

Alexander, Jacquelyne

Public Comment - Group 1

#2

Subject: FW: Survey Fees
Attachments: Fee increase opposition.pdf



From: Kyle Huerth <kyle.huerth@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, March 22, 2021 2:48 PM
To: Jon McKellar <jon@jonmckellar.com>
Cc: Hanke, Aaron <aaron.hanke@countyofsb.org>; Nelson, Bob <bob.nelson@countyofsb.org>
Subject: Re: Survey Fees

Mr. Bob Nelson,

While I don't agree with raising any of the review fees. The fee that I am vehemently opposed to is the Record of Survey deposit of \$3400 for a map within an incorporated City. The largest review fee in the State of California is in Solano County at \$905. The largest deposit based review is in Yolo County with a deposit of \$2000 and full cost recovery, but that is for a map over three sheets. In some cases the \$3400 deposit for reviewing the Record of Survey will be more than the Surveyor charged the client to prepare the map in the first place, while also carrying 100% of the liability as a licensed professional.

The main issue is the time spent reviewing the Record of Surveys. In my informal poll that I sent to some County Surveyors in February 2020, Santa Barbara County spends over twice the amount of time than any other County reviewing a map. The State has specific laws on what the County Surveyor may review on Record of Surveys (Business and Professions Code 8766). San Luis Obispo County spends less than half the time reviewing maps produced by some of the same surveyors who also file in Santa Barbara County. They also record significantly more Record of Surveys, which is a benefit to the public.

We need to encourage the public to get their property monumented correctly to understand their ownership rights. Why would John Q Public spend over \$5000 identifying their property line to build a \$1500 fence? They won't and then they'll build it where they feel the line is and potentially force future costly litigation with the neighbors.

I am not privileged to the map checking process in any County as a private surveyor, but there seems to be something not working in Santa Barbara County. It would be more reasonable to perform an audit in the County Surveyor's Office to identify where the extra time is being spent, implement some changes and then an increase in fees could be justifiable. To expect the people in this County, your constituents, to pay astronomical review fees because the process is flawed is unbelievable.

I encourage you to not approve these review fee hikes and instead ask the Surveyor's office to streamline their processes rather than just require more money.

I appreciate you reaching out and asking my opinion, if there is anything else I can help with or if you have any questions about the process I would be more than willing to discuss in further detail.

Sincerely,

Kyle E. Huerth, PLS

Jon McKellar, PLS
A Professional Land Surveying & Consulting Company



March 18, 2021

Honorable Board of Supervisors
County of Santa Barbara
c/o 4th District Supervisor Mr. Bob Nelson
511 East Lakeside Parkway, Suite 47
Santa Maria, CA 93454

Dear Supervisors:

In response to the proposed Surveyor's Office fee increase and full cost recovery program I offer the following brief synopsis of why I am in objection.

- 1) Full cost recovery without accountability is inherently dangerous without the tools to measure an employee's productivity and cost effectiveness. Since profitability and competition are not tools available for government to measure those goals by, what vehicles are in place to set the baseline?
- 2) The Cost Study provided is incomplete and flawed. The metrics only computed a monetary valuation of costs incurred. It did not analyze productivity, effectiveness, or situational factors behind those costs.
- 3) The pandemic forced us to change the way business is conducted. Electronic submittals, staff working from home, public counters closed, all vehicles that lowered the overhead cost to the County. It has shown us that "just because we have always done it that way" may not be the best way to do things. Open eyes and an open mind can make a better mousetrap. The Cost Study did not address this change.
- 4) In-lieu of a blanket rate hike let's change the way business is performed in the Surveyor's Office. Let's look at the many non-surveying functions performed by staff and remove them from their distraction. Road naming should be an Emergency Response task. Voluntary Mergers should be reviewed and approved by Planning with only technical support provided by the Surveyor's Office. Certificates of Compliance are documents issued that state that a parcel was created in compliance with the zoning and subdivision rules in effect. Why is this not a Planning function like in San Luis Obispo County?
- 5) Fee increases are being proposed with no benefit to the public. Land Records databases and recorded map indices are incomplete and out of date. Where is this being addressed in the proposed rate hike.
- 6) The study supports an increase to fees without reviewing the process. The Surveyor's Office spends an inordinate amount of time reviewing interdepartmental project clearances for accuracy and completeness. Why are Surveyor rates being increased when other Departments can't fulfill the mandated responsibilities?

I would ask that you approve a complete reanalysis of the process, not just of the cost of the process. Spend time and money on streamlining functions, removing redundancy within Departments, outlining standards, and limiting reviews to only those standards, update electronic

submittals and make information current and accessible. Help the County Surveyor find a definition for "Technically Correct" that benefits everyone. Open your process to those in the community that navigate the County briar daily. You are a governmental entity tasked with serving the community. How can you do that with blinders on, looking only at the dollars? We continue to bandage the problem with money and neglect to look at the wound.

Lastly, Records of Surveys, boundary establishment maps mandated by State Law for the sole purpose to benefit the public. Boundaries, limits of ownership, are the foundation on which all infrastructure is based. Without them, chaos. The State of California and the Surveying Community recognized early on the value and necessity for a public mapping system with standardized preparation and review methods with unrestricted access. Such a value that the State enacted law to allow a surveyor to trespass to gather the information needed to support boundary establishment. A law still in effect today. Records of Survey continue to be publicly supported. Everyone benefits from knowing where a boundary line is. To change that now, to raise fees so high that the little mom and pop land owner can't afford to pay for the map preparation or filing, to do the unmentionable, jump to full-cost- recovery placing the fee burden on a single individual when the entire public benefits from the map, is disheartening. Do we want to support the filing of these maps or price them so high that they no longer are filed? Do we want to stop the setting of permanent monuments that mark where boundaries are? Did the Cost Study weigh the cost vs. benefit factor in this case?

Please reject this increase. Direct staff to explore the options available to lower costs through changes in efficiency and methodology. Redirect the money spent purchasing a cost analysis to funding a process improvement team. Accept input from those that interact with all departments to help eliminate redundancy. Prioritize the archiving and dissemination information.

Respectfully,

Jon McKellar
PLS 7578