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August 18, 2026

The Honorable Sheila F. Hanson
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court
700 Civic Center Drive West
Santa Ana, CA 92701

**RE: City of San Juan Capistrano Response to Orange County Grand Jury Report Entitled:
"Wildfires Hit Home"**

Dear Honorable Judge Hanson:

Please accept this letter as the City of San Juan Capistrano's response to the applicable findings and recommendations in the Grand Jury's report entitled "Wildfires Hit Home." The City was requested to respond to Findings F1 through F6 and Recommendations R2 through R4. The City's responses to the findings and recommendations are listed below.

FINDINGS F1 THROUGH F6:

- F1 *More frequent and severe wildfires driven by increasingly hotter, drier, and windier conditions in the Orange County wildland-urban interface are escalating impacts on financial and non-financial resources. Among the financial costs are dramatic increases in homeowners' insurance premiums, nonrenewals, and inability to obtain insurance.*

City Response: The City partially agrees with this finding. The City agrees that wildfires in the region have become more frequent and severe, placing increased demands on resources. However, the City does not collect or maintain data on homeowners' insurance premiums and, therefore, cannot independently validate or dispute the finding's conclusions regarding insurance costs or homeowners' ability to obtain insurance.

- F2 *Actions that address conditions in the home ignition zone to significantly reduce ignition potential can prevent a community wildland-urban interface fire disaster or suburban conflagration.*

City Response: The City agrees with the finding.

- F3 *Expanded engagement with the community to raise awareness and provide support regarding home hardening and defensible space will increase effectiveness of wildfire risk mitigation and insurance risk reduction efforts.*

City Response: The City agrees with the finding. The City is committed to proactive wildfire mitigation and recognizes that community awareness and participation are important components of reducing wildfire risk. The City works with regional partners to provide residents with information and educational resources regarding wildfire risk reduction measures.

- F4 *Achievement of community-level and property-level wildfire risk mitigation designations (such as Firewise USA Site, Fire Risk Reduction Community or Insurance Institute for Business and Home Safety certification) lessens wildfire risk and helps reduce insurance premium costs.*

City Response: The City partially agrees with this finding. The City agrees that community- and property-level mitigation measures can help reduce localized wildfire risk. However, the City does not collect or maintain information regarding private homeowners' insurance premiums and, therefore, is not in a position to evaluate the extent to which these measures may affect insurance costs.

- F5 *All county residents should be made aware that Safer from Wildfire regulation requires insurers to provide discounts to homeowners and communities that implement home hardening and defensible space measures regardless of whether a property is located within a Fire Hazard Severity Zone.*

City Response: The City partially agrees with this finding. The City agrees that home hardening and defensible space measures can improve a structure's resilience to wildfire and help reduce the potential for property damage. However, the City does not collect or maintain information regarding private homeowners' insurance premiums and, therefore, is not in a position to validate the finding's conclusions regarding the effect of these measures on insurance costs. The City agrees that residents should be informed of any insurance benefits, incentives, or other resources that may be available to homeowners and communities that implement home hardening and defensible space measures.

- F6 *AB888, California Safe Homes Grant Program, provides financial assistance to eligible homeowners, cities, counties, and special districts for home hardening and defensible space measures. Applying for and using these grant funds will reduce wildfire losses and improve insurability and resilience of vulnerable communities.*

City Response: The City partially agrees with this finding. The City agrees that financial assistance for home hardening and defensible space measures can help reduce wildfire risk and improve the resilience of structures to wildfire. However, the City does not evaluate or regulate homeowners' insurance premiums or private-market insurability and, therefore, is not in a position to validate the finding's conclusions regarding the effect of these measures on insurance costs or the availability of insurance coverage.

RECOMMENDATIONS R2 THROUGH R4:

- R2 *By December 31, 2026, cities and fire service agencies, including Orange County Fire Authority should commit to participation in a county-wide annual wildfire prevention fair planned by the Orange County Board of Supervisors to showcase wildfire prevention outreach programs. [F1, F2, F3, F4, F5, F6]*

City Response: The recommendation will be implemented. The City remains actively committed to educating the community about wildfire prevention and would gladly participate in a regional wildfire prevention fair hosted by the Orange County Board of Supervisors.

- R3 *By December 31, 2026, cities, unincorporated areas, special districts, and fire service agencies in High and Very-High Fire Hazard Severity Zones should initiate planning activities to achieve community-level wildfire risk mitigation designations and/or establish a local Fire Safe Council within one year. [F4, F5, F6]*

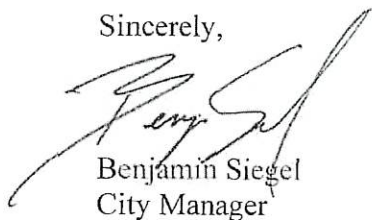
City Response: The recommendation has been implemented. The City currently maintains its standing on the CAL FIRE 2026 Fire Risk Reduction Community List and will continue evaluating additional programs to support community-level wildfire risk reduction.

- R4 *By December 31, 2026, to ensure city residents are engaged and aware of wildfire risk reduction resources, OCFA member and non-member cities should provide information, develop their own outreach program, and establish a direct contact person(s) for their residents. This is in addition to whatever referrals or references made to OCFA outreach programs. [F1, F2, F3, F4, F5, F6]*

City Response: The recommendation has been implemented. The City currently conducts a public outreach program that includes multiple educational events each year focused on emergency preparedness. To further increase awareness of wildfire risk reduction resources, the City will expand existing outreach efforts where feasible. Information and resources regarding emergency preparedness are also available on the City's website at <https://www.sanjuancapistrano.org/223/Emergency-Preparedness>. The City Manager's Office, through the Safety & Emergency Services Manager, serves as the City's designated point of contact for questions and information regarding these efforts.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Grand Jury report. If you have any questions, please contact Sean Sabo, Principal Analyst, at (949) 443-6304 or email at ssabo@sanjuancapistrano.org.

Sincerely,



Benjamin Siegel
City Manager

cc: Orange County Grand Jury, 700 Civic Center Drive West, Santa Ana, CA 92701
San Juan Capistrano City Council