



City of St. Helena

"We will conduct city affairs on behalf of our citizens
using an open and creative process."

FILED

August 28, 2019

SEP 10 2019

The Honorable Elia Ortiz
Presiding Judge of the Civil Grand Jury
The Superior Court of California, County of Napa
825 Brown Street
Napa, CA 94559

Clerk of the Napa Superior Court
By: C. Blum
Deputy

Napa County Civil Grand Jury
c/o Foreperson Kort van Bronkhorst
1754 Second Street, Suite D
Napa, CA 94559

Re: 2018-19 Napa County Grand Jury Report "Napa County Water Quality: It's a Matter of Taste"

Dear Judge Ortiz and Foreperson Bronkhorst:

The City is in receipt of the Grand Jury report dated June 14, 2019: "Napa County Water Quality: It's a Matter of Taste". The City has carefully reviewed and considered the findings and recommendations of the Report. Pursuant to your request for response, at the regularly scheduled City Council meeting held on August 27, 2019, the City of St. Helena City Council approved this response.

The City of St. Helena responds to the Grand Jury's *Findings* and *Recommendations* as follows:

Findings:

F1. Drinking water supplied by all Napa County municipalities meets all USEPA and State Water Resources Control Board standards and is safe to drink.

Response: The City **agrees** with this finding. As indicated by the City's Consumer Confidence Reports, in all cases the City meets or exceeds all established standards.

F2. Drinking water supplied by each municipality is acknowledged by all Napa County Public Works officials to have, from time-to-time, predictable Taste and Odor (T&O) and color issues which, while not unsafe, the water-consuming public may find objectionable and cause for concern.

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Response: The City **partially disagrees** with this finding. While the City has recognized T&O complaints, the complaints are not predictable. To improve T&O the City, in December 2017, began utilizing a Carbon Filtration System (CFS) when the City received a spike in T&O and color complaints. The CFS uses a bed of activated carbon to remove contaminants and impurities that cause T&O. Since the installation of the CFS, the amount of T&O complaints has reduced by 75%. The City of St. Helena also purchases water from the City of Napa via the Rutherford connection. This water does not filter through the City's plant, so it is not treated with CFS which may result in T&O.

- F3. Communication of water quality testing and T&O and color issues to the public by all Napa County Public Works municipalities is inconsistent and, at time, inadequate.

Response: The City **disagrees** with this finding. The City publishes the Annual Consumer Confidence report online as well as monthly and weekly water reports. Operation (and testing) of public water distribution systems are heavily regulated by the State of California. The City takes great pride in operating a system which meets or exceeds the State requirements for the City's Water Distribution System. In addition, all complaints regarding water related issues are followed up by City staff and noted in a complaint log. A member of the City's Public Works department responds to the complaint, conducts an investigation, and follows up with the responsible party. In cases where there is a concern, or the system is in other than normal operations, the City uses a variety of options to communicate with the public including media releases and emergency notification systems (NIXLE).

- F4. Napa County Public Works officials are aware of existing T&O and color issues and a number of municipalities are assessing and testing various treatment options for improvement, including long-term capital improvement projects.

Response: The City **partially disagrees** with this statement. The City of St. Helena is not responsible for the treatment of water for other municipalities. As stated in F2, in December 2017, the City began utilizing a CFS which eliminated much of the T&O at the City of St. Helena's Water Treatment Plant and greatly reduced complaints. It is important to note water purchased through the City of Napa does not go through the City's CFS treatment process.

- F5. Public Works official's countywide treat T&O and color issues as less important than Federal and State regulated contaminant standards, thereby minimizing T&O and color concerns in their water treatment standards and reporting.

Response: The City **disagrees** with this finding. The City (and City staff) treat all complaints with the same urgency and concern as evidenced by the complaint and response logs. T&O can be an indication of distribution system (or treatment plant)

health, and other than normal operations. As such, staff responds promptly to investigate, remediate (if needed), and follow-up with the responsible party on the complaint.

- F6. All municipalities lack formal written procedures for the handling of water quality complaints.

Response: The City **partially disagrees** with this finding. The City does not know what written procedures exist at other agencies. The City staff does have a complaint log, but does not have a formal written policy. A written policy will be developed and implemented on, or before June 30, 2020, per the Grand Jury request.

- F7. There are large disparities in household drinking water and wastewater rates between the municipalities, with smaller up-valley cities in Napa County paying much higher costs for the same amount of residential drinking water and wastewater.

Response: The City **agrees** with this finding. However, the City notes that water and wastewater rates are highly governed by a number of state laws. Rates cannot exceed the actual costs to deliver that service in each community based on its water supply, maintenance and operations costs, capital improvement program costs, and personnel and other costs. The rate setting process is typically on a 5-year cycle and is governed by the majority protest and other procedures of Propositions 218 and 26 and their implementing state laws.

- F8. Residents of mobile home parks, gated communities and apartment buildings do not always receive communication about water quality or taste and odor issues – rather the owner/operator/manager of the site received required water quality notifications and is not required to pass the notification on to individual residents.

Response: The City **partially disagrees** with this finding. The residents of the City receive notification of all, other than normal, water operations from a variety of methods including the St. Helena Star, e-news notifications, NIXLE, the SHINE Newsletter (a quarterly City distribution), and the City's website. This is typical for all City water customers and does not exclude the residents on any of the examples listed in F8. The City continues to work on more effective and efficient communications in all interactions with the public including the recent development of a communications checklist. Over the past year, City staff has compiled a list of all addresses in the City where important communications can be delivered. This list includes individual mobile homes and apartment units.

Recommendations:

- R1. Each Napa County municipality's Department of Public Works explain on its City and/or Department of Public Works website, in water invoices, via social and other local media, what ongoing water quality tests are taken, where and when they are taken, and what is required if results do not meet USEPA and State standards.

Each of Napa County's five Department of Public Works should implement these actions no later than June 30, 2020.

Response to Recommendation 1: This recommendation has been implemented. The City currently includes information such as its Consumer Confidence Report on the Public Works website at: <https://www.cityofstheleena.org/publicworks/page/water-reports> and has in the past utilized e-news, media releases, and NIXLE alerts to inform and educate its residents on water quality issues. The City commits to continuing this recommended action.

- R2. Each Napa County municipality's Department of Public Works advise citizens of known and anticipated T&O and color issues by notices on its Department of Public Works website and within social media and news media. Each Napa County's five Department of Public Works should implement these actions no later than June 30, 2020.

Response to Recommendation 2: The recommendation has been implemented. The City has previously utilized, and will continue to utilize, its website and media releases to inform and educate its residents on water quality issues. The City commits to continuing this recommended action.

- R3. Each Napa county municipality's Department of Public Works identify, evaluate, and estimate water treatment process improvements and longer-term capital improvement programs that could mitigate T&O and color issues in their respective water treatment operations. Each of Napa County's Department of Public Works should implement these actions no later than June 30, 2020 for the 2021/2022 budget year.

Response to Recommendation 3: The recommendation has been implemented. As noted in F2 and F4, the City implemented a Carbon Filtration System in December 2017 to address T&O. Additionally, the City annually reviews and adopts the 5-year Capital Improvement Program (CIP) list which includes water and wastewater projects. These projects include facility condition assessments, improvements and upgrades to systems, and feasibility studies. The City commits to continuing this recommended action.

- R4. Each Napa County municipality's Department of Public Works publish T&O and color quality measures and results as part of their Annual Consumer Confidence Water Quality report provided to citizens. Each of Napa County's Department of Public Works should implement this action in the 2019 Report published by June 30, 2020.

Response to Recommendation 4: The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future by the June 30, 2020 deadline.

- R5. Each Napa County municipality's Department of Public Works establish a formal written complaint policy identifying how complaints should be received, processed,

tracked, responded to, and reported, including a written complaint resolution notice to be issued for every complaint. Each of Napa County's Department of Public Works should implement this action in the 2019 Report published by June 30, 2020.

Response to Recommendation 5: This recommendation has been partially implemented and full implementation is expected by June 30, 2020. The City currently follows all State mandated reporting requirements and is receptive and agrees to evaluate its current processes and look at ways to improve the process for managing water quality complaints including development of a written formal policy.

- R6. Each Napa County municipality's Department of Public Works establish a formal written communication policy identifying how to better communicate to and interact with customers in mobile home parks, gated communities, and apartment residents that are beyond the water meter. Each of Napa County's Department of Public Works should implement this action in the 2019 Report published by June 30, 2020.

Response to Recommendation 6: The recommendation has been partially implemented and full implementation is expected by June 30, 2020. The City currently distributes information via its website and media releases to inform and educate its residents on water quality issues. All residents (including those in mobile home park communities and apartment complexes who may not have individual meters) access to information from the City on water quality and other issues. Additionally, the City is in the process of developing a communications checklist that can include this type of communications. The City is receptive and, similar to R5, agrees to evaluate its current processes and look at ways to improve the process for communicating to residents beyond the water meter, including development of a written formal policy.

- R7. The LAFCO Municipal Service Review of drinking water and wastewater countywide resources recommendations are due in February 2020. Each Napa County municipality's senior municipal elected officials should review, evaluate, respond to, and where appropriate, incorporate the LAFCO MSR recommendations into each Napa County municipality's operating and long-range plans. Each of Napa County's senior municipal elected officials should implement these actions by no later than June 30, 2020.

Response to Recommendation 7: The recommendation requires further analysis as the referenced report has yet to be completed or released and is expected in February 2020. The City agrees that review and consideration of implementation of possible recommendation contained in the LAFCO Municipal Services Review (MSR) is important. As with other recommendations and reports from LAFCO, the City is committed to a thorough review and analysis of this report once it is published. However, before the City can commit to implement a course

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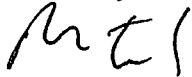
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of yet unknown recommendation, it would be appropriate for the City to review, evaluate, and fully understand the scope and implications of the recommendations contained in the LAFCO MSR.

The City of St. Helena appreciates the opportunity to provide written responses to the Napa County Grand Jury Report, "Napa County Water Quality: It's a Matter of Taste."

Should the Grand Jury require any additional information, please contact me directly at (707) 312-0252.

Thank you,



Mark T. Prestwich

City Manager

cc: City Council

Cindy Tzafopoulos, City Clerk