



CITY COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

MEETING DATE: August 1, 2006

ITEM NUMBER:

SUBJECT: SANTA ANA RIVER HABITAT AND RECREATIONAL PLANNING GRANT & BLUE RIBBON COMMITTEE

DATE: JULY 13, 2006

FROM: City Manager's Office

PRESENTATION BY: CAROL C. PROCTOR, MANAGEMENT ANALYST

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Carol C. Proctor at (714) 754-5688

RECOMMENDATION:

Provide direction on membership of Committee and adopt Resolution No. 06-__ authorizing City participation in the Santa Ana River Habitat and Recreational Planning project, and accepting a grant of \$5,000 from The Wildlands Conservancy for said project.

BACKGROUND:

The City of Costa Mesa has been involved in the design and implementation of the elements of the Fairview Park Master Plan since it was approved in 1998. Various recent park developments include the creation of coastal sage scrub habitat, the multi-purpose trail, the bridge, wetlands and riparian habitat, upper trails, and the multi-purpose trail immediately south of the Fairview Channel. The City's Fairview Park Friends Committee and staff have kept the public aware of these Master Plan developments, and have advised other agencies as well.

Staff has participated in monthly meetings with the Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks (FHBP) for the planning of the Orange Coast River Park (OCRP). The OCRP includes: Fairview Park at the northerly end; Talbert Park/Nature Preserve (County); Banning Ranch (County, City of Newport Beach & private land); and the Huntington Beach Wetlands Conservancy (in the City of Huntington Beach on Pacific Coast Highway, west of the Santa Ana River). While the OCRP would be one of the largest parks in Orange County, it is still in the conceptual design phase. At this time, land must still be purchased and specific elements designed and constructed before areas of the OCRP can become a reality.

One aspect of the OCRP vision is to ensure access throughout the park—internally and from outside points. Members of the FHBP who are at the forefront of the OCRP planning process have been working with The Wildlands Conservancy (TWC), a non-profit corporation. TWC has coordinated a regional planning effort to maximize habitat

restoration and passive recreational opportunities all along the Santa Ana River, from San Bernardino County to the Orange County coast. TWC has approached the City of Costa Mesa to join in the vision planning process of the Santa Ana River Parkway. The proposal from TWC includes a \$5,000 grant to assist the City in the development of a vision document for passive recreational uses and habitat protection in and next to the Santa Ana River along the City's westerly border (see Attachment 1). Attachment 2 contains website information from TWC on the Santa Ana River Habitat and Recreation Planning vision along the river trail.

ANALYSIS:

At this time, the County of Orange and the cities of Huntington Beach, Newport Beach, and Santa Ana have already adopted resolutions to form a small "blue ribbon committee" in each of their respective communities, and to accept the \$5,000 grant offered to each by TWC. Each agency's committee is tasked with preparing a vision document for their portion of the Santa Ana River for habitat restoration and passive recreational activities. Members of these committees have included Council Member(s), appointed officials, appropriate committee member(s), staff, and members of the public.

The City of Newport Beach is currently in the process of forming their committee and believes the \$5,000 grant will cover the cost of document preparation and any related costs because the goal is a broad vision. However, the area of the Santa Ana River within Newport Beach is only at the mouth of the River. The City of Huntington Beach already has a blue ribbon committee established and the committee has already initiated discussions of their vision statement (see Attachment 3 for details). Huntington Beach's easterly border spans about 3.75 miles along the Santa Ana River.

Costa Mesa abuts the Santa Ana River on its westerly border for approximately 4.25 miles. A large portion of the properties along the River are zoned and developed institutional and recreational (I&R): Suburbia Parks I & II; Mesa Verde Golf Course; Fairview Park; and Vista Park. The County's Talbert Nature Preserve is within the City's western border, is also zoned I&R, and is included in this 4.25-mile portion, and Canyon Park is about ½ mile from the Santa Ana River. A 115-foot wide strip owned by Southern California Edison, containing high voltage transmission lines and towers, occupies the northwesterly ½-mile portion of land within City boundaries, adjacent to the Santa Ana River. It is industrially-zoned. The remaining properties along the 4.25-mile border are predominantly single family residences (1-½ miles). There are some existing as well as potential access areas along this border for members of our community and others to use locally and regionally, absent vehicular traffic.

TWC's tri-county effort (Orange, Riverside and San Bernardino) will further provide the opportunity for an enjoyable experience along the 110-mile Santa Ana River in the course of walking, running, or cycling. Additionally, it will promote educational opportunities about various protected habitats in and along the River areas. These activities and the Santa Ana River Habitat and Recreation Planning vision are consistent with both the City's General Plan and the goals of the Orange Coast River Park; they would also complement the elements of the Fairview Park Master Plan.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

- (1) Establishment of a Blue Ribbon Committee and possible member considerations:
 - a. Designate the Fairview Park Friends Committee to serve in this capacity;
 - b. Designate the Parks and Recreation Commission to serve in this capacity;
 - c. Have the Blue Ribbon Committee be comprised of members from both the Fairview Park Friends Committee and the Parks and Recreation Committee;
or
 - d. Create a new Committee.

- (2) Consider how the \$5,000 grant funding will assist in the preparation of a "Vision Document." Some possibilities include:
 - a. Have the City's Blue Ribbon Committee work with staff from the Development Services and/or Public Services Departments with assistance from TWC representative, as needed, to plan a draft vision statement;
 - b. Collaborate with surrounding agencies' Blue Ribbon Committees, such as Newport Beach, Huntington Beach, Santa Ana and the County of Orange and select members of the FHBP and OCRP to ensure a seamless master plan statement for this area of the Santa Ana River; and
 - c. Share information with adjacent property owners, such as SCE, Mesa Verde Golf Course, the Mesa Verde Homeowners Association, and interested Westside Homeowners Associations on the creation of the Vision Document.

FISCAL REVIEW:

A budget adjustment will be processed when The Wildlands Conservancy grant is received for the Santa Ana River and Recreation Planning project.

LEGAL REVIEW:

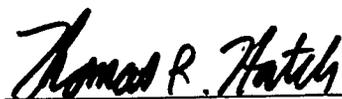
The attached Resolution (Attachment 4) has been approved as to form by the City Attorney's Office.

CONCLUSION:

City Council needs to determine: (1) whether to form a Blue Ribbon Committee, including what its membership will be; and (2) whether to proceed with the planning of a vision document as noted in the staff report, and secure \$5,000 grant funding from The Wildlands Conservancy to assist the City in creating the document.



CAROL C. PROCTOR
Management Analyst



THOMAS R. HATCH
Assistant City Manager



ANN C. SHULTZ

Legislative & Public Affairs Manager



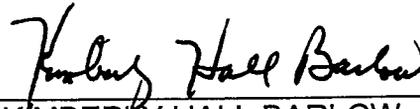
ALLAN L. ROEDER

City Manager



MARC R. PUCKETT

Director of Finance (fiscal review only)



KIMBERLY HALL BARLOW

City Attorney (Legal Review Only)

DISTRIBUTION: Parks & Recreation Commission
Fairview Park Friends Committee
Public Services Director
Development Services Director
Transportation Services Manager
Senior Engineer/Parks Project Manager
Fairview Park Plan Administrator

D.P. Myers
Projects Manager & Santa Ana River Coordinator
The Wildlands Conservancy
39611 Oak Glen Road, #12
Oak Glen, CA 92399

Jean Watt
President
Friends of Harbors, Beaches & Parks
P.O. Box 9256
Newport Beach, CA 92658

ATTACHMENTS: 1 Letter from The Nature Conservancy
2 TWC – Santa Ana River Trail Parkway Vision
3 Agenda & Minutes from Huntington Beach Blue Ribbon
Committee
4 Resolution No. 06-__



THE WILDLANDS CONSERVANCY

July 10, 2006

City of Costa Mesa
Mayor Allan R. Mansoor and City Council
77 Fair Drive
Costa Mesa, CA 92626

RE: Request for adoption by the City Council to create a Blue Ribbon Committee for the Santa Ana River.

Dear Mayor Mansoor and Council Members:

The Wildlands Conservancy is a California nonprofit for public benefit corporation with the mission to preserve the beauty and biodiversity of the earth, and to fund programs so that every child may know the wonder and joy of nature. As you know the Santa Ana River is a beautiful ribbon of nature that flows through urban cities with little or no parks, or nature areas for the families and youth of these communities to enjoy. To date, The Wildlands Conservancy has spent over 50 million dollars on creating a greenway and outdoor education along the 110 miles of the river.

Currently the Cities of Riverside and San Bernardino have completed their vision documents and are working on a projects identified in their vision documents. The Cities of Redlands, Colton, Santa Ana, and Huntington Beach have committees working on the vision document.

The Wildlands Conservancy respectfully asks the City Council of Costa Mesa to adopt a Blue Ribbon Committee tasked to create the City's vision for the Santa Ana River. With the adoption of a committee TWC will grant the city \$5000.00 for the costs of creating the vision document. I will also be part of the committee and help in any way we can to ensure that the vision created becomes a reality.

Thank you very much for you time and consideration. Please contact me for any reason at (909) 797-8507.

Respectfully,

D.P. Myers
Projects Manager and Santa Ana River Coordinator

Cc: Mr. Allen Roeder, City Manager
Ms. Carol Proctor, Asst. City Manager





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The Wildlands Conservancy

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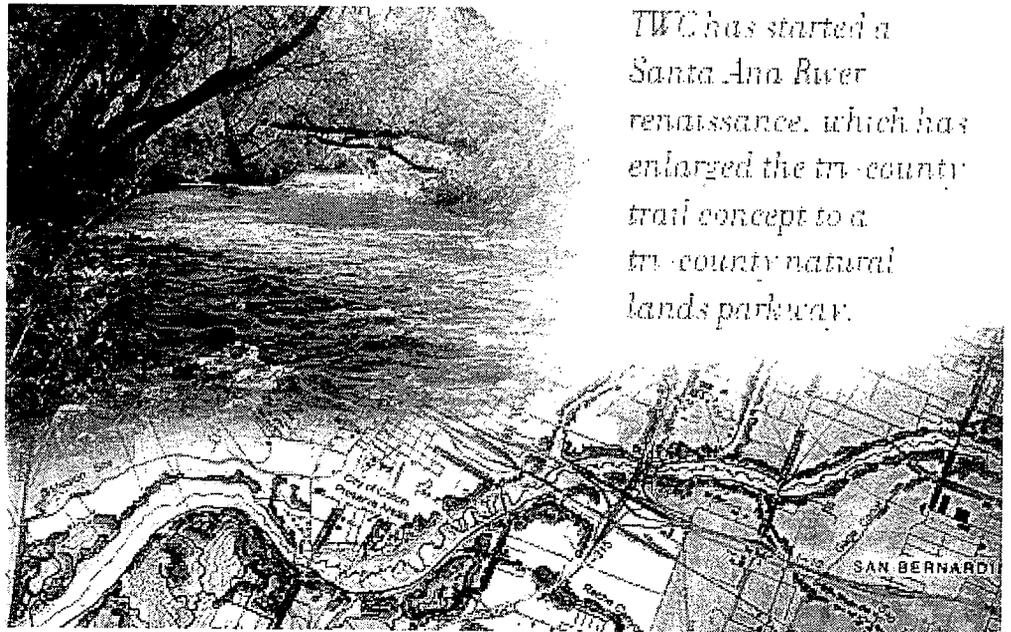
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TWC Projects: Santa Ana River Parkway

When the Santa Ana River Trail was envisioned in 1915, no one could have imagined that it would take nearly 100 years to complete. The constant encroachment by urban growth and development since that time has diminished the breadth and flow of the river, but it has not extinguished the vision of a 110-mile trail stretching from the mountains to the Pacific. Through time, countless dedicated groups and individuals have advanced the river trail. Recently, staff time and financial contributions from The Wildlands Conservancy have started a Santa Ana River renaissance, which has enlarged the tri-county trail concept to a tri-county natural lands parkway.

OTHER TWC PROJECTS

-  California Desert Acquisition
-  Save the Saints
-  Wildlife Corridors
-  Sand to Snow
-  Owens Valley
-  Santa Ana River Parkway



TWC has started a Santa Ana River renaissance, which has enlarged the tri-county trail concept to a tri-county natural lands parkway.

The Santa Ana River passes through the urban core of Orange, Riverside and San Bernardino counties. Via the bike path, national forests, state parks, county parks, and the Pacific Ocean will become readily accessible to urban residents, especially children. TWC's private-sector funding has done wonders in convincing officials that they have a real partner, dedicated to the Santa Ana River Parkway's successful completion.

In Orange County, TWC gave a planning grant to the County to design the last unfinished section of the parkway through Santa Ana Canyon. TWC also gave the City of Santa Ana a \$350,000 grant to restore habitat and enhance outdoor education programs at Santiago Park. TWC also started scenic raft tours through Santa Ana Canyon.

In Riverside County, TWC gave a \$100,000 grant for an Earn-a-Bike program in which underserved children performed ecological restoration work in parks along the river while learning about nature from TWC naturalists. At the end of the program each child learned bike safety and received a helmet and a lock to go with the brand new bicycle. In 2005, TWC donated \$3.3 million to Riverside County to be matched by county funds to help complete the Prado Basin tri-county linkage.

In San Bernardino County, TWC is building a wetlands park on Hospitality Lane in downtown San Bernardino. TWC has also granted in excess of \$1.5 million to the county to leverage additional monies for designing and building the Santa Ana River Trail. TWC is also spending \$1.2 million to purchase land along the river in the City of Colton. This land will be donated to San Bernardino County for the creation of a new regional park, the first one in 23 years.

The Wildlands Conservancy

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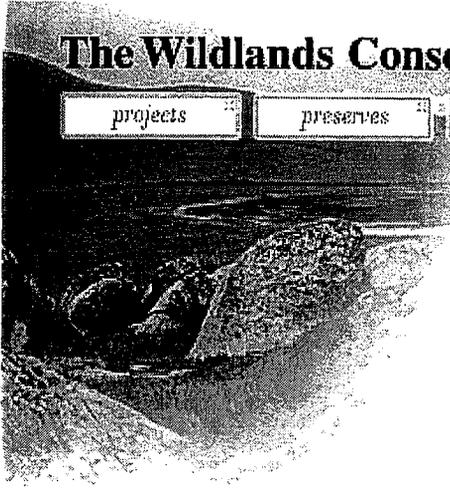
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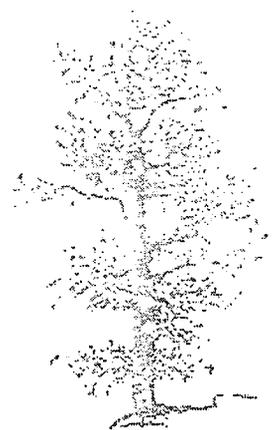
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About Us

The Wildlands Conservancy (TWC) is a California nonprofit public benefit corporation founded in 1995.

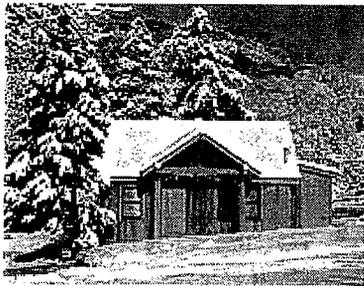
TWC has conveyed more lands in California to National Parks and Federal Wilderness Areas than has any other conservation organization. We are always mindful that the status to which we elevate these lands is not sacrosanct by designation alone. Our preserved lands are only inviolate as a result of the hearts and minds of people who believe in them and work to protect them. This is why we devote our time and resources toward making nature, landscape preservation, and environmental issues relevant to our society.



behold
the beauty

Our Mission

To preserve the beauty and biodiversity of the earth, and to fund programs so that every child may know the wonder and joy of nature.



TWC headquarters at Oak Glen Preserve

Headquarters

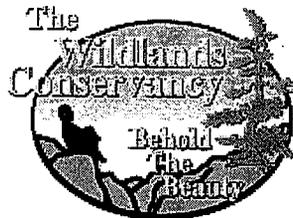
The Wildlands Conservancy
39611 Oak Glen Road, #12
Oak Glen, CA 92399
(909) 797-8507
paula@wildlandsconservancy.org
[org](http://www.wildlandsconservancy.org)

Administrative Staff

Executive Director: David Myers
Associate Director: Dan York
Staff Attorney: Heidi Fron
Human Resources/Office Manager: Gordon Johnson
Accountant: Kristin Mandolini
Special Projects: Paula Taylor

Make a Donation

The Wildlands Conservancy is dedicated to preserving outstanding landscapes. Click the red button above to find out how you can help.



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For website questions and comments, please email the webmaster



SANTA ANA RIVER TRAIL
BLUE RIBBON COMMITTEE



AGENDA

Huntington Beach Civic Center
Room B7, Lower Level
2000 Main Street
Huntington Beach, CA 92648
June 12, 2006
5:00 p.m.

Council Committee: Gil Coerper; Cathy Green; Dave Sullivan

City Staff: Dave Dominguez; Jim B. Engle; Cheryl Robinson

1. Public Comments (*Note: Comments are limited to 3 minutes per person*)
2. Review of Huntington Beach Elements of Blue Ribbon Committee Master Plan
3. Huntington Beach Vision Statement
4. Adjournment

Community Groups: Carrie Thomas, Huntington Beach Community Services Commission; Jerry Dominguez, Southern California Edison; Lena Hayashi, HB Wetlands Conservancy/OC River Park; Merrilee Madrigal, HB River Park Foundation; D. P. Myers, The Wildlands Conservancy; Jean Watt, Friends of Harbors, Beaches & Parks; Stephanie Berger, Earth Resource Foundation; Melanie Schlotterbeck, Santa Ana River Watershed Alliance; Garry Brown, Coastkeepers; Steve Homer, Southeast Huntington Beach Neighborhood Association; Doug Traub, Conference & Visitors Bureau; Mary Behrens, HCP Equestrian Center

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properties to the city for parkland. He noted that the five-acre SCE property south of LeBard Park is currently involved in litigation and is under a license agreement to a nursery. Dominguez noted how costly it is to develop SCE properties within SCE's constraints, maintain them, and pay the license fees. Engle commented that SCE has been a great partner to the city and has tried to keep the fees for existing licensed parkland to a nominal amount.

Chair Green thanked attendees for their comments, and received their agreement to keep the committee meetings on Tuesdays at 5:00 p.m. Engle was asked to set up the next meeting and work with the Chair to develop an agenda.

Meeting adjourned at 6:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Cheryl Robinson, Administrative Assistant

Page two

hope to combine marketing and funding efforts. He noted that Huntington Beach has to refine its involvement with the OCRP project, and that the committee would be doing that and creating a vision statement. He referred attendees to the draft vision statement provided in the agenda packet as well as examples of two other agencies' vision statements.

Engle reported that The Wildlands Conservancy would make a \$5,000 grant available to the city towards its effort to create its vision statement and to market it.

Chair Green advised that at its meeting Monday evening, City Council reviewed an offer of \$30,000 from the Friends of Harbors, Beaches & Parks (FHBP) as an initial fund to lease Southern California Edison property adjacent to LeBard Park, and directed staff to determine the impacts to the city of adding five acres of leased property to the city's park system, including costs for development, lease payments, drainage problems, and maintenance.

Chair Green asked for public comments and received the following:

- There is a need for a master plan of bicycle trails to be considered as part of the OCRP.
- The area from Little Shell to the river should be reassessed to determine what could be a part of the project and then draft a master plan.
- The trail should be studied to determine how it is being used currently. There needs to be equity for all users (pedestrians and bicyclists).
- Decomposed granite (DG) should be considered for pedestrian trails; DG does not necessarily lend itself to bicycles.
- Multiple areas for staging should be considered where groups could hold activities.
- We should consider a general plan for the Huntington Beach Santa Ana River that includes as much open space as possible. Consider closed LeBard School for an interpretive center. Section river plan into three areas: Victoria-Hamilton to the ocean; Hamilton-Victoria to Adams; Adams to Garfield.

Jerry Dominguez, SCE, explained the process of licensing agreements with specifics on how licensed property is used, length of agreements (five years), cost, etc. He spoke on SCE's involvement in the community and past history with the city, and advised that SCE currently leases six



**SANTA ANA RIVER TRAIL
BLUE RIBBON COMMITTEE**



MINUTES

Huntington Beach Civic Center
Room B8, Lower Level
2000 Main Street
Huntington Beach, CA 92648
April 18, 2006
5:00 p.m.

Present: Council Committee Gil Coerper, Cathy Green (Chair), Dave Sullivan; City Staff Dave Dominguez, Jim B. Engle, Cheryl Robinson; John Anderson; Stephanie Barger; Ellen Brown; Garry Brown; Jerry Dominguez; Lena Hayashi; Jerry King; Merrilee Madrigal; John Scott

Mayor Sullivan called the Santa Ana River Trail Blue Ribbon Committee to order at 5:10 p.m. and made a motion that was seconded by Coerper to make Green Chair of the committee. Green accepted and asked Engle to give an overview of what the committee is trying to accomplish. He gave an historical perspective of what Orange County and the cities of Newport Beach and Costa Mesa are doing, and explained that Huntington Beach will be creating a vision statement concerning the Santa Ana River Trail.

Engle introduced Lena Hayashi with the Orange County River Park (OCRP) and the Huntington Beach Wetlands Conservancy, who provided a PowerPoint on the OCRP, a nonprofit organization whose mission is to preserve, enhance and expand parks, open space and coastal recreation facilities in Orange County. She said their first project is the OCRP, a thousand acre project in a densely populated area in central Orange County. Hayashi noted that the three goals of developing the park are to restore an ecological staircase; extend a passage to the coast; and to create an oasis of tranquility. She estimated the cost of the OCRP to be \$51 million. She said it is the intent of OCRP to have the agencies ban together to seek funding over the next five to ten years to accomplish their goal.

Barger invited everyone to the OCRP Open House at Fairview Park in Costa Mesa on Saturday, April 29 at 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Engle reported that he and other Community Services staff are attending the tri-county and Orange County meetings on this project. He said the groups

RESOLUTION NO. _____

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF COSTA MESA, CALIFORNIA, AUTHORIZING PARTICIPATION IN AND ACCEPTING A GRANT FOR SANTA ANA RIVER HABITAT AND RECREATIONAL PLANNING.

WHEREAS, residents of the City of Costa Mesa value the habitat and recreational value of the Lower Santa Ana River; and

WHEREAS, the City of Costa Mesa has long supported the planning and formation of the Orange Coast River Park, which would abut and include the Santa Ana River; and

WHEREAS, The Wildlands Conservancy has worked with local agencies to coordinate and encourage planning along the Santa Ana River to create a consistent plan across the three-county region; and

WHEREAS, these planning efforts will be supplemented by a \$5,000 grant from the Wildlands Conservancy or one of its partner funders if River-adjacent communities form committees to conduct this planning, and if such planning is consistent with habitat-protective and passive recreational uses; and

WHEREAS, community representatives to the Orange Coast River Park Planning Committee and the City's Fairview Park Friend/Fundraising Committee are supportive of the City's participation in the Wildlands Conservancy's efforts.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Costa Mesa hereby:

1. Authorizes the Mayor to execute any document that accepts a planning grant from the Wildlands Conservancy for Santa Ana River Planning; and

2. Authorizes the City Council to establish a Blue Ribbon Committee to comply with the terms of The Wildlands Conservancy's grant and prepare a Vision Statement document; and
3. Expresses the City's support of planning activities along the Santa Ana River that protect habitat, encourage passive recreational uses, and that are consistent with the goals of the Orange Coast River Park and the City's General Plan.

PASSED AND ADOPTED this _____ day of _____ 2006.

Mayor of the City of Costa Mesa

ATTEST:

City Clerk of the City of Costa Mesa

STATE OF CALIFORNIA)
COUNTY OF ORANGE) ss
CITY OF COSTA MESA)

I, Julie T. Folcik, City Clerk and ex-officio Clerk of the City Council of the City of Costa Mesa, hereby certify that the above and foregoing Resolution No. _____ was duly and regularly passed and adopted by the said City Council at a regular meeting thereof held on the _____ day of _____ 2006.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed the seal of the City of Costa Mesa this _____ day of _____ 2006.

City Clerk and ex-officio Clerk of
the City Council of the City of Costa Mesa