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Economy & Efficiency Commission Presentation

Editorial Note: Although every effort has been made to insure the accuracy of the material in this presentation, the scope of the material covered and the discussions undertaken lends itself to the possibility of minor transcription misinterpretations.

**PRESENTATIONS BY
Ms. Gail Farber
Director, Department of Public Works
Los Angeles County**

January 7, 2010

OVERVIEW OF THE LOS ANGELES COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

Chairman Barcelona greeted Gail Farber, Director of Department of Public Works and welcomed her while turning it over for Ms. Farber to speak to the Economy and Efficiency Commission.

Public Works Department Overview

Ms. Farber stated that the Los Angeles County Public Works was formed on January 1, 1985 consolidating the former County Road Department, a portion of the County Engineer-Facilities, and the County Flood Control District. She stated that in 1995, Public Works assumed the responsibility for capital projects from the County Internal Services Department.

Ms. Farber stated that her Department was divided into 30 divisions and groups. Her Department employs over 3,500 people in approximately 450 separate job classifications, including professional, technical, clerical, and skilled craft workers. Ms. Farber stated that her Department's operating budget is over \$1 billion and is funded by restricted revenues, such as gas sales tax, benefit assessments, water and sewer sales, user fees, and revenues from contract cities.

Ms. Farber stated that her Department is responsible for the design, construction, operation, maintenance, and repair of roads, bridges, airports, sewer, water supply, flood control, water quality, and water conservation facilities, as well as for the design and construction of capital projects. She also stated that additional responsibilities include regulatory and ministerial programs for the County of Los Angeles, Los Angeles County Flood Control District, other special districts, and contract cities that request service. Ms. Farber stated that a 24-hour Emergency Operations Center is maintained to respond to problems reported by the public and other agencies, as well as major emergencies, such as floods, earthquakes, fires, and other disasters. She stated that Public Works is dedicated to protecting property and ensuring public safety, by striving to increase productivity and efficiency while continuing to emphasize and provide the highest levels of service.

Ms. Farber stated that the Department of Public Works recognizes internal strengths throughout the County contribute to the high quality service her Department provides and that she continues to look for ways to build on those strengths. She stated that her Department's broad knowledge base and technical expertise have resulted in a strong reputation for competence and getting things done right. She stated that her Department takes pride in maintaining high standards for responsiveness and quality.

Ms. Farber stated that to maintain this high standard for excellence requires that her Department invests in staff development through training programs, educational reimbursement programs, and other employee development opportunities. She stated that her Department promotes a culturally diverse work environment and appreciates contributions made by the Department's diverse work force, recognizing that through varied experiences and backgrounds come new perspectives and creative ideas.

Ms Gomez stated that one is only obligated to serve jury duty once every 12 months. She stated that if one receives a summons for jury service but has already served within the year then he or she will still need to complete the summons as requested and then requests to be excused based on his or her previous service (Section B, No. 13 on the jury summons).

Ms. Farber stated that as a public work agency serving one of the most populous areas in the United States, ranked second by the Census Bureau, the Department of Public Works faces an ever-growing population with increasing demands for its public works services. She also stated that her Department has come to recognize that the way they have always done things may not be enough in our growing communities. She stated that her Department is looking forward to working in collaboration with the various communities to identify their priorities and design programs that address their varied needs.

Permitting and Land Management Solutions (PALMS)

Mr. Williams stated that for a number of years the County has recognized that the land development process had some inefficiency and some problems that resulted from a lack of collaborative process. He stated that the problems that come out of that can range from something as simple as a person wanting to do an addition to his/her home, he or she would go to one of the Building and Safety offices and end up getting sent to four other different places chasing the permit and approval process. He stated that the departments that are traditionally involved in the land development process include Public Works Department, Regional Planning, Fire Department, Environmental Health, Parks and Recreation, and the Assessor. He stated that this group of departments formed a County team to examine and improve the land development process with the intention of recommending and implementing improved operational processes to streamline and make that experience for the customers of the land development process much better than it has been.

Mr. Williams stated that in 2008 the PALMS Project was launched and for the first 6 to 9 months of that year the Public Works Department found that there was a lack of alignment around the County regarding this issue and that this was probably the source for a lot of the operational problems with the land development process that has created a big dissatisfaction over the years. He stated that the Department would realign themselves internally before going out asking the private sector for help with solutions. He stated that the next 6 to 9 months turned out to be extraordinary culminating in the Board of Supervisors approving a contract with a Company called Woolpert in Denver Colorado to produce feasibility study rather than going straight to implementation. He also stated that the County hired Woolpert and has gone through the feasibility study process and it is now on track for completion in March of 2010.

Mr. Williams stated that so far the project has documented in detail nearly every aspect of the current land management and permitting processes in the County. He stated that the project is currently in the phase of determining which of these processes will be selected to streamline the general land management process and what data is needed for technology improvements. He stated that the consultant has already concluded that no single technology solution exists that will answer all the needs of the PALMS-related Departments. There is a core set of data that must be established to be commonly shared between all departments, and that document management and work flow automation are key areas that need to be developed as a part of any solution.

Questions

Commissioner Ikejiri asked whether Ms. Farber's Department is considering implementing a fast track program in order to increase revenue. Mr. Rubin stated that Newhall Land Company contacted the Department and stated that they have a lot of development going on out there and asked what the Department could do to get quicker turnaround service. Mr. Rubin stated that a special program was set up such that if something from that company came into the Department they would be assigned an individual to take care of the paperwork right away. Mr. Rubin stated that the program worked so well that he was recently contacted by the Newhall Land Company again to resurrect the program.

Commissioner Ikejiri stated that Ms. Farber's Department should broadcast the expediting process because he thinks many developers would be interested in the process as well.

Chairman Barcelona expressed his appreciation to Ms. Farber for coming to speak to the EEC and the Commissioners applauded.

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