

State Water Resources Control Board

March 8, 2012

Melissa Lienau
League of California Cities
1400 K Street
Sacramento CA 95814

Dear League of California Cities:

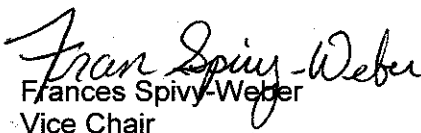
I would like to express my support for the City of Perris's Enchanted Heights Sewer Project. The City of Perris is applying for a Helen Putnam Award in the category of Enhancing Public Trust, Ethics, and Community Involvement Award for its innovative bilingual public education and engagement campaign in a Disadvantaged Community located in portions of the City of Perris. For many years, the residents of Enchanted Heights have lived with contaminated run-off from failing septic systems. As the population of this community continued to grow, the situation worsened and became untenable. The public health hazard created by these inadequate septic systems required decisive and judicious action.

In 2011, the City of Perris partnered with two other local agencies; the County of Riverside and Eastern Municipal Water District to find a solution to this very critical problem. Working together as a team, the city and its partners applied for and received \$10 million in grant funding from the California Department of Public Health to build a sewer system in the Enchanted Heights community. However, the onsite work and connection fees proved to be an economic challenge to this community consisting largely of Spanish speaking immigrants from Mexico. My agency, the State Water Resources Control Board, was happy to be able to provide \$5 million dollars in grant funding to enable the residents to hook up to the sewer system at no cost to them. As Vice Chair of the State Water Resources Control Board, I am happy to have been a part of this incredible effort to assist a Disadvantaged Community.

One of the conditions of our grant was getting the residents to sign a Right of Entry form which would allow the contractor access to the individual properties to conduct the onsite work. This proved to be a challenge in a Disadvantaged Community which had cultural and language barriers. The City of Perris took the initiative to conduct a bilingual community involvement program. This program not only educated the residents as to the need for the project, but it also explained the Right of Entry process in Spanish and English so the residents were fully informed about the issue and what they were signing. To date, the majority of residents have signed the Right of Entry form. The success of the Community Involvement program is evident in the enthusiastic response to the project by the residents.

I truly believe that the Enchanted Height Sewer Project Outreach program is a model for other agencies because of the success in engaging a Disadvantaged Community in a culturally appropriate manner which resulted in the desired outcome. Again, I applaud the City of Perris and its partners for an innovative job well done.

Sincerely,


Frances Spivy-Weber
Vice Chair

CHARLES R. HOPPIN, CHAIRMAN | THOMAS HOWARD, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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