



NOVATO SANITARY DISTRICT

500 DAVIDSON STREET • NOVATO • CALIFORNIA 94945 • PHONE (415) 892-1694 • FAX (415) 898-2279
www.novatosan.com

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July 31, 2012

Mr. Michael Chernock, Foreman
Marin County Civil Grand Jury
3501 Civic Center Drive, Room 275
San Rafael, CA 94903

Re: Marin County Civil Grand Jury Report, May 29, 2012, Preschoolers Learn to Share – Can Local Governments?

Dear Mr. Chernock:

The following are the Novato Sanitary District's responses to the above report's recommendations R3, R4, and R5 pursuant to the Grand Jury's request.

Recommendation R3

"Every local government entity, when facing major capital expenditures (e.g. new facilities, equipment, vehicles, or computer systems) seek out other entities to share the use and costs of the same."

The Novato Sanitary District **has already implemented** this recommendation and has a long history of joint capital projects with other agencies.

- A longstanding example is the joint use with the Marin County Flood Control District of the irrigated pasture land for both pasture and flood water ponding. This project was constructed in the 1980's.
- A second longstanding example is the joint refueling facilities shared by Novato Sanitary District and the City of Novato.
- A more recent example is the joint planning, construction, and operation of the recycled water facility with North Marin Water District and North Bay Water Reuse Authority. This cooperative effort enabled the agencies to benefit from substantial federal and state grants to construct the facilities.
- Novato Sanitary District and the City of Novato participated in a joint design and construction project to re-construct Grant Avenue including all new

sewers. This shared project both saved money and minimized the impact on the business community.

- Novato Sanitary District and the City of Novato are working together on the Novato Boulevard widening project so that the necessary sewer improvements will be included in the same construction project.

Recommendation R4:

"All government officials make it a priority to identify institutional duplication within their sphere of influence and then bring leadership, vision and openness to new, more cost effective alternatives."

The Novato Sanitary District **has implemented** this recommendation and includes this objective as a priority in their **draft** Strategic Plan. Novato Sanitary District participates in cooperative efforts with other public agencies at the state-wide, regional, county-wide, and local level in order to provide cost effective quality services to their constituents.

Statewide

- CSRMA (California Sanitation Risk Management Authority) – Novato Sanitary District obtains workers compensation, property, and general liability insurance through participation in a risk management pool. This arrangement also provides substantial assistance in improving safety and reducing risk with special expertise in the wastewater industry.
- CAL WARN (California Wastewater Agency Response Network) – Novato Sanitary District has been a member of WARN since 1999. Agencies in the network have agreed to provide mutual assistance in times of emergency. The agreement provides for reimbursement for equipment, supplies, and personnel made available on an emergency basis.
- CASA (California Association of Sanitation Agencies) – Novato Sanitary District participates in CASA to share knowledge on the laws, regulations, and technology in the wastewater industry.

Regional

- BACWA (Bay Area Clean Water Agencies) – Novato Sanitary District participates in a regional receiving water monitoring program that replaced an expensive and inefficient local monitoring program. BACWA also coordinates the regional mercury limits and other regulatory requirements at a significant savings to the District.
- NBWA (North Bay Watershed Association) – Novato Sanitary District was one of the founding members of NBWA, which seeks to coordinate planning and capital projects in wastewater, water supply, stormwater, flood protection, and habitat in the North San Pablo Bay Watershed. This

organization is now serving as a model of regional cooperation for the East Bay.

- NBWRA (North Bay Water Reuse Authority) – Novato Sanitary District was also one of the founding members of the NBWRA which has successfully developed a plan and secured federal and state funding totaling \$15 million for recycled water projects in Marin, Sonoma, and Napa Counties.

Countywide

- The Novato Sanitary District Manager meets monthly with the managers of the other wastewater treatment agencies in Marin to discuss areas of mutual interest and identify potential avenues of cooperation. A number of cooperative endeavors have come from these meetings as noted below.
- Novato Sanitary District has shared a Safety Director and safety training program with other Marin Sanitary Agencies since the 1990's. Current participants are Central Marin Sanitation Agency, Sewerage Agency of Southern Marin, Sausalito-Marín City Sanitary District, and Novato Sanitary District.
- Novato Sanitary District participates in a joint Public Education program with Las Gallinas Valley Sanitary District, Central Marin Sanitation Agency, Sewerage Agency of Southern Marin, Tiburon Sanitary District No. 5, and Sausalito Marin City Sanitary District. This program allows us to share the staffing of public events and cost savings through the ordering of materials.
- Novato Sanitary District is a participant in the Mutual Aid and Assistance Agreement between Marin County Wastewater Agencies, which provides a mechanism for both emergency and non-emergency sharing of equipment and personnel.

Local

- The managers of the Novato Sanitary District, North Marin Water District, Novato Fire Protection District, and the Novato School District meet regularly to explore opportunities for sharing resources and coordinating activities.
- Novato Sanitary District participates in the monthly Novato Utility Coordination meeting with the City of Novato, North Marin Water District and other utilities to avoid conflicts and identify opportunities to coordinate capital projects.
- Novato Sanitary District participates with the City of Novato, the Novato Fire Protection District, and North Marin Water District in joint emergency preparedness training and emergency command center staffing.
- Novato Sanitary District works jointly with the City of Novato to manage compliance with solid waste recycling and to provide household hazardous waste disposal.

Mr. Michael Chernock

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- The District coordinates permit issuance with the City of Novato, County of Marin and other agencies to make the process transparent and efficient.

Recommendation R4:

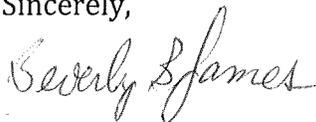
"Public officials assume the obligation of informing and leading their citizens toward the changing paradigms of government that result in more cost-effective government."

Novato Sanitary District **has implemented this recommendation** and has long been a leader in providing cost-effective local government as evidenced by the fact that our rates for both wastewater and solid waste are consistently among the lowest in the area. We manage to do this while bringing innovative recycling programs in both solid waste and water, as well as a new state-of-the-art wastewater treatment facility by judicious use of both public and private partnerships. The public partnerships are described above. The District took a leadership position to competitively bid the operation and maintenance of the new wastewater treatment facility to private contractors. The resulting agreement saves the constituents money while providing exemplary operation. The District also franchises a private family-owned company founded in Novato to collect and recycle solid waste with resulting innovative recycling programs and the lowest rates in Marin County. The District uses local businesses for vehicle maintenance and contracts for all construction through a competitive bidding process. The Household Hazardous Waste Facility and bi-annual e-waste collection events are also managed and operated by private contractors. Most of the District's design engineering and construction management is also performed by local or regional private companies.

Novato Sanitary District is governed by an elected Board of Directors committed to conducting the District's business in an open and transparent manner. Board elections have been vigorously competitive and board meetings well-attended by interested citizens. The District communicates with constituents through a website (www.novatosan.com) regular newsletters, articles in local papers, and direct mailings. All board agendas are posted on the District website, the Novato Patch, and provided to the Marin IJ and the Novato Advance.

We appreciate the Marin County Civil Grand Jury's interest in efficient, cost-effective government and feel that independent special districts have a leadership role to play in innovating to provide quality public service.

Sincerely,



Beverly B. James

Manager-Engineer