

Willits Elementary Charter School  
Charter School Association of Willits  
1431 South Main Street  
Willits, CA 95490  
June 24, 2013

#### Response to the Grand Jury Report:

I am providing a written response to the Grand Jury Report of April 1, 2013. Willits Elementary Charter School is a school established and operated by the Charter School Association of Willits, a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit corporation. The corporation does not have a Board of Trustees but has a Board of Directors for which I am providing a response. In the Grand Jury Report we were asked to respond to findings F1, F4 and to recommendation R1. We are in agreement with Finding F1 but dispute Finding F4 and R1. Our comment to Finding F4 and R1 is as follows:

#### **Finding F4**

“The school appeared suddenly at a problematic location after the Charter School Board exempted themselves from all restrictions. The school has made an effort to overcome the problems of the location.”

The word “suddenly” has connotations that we cannot support. Willits Elementary Charter School (WECS) had been going through the process of being approved by Willits Unified School District for over 2 years. It had been discussed at various school board meetings. When the final approval came from the school district the grant was submitted to the California Department of Education. They were mandated to approve the school early in 2013. Due to their own short staffing they took an extra 2 months to approve and fund the school. Willits is a very difficult town to find land in. The town at the north is in a flood plain, it has seismic issues to the south and finding a big enough parcel of land is very difficult. We were very fortunate to find a very good area to locate the school. The school is in a part of town where the air quality is good, close to the library, museum and the park. It is located on a fairly quiet street. We do have to deal with it being located in a flood plain and have designed around that factor.

Regarding the statement that the school exempted themselves from all restrictions. We worked closely with the City of Willits Planning and Building Departments and met all requirements of the law particularly as it applied to CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act). We did our homework and acted fully within the provisions of state and city ordinances.

#### **Recommendation R1**

The charter school should continue and document the search for a permanent location that meets the needs of child safety and environmental regulations.

As far as we are concerned the site is safe and meets all appropriate environmental regulations. We have two years remaining on a three year lease of the property. During the next few years we will be looking for another site. We want to own our own property and also get out of the flood plain as well as have a larger site with more play area.