

PUBLIC COMMENTOR 211 - ANNE SEELEY, SEPTEMBER 24, 1996

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I understand your concern for brevity, and I'll be real brief. My name is Anne Seeley. I live at 4370 Raymonde Way in Santa Rosa. And as Chairwoman of Concerned Citizens for Santa Rosa and a member of SCOR, I'd like to quickly offer my thoughts on the interests of the rate payers. Because they often are shown as being opposite to agricultural reuse. What the rate payers require of a wastewater system is that it be reliable, as low cost as possible, and if they are environmentally aware, that the system be environmentally responsible. Crucial to all three factors is the assessment that the system does not provoke an endless expensive train of lawsuits.

The system proposed by SCOR meets those requirements, first by being reliable and providing the three components necessary -- treatment, adequate storage, and disposal in a verifiable manner.

For the second requirement, low cost, the proposal provides benefits that no other single alternative does. Because of the phasing in of the project, several things occur. The City does not have to bond at great expense for a huge amount of money for a giant public works project. If there is no huge front-loaded cost at the outset, debt service will be considerably less, and if we enter difficult economic times, as we have recently, in which there is less than projected City growth, we simply slow down the growth of the system.

With the front-loaded big money project, if the City growth slows, the current rate payers suffer under the burden of greatly increased rates to pay for future growth, and rising hookup costs for new housing and businesses, including restaurants, increases to make affordability almost impossible.

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Phasing in the system -- Scott covered this quite well, and other speakers -- about how they -- the development of interest and trust between the farming community and the City is essential.

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The third rate payer concern, environmental responsibility, is more than adequately met by this system, which maximally reuses a precious and expensive resource. With reclaimed water for agriculture as well as urban irrigation uses, further development of a new or expanded drinking water source is delayed by many years. The SCOR proposal may be most notable for preventing the single most expensive and disagreeable outcome of other alternatives, the big lawsuit. This eminent advantage results from a cooperative process among most of the stakeholders who might legally object to any alternative and quite simply from having found an alternative acceptable to all. The possibility of prolonged legal objection is a financial concern for rate payers, who would pay for another set of environmental studies, more attorney's fees, and any penalties the system incurs for delays in building a viable solution. The rate payers need a system that works for everyone. In closing, I just want to reiterate that it is critical that the project -- that project phaseability be included as an option in this EIR. Thank you.

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Mayor Wright:

Thank you, Anne. Alan Strachan, followed by Bill Kortum, followed by Richard Carlile.