

January 18, 1999

Stacy Miller
Economic Development
City of Santa Clarita
City Hall
23920 Valencia Blvd.
Santa Clarita, Ca. 91355

Dear Stacy,

Following our conversation and a brief review of the FAX you sent, I am submitting some comments on a part of the historical processes residents of the Santa Clarita Valley have undergone in the creation of self government.

A.) In 1976-77 as Co-Chairman of the Canyon County effort with local attorney Daniel Hon, and helped by a group of dedicated volunteers, we: 1) circulated petitions (collecting 25% of the registered voters in a 250 square mile area), 2) made innumerable speeches, 3) wrote and circulated hundreds of press releases, 4) appeared on television and radio programs throughout the County, 5) garnered support from the Chamber of Commerce and most of the organized clubs in the affected area.

(Signatures were obtained by house to house solicitation of valid registered voters.)

After verification of the adequacy of the petition signatures, a Commission was appointed by the Governor to study the possibility of secession of Canyon County from Los Angeles County. Headed by Professor Donald Hagman from UCLA, the Commission spent a year analyzing the formation and while recognizing Canyon County could become a wealthy, if small governmental entity, recommended against county formation.

The recommendation did not affect the thrust of law, which was to allow the vote to occur. While the balance of the County voted by 4 to 1 against letting Canyon County be formed, in two successive votes, the local citizenry opted for self-government by approximately 60%.

Arguments for forming a County were basically the same as city formation – to bring government closer to the residents and to have a bigger voice in decisions that affect every day life. There was a general level of dissatisfaction with the remote County government whose County employees rarely even knew where the Santa Clarita Valley was located!

The most positive thing that came out of the Canyon County movement was that for the first time the disparate little communities of Newhall, Saugus, Valencia and Canyon Country all voted together for local government.

In effect this set the stage for city formation to come later. Among the local leaders who were involved in this effort were :JoAnne Darcy, Jan Heidt, Carl Boyer and Clyde Smyth.

There are many stories, some funny, to flesh out the Canyon County portion of local history. My files were given to the Historical Society for safe keeping.

Following the Canyon County effort for local government, a couple of small groups formed to explore City Formation. It was not until 1985 when Louis Garasi and I Co-Chaired the effort that the SUCCESSFUL "BIG PUSH" OCCURRED.

B.) The successful drive for Cityhood began in 1985 with a strong endorsement by the Chamber of Commerce, and subsequent involvement by many clubs and organizations. By this time the area had grown substantially, and with the new residents came a strong desire for self-determination.

The inadequacy of infrastructure was an important component in selling "city formation". The need for roads, more parks and recreation facilities were explained as items more easily obtained with a locally elected Council. Not having to drive 50 to 75 miles to Los Angeles was another feature of City formation.

A City Formation committee was formed and included many members of the Chamber, many members from clubs and some members who were new to the area and to volunteerism. Among them were Jill Klajic and Allan Cameron. Weekly meetings were held, and many of the same procedures developed for County formation were now used in trying to form a City. A solid relationship was established with the Local Agency Formation Committee (who had no direct involvement in the County effort, as that is a State driven function.) and Ruth Benell and Miche Takahashi received numerous visits by the City Formation Committee.

Once again petitions were circulated and more than 25% of the signatures of registered voters were obtained. This time house to house drives were augmented by signature gathering in shopping centers and super markets. Extensive public relations efforts were employed, hundreds of speeches given and written reports appeared in local and regional papers as well as periodicals.

Louis Garasi found his time commitment at his business would preclude his continuance as Co-Chair. Consequently, he was replaced by Carl Boyer and then when Carl filed for a seat on the City Council, Art Donnelly chaired the committee. Getting the message out to the public in a consistent manner and influencing decision makers was deemed important. I continued to speak and write for the Formation Committee and volunteered in this capacity.

The City of Santa Clarita became reality in November of 1987, and the first organizational meeting was held on a bitterly cold night at College of the Canyons in December. The weather did not preclude attendance by well over 2,000 members of the public whose enthusiasm and delight in achieving self-government warmed the cavernous gymnasium.

Both the Canyon County and City Formation efforts demonstrated the ability of a broad spectrum of individuals and groups working cooperatively to affect change. While many factors can be considered as instrumental in achieving a governmental restructure, certainly the most important is the willing cooperation of hundreds of volunteers.

City of
Santa Clarita

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January 6, 1999

Connie Worden Roberts
P.O. Box 220233
Santa Clarita, CA 91322

Connie
Dear Connie:

I believe, and I think you will agree, Santa Clarita is a community that is second to none! As a community, I would like us to work together to submit an application to be recognized as an "All America City." I have personally selected you to participate in this process and would be most appreciative if you would assist me in this important endeavor.

The All America City Award is a tremendous national honor bestowed on only ten communities a year. It is considered to be "the most extensive award process" of any national award. Previous winning communities have benefited greatly from tremendous national recognition (USA Today, Wall Street Journal, etc...), job creation and group solidarity.

I would like to ask you to join me and other business and community leaders for a working lunch on Tuesday, January 19, 1999 to review the application's central theme. City staff will take on the task of writing the application, however we need your assistance in identifying projects that best exemplify the dedication of our community. The luncheon is scheduled from 11:30-1:30 in the Century Room at City Hall, 23920 Valencia Boulevard.

While the application's theme is not set in stone, we are thinking of focusing on the incorporation of the City; its grassroots efforts, impact on our community and the massive collaborative effort that was involved in undertaking such a project. In addition, we are looking at highlighting two youth oriented programs and would like your feedback on them as well.

I am enclosing a copy of the application form (remember, staff will write it) and would appreciate it if you would jot down any ideas or thoughts you might have. Also, please pay particular attention to the Civic Index portion of the application, as your input on that is vital too. It is imperative that we work as a group on this application. Not only are we vying for the most prestigious recognition a community can receive, we are also undertaking a process whereby we can self examine what does and does not work in our community.

With your help, Santa Clarita can become an All America City! Please RSVP your attendance by January 14th to Stacy Miller at (805) 286-4166. If you have any questions, please feel free to call Stacy or me at City Hall.

Best regards,

JoAnne Darcy
JoAnne Darcy
Mayor



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