COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

"To Enrich Lives Through Effective and Caring Service"

DONALD L. WOLFE, Director

900 SOUTH FREMONT AVENUE
ALHAMBRA, CALIFORNIA 91803-1331
Telephone: (626) 458-5100
www.ladpw.org

ADDRESS ALL CORRESPONDENCE TO:
P.O. BOX 1460
ALHAMBRA, CALIFORNIA 91802-1460

November 29, 2005

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TO: Each Supervisor

FROM: Donald L. Wolfe
Director of Public Works

BOARD MOTION OF NOVEMBER 1, 2005, SYNOPSIS 63
QUARTZ HILL STORM DRAIN
DRAINAGE BENEFIT ASSESSMENT AREA NO. 29
REPORT BACK ON FUTURE ELECTIONS

As requested at the November 1, 2005, Board meeting, we have investigated the possibility of conducting future elections on the proposed Quartz Hill Storm Drain and Drainage Benefit Assessment Area No. 29. Proposition 218 ballots were mailed to 1,876 property owners within the proposed assessment area in September 2005. A total of 698 ballots were cast by the property owners by the close of the Public Hearing on October 25, 2005. Of the ballots received, 409 ballots were opposed and 289 ballots were in favor. Of the 409 ballots that were opposed, 378 (over 90 percent) were cast by local owners. Of the 1,876 properties that were to be assessed, 84 percent are owned by local residents. Of the 93 ballots cast by absentee owners, the absentee owners supported the assessment three to one. These statistics indicate that the absentee owners had an insignificant impact on the results of this election.

We found two common themes of opposition. First, the property owners in Quartz Hill believe that development in the City of Palmdale is the cause of their drainage problem, the County should have done something to prevent the problem, and there is no effort by the three jurisdictions to coordinate the drainage solutions in the Antelope Valley. Consequently, they do not agree that the Quartz Hill property owners should have to pay anything for the solution. Second, they question the adequacy of the proposed drainage solution to address their problems.

There are no statutes that would prohibit a second Proposition 218 ballot on this matter. If a second ballot is to be initiated, we recommend that no changes be made to the Drainage Benefit Assessment Area No. 29 Engineer's Report. We also recommend that the second ballot schedule provide for six to nine months of public outreach prior to mailing the ballots.

Since less than 40 percent of the property owners voted, we believe that a multi-faceted public information program could be undertaken in connection with any future election which would provide the community with an increased level of information and awareness about the proposed assessment. Such a program would be designed to ensure that the Quartz Hill property owners have been provided sufficient opportunity to receive answers/feedback to their questions and concerns on the proposed drainage solution. Public outreach could also be effective in increasing the number of property owners voting in a future election, in correcting any misperceptions regarding the appropriateness of the solution, and in better apprising the community that the proposed solution is indeed a part of a coordinated watershed drainage system.

If you have any questions or require further information about this matter, please contact me or your staff may contact Ms. Robin Phillips at (626) 458-3953 or rphillips@ladpw.org.

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cc: Supervisor Michel D. Antonovich (Paul Novak, Norm Hickling)
Auditor-Controller
Chief Administrative Office
County Counsel (Yanai)
Executive Office