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INSIGHT: La Mesa Councilmember Ernest Ewin on Regional Wastewater Issues

(Another in a series. Ewin is chair of the Ad Hoc Finance Committee.)

I believe that there is still a lot riding on the City of San Diego's ability to resolve their audit issue. In the short term, San Diego has been able to secure financing under rates and terms that reflect the benefits and advantages of traditional long term bonding. My concern is that these market conditions will not last nor will the temporary slowdown of Metro capital projects. Whether a regional joint governance organization (JGO) that has been talked about could operate and maintain the metro wastewater system not only affects the City of San Diego but also the Participating Agencies (PA). It is very important to remember that aside from reasonable political input and PA financial contributions, we must ask if the JGO will ultimately benefit the rate payers and will it offer a better process or system? The party holding the most cards should explain why it won't benefit ratepayers or be a better system.

The regional issue that concerns me most is that we have to get serious about water reuse (purple pipe) uses and transportation. Given that our major source of water supply is the Colorado River, and the amount of discharging that goes into that supply. I remember a time when San Diegans could not water their landscape at will. What has changed?

La Mesa was incorporated 95 years ago and we continue to be recognized for our smart growth, walkability programs, athletic facilities and historic preservation. Dissected by three freeways, La Mesa has five trolley stations, great citizens and a wonderful climate. I first served on the Council from 1985-90, took 12 years off to be with my children and was newly elected 2002 and again 2006. So you could say that I may be only one of a few locally to have been elected in two different centuries.

Strategic Planning Retreat – From Historical Perspective to Future Opportunities

This year's strategic planning retreat not only looked forward to what the region may look like in the future, but also reviewed the path from whence it came. Institutional memory came from Padre Dam Commissioner Augie Caires who delivered a presentation of member agency participation and regional wastewater governance over the past half-century, with an emphasis on key milestones and agreements during the past 20 years. The afternoon session featured the comprehensive research report by Karyn Keese of PBS&J and Scott Huth, Metro TAC Chair from Coronado, about conducting a study of regional governance options. They

provided an overview of three regional governance options. Alternative 1: Add San Diego to Metro Commission; Alternative 2: Form a new JPA, with no Asset/Debt Transfer; and Alternative 3: Create JPA with Full Ownership/Transfer. An upcoming report on this year's retreat will be given to Commissioners and participants by facilitator John Gavares.

Water-born Pharmaceuticals in Wastewater – One City's Approach to Help Educate the Public

The Regional Solid Waste Association (RSWA) and its member cities of Del Mar, Encinitas, Escondido, National City, Poway, Solana Beach and Vista are charged to provide solid waste and other environmental services to their residents at a reasonable cost. One such program was directed at the increasing problem of water-born pharmaceuticals due to residents flushing unused medicines into the wastewater system. Safe Medicine Disposal Day was sponsored by Poway, RSWA and Wal-Mart and resulted in the collection of pharmaceutical waste that filled a 55-gallon drum. Forty-nine residents participated with 1.1 gallons of medicines collected per resident. Poway officials worked with Wal-Mart pharmacy managers, Clean Harbors Co. (disposal company) and the Sheriff's Department. The program cost Poway only \$2,000. For more information about sponsoring a Safe Medicine Disposal event in your city, contact the RSWA or Metro TAC member Jim Howell from Poway

Metro JPA and Metro TAC Upcoming Meetings

The next luncheon meeting of the Metro JPA will be on Thursday, June 7 at noon at the Metropolitan Operations Center (MOC II), 9192 Topaz Way, Kearny Mesa. The technical advisory committee (Metro TAC) will be on Wednesday, June 20 at 11 a.m. at the same location.

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THE JOINT POWERS AUTHORITY PROACTIVELY ADDRESSING REGIONAL WASTEWATER ISSUES

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