastside County Water District is not an agency that was requested to respond to this recommendation.

R2. All independent special districts shall take the necessary steps to maintain their websites using the current standards set by the Special District Leadership Foundation so as to provide pertinent information to their constituents and to continue to qualify for the District Transparency Certificate of Excellence.
The District has implemented this recommendation, and will continue to maintain its website to meet the transparency standards set by the Special District Leadership Foundation.

R3. The eight independent special districts that qualify for the District Transparency Certificate of Excellence are strongly encouraged to apply for it to be recognized for their efforts.
The District has implemented this recommendation and has submitted its application for the District Transparency Certificate of Excellence on July 7, 2017.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond. If you have any questions about the District's response to the Grand Jury Report, please call me at 650.726.4405 or email me at ddickson@coastsidewater.org.

Sincerely,

David R. Dickson
General Manager

COASTSIDE FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT
1191 MAIN STREET, HALF MOON BAY CA 94019
TELEPHONE (650) 726-5213
FAX (650) 726-0132

July 29, 2017

Honorable V. Raymond Swope
Judge of the Superior Court
Hall of Justice
400 County Center, Department 23
Redwood City, CA 94063

Dear Judge Swope:

The Coastside Fire Protection District Board has had an opportunity to review the 2017 Grand Jury report entitled " CAN WE SEE YOU NOW? San Mateo County's Independent Special Districts Website Transparency Update." The District Board after reviewing the report and allowing for public comment at its regular Board meeting on July 26, 2017 offers the following response to Recommendation 2 as directed in the report:

Response to Recommendations

R2. All independent special districts shall take the necessary steps to maintain their websites using the current standards set by the Special District Leadership Foundation so as to provide pertinent information to their constituents and to continue to qualify for the District Transparency Certificate of Excellence

Response: Respondent Coastside Fire Protection District agrees with this recommendation.

Respectfully submitted,

G. Burke

Gary Burke
President, Coastside Fire Protection District

Cc: Grand Jury Foreperson
c/o Court Executive Office 400 County Center
Redwood City, CA 94063-1655

Board of Fire Commissioners
Maryanne Hazard
Gina Sheridan
Peter Dabai

COLMA FIRE DISTRICT

50 REINER STREET
COLMA, CALIFORNIA 94014
Phone (650) Plaza 5-5666
Fax (650) 755-5691

Fire Chief
Geoffrey C. Balton

August 18th , 2017

Honorable Leland Davis III
Judge of the Superior Court
C/o Charlene Kresevich
Hall of Justice
400 County Center; 2nd Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063-1655

Subject: District response Grand Jury Report: "Can we see You Now? San Mateo County's Independent Special Districts website Transparency Update."

Dear Honorable Judge Davis,

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the above mentioned Grand Jury report. On behalf of the Colma Fire District and the Board of Directors, thank you for the information related to this topic.

The Grand Jury report and our response was on the agenda for our August 2017 meeting. We will continue this topic to future meetings.

FINDINGS:

F1: We agree with this finding.
F2: We agree with this finding.
F3: We agree with this finding.
F4: We agree with this finding.
F5: We agree with this finding.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

R1: We accept this recommendation and intend to comply prior to the December 31st recommended deadline.

R2: We accept this recommendation and will work in the next year to Qualify for the District Transparency Certificate of Excellence.

R3: No response requested.

We want to thank you again for the opportunity to respond to the Grand Jury.

Sincerely,

Peter Dabai
Chairman, Board of Directors

Geoffrey Balton
Fire Chief

EPASD
EAST PALO ALTO SANITARY DISTRICT

BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Bethzabe Yañez, President
Glenda Savage, Vice President
Joan Sykes-Miessi, Secretary
Goro Mitchell, Director
Dennis Scherzer, Director

901 Weeks Street
East Palo Alto, CA 94303
Phone: (650) 325-9021
Fax: (650) 325-5173
www.epasd.com

Karen Maxey, Interim General Manager

September 8, 2017

VIA U.S. MAIL AND ELECTRONIC MAIL
[GRANDJURY@SANMATEOCOURT.ORG]

Hon. Leland Davis, III
Judge of the Superior Court
c/o Charlene Kresevich
Hall of Justice
400 County Center, 2nd Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063-1655

Re: East Palo Alto Sanitary District Response to 2016-2017 Grand Jury Report: "Can We See You Now? San Mateo County's Independent Special Districts Website Transparency Update"

Dear Hon. Leland Davis, III:

This letters transmits the response of the East Palo Alto Sanitary District (EPASD) to the 2016-2017 San Mateo County Civil Grand Jury Report: "Can We See You Now? San Mateo County's Independent Special Districts Website Transparency Update".

Finding

F5. *Eight independent special districts websites have not met the Special District Leadership Foundation's minimum requirements.*
EPASD agrees with this finding.

Recommendations

R1. *The eight independent special districts' websites that do not conform to the current standards set by the Special District Leadership Foundation's transparency checklist shall conform to the accepted criteria on or before December 31, 2017.*
The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but EPASD is currently working on updating its website to conform to the SDLF transparency checklist by December 31, 2017.

R2. *All independent special districts shall take the necessary steps to maintain their websites using the current standards set by the Special District Leadership Foundation so as to provide pertinent information to their constituents and to continue to qualify for the District Transparency Certificate of Excellence.*
The website once complete, as noted above, will be maintained by existing staff using the standards sets by SDLF.

This response was approved by the District Board at regular board meeting of the District on September 7, 2017. Thank you for the opportunity to respond to this matter and if I can be of further service, please contact me.

Sincerely,

Bethzabe Yañez, President
East Palo Alto Sanitary District

GRANADA COMMUNITY SERVICES DISTRICT

Board of Directors
Jim Blanchard, President
Leonard Woren, Vice President
Matthew Clark, Director
Barbara Dye, Director
David Seaton, Director

August 18, 2017

Hon. Leland Davis, III
Judge of the Superior Court
c/o Charlene Kresevich
Hall of Justice
400 County Center, 2nd Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063-1655

Re: Grand Jury Report: "Can We See You Now? San Mateo County's Independent Special Districts Website Transparency Update"

Dear Hon. Davis:

This is in response to your letter dated June 19, 2017, requesting our Agency's comments regarding the above referenced Grand Jury Report. The responses listed below were approved by the Granada Community Services District Board of Directors at the August 17, 2017 board meeting.

Please find our Agency's responses below.

FINDINGS:

F1. Six independent special districts have completed the requirements and been awarded the *District Transparency Certificate of Excellence* designation from the Special District Leadership Foundation of the past three years.

GCSD Response: We agree with the finding.

F2. Eight additional independent special districts have completed the requirements and been awarded the *District Transparency Certificate of Excellence*.

GCSD Response: We partially agree with the finding. As explained in the body of the Grand Jury report, GCSD has completed the requirements for the DTCE, but we have not applied for the certificate.

F3. Three independent special districts have achieved the District of Distinction Designation from the Special District Leadership Foundation over the past three years.

GCSD Response: We agree with the finding.

504 Avenue Alhambra, 3rd Floor ~ P. O. Box 335 ~ El Granada, California 94018
Telephone: (650) 726-7093 ~ Facsimile: (650) 726-7099 ~ E-mail: gcsd@granada.ca.gov

F4. Fifteen independent special districts have websites meeting the first tier of required components.

GCSD Response: We agree with the finding.

F5. Eight independent special districts websites have not met the Special District Leadership Foundation minimum requirements.

GCSD Response: We agree with the finding.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

R1. The eight independent special districts' websites that do not conform to the current standards set by the Special District Leadership Foundation's transparency checklist shall conform to the accepted criteria on or before December 31, 2017.

GCSD Response: The recommendation is not applicable to our Agency.

R2. All independent special districts shall take the necessary steps to maintain their websites using the current standards set by the Special District Leadership Foundation so as to provide pertinent information to their constituents and to continue to qualify for the *District Transparency Certificate of Excellence.*

GCSD Response: The recommendation has been implemented. The District previously met the Tier 1 requirements, and our contact information has been updated. Four items listed in Tier 2 have been added to our website.

R3. The eight independent special districts that qualify for the *District Transparency Certificate of Excellence* are strongly encouraged to apply for it to be recognized for their efforts.

GCSD Response: The recommendation has not been implemented, but will be implemented by December 2017.

We appreciate the opportunity to respond to the Grand Jury Report and to provide our input in this process.

Sincerely,
GRANADA COMMUNITY SERVICES DISTRICT

J. Blanchard

Jim Blanchard, Board President

504 Avenue Alhambra, 3rd Floor ~ P. O. Box 335 ~ El Granada, California 94018
Telephone: (650) 726-7093 ~ Facsimile: (650) 726-7099 ~ E-mail: gcsd@granada.ca.gov

HIGHLANDS RECREATION DISTRICT EST. 1957

Highlands Recreation District

1851 Lexington Avenue • San Mateo, CA 94402
(650) 341-4251 • Fax (650) 349-9627
www.highlandsrec.ca.gov

"Where Family Traditions Begin"

July 12, 2017

Hon. Lisa Novak
Judge of the Superior Court
c/o Charlene Kresevich
Hall of Justice
400 County Center; 2nd Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063-1655

Honorable Ms. Novak:

In response to the June 19, 2017 Grand Jury Report, the Highlands Recreation District (HRD) hereby submits the following. This response was approved by the HRD Board of Directors at its July 11, 2017 board meeting.

General Comment: The HRD generally agrees with the findings and recommendations made in the report. The HRD engaged the services of a professional web development firm to revise our website in the latter half of 2013. Since then, the site has been continually upgraded and updated, either in house or by outsourcing to a professional. The District earned a Transparency Certificate in 2014, and again in 2017.

Additional comments:

1. As stated in the District's July 2014 response to the 2014 Grand Jury inquiry, the Highlands Recreation District's website was compliant and received its transparency Certificate in 2014. Therefore, the current report's opening statement regarding 'the lack of transparency in the websites of 23 independent special districts' in 2014 may be too strongly worded. Our District, for example, was already actively working on improving and upgrading its website to more fully comply with transparency recommendations, but at no time was the District completely lacking in such transparency. The District's upgrade efforts were completed by June 30, 2014. So while there were certainly varying degrees of transparency among special districts in the County, there was not a collective and complete lack of such transparency.
2. It is also important to note that, until recently, the cost of maintaining and updating websites on a daily or monthly basis was a burden for smaller Districts who lacked the internal technological capability and expertise to update websites. Today, such updates are much more easily and more timely done, as functionality and user-interface have been greatly simplified and are much more cost-effective.
3. The District's applied for Transparency Certificate renewal in September 2016. The renewal was confirmed in April 2017. This certificate is in effect through April 2019. A copy of the certificate is attached.
4. The District website includes (and has included since June 25, 2014) a link to a document clearly showing District boundaries: http://highlandsrec.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/pdf-

boarddocs-District-Map.pdf. If that is, in fact, item 2H on the Transparency Checklist on page 12, please make that correction on the checklist to indicate compliance. (Assuming that the item listing on page 12 corresponds to the Tier 1 and Tier 2 lists on page 3.)

Thank you for your attention to the suggestions and requested corrections to the Grand Jury report. Thank you also for your time and service to the County and its residents.

Sincerely,

Eric Olbekson, President,
Board of Directors
Highlands Recreation District

cc: Portor Goltz, Counsel
Supervisor Dave Pine
HRD Board of Directors

Ladera Recreation District
150 Andeta Way
Portola Valley, CA 94028

(650) 854-3242
Fax: (650) 854-3413
Email: mail@lrdrec.com
www.lrdrec.com

September 18, 2017

Hon. Leland Davis III
Judge of the Superior Court
c/o Charlene Kresevich
Hall of Justice
400 County Center, 2nd Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063-1655

Re: Grand Jury Report "Can We See you Now?"
Ladera Recreation District Statement of Compliance

Dear Judge Davis And Ms. Kresevich,

On September 18th, the Ladera Recreation District Board of Directors met and approved the following response:

Ladera Recreation District agrees with the Grand Jury's finding that the District was not fully in compliance with the San Mateo County's Independent Special District's Website Transparency Update. Additionally, the District has implemented all suggested actions with regards to its website.

As of September 18, 2017, the Ladera Recreation District has fully complied with all twelve items required in Tier 1 of the Methodology. Additionally, at least 4 of the Tier 2 requirements have also been completed, as requested. The 4 items completed in Tier 2 are: the last three years' audits, the on line/downloadable Public Records Act Request form, a Map of the district boundaries/service area, and a Link to California Special Districts Association mapping program.

With all due respect, the Ladera Recreation District submits that it has now met or exceeded the acceptable level of transparency as required by law. The website can be located at: www.laderarec.org.

Very Truly Yours,

Robert Felderman
LRD Board President

555 12th Street, Suite 1500
Oakland, California 94607
tel (510) 808-2000
fax (510) 444-1108
www.meyersnave.com

Lauren E. Quint
Attorney at Law
lquint@meyersnave.com

meyers | nave

November 28, 2017

Honorable Leland Davis, III
Judge of the Superior Court
c/o Charlene Kresevich
Hall of Justice
400 County Center; 2nd Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063-1655

Re: Civil Grand Jury Response

Dear Honorable Leland Davis, III:

I am the General Counsel of the Menlo Park Fire Protection District ("MPFPD" or the "District"). On behalf of the MPFPD Board of Directors, the District provides the following responses to the findings and recommendations of the San Mateo County Civil Grand Jury Report entitled "Can We See You Now?" dated June 19, 2017.

The Board does not have sufficient information to opine as to other special districts and will respond only to those findings and recommendations that apply directly to the MPFPD. The MPFPD Board of Directors approved this letter and instructed its delivery at its November 21, 2017 regular board meeting.

Findings:

F2. "Eight additional independent special districts have completed the requirements and been awarded the *District Transparency Certificate of Excellence*"

MPFPD Response: In one portion of the report, MPFPD is listed as one of the Districts that received DTCE designation. In another portion of the report, it is recommended that the District apply for the DTCE.

To clarify, MPFPD has not been awarded the DTCE, although the District has completed many of the underlying requirements.

Recommendations:

R3. "The eight independent special districts that qualify for the District Transparency Certificate of Excellence are strongly encouraged to apply for it to be recognized for their efforts"

MPFPD Response: The recommendation requires further analysis. The District always strives to achieve transparency, and will continue its efforts to improve the public's access to information about the District and its Board of Directors, regardless of whether it pursues the Certificate of Excellence.

Very truly yours,

Lauren E. Quint

LEQ:LEQ
2892335.1

Regional OpenSpace | Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District

GENERAL MANAGER
Stephen E. Abbors

BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Pete Siemens
Yoriko Kishimoto
Jed Cyr
Curt Riffle
Nonette Hanko
Larry Hassett
Cecily Harris

November 8, 2017

Hon. Leland Davis, III
Judge of the Superior Court
c/o Charlene Kresevich
Hall of Justice
400 County Center, 2nd Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063-1655

Dear Judge Davis,

We are in receipt of the Civil Grand Jury report entitled, "*Can We See You Now? San Mateo County's Independent Special Districts Website Transparency Update.*" Pursuant to your request for response, the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District's (District) Board of Directors held a public meeting on November 8, 2017 and approved this response. The District responds to the Grand Jury's recommendations, as requested, as follows:

Recommendations

R1. The eight independent special districts' websites that do not conform to the current standards set by the Special District Leadership Foundation's transparency checklist shall conform to the accepted criteria on or before December 31, 2017.

The District has not been requested to respond to this recommendation.

R2. All independent special districts shall take the necessary steps to maintain their websites using the current standards set by the Special District Leadership Foundation so as to provide pertinent information to their constituents and to continue to qualify for the District Transparency Certificate of Excellence.

This recommendation was implemented prior to the issuance of the Grand Jury report. The District employs a full time website administrator who maintains and updates the website regularly.

R3. The eight independent special districts that qualify for the District Transparency Certificate of Excellence are strongly encouraged to apply for it to be recognized for their efforts.

The District asserts it is in full compliance with all applicable laws and regulations related to its operations and transparency efforts. The District also maintains its website to meet the requirements of the Special District Leadership Foundation's *District Transparency Certificate*

of Excellence and will continue to maintain and update its website on a regular basis to promote transparency and public understanding of the District and its activities.

Very truly yours,

Larry Hassett

Larry Hassett, Board President
Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District

Cc: Board of Directors, Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District

MID-PENINSULA
WATER DISTRICT

3 Dairy Lane, Belmont, CA 94002
tel: 650.591.8941 • fax: 650.591.4998
MidPeninsulaWater.org

September 5, 2017

Honorable Leland Davis, III
Judge of the Superior Court
c/o Charlene Kresevich
Hall of Justice
400 County Center, 2nd Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063-1655

Re: Response to Grand Jury Report on Special Districts' Websites Transparency Update filed on June 19, 2017

Dear Judge Davis:

The Mid-Peninsula Water District (MPWD) has reviewed and considered the referenced Grand Jury report, and responds to the report's findings and recommendations related to the MPWD as follows:

FINDING	***MPWD RESPONSE***
F5. Eight independent special districts' websites have not met the Special District Leadership Foundation's (SDLF) minimum requirements.	*The MPWD agrees that during the Grand Jury's review, the MPWD website lacked the following two (out of the eleven required) elements from the SDLF website transparency checklist:* ▪ *Election procedure and deadlines; and* ▪ *Authorizing statute/enabling act.*

RECOMMENDATION	***MPWD RESPONSE***
R1. The eight independent special districts' websites that do not conform to the current standards set by the SDLF's transparency checklist shall conform to the accepted criteria on or before December 31, 2017.	*The election procedures and enabling act items were posted at the MPWD's newly redesigned website on August 16, 2017:* https://www.midpeninsulawater.org/boardoverview AND https://www.midpeninsulawater.org/about

This response was considered and approved by the MPWD Board of Directors at its regularly scheduled meeting on Thursday, August 24, 2017.

Sincerely,

Tammy A. Rudock
General Manager

Montara Water and Sanitary District
Serving the Community of Montara and Moss Beach

P.O. Box 370131
8888 Cabrillo Hwy
Montara, CA 94037-0131
t: 650.728.3545 • f: 650.728.8556
email: mwsd@coastside.net
web: mwsd.montara.org

SENT VIA US POSTAL SERVICE:

October 23, 2017

Hon. Leland Davis, III
Judge of the Superior Court
c/o Charlene Kresevich
Hall of Justice
400 County Center; 2nd Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063-1655

Dear: San Mateo Grand Jury

This letter is in response to the San Mateo County Grand Jury letter dated June 19, 2017 requesting follow up information regarding the June 19, 2017 Grand Jury Report referencing Montara Water and Sanitary District.

R2. All independent special districts shall take the necessary steps to maintain their websites using the current standards set by the Special District Leadership Foundation so as to provide pertinent information to their constituents and to continue to qualify for the *District Transparency Certificate of Excellence.*

This has been implemented and the website will be periodically reviewed for compliance and updated in the future as needed.

R3. The eight independent special districts that qualify for the *District Transparency Certificate of Excellence* are strongly encouraged to apply for it to be recognized for their efforts.

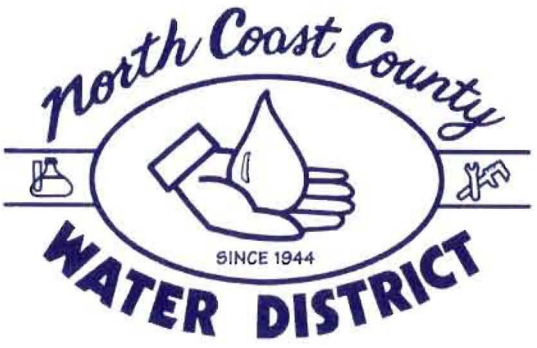
The recommendation will be implemented during 2018. MWSD has reviewed the requirements of the District Transparency Certificate of Excellence in detail and identified a handful of specific requirements where more work needs to be done, primarily in developing or updating specific policies. Staff will be bringing updated policies and other needed information to the Board for approval and will then apply for the certificate.

Sincerely,

Clemens Heldmaier,
General Manager
Montara Water and Sanitary District

MWSD.Ltr.Grnd.Jury.Re.March.6.2017.Letter.Re.2015-16.Report_17.3.23

2400 Francisco Blvd.
P.O. Box 1039
Pacifica, CA 94044
www.nccwd.com



Phone (650) 355-3462
Fax (650 355-0735

August 30, 2017

Honorable Leland Davis III
Judge of the Superior Court
c/o Charlene Kresevich
Hall of Justice
400 County Center, 2nd Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063-1655

Re: Special District Report "Can We See You Now? San Mateo County's Independent Special Districts Website Transparency Update"

Honorable Leland Davis III:

The North Coast County Water District (District) hereby submits its responses to the findings and recommendations of the Grand Jury regarding its review of the transparency of Independent Districts' Websites. The Grand Jury made five (5) findings and three (3) recommendations. Each finding will be addressed separately and the District was requested to only comment on Recommendation 2.

Findings

F1. Six independent special districts have completed the requirements and been awarded the District Transparency Certificate of Excellence designation from the Special District Leadership Foundation over the past three years.

The District agrees with the finding with regards to the North Coast County Water District having successfully completed the requirements.

The District does not have sufficient information about whether the other districts listed have completed their requirements to agree or disagree with the remaining contents of this finding.

F2. "Eight additional independent special districts have completed the requirements and been awarded the District Transparency Certificate of Excellence".

The District does not have sufficient information about other districts to agree or disagree with this finding.

F3. "Three independent special districts have achieved the District of Distinction Designation from the Special District Leadership Foundation over the past three years".

The District agrees with the finding with regards to the North Coast County Water District having successfully completed the requirements.

The District does not have sufficient information about whether the other districts listed have completed their requirements to agree or disagree with the remaining contents of this finding.

F4. "Fifteen independent special districts have websites meeting the first tier of required components".

The District agrees with the finding with regards to the North Coast County Water District having successfully completed the requirements.

The North Coast County Water District recognizes the benefits of transparency delivered through district websites and was the first special district in San Mateo County to receive the SDLF District Transparency Certificate of Excellence on March 21, 2014 and renewed its certificate on April 1, 2016.

The District does not have sufficient information about whether the other districts listed have completed their requirements to agree or disagree with the remaining contents of this finding

Recommendations

Although the report listed three (3) recommendation, the North Coast County Water District was requested to respond only to Recommendation 2 – "All independent special districts shall take the necessary steps to maintain their websites using the current standards set by the Special District Leadership Foundation so as to provide pertinent information to their constituents and to continue to qualify for the District Transparency Certificate of Excellence."

The recommendation has been implemented and the North Coast County Water District received the SDLF District Transparency Certificate of Excellence on March 21, 2014 and renewed the certificate on April 1, 2016.

The District appreciates this opportunity to respond to the Grand Jury report on the Transparency of Independent Special Districts. Should you require any additional information please do not hesitate to contact Cari Lemke, General Manager at (650) 355-3462 or at clemke@nccwd.com.

Sincerely,

Jack J Burgett

Jack Burgett, President
Board of Directors
North Coast County Water District

Peninsula Health Care District

July 31, 2017

Honorable Leland Davis, III
Judge of the Superior Court
400 County Center, 2nd Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063 - 1655

RE: RESPONSE TO THE CIVIL GRAND JURY REPORT 2016-2017: "Can We See You Now? San Mateo County's Independent Special Districts Website Transparency Update"

Dear Judge Davis:

The purpose of this letter is to respond to the Civil Grand Jury's findings and recommendations in the 2016-2017 report cited above.

FINDINGS:

F1. Six independent special districts have completed the requirements and been awarded the *District Transparency Certificate of Excellence* designation from the Special District Leadership Foundation over the past three years.

PHCD agrees with this finding as it relates to our District. Our District received its certificate December 2015.

F2. Eight additional independent special districts have completed the requirements….

PHCD has no firsthand knowledge upon which to base a response.

F3. Three independent special districts have achieved the *District of Distinction Designation* from the Special District Leadership Foundation over the past three years.

PHCD has no firsthand knowledge upon which to base a response.

F4 Fifteen independent special districts have websites meeting the first tier of required components.

PHCD agrees with this finding as it relates to our District website.

F5 Eight independent special districts websites have not met the Special District Leadership Foundation's minimum requirements.

PHCD has no firsthand knowledge upon which to base a response.

Peninsula Health Care District

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The eight independent special districts' websites that do not conform to the current standard set by Special District Leadership Foundation's transparency checklist shall conform to the accepted criteria on or before December 31, 2017.

   Not applicable to PHCD per the Civil Grand Jury report.

2. All independent special districts shall take the necessary steps to maintain their websites using the current standards set by the Special District Leadership Foundation so as to provide pertinent information to their constituents and to continue to qualify for the *District Transparency Certificate of Excellence.*

   The PHCD Board is committed to maintaining this certificate and distinction. Operational procedures have been put into place to regularly review website content, to ensure compliance to the Special District Leadership Foundation's criteria, as well as, monitor for continuous quality improvement. For example, the staff member assigned to monitor the website content is a different staff member from the position responsible for its maintenance.
   The district also engages its communications consultants to periodically and not less than annually, audit the site. This provides additional oversight to ensure compliance with the standards and greater opportunity to identify and improve access to information.

3. The eight independent special districts that qualify for the *District Transparency Certificate of Excellence* are strongly encouraged to apply for it to be recognized for their efforts.

   Not applicable to PHCD per the Civil Grand Jury report.

The Board is proud to be one of three independent special districts ranked #1 on the Transparency Checklist and recognized for that achievement in the Civil Grand Jury Report.

This letter of response was presented to the Board of Directors and approved unanimously at a Special Public Board meeting on July 31, 2017.

Sincerely,

Lawrence W. Cappel, PhD
Board Chair

SAN MATEO COUNTY
MOSQUITO & VECTOR
CONTROL DISTRICT
Protecting public health since 1916

1351 Rollins Road
Burlingame, CA 94010

phone (650) 344-8592
fax (650) 344-3843

www.smcmvcd.org

Hon. Leland Davis III
Judge of the Superior Court
c/o Charlene Kresevich
Hall of Justice
400 County Center, 2nd Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063-1655

Date: July 13, 2017
Board Meeting Date: July 12, 2017
Vote Required: Majority

On behalf of the San Mateo County Mosquito and Vector Control District ("District"), I am submitting this response to the 2016-17 Civil Grand Jury Report "Can We See You Now? San Mateo County's Independent Special Districts Website Transparency Update." This response was presented to and approved by the District Board of Trustees at its regular meeting on July 12, 2017.

We agree with the Findings of the report that apply to our District.

F1. The District has completed the requirements for and been awarded the *District Transparency Certificate of Excellence.*
F3. The District has also achieved the *District of Distinction Designation*
F4. The District's website meets the first tier of required components for the Special District Leadership Foundation's *District Transparency Certificate of Excellence.*

The recommendations contained in the report that apply to this District have been implemented.

R2 All independent special districts shall take the necessary steps to maintain their websites using the current standards set by the Special District Leadership Foundation to provide pertinent information to their constituents and to continue to qualify for the *District Transparency Certificate of Excellence.*

The District will perform regular website audits to ensure that its website continues to meet the standards set by the Special District Leadership Foundation. The District will also provide pertinent information online in order to continue to qualify for the *District Transparency Certificate of Excellence.*

Respectfully,

Rick Wykoff

Rick Wykoff, Board President

August 17, 2017

Hon. Leland Davis, III
Judge of the Superior Court
Hall of Justice
400 County Center; 2nd Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063-1655

Re: 2016-2017 Grand Jury Report: "Can We See You Now? San Mateo County's Independent Special Districts Website Transparency Update"

Hon. Davis,

The San Mateo County Harbor District (District) has received the San Mateo County Civil Grand Jury's above referenced Report dated June 19, 2017. This response has been approved by the District's Board of Harbor Commissioners at its August 16, 2017 Regular Meeting.

Findings: Findings F1-F4 do not apply to the District. The District agrees with Finding F5 that the District had not yet met the Special District Leadership Foundation's (SDLF) minimum requirements as of the date of the Grand Jury Report. As set forth below, it has since addressed the one missing requirement.

Recommendations: The report contains two recommendations which apply to the District:

R1 is that "The eight independent special districts' websites that do not conform to the current standards set by the Special District Leadership Foundation's transparency checklist shall conform to the accepted criteria on or before December 31, 2017."

The District has already implemented this recommendation by adding language to the District's website describing the election process for District Commissioners.

R2 is that "All independent special districts shall take the necessary steps to maintain their websites using the current standards set by the Special District Leadership

Foundation so as to provide pertinent information to their constituents and to continue to qualify for the District Transparency Certificate of Excellence."

The District already meets the SDLF checklist for website transparency. It will continue to improve its website so as to provide all pertinent information to its constituents.

Best regards,

Steve McGrath
General Manager
San Mateo County Harbor District
(650) 583-4962

San Mateo County Resource Conservation District
625 Miramontes Street, Suite 103, Half Moon Bay, CA 94019, 650.712.7765

August 29, 2017

Honorable Leland Davis, III
Judge of the Superior Court
c/o Charlene Kresevich
Hall of Justice
400 County Center, 2nd Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063-1655

Re: Grand Jury Report: "Can We See You Now? San Mateo County's Independent Special Districts Website Transparency Update"

Dear Honorable Leland Davis, III,

Attached please find the response from the San Mateo County Resource Conservation District to the 2017 Grand Jury report referenced above. The enclosed reply was approved by the district's Board of Directors at its August 17, 2017 meeting.

Sincerely,

Kellyx Nelson

Executive Director

Responses to Civil Grand Jury Report: "Can We See You Now?"
Approved by San Mateo County Resource Conservation District Board of Directors
August 17, 2017

Background

On May 19, 2014 the San Mateo County Civil Grand Jury (Grand Jury) investigated the utility and transparency of the county's 23 independent special districts' websites. The Grand Jury found no violation of laws and no attempt to intentionally obfuscate beneficial information. The Grand Jury did make recommendations for 15 of the 23 districts to improve website access to include information regarding finances, staff and Board of Directors' or Commissioners' contacts, and Board or Commission minutes.

As a follow-up, in 2016-17 the Grand Jury reinvestigated the transparency of the County's 22 independent special district websites. The report, entitled "Can We See You Now? San Mateo County's Independent Special Districts Website Transparency Update," was filed on June 19, 2017. Each of the identified 22 districts, including the San Mateo County Resource Conservation District (RCD), is required to submit comments within 90 days for each relevant finding and recommendation, due no later than September 18, 2017.

Responses to Findings

The Grand Jury directed the RCD to reply to each of its findings.

Finding 1. Six independent special districts have completed the requirements and been awarded the District Transparency Certificate of Excellence designation from the Special District Leadership Foundation over the past three years.

> **Response: Do not know.** The RCD has not applied for an SDLF program, certificate, recognition, or certification but cannot comment on whether other districts have.

Finding 2. Eight additional independent districts have completed the requirements and been awarded the District Transparency Certificate of Excellence.

> **Response: (1) Do not know and (2) Disagree.** (1) The RCD has not applied for an SDLF program, certificate, recognition, or certification but cannot comment on whether other districts have. (2) This finding erroneously lists the RCD as having received the District Transparency Certificate of Excellence.

Finding 3. Three independent special districts have achieved the District of Distinction Designation from the Special District Leadership Foundation over the past three years.

> **Response: Do not know.** The RCD has not applied for an SDLF program, certificate, recognition, or certification but cannot comment on whether other districts have.

Finding 4. Fifteen independent special districts have websites meeting the first tier of required components.

Response: Do not know. The RCD is not aware of whether other special districts have completed these requirements but can confirm that the RCD meets the first tier of components. Please note that these are requirements for a certificate *of distinction*, not requirements for special district transparency.

Finding 5. Eight independent special districts websites have not met the Special District Leadership Foundation's minimum requirements.

Response: Do not know. The RCD is not familiar with the websites of other special districts.

Responses to Recommendations

The Grand Jury directed the RCD to respond to Recommendation 2 and Recommendation 3 in its report and identify whether the recommendation has been implemented, has not yet been implemented but will be implemented in the future, requires further analysis, or will not be implemented.

Recommendation 2. All special districts shall take the necessary steps to maintain their websites using the current standards set by the Special District Leadership Foundation (SDLF) so as to provide pertinent information to their constituents and to continue to qualify for the District Transparency Certificate of Excellence.

Response: The recommendation may or may not be implemented. Because we cannot be certain that funds will always be available to maintain our website at its current level, the RCD will prioritize our limited financial resources on delivering cost-effective, high quality services to our constituents.

In our reply to the 2014 Grand Jury Report, we noted that the Grand Jury is requesting that SDLF's standards for excellence and distinction be considered a baseline requirement. The standards for distinction go well beyond districts meeting or exceeding legal requirements. It was not the intent of the SDLF that their meritorious honor of distinction be used to indict districts that are otherwise meeting all requirements.

We also noted in our 2014 reply that the Grand Jury's recommendations were irrespective of districts' budget, size, or capacity. Appendix G of that report included a table of San Mateo County property tax revenue earned by each independent special district. The RCD was in a different financial category from the other districts identified, serving over 157,000 acres of the county with .06% of the property tax revenues, about 67% less than the next highest earning district.

Our operating base of approximately $60,000 per year is not sufficient to pay rent, insurance, phones, and a single full-time staff person. For this reason, we are dependent on grants to fund our work. Grants for public entities like RCDs are typically limited to very specific tasks with extreme constraints on the ability to bill overhead. It is not unusual for the RCD to be awarded more than $500,000 for a restoration project while struggling to pay for simple overhead and

items such as web design. Grant-funded staff members must bill their time to specific grant-funded projects. It can be challenging to fund staff time for work that is not directly attributable to a specific grant-funded project.

An additional financial hardship is cash flow. It is not unusual for the RCD to wait a year or more to be reimbursed for completed work and expenses funded through State grant programs. Although the RCD's net profit and loss is adequate to cover all expenses approved in the budget, it is often not possible to purchase budgeted services (such as web design or maintenance) because of the nearly perpetual state of arrears and cash flow problems posed by delayed grant payments. Our office furniture has been donated, found on Freecycle, or purchased used from Craigslist. Several of our office computers were donated used. As lean as we are, we deliver high quality services to our constituents and have been recognized as District of the Year by the California Association of RCDs.

It is our hope that our response to the Grand Jury report presents an opportunity to highlight the financial need of RCDs statewide that are delivering high value programs and essential services in communities throughout California with incredible cost efficiency.

Recommendation 3. The eight special districts that qualify for the District Transparency Certificate of Excellence are strongly encouraged to apply for it to be recognized for their efforts.

Response: The recommendation requires further analysis. As noted in the Grand Jury report, the RCD meets all requirements to qualify for the certificate. While the certificate would showcase our efforts in transparency, it will not change the extent to which the RCD is transparent. Whether the RCD will apply for the certificate is uncertain at this point. The RCD will prioritize our limited financial resources on delivering cost-effective, high quality services to our constituents.

Sequoia
Healthcare
District

525 Veterans Blvd.
Redwood City, CA 94063

650-421-2155 Phone
650-421-2159 Fax

www.sequoiahealthcaredistrict.com

July 20, 2017

Hon. Leland Davis, III
Judge of the Superior Court
c/o Charlene Kresevich
Hall of Justice
400 County Center; 2nd Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063

SUBJECT: SEQUOIA HEALTHCARE DISTRICT'S RESPONSE TO THE GRAND JURY REPORT "CAN WE SEE YOU NOW? SAN MATEO COUNTY'S INDEPENDENT SPECIAL DISTRICTS WEBSITE TRANSPARENCY UPDATE" DATED JUNE 19, 2017

Dear Judge Davis:

At a Special Meeting of the Board of Directors on July 19, 2017, the attached response to the above subject report was unanimously approved.

Sincerely,

Lee Michelson
Chief Executive Officer

Attachment

WEST BAY
SANITARY DISTRICT

Serving Our Community Since 1902

500 Laurel Street, Menlo Park, California 94025-3486 (650) 321-0384 (650)321-4265 FAX

PHIL SCOTT
District Manager

In reply, please refer to our
File No. 1591.1

August 23, 2017

Honorable Leland Davis III
Judge of the Superior Court
c/o Charlene Kresevich
Hall of Justice
400 County Center; 2nd floor
Redwood City, CA 94063-1655
grandjury@sanmateocourt.org

Re: Grand Jury Report: "Can We See You Now? San Mateo County's Independent Special Districts Website Transparency Update"

Dear Judge Scott,

Thank you for your service and efforts to examine the transparency of the County's independent special districts websites. West Bay Sanitary District (West Bay) agrees with the Grand Jury that "Californians value the importance of transparency in government at all levels." To that end West Bay has worked hard over the past several years to maintain a website that informs the public as well as documents the effective use of their tax dollars.

Although West Bay has not applied for the Special Districts Leadership Foundation's (SDLF) *District Transparency Certificate of Excellence*, we are pleased to see the Grand Jury recognizes that West Bay's website is adequately transparent and would qualify for certification if application was submitted.

West Bay indeed does meet all the Tier 1 checklist requirements for the certificate and believes it meets the minimum required four components of the Tier 2. As of July 2017, West Bay has become a member of the California Special Districts Association with the expressed intent of including virtually all the checklist components on the District's website and submitting application for the *District Transparency Certificate of Excellence* from SDLF by the end of 2017 or early 2018.

The District has in many ways exceeded the Grand Jury's recommendations made in July 2014 for a useful and transparent website. In addition to the Grand Jury listed criteria the District has included the following:

- Current rate information and rate studies for the last few years
- Step by Step guide to rehabilitating your private sewer lateral including Videos on obtaining permits, replacing sewer laterals, calling before you dig and construction specifications
- Educational material and links
- RFP and Bid information
- Capital Improvement Project information

- Sewer clearing and operations information
- A special page for kids
- Information on What 2 Flush
- Documents page
- Employment page
- 'What's New' page with recent articles and District announcements
- Link to our partnership with HomeServe Lateral Insurance
- Link to Opengov.com an interactive website where users can graph District revenues and expenses
- Links to many other partner agencies, associations and affiliations

The District responses to the Grand Jury specific Findings and Recommendations are as follows:

The 2016-2017 San Mateo County Grand Jury Found that:

FINDINGS

F1. Six independent special districts have completed the requirements and been awarded the *District Transparency Certificate of Excellence* designation from the Special District leadership Foundation over the past three years.

West Bay agrees with this finding.

F2. Eight additional independent special districts have completed the requirements and (have not) been awarded the *District Transparency Certificate of Excellence*.

West Bay agrees with this finding.

F3. Three independent special districts have achieved the *District of Distinction Designation* from the Special District Leadership Foundation over the past three years.

West Bay agrees with this finding.

F4. Fifteen independent special districts have websites meeting the first tier of required components.

West Bay agrees with this finding and is pleased to be included among the fifteen districts.

F5. Eight independent special districts websites have not met the Special District Leadership Foundation's minimum requirements.

West Bay agrees with this finding.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Grand Jury requested responses from West Bay Sanitary District as follows:

- West Bay Sanitary District: R2 & R3.

R2. All independent special districts shall take the necessary steps to maintain their websites using the current standards set by the Special District Leadership Foundation so as to provide pertinent information to their constituents and to continue to qualify for the *District Transparency Certificate of Excellence*.

West Bay's website contains all the Tier 1 components:

Names of board members and their terms of office
Name of general manager and key staff along with contact information
Election procedure and deadlines
Board meeting schedule
District's mission statement
Description of district's services/functions and service area
Authorizing statute
Current district budget
Most recent financial audit
Archive of board meeting minutes for at least the past six months
List of compensation of board members and staff and/or link to California state controller's webpage with the data

West Bay's website also contains the minimum of 4 components from the Tier 2 list:

Picture, biography and email address of board members
Last three year's audits
Financial reserves policy
Map of district boundaries/service area

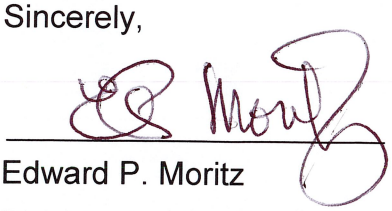
R3. The eight independent special districts that qualify for the *District Transparency Certificate of Excellence* are strongly encouraged to apply for it to be recognized for their efforts.

West Bay has become a member of the California Special Districts Association and will be applying for the ***District Transparency Certificate of Excellence*** by the end of 2017. The District's goal is to meet <u>all</u> of the Tier 1 and Tier 2 checklist components if possible.

Thank you again for your efforts in this matter and allowing the District to respond to the Grand Jury report and share the District's thoughts and opinions.

This response was approved by the West Bay Sanitary District Board of Directors at a regular meeting on August 23, 2017.

Sincerely,



Edward P. Moritz
President of the District Board of the
West Bay Sanitary District

cc: West Bay Sanitary District Board
Phil Scott, District Manager

SEQUOIA HEALTHCARE DISTRICT'S RESPONSE TO THE GRAND JURY REPORT "CAN WE SEE YOU NOW? SAN MATEO COUNTY'S INDEPENDENT SPECIAL DISTRICTS WEBSITE TRANSPARENCY UPDATE" DATED JUNE 19, 2017

GJ Recommendation R3: The eight independent special districts that qualify for the *District Transparency Certificate of Excellence* are strongly encouraged to apply for it to be recognized for their efforts.

Response: Sequoia Healthcare District agrees with the finding of the Grand Jury; however the recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted for the following reason:

"Healthcare Districts have their own association, Association of California Healthcare Districts, (ACHD) that provides many of the services offered by The Special District Association. ACHD includes reviews of healthcare district websites and other documents for transparency.

Sequoia Healthcare District received ACHD's best practice in Governance and therefore elected not to apply for the SDLF Transparency Certificate."

Approved by the Board of Directors of Sequoia Healthcare District at a public meeting on July 19, 2017

WEST BAY
SANITARY DISTRICT

Serving Our Community Since 1902

500 Laurel Street, Menlo Park, California 94025-3486 (650) 321-0384 (650)321-4265 FAX

PHIL SCOTT
District Manager

In reply, please refer to our
File No. 1591.1

August 23, 2017

Honorable Leland Davis III
Judge of the Superior Court
c/o Charlene Kresevich
Hall of Justice
400 County Center; 2nd floor
Redwood City, CA 94063-1655
grandjury@sanmateocourt.org

Re: Grand Jury Report: "Can We See You Now? San Mateo County's Independent Special Districts Website Transparency Update"

Dear Judge Scott,

Thank you for your service and efforts to examine the transparency of the County's independent special districts websites. West Bay Sanitary District (West Bay) agrees with the Grand Jury that "Californians value the importance of transparency in government at all levels." To that end West Bay has worked hard over the past several years to maintain a website that informs the public as well as documents the effective use of their tax dollars.

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West Bay indeed does meet all the Tier 1 checklist requirements for the certificate and believes it meets the minimum required four components of the Tier 2. As of July 2017, West Bay has become a member of the California Special Districts Association with the expressed intent of including virtually all the checklist components on the District's website and submitting application for the *District Transparency Certificate of Excellence* from SDLF by the end of 2017 or early 2018.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

The Grand Jury requested responses from West Bay Sanitary District as follows:

- West Bay Sanitary District: R2 & R3.

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West Bay's website contains all the Tier 1 components:

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Name of general manager and key staff along with contact information
Election procedure and deadlines
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District's mission statement
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West Bay's website also contains the minimum of 4 components from the Tier 2 list:

Picture, biography and email address of board members
Last three year's audits
Financial reserves policy
Map of district boundaries/service area

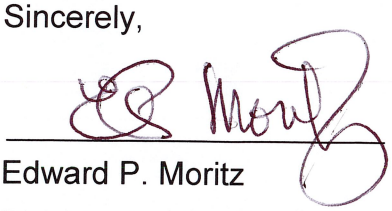
R3. The eight independent special districts that qualify for the *District Transparency Certificate of Excellence* are strongly encouraged to apply for it to be recognized for their efforts.

West Bay has become a member of the California Special Districts Association and will be applying for the ***District Transparency Certificate of Excellence*** by the end of 2017. The District's goal is to meet <u>all</u> of the Tier 1 and Tier 2 checklist components if possible.

Thank you again for your efforts in this matter and allowing the District to respond to the Grand Jury report and share the District's thoughts and opinions.

This response was approved by the West Bay Sanitary District Board of Directors at a regular meeting on August 23, 2017.

Sincerely,



Edward P. Moritz
President of the District Board of the
West Bay Sanitary District

cc: West Bay Sanitary District Board
Phil Scott, District Manager

westborough water district

e-mail: wwd@westboroughwater.com

2263 westborough boulevard . p.o. box 2747 . south san francisco, ca 94083-2747 - 650-589-1435 - fax: 650-589-5167

August 14, 2017

Hon. Leland David, III
Judge of the Superior Court
c/o Charlene Kresevich
Hall of Justice
400 County Center, 2nd Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063-1655

Re: Grand Jury Report – San Mateo County's Independent Special Districts Website Transparency Update

Dear Hon. Judge David:

The above referenced matter (letter dated June 19, 2017) was placed on the agenda for the District's regular meeting held on August 10, 2017. The Board of Directors authorized me to respond to the letter on their behalf. With respect to recommendation R2, the Westborough Water District will continue to take necessary steps to maintain our website using the current standards set by the Special District Leadership Foundation so as to provide pertinent information to our constituents and to continue to qualify for the District Transparency Certificate of Excellence.

Should you have any questions, please contact me at (650) 589-1435.

Sincerely,

Darryl A. Barrow

Darryl A. Barrow
General Manager

DAB/db

WOODSIDE FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

3111 WOODSIDE ROAD
WOODSIDE, CALIFORNIA 94062
650.851.1594
FAX 650.851.3960

August 29, 2017

Hon. Leland Davis, III
Judge of the Superior Court
C/o Charlene Kresevich
Hall of Justice
400 County Center; 2nd Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063-1655

Subject: Response to the Grand Jury Report: "Can We See You Now? San Mateo County's Independent Special Districts Website Transparency Update".

Dear Judge Davis:

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Grand Jury report "Can We See You Now? San Mateo County's Independent Special Districts Website Transparency Update". The Woodside Fire Protection District and the Board of Directors provide our thanks for the information related to this topic.

The Grand Jury report was shared as part of "written communication" at our June 26th, 2017 Board of Directors meetings. It was further addressed at our August 28th, 2017 Board meeting as part of the agenda. The following information was developed through active discussion of this agenda item.

1. The Woodside Fire Protection District was again disappointed in the Grand Jury's Title of this report as it appeared it was trivializing Special Districts and the good people who make up these Districts. A simple "Investigating the Transparency of Special Districts' Websites" would have been very appropriate. It is obvious from our previous response (June 20th, 2014) to this, that the Grand Jury doesn't read the response or disagrees that the title is trivializing the work of Special Districts.

F1. Assuming the Grand Jury is correct, the District agrees and congratulates these Districts.

F2. Assuming the Grand Jury is correct, the District agrees and congratulates these Districts.

F3. Assuming the Grand Jury is correct, the District agrees and congratulates these Districts.

F4. Assuming the Grand Jury is correct, the District agrees and congratulates these Districts.

F5. This District agrees with this finding as far as our District is concerned. Once again, it is unfortunate that this Foundation is being used as a benchmark when it does not even meet the transparency (as one example, no current financial information or reporting) the Grand Jury is seeking. This does not lead to credence in the standard.

Regarding the recommendations by the Grand Jury for Special Districts.

R1. This District will evaluate the criteria listed in the SDLF's transparency checklist and adopt prudent items as the Board of Directors see appropriate.

R2. The District will consistently seek to meet the appropriate standards as set forth by the Special District Leadership Foundation and agreed upon by the Board of Directors of the Woodside Fire Protection District.

R3. Not applicable to this District.

It is the opinion of this District that while a website may influence some perception of the work performed by the Board Members (as established on page 4 paragraph 1), the real perception of the work done is in the day to day operations of the District and the services that are provided. This, along with the open relationship the District has established with the community, is the best way to identify the work this Board of Directors has performed.

Thank you in advance,

Board of Directors
Woodside Fire Protection District

Daniel J. Ghiorso
WFPD Fire Chief