



# City of La Quinta

TO: The Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

FROM: Les Johnson, Community Development Director

DATE: April 7, 2015

SUBJECT: LEAGUE OF CALIFORNIA CITIES 2015  
PLANNING COMMISSIONERS ACADEMY

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The League of California Cities facilitated the Annual 2015 Planning Commissioners Academy (Academy) in Newport Beach, CA, on March 4 – 6, 2015. The Academy is tailored to assist planning commissioners, planning directors, planning staff, and other interested officials, by offering sessions on major planning and land-use issues facing cities.

I had the opportunity to accompany Planning Commissioners Robert Wright, Robert Wilkinson, Philip Bettencourt, and Frank Blum at the Academy. A brief summary of the sessions during the Academy included the following:

- The Dance of Leadership – Discussion of how to think of leadership differently, how it has become an art rather than a science. Provided several key points to effective leadership.
- Essential Planning Tools 101 – Oriented toward new planning commissioners, covered basic topics relevant to review of planning documents and land use cases.
- Hot Topic Policy Issues – Presentation focused upon SB 731, which represents new massage regulations. Provided information on updates two cities recently completed.
- Trimming the Fat: Streamlining Government Policies and Operations – Presentation provided general overview of land use policy and other key factors that can assist in streamlining the permitting process.

- Can Your Findings Withstand a Legal Challenge and Can Your Conditions of Approval Be Implemented? – Session discussed writing findings that include supporting facts that will weather a legal challenge.
- CEQA Basics: Everything a New Planning Commissioner Needs to Know – Provided a general summary of basic requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act.
- Complete Streets – Addressed State requirement for streets to be planned, designed and operated to accommodate walking, cycling, automobiles and public transit.
- Sign Ordinances – Presentation focused upon several key sign issues, such as content neutrality, billboards, flags and use of sign trucks.

A highlight of the event was a Thursday afternoon tour Commissioner Bettencourt provided of multiple smaller housing developments in Newport Beach. Mr. Bettencourt introduced the group to several work/live projects in “the cannery” area and a new multi-family development in Costa Mesa that included roof decks. All of the projects visited provided examples of development that could work in The Village and/or possibly along the Highway 111 corridor.

Overall, the Academy provided a great opportunity to gain valuable knowledge and insight into several topics relevant to La Quinta. In addition, the Thursday tour was also of great benefit. All four Commissioners had very favorable comments regarding the experience and expressed gratitude for the opportunity provided.