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September 6, 2023

The Honorable Kevin G. DeNoce
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court
County of Ventura
800 South Victoria Avenue
Ventura, CA 93009

Re: City's Response to Grand Jury Report Entitled "Water Availability for Wildfires in Ventura County"

Dear Judge Kevin G. DeNoce:

On or about June 12, 2023, the Ventura County Grand Jury issued its report titled "Water Availability for Wildfires in Ventura County" (the "Report"). In the Report, the Grand Jury recognized that in the 2017 Thomas and the 2018 Woolsey fire, water shortages hampered firefighting efforts and the ability to protect structures. The Grand Jury also recognized Ventura County frequently experiences conditions of low humidity, high winds and dry brush, conducive to dangerous wildland fires. Ventura County has 96% of its rural and unincorporated lands classified as very high fire zones.

The Report focused on the importance of having written procedures, adequate backup power, proper notifications of various safety notices, and communication between water purveyors. The Report noted that notifications to Ventura County public water purveyors of impending Fire Weather Watches and Red Flag Warnings are inconsistent. The Report noted that inadequate communication between adjoining Ventura County public water purveyors limits their ability to coordinate available resources. The Report also noted that not all cities have adopted language concerning brush clearance around water infrastructure that is consistent with Ventura County Fire Code.

The Report recommends that Ventura County water purveyors establish written operational procedures and training to provide for increased water supply during Fire Weather Watch, Red Flag Warning, active fire and Public Safety Power Shutoff events for purposes of firefighting. The Report further recommends that Ventura County water purveyors have on-site emergency power available for all critical water infrastructure; that the Ventura County Office of Emergency Services maintain a current contact list of Ventura County water purveyors, updated at least once a year; that Ventura County water purveyors establish common communication protocols with adjoining water purveyors to be able to coordinate needed actions, including water transfers; and that all Ventura County water purveyors establish a protocol for brush clearance around pumps, water tanks and supported infrastructure in accordance with Ventura County's Fire Code. At the

conclusion of the Report, the Grand Jury requested a response from the City to Findings F-01 through F-10, F-12 through F-14, Recommendations R-01 through R-03, and R-05 through R-8.

Findings:

F-01. The Grand Jury finds that an adequate supply of water is essential for successful suppression of wildfires.

The City agrees with Finding F-01.

F-02. The Grand Jury finds that the limited number of Fire Weather Watch (FWW) advisories amplifies the importance of establishing written procedures, protocols and training.

The City cannot agree or disagree with finding F-02. An explanation of how the limited number of Fire Weather Watch (FWW) advisories amplifies the importance of establishing written procedures, protocols and training was not provided. The City acknowledges the importance of establishing written procedures, protocols, and training.

F-03. The Grand Jury finds that written procedures for actions taken by water purveyors during a Fire Weather Watch event is a best practice that is lacking in Ventura County.

The City agrees with Finding F-03

F-04. The Grand Jury finds that the limited number of Red Flag Warning (RFW) events amplifies the importance of establishing written procedures, protocols, and training.

The City cannot agree or disagree with finding F-04. An explanation on how the limited number of Red Flag Warning (RFW) events affects the importance of establishing written procedures, protocols and training was not provided. The City acknowledges the importance of establishing written procedures, protocols, and training.

F-05. The Grand Jury finds that written procedures for actions taken by water purveyors during a Red Flag Warning event is a best practice that is lacking in Ventura County.

The City agrees with finding F-05.

F-06. The Grand Jury finds that written procedures for actions taken by water purveyors during an active fire event is a best practice that is lacking in Ventura County.

The City agrees with Finding F-06.

F-07. The Grand Jury finds that written procedures for actions taken by water purveyors during Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS) events is a best practice that is lacking in Ventura County.

The City agrees with Finding F-07.

F-08. The Grand Jury finds that backup power to critical infrastructure is not always available

The City disagrees with Finding F-07 as it pertains to the City. The City has backup power for critical infrastructure on standby.

F-09. The Grand Jury finds that SCADA systems are not equipped with backup power in all instances.

The City disagrees with Finding F-09 as it pertains to the City. The City has backup power for its SCADA systems.

F-10. The Grand Jury finds that inadequate communication between adjoining water purveyors limits the ability to coordinate needed actions such as available water transfers.

The City cannot agree or disagree with Finding F-10. The city has no adjoining (e.g. connected) water purveyors available for water transfer.

F-12. The Grand Jury finds that enrolling in GETS and WPS would allow Ventura County water purveyors priority access to landline and cellular telephone networks in emergency situations.

The City agrees with Finding F-12.

F-13. The Grand Jury finds that enrolling in CalWARN would allow Ventura County water purveyors access to statewide resources.

The City cannot agree or disagree with Finding F-13 as no information was provided on what statewide resources would be accessible to the City.

F-14. The Grand Jury finds that Ventura County Fire Code section 4907.8 regarding brush clearance around water tanks, water supply pumps, pump houses and related infrastructure applies to all rural and unincorporated communities, and all cities except Fillmore, Oxnard and Ventura.

The City agrees with Finding F-14.

Recommendations:

R-01. The Grand Jury recommends that water purveyors establish written operational procedures and training to provide for increased water supply for fire flow during FWWs, RFWs, active fires and PSPS

The City will implement recommendation R-01. The City has established written operational procedures to provide for increased water supply for fire flow during FWWs, RFWs, active fires and PSPS and will commence training August 2023.

R-02. The Grand Jury recommends that water purveyors have emergency power on site for all critical water infrastructure including SCADA systems.

The City has implemented recommendation R-02. The City currently has a combination of stationary and mobile generators to provide emergency power for all critical water infrastructure including SCADA systems.

R-03. The Grand Jury recommends that water purveyors establish common communication protocols with adjoining water purveyors to coordinate needed actions, including water transfers during active fires.

The City cannot implement recommendation R-03 as it does not have any adjoining (e.g. connected) water purveyors available for water transfer. The City will make efforts to formalize communication protocols with neighboring water purveyors for other needed resource sharing.

R-05. The Grand Jury recommends that water purveyors enroll their employees in the FCC Wireless Priority Service (WPS) providing cell phone priority in emergencies.

The City has implemented recommendation R-05.

R-06. The Grand Jury recommends that water purveyors enroll in the Government Emergency Telecommunications System (GETS) providing landline phone priority in emergencies

The City has implemented Recommendation R-06.

R-07. The Grand Jury recommends that all water purveyors enroll in CalWARN, a network of water and wastewater agencies that can provide emergency resources.

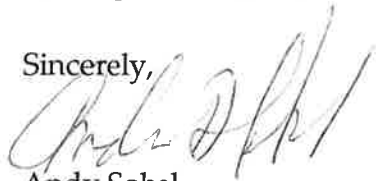
The City will consider implementing recommendation R-06 and will gather additional information regarding enrollment in CalWARN.

R-08. The Grand Jury recommends that all water purveyors provide brush clearance around water tanks, water supply pumps, pump houses and related infrastructure.

The City has implemented recommendation R-08. The City provides brush clearance around water tanks, water supply pumps, pump houses, and related infrastructure on a regular basis. The City proactively monitors for uncontrolled brush growth as part of its regular site inspections.

We thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Report. Should you have any further questions or desire any further information, please contact our City Manager, Dan Singer, by telephone at (805) 933-4201 or by email at dsinger@spcity.org.

Sincerely,



Andy Sobel

Mayor

cc: Santa Paula City Council
Dan Singer, City Manager
Clete Saunier, Public Works Director
Keith Frost, Foreperson