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I am personally delighted with the results in this case, which would not have been possible if not for the professionalism of Rio Dell's city attorney. Most actions to enforce the California Public records act do not resolve themselves as this one did. Most take many months if not years to work their way from the initial request to the petition for writ of mandate to hearing and eventual judgment in favor of the requesting party. And, when that happens, the attorney's fees and costs in dispute are much much higher.

The problem with this most common scenario is that, while the requesting citizen and the governmental agency are battling it out, and even though it is likely that the requesting citizen will prevail and obtain a court order requiring the governmental agency to provide access to the information or records the governmental agency is withholding, during this time the citizen and the public are unable to access the information or the records themselves. Contentious litigation creates delay, and that delay harms the public's interests in examining the operations of their governmental agencies.

That didn't happen here. Even though my clients spent a very long time attempting to persuade the city to provide them with a copy of the Hale Report, the moment I filed and served my client's petition for writ of mandate the city attorney contacted me to begin a dialogue that eventually settle the case in a fraction of the time and at a fraction of the cost that I would've expected from a case with this factual and legal profile. The city attorney not only understood the facts, the law and recognized the merits of my clients' position, he was also able to advise and persuade his client – the city Council – to take the high road, cooperate with my clients, and resolve this case amicably.

Anyone who thinks that is easy is wrong. More often than not, those working for and in charge of governmental agencies don't like to be "told what to do" and they dig in their heels, doubling down on a bad situation that ends up getting worse. However, as I said, even though this is what usually happens, it didn't happen here. Even though it's a shame that it took as long as it did and cost as much as it did for the public to be able to find out what was in the Hale Report, it could've easily taken longer and cost much much more.

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