

September 28, 2026

TO:

Anne Roman  
General Manager Pro Tem  
& Director of Finance  
Joshua Basin Water District

FROM:

Dawn Rowe  
San Bernardino County  
Third District Supervisor

RE: JBWD Board Majority Support/Opposition for Sewer-to-Septic Project

Thank you for reaching out with additional questions from President Doolittle regarding the County's Septic-to-Sewer planning initiative. I am sorry I cannot attend your special meeting, but it is at the exact same time as my air quality board meeting. We received the initial four questions, and the subsequent 59 questions. County staff was able to prepare responses to the first four questions, and they are attached.

Regarding the 59 supplemental questions, I believe there is a misunderstanding. The central flaw is that President Doolittle is wanting the results of Phase I as a prerequisite to deciding whether Phase I should continue.

Most of the 59 questions asked fall into four categories:

- Already addressed in my request for resolution letter.
- Questions Phase I planning and scoping are specifically intended to answer.
- Hypothetical questions about later phases that JBWD is not presently being asked to approve.
- Information concerning JBWD's own system, groundwater data, reserves, or regulatory responsibilities.

Most of the questions either were addressed in my prior correspondence, or concern matters that Phase I planning and scoping are specifically intended to evaluate. JBWD is not being asked to approve a final project, commit District funds, surrender its independent authority, or endorse any future phase. Requiring the County to resolve the very issues Phase I is intended to study before deciding whether Phase I may continue, is circular and does not provide the requested policy direction.

The County is asking one narrow question: **Do the majority of JBWD's Board support or oppose continuing Phase I planning and feasibility work?**

Thank you for taking this to your Board for their consideration.

Dawn

***1. Project status and administration:*** *Update since the April 1 presentation, including work completed or underway, expenditures, remaining funds, schedule, deliverables and any changes in scope or proposed boundaries; identification of WBSE 30.30.0214, the responsible County department and project manager, and any public means of tracking project funding, documents and progress.*

No requests for proposals (RFP) have been issued to date. An RFP for the consultant to help facilitate Phase 1 is currently being drafted. The solicitation, evaluation, and contract-award process is anticipated to take approximately three to four months. Since the April 1 presentation, no substantive project work has commenced. Only limited internal County administrative staff work has occurred, for which a small amount of reimbursement will be required. No consultants have been retained, and no planning, design or construction contracts have been awarded. Accordingly, there are no consultant deliverables or substantive project expenditures to report. No wastewater system has been approved, no project boundaries have been established, and there has been no change in project scope. The previously provided project schedule remains unchanged at this time, and no changes to the project scope or proposed boundaries are anticipated until the selected engineering consultant begins its evaluation.

The project is associated with WBSE 30.30.0214, and the Department of Public Works remains the responsible County department, with Noel Mondragon (Project Management Division Manager) as the contact for Project Management. Current expenditures are at \$4,525 for staff time, with a remaining fund balance of \$6,295,475. Project funding information, documents, and status updates can be made available as the evaluation proceeds; the appropriate public-facing website or tracking mechanism remains to be determined.

***2. Project authority and funding:*** *Clarification of County responsibilities and the roles of Supervisor Rowe's office and participating departments; funding sources, conditions and deadlines; the basis for the August 20 requested resolution and stated urgency; and consequences, if any, of JBWD support, opposition, delay or inaction.*

The Board approved \$6.3 million for the project's planning and development through a broader Third District funding package. The County is the project sponsor and recipient of any federal planning funds. Supervisor Rowe's office supported securing funding for the study; the appropriate County departments are responsible for its administration, be it for this potential project, or any other EPA approved project.

The County requested a resolution from JBWD because two individual Board members have made repeated public statements opposing or undermining the planning effort, including statements that are inaccurate or misleading as to the County's actions, intentions, and the status of the project. See Reference 1, 2, 3 for examples of such statements.

The County respects that individual JBWD Board members may not be in support of this project. The County would like clarity regarding a *majority* of JBWD Board members' position of the JBWD Board as a governing body, rather than continuing to respond to statements or positions of

individual Board members. The requested resolution is limited to whether a simple majority of JBWD Board members support or oppose the County continuing the planning effort. Support does not constitute approval of a sewer system, commitment to ownership or operation, approval of any boundary, or authorization of any future expenditure by JBWD.

The County does not believe it is appropriate to continue committing taxpayer dollars and staff resources to an effort if a majority of the members of the local water district's governing board do not support the process.

Accordingly, the requested resolution is intended to provide a clear record of the majority of JBWD Board's institutional position so the County can determine whether continued expenditure of public resources is warranted. If there is not support to proceed, that is fine, the County just needs clarity. If there is support, please note it is appropriate for County staff to work with JBWD staff, **not elected officials**.

***3. Groundwater and regulatory basis:** Current nitrate and other groundwater information in general, and specifically supporting the need or urgency for the project, including any existing or anticipated regulatory requirements or timelines.*

The RFP scope is intended to collect and evaluate current groundwater data, including nitrate and other relevant water-quality information, and to identify applicable or anticipated regulatory requirements and timelines.

As previously discussed, the County has not represented that Joshua Tree is presently subject to an immediate mandate to construct a sewer system. The fact that JBWD established a Wastewater Capacity Charge specifically intended to contribute towards a future centralized wastewater collection and treatment system is clear evidence that JBWD is planning for such an eventuality.

JBWD is the local water purveyor responsible for managing and monitoring the groundwater supply and is in possession of groundwater-quality information, including nitrate data. JBWD has also participated in prior technical studies specifically evaluating nitrate transport and the potential long-term impacts of septic systems on the groundwater basin. Current and historical water-quality information is publicly available through JBWD and state regulatory agencies.

The planning effort is intended to evaluate whether long-term groundwater conditions, regulatory considerations, growth, infrastructure needs and other factors warrant a centralized wastewater system. No conclusion has been predetermined.

Accordingly, the County does not believe it is necessary or productive to duplicate groundwater information already maintained by JBWD or to resolve, in advance, the technical questions the proposed planning effort is intended to evaluate.

***4.Future system responsibility and costs:*** *Anticipated County and JBWD roles in ownership, financing and operation of any future system, including potential property-owner/ratepayer costs, affordability and available funding assistance.*

The consultant evaluation to be completed under the RFP is intended to help define the respective roles of the County and JBWD in the ownership, financing, and operation of any future system. It will also evaluate potential costs to property owners and ratepayers, affordability considerations, and available funding.

No determination has been made regarding ownership, operation, governance, financing or final boundaries of any future system. Likewise, no rates, assessments or property-owner costs have been established.

Potential costs, affordability measures, outside funding opportunities and governance options are among the issues the planning effort was intended to evaluate. The County cannot provide definitive costs or assign future responsibilities for a system that has not been studied, designed or approved.

**Additional questions submitted on behalf of President Doolittle:**

5. What exactly is Supervisor Rowe asking JBWD to approve?
6. Why is a formal resolution necessary?
7. What would Supervisor Rowe consider a successful outcome of JBWD adopting the resolution, both for the County and for the Joshua Tree community?
8. What does Supervisor Rowe understand a “yes” vote on the requested resolution to mean?
9. How does Supervisor Rowe intend for the resolution to be used or relied upon after it is adopted?
10. Is JBWD being asked to support only continued Phase I planning and feasibility work, or would adoption be considered support for later phases or the overall project?
11. What would adoption of Supervisor Rowe’s requested resolution mean for JBWD’s independence and oversight during Phase I?
12. How can JBWD’s independent oversight and community knowledge strengthen the Phase I process while allowing the District and County to work collaboratively?
13. If JBWD adopts the resolution, will the District remain free throughout Phase I to ask questions, request information, raise concerns, propose changes, and disagree with recommendations without being considered opposed to the project?
14. If JBWD later takes a position inconsistent with something developed during Phase I, what effect, if any, would that have on continued County work or funding?
15. How will JBWD retain meaningful oversight and maintain transparency and accountability to its customers while independently evaluating and taking positions as Phase I develops?

16. Please describe the actions Supervisor Rowe considers consistent—and inconsistent—with being a constructive partner.
17. What happens if JBWD does not adopt Supervisor Rowe's requested resolution?
18. If JBWD is not comfortable adopting the resolution as currently proposed, is Supervisor Rowe open to working with the District on alternative language or another approach that would allow Phase I to continue while addressing JBWD's concerns?
19. What County work would stop or change.
20. What funding, if any, would actually be affected?
21. What decisions would be delayed?
22. What specific JBWD action or vote would cause work on the project to stop or funding to be redirected?
23. Who within the County has authority to make that decision?
24. Who owns, manages, and has decision-making authority over the Joshua Tree Septic-to-Sewer Project?
25. What is the respective role of the Board of Supervisors, Public Works, Special Districts, and Supervisor Rowe's office in managing the project and making decisions about its funding, scope, and direction?
26. Why did the August 20 direction regarding potential loss of funding and the requested resolution come from Supervisor Rowe?
27. Did the Board of Supervisors specifically authorize or direct the August 20 request that JBWD take a binary position supporting or opposing continued work on the project?
28. If so, what Board action specifically authorized that request, as distinct from the Board's earlier approval of the project or its funding?
29. What are the actual funding commitments and deadlines?
30. What specific funding source is at risk?
31. What is the applicable deadline?
32. What would cause those funds to be lost?
33. Please identify any grant agreement, appropriation, Board of Supervisors action, budget provision, fiscal-year deadline, or other requirement that makes action by JBWD on the requested resolution necessary at this time.
34. Identify the specific date by which JBWD must act to avoid the loss or reallocation of any portion of the approximately \$6.3 million in County discretionary funding.

35. What specifically happens to the funding if JBWD does not adopt the resolution by that date?
36. If there is no such deadline, please say so.
37. What is the EPA award date and deadline for obligating and spending these funds?
38. What federal document establishes those deadlines?
39. If County funding ultimately is not used for this project, does it lapse, revert, remain available to the Third District, or become available for another project?
40. Who has authority to reallocate those funds?
41. Could some or all of the County funding instead be made available to JBWD for its own work on a downtown sewer?
42. Does the project's financial planning assume the use of JBWD funds?
43. Why were those District funds included in her correspondence?
44. Does the current project financial plan assume that any portion of those funds will be contributed to the project?
45. Has JBWD made any commitment regarding use of those funds? If so, please identify the communication or agreement being relied upon.
46. How will Phase I decisions, public participation, and the transition to Phase II work?
47. What progress has been made during Phase I to date?
48. What findings or developments does the County consider particularly encouraging?
49. Have any Phase I findings identified opportunities to reduce project costs, improve affordability, refine the service area, or otherwise improve the project for the community?
50. What are the specific Phase I deliverables?
51. What must occur before the project proceeds from Phase I to Phase II?
52. What are the specific opportunities and dates for JBWD and community review and input on these issues during Phase I?
53. What is the County project number or other public tracking mechanism that can be used to follow the status, expenditures, and progress of the project?
54. Will the County work with JBWD to establish an agreed-upon schedule for review and input that provides adequate time for the District and community to evaluate Phase I work and request changes while sufficient Phase I funding remains available to evaluate and incorporate those changes?
55. Is there a formal public review and decision point before Phase II begins?

56. How and when will affordability impacts, including impacts on disadvantaged households, be evaluated?
57. What specific groundwater-quality standards, regulatory requirements, findings, or other water-resource criteria were County representatives referring to?
58. How will groundwater conditions—including nitrate levels, existing or projected impacts from septic systems, and the need to protect the basin—be used to determine where sewerage is warranted?
59. If the available groundwater data do not demonstrate a regulatory or water-quality need for sewerage in portions of the study area, how will that affect the proposed boundaries and scope of the project?
60. What happened to the collaborative process previously described to JBWD?
61. What changed?
62. Going forward, will the County commit to regular communication and updates to JBWD as Phase I progresses?
63. How can the County work with the Water & Growth Committee and JBWD earlier in its planning process so that District concerns and information can be considered before major project decisions are made?
64. Supervisor Rowe has asked JBWD to be a “constructive partner” in the County-led project. Would Supervisor Rowe likewise be willing to serve as a constructive partner if JBWD pursued a District-owned and -managed sewer project, including providing County financial support and assisting JBWD in securing additional funding?

**\*Reference 1: Facebook post written by Stacy Doolittle. In the comment thread President Doolittle offered her opinion on who should operate the sewer.**

## Stacy's Post



Stacy Doolittle · 12w · Author

**Candy Jane Moulton Elder** 🙌 I believe you are mistaken. You are correct that the State mandated sewer in Yucca Valley, but isn't the case for Joshua Tree.

The County is defending the idea of a sewer by claiming Joshua Tree has a nitrates problem. As of now, that is not the case.

(Note: the water district is diligent in testing our water and ensuring it is of the highest quality.)

The downtown area and dense neighborhoods in the future (who knows when) are likely to contribute nitrates, and a sewer is indeed the fix. I myself support a sewer for these areas at some point soon.

However, the County wants to manage the sewer. I have researched this in other communities who have sewer county-management and it is not always ideal. I believe it would be particularly onerous here due to our isolation from County government with the greatest impact to disadvantaged community members. I believe our water district should manage the sewer. ...

The County's initial sewer layout has it extending far past the downtown area into undeveloped properties. This is to ensure that future development has access to the sewer. No gated community or commercial developer desires absorbing the high cost of a wastewater package treatment plant, and a sewer would make it mighty convenient and cheaper.

It is likely developers are behind the push for sewer because development follows sewer. We only have to look at the quaint villages in California, who were transformed by sewer (mandated or not). The County seems willfully ignorant of what a gem Joshua Tree is, particularly to (money-generating) tourists.

Our village must be protected from development creating an Everytown feel. Our ownership of the sewer is one way to do this.



Reply

Edited



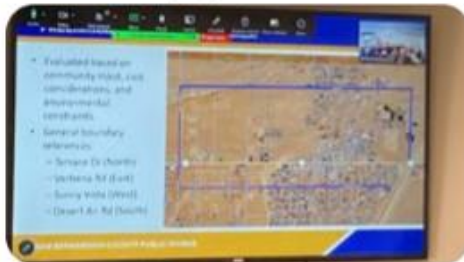
**\*Reference 2: Facebook post written by Stacy Doolittle. In the comment thread President Doolittle posted misinformation on the proposed boundaries of the Septic-to-Sewer initiative. It has never been proposed to go as far south as Alta Loma.**

## Stacy's Post



**Dawn Davis** · 12w · by author

In reference to Stacey's sixth paragraph above. This slide is from a County Department presentation in April 2026 at JBWD, showing the proposed mapped area of the sewer project. ...



Reply



**Stacy Doolittle** · 12w · Author

[Dawn Davis](#) and that's just one design. We've heard of other boundaries as well. One boundary line went all the way up to Alta Loma, which would conveniently support the LoveMore ranch.



Reply



**\*Reference 3: Facebook post written by David Fick. He states incorrect and false information.**



**Joshua Tree Community C...** ... X

David Fick · 30m ·

## The Empire Strikes Back

County (The Inland Empire) Influence has made for a Back Room Deal within JBWD. These two mystery agenda items have NO Backing Support or Who put this on the JBWD Agenda?

JBWD President Stacy Doolittle and I have been in contact with Mojave Water Agency (Stacy) and the Colorado Regional Water Quality Agency (David) to have third party review of nitrate data in concern of the "Joshua Tree nitrate problem" issue. We both know that Joshua Tree doesn't have a nitrate problem as the County asserts. The current known level of nitrates in the JBWD is 3.3 and the trigger point is 10. The JT nitrate levels have actually improved in ten years of imported water recharge.

Since the April 1st JBWD board meeting (standing room only), the County Special Districts hasn't made a step forward in five months in spending their \$6.3 million dollar escapade for the County Septic-to-Sewer effort - probably because it met 100% opposition of the Joshua Tree businesses and residents.

So instead, there's a County influenced attack from within. The County WANTS Stacy to NOT BE PRESIDENT. That's what Agenda item 7a is about. The County wants Stacy to be censured - that's what 7b is about. I know the feeling - the County agents cancelled my