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February 17, 2015

Santa Barbara Local Agency Formation Commission
105 E. Anapamu Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

Re: Assembly Bill 3 – Letter of Concern

Dear Chair Farr and Members of LAFCO:

Thank you for taking the time to organize your concerns about my legislation, Assembly Bill 3, which currently states the intent of the legislature to form a community services district (CSD) in the unincorporated part of Santa Barbara County known as Isla Vista (IV).

It is important to clarify that the bill currently only contains “intent language,” meaning there are no details contained in the bill at this time. In fact, it cannot even be referred to policy committee yet because it does not contain language that can be voted on by the legislature.

The bill was introduced after a series of community meetings and town halls that took place shortly after the Deltopia riot. These meetings were organized by residents of IV and my office participated but was not the lead in these meetings. After the events of May 24th, the trustees of the UCSB Foundation created a Committee on IV Strategies, which discussed potential solutions to create a safer, stronger community. One of these solutions was to create a CSD by state legislation. I was asked by members of the Trustee Committee and students at UCSB to author such legislation, which led to the introduction of AB 3.

The decision to use special legislation to create a CSD was based in the reality of the constraints of the LAFCO process. In order to create a CSD that would meet the distinct needs of IV residents, we need to get creative with the board makeup and taxation powers. The typical CSD structure with a board of five at-large elected board members and the power to only levy property taxes would not serve the diverse and unique demographics that reside in IV.

Many of the questions that you list in your letter are questions that I have as well. We have been discussing these questions in weekly community meetings my office organizes in IV, which began on December 4, 2014. We have a standing weekly community stakeholder meeting every Tuesday from 6:00-8:00pm in the conference room of the IV Clinic Building, located at 970 Embarcadero Del Mar. In addition, we hold a second weekly “floating” meeting, which is held

on a different time, day, and location within IV every week to meet the needs of residents who cannot attend our standing weekly meeting.

Question number three in your letter states that community meetings did not begin until January 6th and asks if we should have started getting community input prior to the introduction of the bill. To clarify, community meetings my office organized began on **December 4th** – not on January 6th. In addition, there were numerous meetings organized by other community members that my office participated in starting after the Deltopia riot.

To date, my office has held 24 group stakeholder meetings and 24 individual meetings with various stakeholders throughout the community to receive feedback on issues pertaining to self-governance in IV. We have also held a large town hall thus far and have two more town halls planned:

Saturday, February 21st
1:00-3:00pm
Anisq'Oyo' Park

Thursday, March 5th
7:00-9:00pm
St. Michael's University Church

We have been canvassing, tabling, and doing other proactive forms of community outreach to educate members of IV's community about the bill and the meetings we are holding. All the group meetings we have held have taken place in IV to make more accessible for IV residents to participate while LAFCO meetings are held in downtown Santa Barbara in the middle of a week day, which makes it very hard for the students and working residents of IV to attend and give input. I cannot understand how our process can be described as "limiting community input."

Although I appreciate the clarity with which LAFCO is expressing their concern, I am requesting that you and the board deny approving the letter of concern before the board today. Regardless of the fact that this is just a letter of concern, it will largely be perceived as opposition to the bill as a whole. While that may be the goal of some members of LAFCO, appearing to come out in opposition to a bill that has no specifics would only reinforce negative opinions of this board and their past dismissal of self-governance options for IV.

A more productive option is for the board members to join in the community conversations to address the questions listed in your letter. Chair Farr or a member of her staff has attended every stakeholder meeting we have held so far. Commissioner Moorhouse has attended one community meeting and Executive Officer Paul Hood has attended one community meeting specifically about AB 3. I hope that we can increase participation of LAFCO in this process.

Please feel free to contact me any time and I hope that you and the LAFCO Boardmembers will consider attending our community meetings so we can work together to answer the questions you presented.

Sincerely,



DAS WILLIAMS
Assemblymember, 37th District