



August 18, 1998

Honorable Charles Campbell, Jr.
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court
Hall of Justice
County of Ventura
800 South Victoria Avenue
Ventura, California 93009

Dear Judge Campbell:

This is in response to a report titled "Study of Oxnard City Council Members' Geographical Representation", and a cover letter dated June 29, 1998 from Dr. Donald W. Thibeault, Foreman of the 1997-98 Ventura County Grand Jury.

In his cover letter, Dr. Thibeault requested that the City of Oxnard Inter-Neighborhood Council Committee (INCC) Executive Board provide a response to the Grand Jury report within 90 days. The INCC Executive Board met on August 18, 1998, to finalize this response to you.

The primary focus of the Grand Jury report was on whether there is a balanced geographic representation by City Council members for all parts of Oxnard based on where the council members live. Our understanding is that a response from the City Council will be provided to you on that matter. In addition to the geographic representation question, the Grand Jury reviewed the opportunities for residents to express concerns to the City Council. This portion of the report focused on the Neighborhood Council Program and the INCC.

The INCC Executive Board believes the historical statements about the formation of neighborhood councils and the INCC are accurate. The INCC is composed of the Executive Committees of 43 neighborhood councils. Some of these are very active and meet monthly. Others are moderately active and meet two to four times per year. Approximately ten councils have not held a meeting in the past twelve months.

The INCC Executive Board and the City staff in the Neighborhood Services Office are continually working to contact the less active neighborhoods to encourage greater participation and offer any assistance that may be needed or requested. Last year two seminars were held on Leadership Development Training for the Neighborhood Council Executive Committees. This training was intended to give Neighborhood Council officers new tools in improving the operation of each council and increasing attendance.

As pointed out in the Grand Jury report a group of Neighborhood Council Chairs have formed the Focus Group as an informal gathering to address issues of concern in their neighborhoods. City staff participates informally with the Focus Group. Although the INCC and the Focus Group function separately, the INCC Executive Board and City staff acknowledge that both groups are working for the best interests of the neighborhoods of Oxnard. We do not believe that one group exerts more influence with the City Council than the other. However, we do believe that the Neighborhood Council Program would be more efficient if the two groups were to unify in the future.

C. J. P.

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answer active to get participation We are doing it.

Conclusion of the Grand Jury report is that there are neighborhoods with little or no representation. Neighborhood Councils are based on neighborhoods identified in the 2020 General Plan adopted in December 1990. In the 2020 General Plan there are approximately 49 neighborhoods within Oxnard's present corporate limits. One neighborhood is completely commercial which leaves 48 neighborhoods with at least some residential areas. This means that there are only five neighborhoods which currently do not have a neighborhood council. Staff is currently working to activate the Sea View neighborhood which will then leave only 4 neighborhoods without a council.

One of those is El Rio which is predominantly unincorporated. Less than 5% of that neighborhood is incorporated and non-city residents have resisted incorporation. West Village is just beginning to develop and we are confident that they will want to establish a neighborhood council. Oxnard Pacific consists of two mobile home parks and a resident of one of those parks has been unsuccessful so far in locating residents who would be willing to form a neighborhood council. Oxnard Dunes and Hollywood Beach are small beach areas which have not been interested in forming a neighborhood council.

The INCC Executive Board will continue to encourage all neighborhoods to be a part of an active neighborhood council. However, the City of Oxnard is justly proud of having 43 councils out of 49 neighborhoods active and involved in the community. No other city in Ventura County has such an organized and successful program of resident participation. We regret that there may be a very small number of individuals who would contact the Grand Jury to impugn the success of the Neighborhood Council Program in Oxnard.

The INCC will continue its efforts to maximize resident participation in neighborhood councils. We welcome the active participation of the Focus Group and we will continue to work closely with the City Council on matters that affect this community.

The INCC Executive Board appreciates the opportunity to comment on the 1997-98 Grand Jury report.

Sincerely,



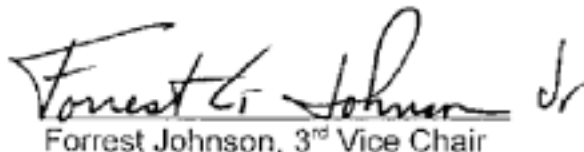
Ray Gonzalez, Chair



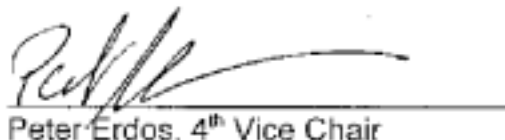
Alan Wingo, 1st Vice Chair



Harold Ceja, 2nd Vice Chair



Forrest Johnson, 3rd Vice Chair



Peter Erdos, 4th Vice Chair

cc: Dr. Donald W. Thibeault, Foreman
1997-98 Ventura County Grand Jury
Oxnard City Council