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Response to Grand Jury Report Form

Report Title: **Will There Be Water after an Earthquake**

Report Date: June 11, 2019

Response By: City of Rohnert Park

FINDINGS

The City of Rohnert Park agrees with findings F1, F2, F3, F6, F7 and F11 with the additional detail and clarification attached.

The City of Rohnert Park partially disagrees with findings F4, F5 and F8 based on the rationale and clarification attached.

The City of Rohnert Park has no response to findings F9 and F10 which are directed specifically at Sonoma Water's operational practices.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations R3 and R5 have not been fully implemented, but will be implemented in the future. Additional detail is attached.

Date: 9/10/19 Signed: 
Gina Belforte, Mayor, City of Rohnert Park

Number of pages attached: 4

READ AND CONSIDERED

DATE 9/17/2019 BY 

Response to Grand Jury Report on Groundwater Sustainability

City of Rohnert Park Clarifications and Responses

FINDINGS

Finding F1: *Sonoma County relies primarily on the Russian River for drinking water which may be disrupted in the event of a major earthquake.*

Response: Rohnert Park agrees with this finding, with the following clarification.

Rohnert Park acknowledges that Sonoma Water's Russian River supply is major source of supply for portions of Sonoma and Marin County. However, for several decades, Rohnert Park has utilized a conjunctive use operating strategy, taking advantage of Sonoma Water's supply, a local groundwater supply and a recycled water supply which provides the City with additional reliability and resiliency.

The City's current potable water demand is approximately 5,600 acre feet annually (AFY), which is expected to grow to 6,100 AFY by 2040. The City meets this demand through its contract with Sonoma Water, which is anticipated to provide approximately 6,400 AFY under normal conditions, and local groundwater, which can supply up to 2,577 AFY (over 40% of current and projected potable demands). Because of the rather robust local groundwater supply, the City has options beyond Sonoma Water, to meet a significant amount of its potable demand.

In addition, the City has access to 1,300 AFY of highly treated recycled water through the Santa Rosa Subregional System. The recycled water supply is not suitable for drinking and is generally used for irrigation under normal conditions. However, in the event of a true emergency, this supply provides additional resiliency with respect to non-potable needs.

While the City acknowledges the vulnerability of all of its water supplies to natural disasters and supports the Grand Jury's general conclusions, the City's unique supply blend reduces its reliance on Sonoma's Water supply.

Finding F2: *Sonoma County relies primarily on a single wholesale provider for its water. Sonoma Water, which delivers water under contract to cities and water districts in Sonoma County and northern Marin County, may be without sufficient resources to meet all emergency needs.*

Response: Rohnert Park agrees with this finding with the clarifications provided under Finding F1.

Finding F3: *In the event of a major earthquake, water supplies are likely to be significantly disrupted for extended periods of days or weeks, although reduced water supplies may be provided through alternative means. Full recovery of systems could take longer.*

Response: Rohnert Park agrees with this finding and the additional detail provided in Sonoma Water's response to the Grand Jury.

Finding F4: *Measures implemented by Sonoma Water to reduce the risk of critical water shortages following a major earthquake have relied heavily upon state and federal grant funds, but implementation has fallen behind the schedules proposed in the LHMP. A more rapid reduction of risks could be achieved through water rate adjustments.*

Response: Rohnert Park disagrees partially with this finding.

While Sonoma Water has been very effective in leveraging grant funding for hazard mitigation projects, delays in implementing capital projects are often attributable to more than just funding availability, such as the need to secure and comply with multiple permits, comply with the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), acquire right-of-way, and

prioritize among numerous other important risk mitigation projects (e.g. regulatory, climate, aging infrastructure, etc.)

Finding F5: *Consistent with FEMA recommendations, residents need to maintain their own emergency source of water to meet their personal needs for more than the three days frequently stated by officials.*

Response: Rohnert Park partially disagrees with this finding.

Currently, FEMA emergency preparedness websites such as www.ready.gov and federal publications on disaster readiness **still recommend to individuals and families a minimum of three days of food and water in their personal disaster kits.**

While Rohnert Park heartily agrees that more public outreach and education around emergency preparedness is needed, consistent messaging is also an important part of any educational strategy. The City is committed to working with Sonoma Water and all of our regional partners to develop, implement and evolve effective outreach and education campaigns.

Finding F6: *More public outreach is needed to educate water users to their risks and individual responsibility for earthquake preparedness.*

Response: Rohnert Park agrees with this finding and the additional detail and clarification provided in Sonoma Water's response to the Grand Jury.

Finding F7: *Coordination between Sonoma Water and its contractors needs to improve by increasing training exercises, mutual aid training, and systems information exchange.*

Response: Rohnert Park agrees with this finding and the additional detail and clarification provided in Sonoma Water's response to the Grand Jury.

Finding F8: *Because operating pressures must be maintained through the system, water contractors have limited ability to curtail non-essential water uses without compromising availability of water for critical applications such as fire suppression and hospital use.*

Response: Rohnert Park partially disagrees with this finding.

While Rohnert Park agrees that public water system operators cannot simply shutdown portions of the system to control nonessential uses, system operators can utilize their public information and communication tools to reduce non-essential use and curtail demand.

State law requires that every public water system operator include a "Water Shortage Contingency Plan" with its Urban Water Management Plan (UWMP). UWMPs are reviewed, updated and resubmitted to the state every 5 years. The *Water Shortage Contingency Plan* outlines the processes the City will use to manage demand in times of shortage, whether the shortage be a result of an a relatively instantaneous natural disaster, such as an earthquake, or a longer term drought.

The effectiveness of the *Water Shortage Contingency Plans* in this region was demonstrated during the relatively recent drought when suppliers in this area effectively reduced non-essential uses by more the fifteen percent over an extended period of time.

Finding F11: *Sonoma Water and its contractors maintain a well-designed system and have made significant progress in mitigating earthquake risks. On-going efforts are needed to reduce remaining risks.*

Response: Rohnert Park agrees with this finding and the additional detail and clarification provided in Sonoma Water's response to the Grand Jury.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation R3: *Sonoma Water and water contractors derive and publicize more realistic outage periods and provide updated information to the public, by December 31, 2019.*

Response: Rohnert Park concurs with Sonoma Water's response that this recommendation has not yet been implemented. Rohnert Park is committed to working cooperatively with Sonoma Water and the other contractors to implement the consistent regional messaging program outlined in Sonoma Water's response to the Grand Jury.

Recommendation R5: *Water contractors study options for making local systems more adaptable under emergency conditions – such as dedicated supply loops, digitally monitored metering, or automatic shut-down valves, by December 31, 2019 (F8).*

Response: Recommendation #5 has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future, although progress is being made as outlined below.

Regional Resiliency

Rohnert Park fully supports the Grand Jury's recommendation to study options for making our local public water supply system more adaptable for emergency conditions. Although the water systems of Sonoma Water and its retail customers are inter-connected, integration improvements are possible, especially in times of water shortage. By leveraging the collective water resources and infrastructure of Sonoma Water and its nine retail customers, there could be opportunities to improve water supply reliability and resiliency through better integrated water resources planning and management.

To this end, Rohnert Park and the eight other retail water contractors are funding a *Regional Water Supply Reliability Study* (Study) coordinated by Sonoma Water. The Study was initiated in February 2019, in advance of the Grand Jury Report. Sonoma Water has engaged the services of Jacobs Engineering Group to evaluate strategies and water supply projects to improve integrated water resources management and make the service area more resilient to potential short term (e.g., earthquakes) and long-term (e.g. sustained drought) water shortages.

This Study will identify opportunities to enhance coordination and partnerships between Rohnert Park Sonoma Water and the eight other water contractors for improved regional integrated water supply emergency planning. It is anticipated that this work will be completed by spring 2020.

Local System Resiliency

In addition to purchasing wholesale water from Sonoma Water, Rohnert Park has access to local groundwater and recycled water supplies, which can meet a significant percentage of local demand and which enhance the resiliency of its water system (see Response to Finding F1). Rohnert Park's well field and recycled water system are operated independently of Sonoma Water's infrastructure.

The City has budgeted for and is ordering generators to allow these to be available in the event of a power outage.

Rohnert Park is currently completing the construction of its first elevated water tank. This 900,000 gallon tank is a major improvement to the city's ability to provide water supply in the event of a power loss. This stored supply is one piece of the city's strategy to provide water supply in an emergency. The City's capital improvement program includes replacement of two

significant aging water lines, one in State Farm Drive and one in Commerce Boulevard, as part of ongoing efforts to reduce the system's vulnerability to disruption.

Implementing Actions

Consistent with the Grand Jury's recommendation, the City will evaluate additional options for making its systems more adaptable under emergency conditions by December 31, 2019. The results of this evaluation will inform the City's ongoing capital improvement program.