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Assembly California Legislature



MARC LEVINE
ASSEMBLYMEMBER, TENTH DISTRICT

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IMPROVING BAY AREA TRANSPORTATION
SYSTEMS
WINE

January 27, 2016

Steve Kinsey
Chair, California Coastal Commission
45 Fremont Street #2000
San Francisco, CA 94105

Dear Mr. Kinsey:

This letter is to ask that as the California Coastal Commission contemplates Charles Lester's tenure as your Executive Director, that the Commissioners consider Mr. Lester's track record as he manages your staff, and that the Commission also look at the Commissioners' own record and recent decisions.

Media accounts have reported that the Commissioners are primarily concerned that Mr. Lester has demonstrated a lack of leadership. Please keep in mind that Mr. Lester acts only under the authority and direction of the Commissioners. The leaders of the Commission are the Chair and other Commissioners. The policies and direction of the Commission are determined by the Commissioners, not by Commission staff.

The Commission's mission is one committed to "*Protecting and enhancing California's coast and ocean for present and future generations. It does so through careful planning and regulation of environmentally-sustainable development, rigorous use of science, strong public participation, education, and effective intergovernmental coordination.*"

With that mission in mind, Charles Lester has helped the Commission accomplish the following:

- Worked with the Legislature to create the Commission's new Administrative Penalty authority. This authority is being utilized to protect public access to the beach, and multiple long-standing cases have been resolved without fines or penalties levied.
- Helped secure a \$3 million budget augmentation to support Local Coastal Program (LCP) and Climate Change Adaptation Planning.
- Improved and expanded the LCP Grant Program to assist local governments.
- Prepared a Comprehensive Sea Level Rise Guidance document.
- Prepared the Commission's first detailed Strategic Plan.
- Implemented a new data management system. This new system provides planning and permitting information to the public and has increased the transparency of Commission actions.

- Pursued streamlining regulations for LCPs. This streamlining has reduced the backlog and processing time for permit appeals.

Conversely, lawmakers and the media have been critical of the following recent votes of the Commission which are arguably contrary to the Commission's mission:

- Approved U2 guitarist The Edge's proposal to build five homes on an undeveloped ridge over Malibu. The project had been described as "one of the three worst projects . . . in terms of environmental devastation."
- Approved a massive sand-replenishment project to protect multimillion dollar homes on Malibu's Broad Beach. This was done without protecting public access should the constructed dunes ever succumb to coastal erosion.
- Approved the Monterey Bay Shores, a massive hotel and condominium resort in Sand City on 40 acres of sand dunes south of Fort Ord Dunes State Park. This was done with no documentation or plans to protect habitat, scenic views, and public access.

If the Commissioners are truly concerned about the policies and leadership at the Commission, I urge the Commissioners to consider their own actions first before hastily pointing fingers at Commission staff.

Sincerely,



MARC LEVINE

Cc: Commissioners