



CITY OF FAIRFIELD

Founded 1858

Incorporated December 12, 1803

Home of
Travis Air Force Base

COUNCIL

Mayor

Harry T. Price
707.428.7395

Vice-Mayor

John Mraz
707.429.6298

Councilmembers

707.429.6298

Chuck Timm

Catherine Moy

Rick Vaccaro

...

City Manager

Sean Quinn
707.428.7400

...

City Attorney

Greg Stepanovich
707.428.7419

...

City Clerk

Arietta Conright
707.428.7384

...

City Treasurer

Oscar O. Reyes, Jr.
707.428.7486

DEPARTMENTS

Community Services

707.428.7465

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Finance

707.428.7486

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Fire

707.428.7375

...

Human Resources

707.428.7394

...

Community Development

707.428.7461

...

Police

707.428.7561

...

Public Works

707.428.7485

August 18, 2009

Honorable Ramona Garrett
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court
Solano Superior Court
600 Union Avenue
Fairfield, CA 94533

Dear Judge Garrett:

This letter is in response to the Grand Jury request dated May 29, 2009 regarding the Flooding of the Hall of Justice, Adjacent Facilities and Areas Within the City of Fairfield. The Grand Jury's Findings and Recommendations are listed below along with our response:

Finding 1 – As the Hall of Justice ground floor is several feet below ground level in a flood plain area, sustained winter rains, inadequate drainage system and the proximity to the Suisun Slough, result in flooding of the building. Until the situation is resolved, flooding of the area will continue to be a drain on taxpayer resources.

Recommendation 1 – The County should aggressively lobby the State to secure funding for replacement or renovations and upgrades to the Hall of Justice.

Response to Finding and Recommendation 1 – Agree with finding, however, this recommendation does not involve the City and resolution is not within the City's jurisdiction.

Finding 2 – Currently, no adequate external barriers exist to impede or hold back runoff from entering the buildings, especially those entrances below street level. Until this situation is resolved, flooding of these buildings will continue to be a drain on taxpayer resources.

Recommendation 2 – The County should consider constructing a retaining wall around the Hall of Justice, Sheriff's Office, and Office of Emergency Services. Pedestrian ramps for access would have to be included. This will help to add sufficient protection to the buildings from surface runoff.

Response to Finding and Recommendation 2 – Agree with finding, however, this recommendation does not involve the City and resolution is not within the City's jurisdiction.

Finding 3 – The City of Fairfield and Solano County have not implemented any of the recommendations within the several studies to alleviate the threat of surface flooding within the City. Without a comprehensive solution that addresses all related issues, flooding of County buildings may continue on an annual event.

Recommendation 3 – The County of Solano and the City of Fairfield should review the four alternatives stated in the March 2008 study and implement the most effective recommendations: New Detention Ponds, New Pumps (Washington Street Station), Upgrades to Storm Drain Boxes and County Pump Station.

Response to Finding 3 - Do not agree, “the City and the County have not implemented any of the recommendations within the several studies to alleviate the threat of surface flooding within the City.”

- There have been two studies completed, and a third one is underway, addressing flooding in the Union Avenue Creek watershed (where the Hall of Justice is located), and recommendations from the two completed studies have been implemented.

The first study was performed by the Engineering consulting firm of Santina & Thompson, Inc., for the County in 1985. Although this study concluded that, “a complete and total solution to site drainage problems is not available” due to the low elevation of the County facilities and the occurrence of comparatively higher tides and storm surges, this report did recommend that the City pursue two measures to reduce the frequency and magnitude of flooding at the County complex: 1) undertake a comprehensive solution, and 2) replace the bubble-up drainage system in the area with underground drainage lines. The City has in fact implemented both of these recommendations. The Fairfield Area Streams Project (the second study), which provided drainage improvements to a large section of Fairfield, including diversion of approximately 30% of the Union Creek watershed over to Laurel Creek, was completed in the late 1980's. The City has also replaced all of the bubble-up drains noted in the study with underground drainage lines as recommended.

The third study is the “Fairfield Drainage Analytical Study” prepared by Winzler & Kelly Consulting Engineers (the “W&K Study”). This study was jointly commissioned by the City and County to further investigate flooding in and around the County complex and recommend potential solutions. The W&K Study was recently finalized and a final copy received by the City on June 2, 2009, four days following the issuance of the Grand Jury's letter.

"Without a comprehensive solution that addresses all related issues, flooding of County buildings may continue to be an annual event."

- o This statement is not accurate with respect to the frequency of flooding. While the County facilities have periodically flooded, flooding has not been an "annual event". To the City's knowledge, the original Hall of Justice was constructed approximately forty years ago. The City is only aware of flood damage to the original building and its subsequent additions on three occasions.

Also, a "comprehensive solution that addresses all related issues" is not necessary in order to prevent flooding of the Hall of Justice and other low-lying County buildings. The W&K Study did identify four watershed-wide alternatives with estimated costs ranging from \$8.8 million to \$17.7 million. While these comprehensive alternatives would have some benefit by reducing the frequency of flooding from an estimated once every five years to an interval of once every fifteen years, the W&K Study identified several other solutions which are limited in scale and are much more effective and efficient potential solutions that could be undertaken solely by the County. By implementing one of the flood-proofing alternatives identified in the W&K study, the threat of flooding of the interior of buildings could conceivably be eliminated, rather than reduced, and a substantially lower cost according to the report.

Response to Recommendation 3 - This recommendation requires further analysis. As noted above, the W&K Study has just been finalized. The City plans to meet with the County staff to discuss the report, identify the most cost-effective solutions, and evaluate funding opportunities. Based on a preliminary review by the City, the four alternatives identified in the Grand Jury's Recommendation 3 do not appear to be the most cost-effective recommendations in the W&K Study based on their extreme cost and limited benefit compared to the flood-proofing recommendations. This joint analysis by City and County staff is expected to be completed by November 16, 2009.

I trust that the information provided adequately responds to the Grand Jury's Findings and Recommendations.

Sincerely,



Sean P. Quinn
City Manager

Attachment: Original Grand Jury Letter