

GRAND JURY

AUG 31 REC'D

July 27, 2004



The Honorable Allan D. Hardcastle, Presiding Judge
Superior Court, State of California
800 Administration Drive
Santa Rosa, California, 95403

#1866

RE: Response to 2003-04 Grand Jury Final Report, R1 and R2

City Council

Gregory A. Nordin
Mayor

Arnie L. Spradlin
Vice-Mayor

Armando F. Flores
Jake Mackenzie
Vicki Vidak-Martinez
Council Members

Carl Eric Leivo
City Manager

Dear Judge Hardcastle:

We appreciate the opportunity to respond to the recommendations of the 2003-04 Grand Jury regarding ground water. The City first would like to make some observations regarding ground water resources in the Rohnert Park area.

The California Department of Water Resources prepared an evaluation of ground water resources in the Santa Rosa Plain in 1975 and updated the report in 1982. These geologic and hydrologic reports prepared by State experts conclude that there are 3,100,000 acre-feet of ground water beneath Rohnert Park. This is more than 8 times the total water in a completely full Lake Sonoma (381,000 AF) and almost 15 times the maximum water supply pool in Lake Sonoma (212,000 AF).

The City monitors water levels in City wells. The water levels have increased in City wells in recent years. The quantity of groundwater beneath Rohnert Park has not diminished significantly.

The Grand Jury made certain findings that are incorrect. Regarding F3, the Grand Jury incorrectly states that: "Presently no requirement regarding monitoring/testing of well water exists unless contamination is suspected." (p. 55) The City monitors and tests well water on a monthly basis as required by State law and regulation. The Sonoma County Health Department monitors testing methods and results. The City annually prepares and distributes a detailed water quality report to water customers. Water well records are public documents and available to anyone that makes a request.

Regarding F4, the Grand Jury incorrectly purports that: "Proposed large commercial and residential developments may cover over natural recharge areas." (p. 55) The natural recharge area for Rohnert Park groundwater is located east of Petaluma Hill Road with the exception of areas along east/west creeks. The City's General Plan and Urban Growth Boundary prohibits development east of Petaluma Hill Road and General Plan policies protect land along the creeks.

Regarding F6, the Grand Jury states: "Although many cities in the county refer to water supply and conservation in their general development plans, they do not always consider the present availability and/or future sustainability regarding other water users outside their own City limits."

(p. 56) The City of Rohnert Park and its City Council take into consideration the water needs of users outside its City limits. The City has incorporated policies in its General Plan and has implemented groundwater management changes to rely less on groundwater in part to address fears of private water well owners outside its City limits.

Groundwater resources in Rohnert Park are recharging and are managed and protected for the current and future benefit of the Rohnert Park community. Just as Lake Sonoma refills during the winter rains, the aquifer beneath Rohnert Park refills. City water well records record this annual recharge. Groundwater in the Rohnert Park area is a renewable and responsibly managed, sustainable natural resource, contrary to the Grand Jury conclusion on page 57 which states: "...groundwater has been viewed as an endlessly renewable natural resource that is individually owned by the property owner."

The City's responses to the Grand Jury's recommendations follow.

R1. The county and each of its cities should adopt or amend a sustainable water element as part of their general plan with a target date of January 1, 2005, the adoption date of the next general plan.

The City of Rohnert Park General Plan was adopted in July 2000. Per State Law, the Plan contains an Open Space, Parks, and Public Facilities element that includes a Water Supply and Conservation section. This section is in essence the water element as described in the Grand Jury recommendation. The General Plan also includes an Environmental Conservation element that includes a Water Quality section. Water supply and quality are of direct concern to the City and these issues were considered and permeate all parts of the General Plan.

It is customary that the General Plan be updated every five years. Since adoption of the General Plan, the City undertook additional analysis of water supply and transmission. City staff plans to propose an update of the City's General Plan in 2005 and incorporate additional water supply and quality information collected since 2000. The City Council will reexamine its policies regarding water supply and quality.

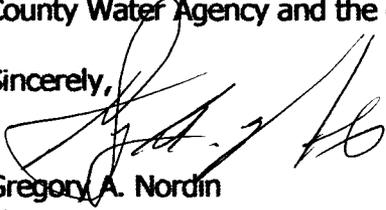
R2, The county and each of its cities should adopt and develop a comprehensive groundwater management plan such as that set forth in AB 3030. The information from the existing groundwater studies should be used to provide a bank of information upon which to initiate a groundwater management plan.

On April 13, 2004, the City Council approved a letter to support a groundwater study of the Santa Rosa Plain. The study would be sponsored by the Sonoma County Water Agency and be conducted by the U.S. Geological Survey. The City committed to a financial contribution of \$40,000 per year over a five-year period to support the study. It is anticipated that the detailed groundwater information

generated by the study will be used to update its groundwater management practices.

Groundwater management cannot be done in isolation. The City adjusts its use of well water in conjunction with the water supply constraints of the Sonoma County Water Agency and the other water customers of the Agency.

Sincerely,



Gregory A. Nordin
Mayor

cc: Sonoma County Board of Supervisors
Sonoma County Municipalities