

Meeting Date: 4-9-13

AGENDA REPORT

Agenda Item # 6C.1



City of Santa Clara, California



Date: April 3, 2013
To: City Manager for Council Information
From: Director of Planning and Inspection
Subject: Petition for Local Government Officials Support of CEQA Modernization

Santa Clara Chamber of Commerce President Steve Van Dorn forwarded to staff the attached petition that has been circulating among California cities seeking local government officials' support for reform of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under the proposed SB 731. A statewide coalition was formed to promote modernization of the CEQA statutes to reduce challenges to local actions that are claimed to have less to do with environmental protection than with hindering local development for other reasons.

Locally, the Silicon Valley Leadership Group (SVLG) has spearheaded the effort of the coalition with various meetings and workshops. The information provided by Mr. Van Dorn and SVLG indicates that more than two dozen Mayors and Councilmembers from cities in California have signed the petition so far, including ten from the Santa Clara County communities. The Chamber of Commerce is supporting this effort.

The SVLG website provides more detailed information and the following statement: "The CEQA Working Group issued the following statements in response to the introduction of Senate Bill 731 on February 22, 2013, authored by Senate President Pro Tem Darrell Steinberg. SB 731 is a good starting point to establish the framework of meaningful CEQA modernization, and we are committed to working through the long process it will take to negotiate thoughtful changes to the law that will preserve CEQA's intent of environmental protection, while eliminating CEQA misuse that frequently kills good projects in California."

Kevin L. Riley
Director of Planning and Inspection

APPROVED:

Julio J. Fuentes
City Manager

Documents Related to this Report:

- 1) *Local Government Officials in Support of CEQA Modernization Petition*

Local Government Officials in Support of CEQA Modernization

An open letter to the California Legislature.

Dear Governor Jerry Brown, Members, California State Senate and Assembly:

We, the undersigned local elected officials, urge you to adopt legislation that would modernize the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) to preserve the law's original intent – environmental protection and public disclosure and participation – while allowing environmentally responsible local decision-making, local economic development and jobs, and 21st century growth.

CEQA is an important law to ensure local governments have the information and tools to protect our local communities, and to allow for citizen involvement in local land-use decisions.

However, many important local projects are being held-up by CEQA challenges or even the threat of challenges- often times for reasons that have nothing to do with environmental protection or mitigation.

It's much easier to challenge a CEQA decision than any other type of local land-use decision. This means that local governments must spend a lot of time and a lot of money – which could be spent on actual environmental mitigation or for some other local purpose - taking excessive steps to protect against litigation and the threat of litigation.

CEQA challenges, and the threat of CEQA challenges, also undermine the ability of local governments to approve projects that carry out other important State policies such as infill development and affordable housing.

We appreciate the efforts of legislative leaders and the Governor to adopt meaningful CEQA reform. Local agencies play a critical role in CEQA and the protection of the environment. As such, we encourage you to take the interests of local decision-makers into account as you work to reform CEQA in a meaningful way.

We look forward to working with you to promote meaningful and responsible CEQA reform this year.

I agree to be publicly listed on this letter as an endorser of CEQA modernization.

Name

Title, City

Street Address

City

Zip

County

Phone Number

Email Address

Signature (Required)

Date

Please complete form and email or fax to mgamble@bcfpublicaffairs.com or 916-442-3510