



# City of Cloverdale

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## GRAND JURY

OCT 19 2007

## RECEIVED

September 27, 2007

The Honorable Robert S. Boyd, Presiding Judge  
Superior Court, State of California  
800 Administration Drive  
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

RE: City of Cloverdale's Responses to 2006-2007 Grand Jury Final Report –

Dear Judge Boyd:

Please allow me to provide you with the City of Cloverdale's responses to the 2006-2007 Grand Jury Final Report concerning "Wastewater: Money Down the Drain?" (Recommendations #1, 5, and 6); "Signs of the Times" (Recommendation #6); and, "Access and Recreation in Open Space District Properties" (Recommendation #6).

The City of Cloverdale ("City") is happy to provide technical information and/or assistance that may be requested of us concerning the Findings and Recommendations in the 2006-2007 Grand Jury Final Report.

With respect to the Recommendations identified above, the City has the following responses:

### I. Wastewater: Money Down the Drain?

**R1** *Begin the creation of a master plan that includes ground water, surface water and waste water.*

**Response:** The City of Cloverdale generally concurs with this statement in that many jurisdictions within the County do not have a comprehensive plan. However, one of the reasons why a comprehensive plan is difficult to put together is because of the ever-changing government regulations pertaining to water and wastewater.



As an example, the City of Cloverdale has historically (since the late 1800's) depended on water wells adjacent to the Russian River for domestic water. Up until the early 1990's, the water pumped through Cloverdale's wells had been considered groundwater. In early 1990, the California Department of Health Services (DHS – the entity that regulates drinking water) changed their determination of water used in the City's wells from groundwater to surface water (since the wells are so close to the Russian River DHS considered them under the influence of surface water.) This caused the City to construct the first micro-filtration water treatment plant required by DHS in the County at a cost of \$2.6 million.

Similar to water, the City has operated its current wastewater treatment plant since the early 1970's. The plant treats wastewater through a secondary process, applies disinfection and discharges the treated wastewater into the City's evaporation/percolation ponds. This has worked very effectively over the years. The City upgraded and expanded the plant in 1997. The plant is operating under an NPDES permit. In 2006, the City's NPDES permit was renewed. In the conditions of the new permit, new regulations (California Toxic Rules) have been included in the permit that require new studies be performed to determine if the City's evaporation/percolation ponds are hydraulically connected to the underflows of the Russian River. If they are, the State very well may require upgrades to the current plant costing millions of dollars. The City has been operating its wastewater collection and treatment system over the years very effectively. Improvements occur virtually every year. In the last several years the City has worked hard to reduce inflow and infiltration into the sewer pipes. Based on work in the last 4 years, the City has seen a reduction of flows into the wastewater treatment plant of nearly 40 million gallons per year.

The City has implemented Recommendation #1. Since the early 1990's, the City has had a comprehensive Water and Sewer Master Plans in place which have been closely followed. These Master Plans have been updated in 1992, 1998 and a draft of a new update was completed in 2006 (the final draft is waiting for the completion of the City's new General Plan.) These long-term Master Plans have been tied to existing and projected land uses as outlined in the City's General Plan. Although the City has had these Master Plans in place, new regulations cause the City to constantly adjust its approach to use of water and treatment/re-use of wastewater and resulting adjustment of rates for both of these utilities. The frequent changing of rules and regulations makes it very difficult to implement accurate long term planning.

*R5 Determine how much, realistically, should be set aside for capital improvements.*

**Response:** The City has generally implemented this recommendation. The City has undertaken detailed cost analyses over the past several years to evaluate

water and sewer rates to ensure they are capturing sufficient monies to cover operation, maintenance and capital replacement. This is evidenced in a report that was presented to the City Council in December 2003 with recommendations to increase rates over a three year time span based on a consultant study. The Council approved the study and implemented the recommendations of the study starting in January 2004. The rate increases took into account sufficient funding to accomplish infrastructure replacement/upgrades as shown in the City's long term Capital Improvement Program.

Although there always seems to be more projects than money, it is the frequently changing regulations that have significant impacts on funding. As stated in the response to Recommendation #1 above, if the findings from the studies required in the City's most recent NPDES permit requires the City to spend millions of dollars to upgrade the wastewater treatment plant, then there are limited resources available (outside of increasing rates) to fund such improvements. With these frequently changing regulations come ever changing rate analyses and adjustments.

***R6 Reopen the examination of consolidation of smaller facilities and continue consolidation efforts.***

Response: Due to the City's location in the northern region of Sonoma County, the City must be self reliant in treating its own wastewater through the City-owned wastewater treatment plant and it is not reasonable for the City to implement Recommendation #6. The nearest treatment plant (the unincorporated area of Geyserville) is nearly 9 miles to the south. Beyond Geyserville, the City of Healdsburg is the next wastewater treatment plant in the area. Given these distances between the facilities and the fact that they are a mix of unincorporated and incorporated areas, the consolidation of facilities is not feasible.