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3					
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5	Attorney for Petitioner Leane Lee				
6	Leane Lee				
7	SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA				
8	COUNTY OF SAN BERNARDINO				
10	Leane Lee,	Case No. CIVDS 1507221			
11	,				
12	Petitioner;	Assigned for all purposes to: Hon. David Cohn			
13	VS.	Dept. S37			
14	Town of Apple Valley,	Verified First Amended			
15	a Municipal Corporation, and DOES 1 through 25, inclusive,	Petition for Writ of Mandate; Complaint for Declaratory Relief			
16	Respondents.	(Public Records Act)			
17	-	Action Filed: May 20, 2015			
18		1202011 1210011 121119 20, 2012			
19					
20	Petitioner Leane Lee alleges:				
21	INTRODUCTION				
22		ifornia Public Records Act ("CPRA").			
23		Petitioner has requested public records from			
24	-				
25	Respondents, but Respondents have failed to fulfill their constitutional and statutory obligation to disclose the public records Petitioner requested.				
26	, ,	s to compel Respondents to disclose the public			
27	records she requested.	to competition of another the public			
28	recerus one requesica.				

### **PARTIES**

- 4. Petitioner Leane Lee is an individual residing in the Town of Apple Valley, County of San Bernardino, California. She brings this action to enforce her right to receive public records under the CPRA.
- 5. Respondent Town of Apple Valley is a municipal corporation and is a local agency as defined by the CPRA.
- 6. The true names of Respondents DOES 1 through 25, inclusive are unknown to Petitioner who therefore brings this Petition against DOES 1 through 25, inclusive by such fictitious names and will seek leave of this Petition to show their true names, identities, and capacities when they have been determined.
- 7. Each Respondent, including the DOE Respondents, are each other's agents and were, at all relevant times, acting as each other's agents.

## **JURISDICTION AND VENUE**

- 8. The CPRA allows any person to institute proceedings for injunctive or declaratory relief or writ of mandate to enforce his or her right to receive public records.
- 9. Petitioner is a natural person and is suing to enforce her right to receive public records. Petitioner has standing to bring this action.
- 10. The San Bernardino County Superior Court is the proper venue because the acts complained of, which are the subject of this Petition, have all occurred or will all occur in the County of San Bernardino, State of California. The relief sought in this Petition is within the jurisdiction of this Court.
- 11. This Petition for Writ of Mandate arises from actions in the Town of Apple Valley and is properly filed in the Civil Division of the San Bernardino District.

### FACTS COMMON TO ALL CAUSES OF ACTION

## **Applicable CPRA Provisions**

- 12. In enacting the California Public Records Act ("CPRA"), the Legislature declared: "access to information concerning the conduct of the people's business is a fundamental and necessary right of every person in this state." Gov. Code § 6250.
- 13. Local agencies have a constitutional mandate to comply with the CPRA. Cal. Const. Art. I, Sec. 3, subd. (b)(7).
- 14. The CPRA requires a local agency's response to a request for public records within ten days to inform the requestor whether the agency possesses disclosable records responsive to the request. Gov. Code § 6253, subd. (c).
- 15. The CPRA permits a local agency to claim one 14-day extension when one of four specified "unusual circumstances" exist. Gov. Code § 6253, subds. (c)(1)-(4).
- 16. One of the four "unusual circumstances" is the need to search for, collect, and examine voluminous amounts of separate and distinct records. Gov. Code § 6253, subd. (c)(1).
- 17. When a local agency withholds public records, it must state in writing a justification for withholding the information (Gov. Code § 6255) and must provide the name and title of each person responsible for the denial (Gov. Code § 6253, subd. (d)).
- 18. When being applied to grant access to information, the CPRA must be interpreted broadly; when being applied to deny access to information, the CPRA must be interpreted narrowly. Cal. Cost. Art. I, Sec. 3, subd. (b)(2).

# Petitioner's CPRA Request

19. On April 13, 2015, Petitioner requested public records from Respondent. A true and correct copy of Petitioner's CPRA request is attached and incorporated into this Petition as Exhibit A.

- 20. Petitioner requested the following categories of records:
  - A. Backup and supporting records for three specific checks Respondent issued to Hayward Consulting Group, BB&K, and Daily Press;
  - B. The budget Respondent adopted for the 2008-2009 fiscal year;
  - C. Respondent's contract with True North Research and related invoices and payments for a specifically identified phone survey; and
  - D. Respondent's contract with 20/20 Network dated February 24, 2015 as well as related invoices and payments.

## Respondent's First Response to the CPRA Request

- 21. On April 23, 2015, Respondent sent Petitioner a written acknowledgment of the April 13 request. A true and correct copy of Respondent's April 23 letter is attached and incorporated into this Petition as Exhibit B.
- 22. In the letter, Respondent asserted the request was for "voluminous records" creating an "unusual circumstance" necessitating a 14-day extension to the time allowed for Respondent's CPRA determination.
- 23. Petitioner's request was for invoices and similar records related to specifically identified checks and contracts. Except for the 2008-2009 budget, all the records Petitioner requested were created within the most recent eight-month period.
- 24. Petitioner did not request records from very broad or diverse categories of information requiring a review of voluminous separate and distinct records in order to locate those that were responsive. Instead, Petitioner identified the exact check numbers and contracts connected to the records at issue.
- 25. Petitioner's request related to Respondent's financial information, records at the core of the CPRA and among those most frequently requested.
- 26. There was nothing unusual about the request, and Petitioner was not asking Respondent to find the proverbial "needle in the haystack."

27. Petitioner is informed and believes that Respondent asserted the extension, not because it needed more time, but because it intended to delay its response and obstruct Petitioner's access to the records she requested.

## Respondent's Second Response to the CPRA Request

- 28. On May 11, 2015, Respondent sent Petitioner its second response to the CPRA request. Respondent described this letter as its "determination." A true and correct copy of this Letter is attached and incorporated into this Petition as Exhibit C.
- 29. In the letter, Respondent addressed each category of documents Petitioner requested.
- 30. For all but two of the categories, Respondent claimed it was providing "hard-copy documents" responsive to the request.
- 31. The two exceptions were the request for backup and supporting records related to a check for \$149,644.79 to BB&K and a request for records related to Respondent's contract with 20/20 Network.
- 32. Respondent asserted the information related to the BB&K check was exempt from disclosure under the attorney-client privilege Evidence Code CPRA exemption.
- 33. With respect to the request related to the 20/20 Network contract, Respondent asserted: "The Town does not have any hard-copy documents that respond to this item of your request."
- 34. While Respondent provided some records in response to Petitioner's other requests, the records provided did not fully respond to the requests.

# Circumstances Surrounding Petitioner's Request and Respondent's Response

35. Petitioner is informed and believes Respondent's legal expenses have significantly exceeded the budgeted amount and Respondent is attempting to conceal the amount spent on legal services by transferring funds from one account to another in order to conceal the nature of the expenditures.

- 36. Petitioner is further informed and believes Respondent is attempting to conceal other, non-legal expenditures, by processing the contracts and payments through its legal representatives and describing the services as "legal" in an attempt to conceal its activities and expenditures under the guise of attorney-client privilege.
- 37. Through enforcement of this request, Petitioner is trying to determine the true nature of Respondent's expenditures.
- 38. Through its denial of Petitioner's request and withholding records,

  Respondent is attempting to further its objective of concealing this information
  from public review.

## Respondent's Contract with 20/20 Network

- 39. Respondent's contact with 20/20 Network is representative of its attempts to conceal expenditures by funneling payments through its legal representatives.
- 40. Petitioner first learned of the 20/20 Network contract in a March 15, 2015

  Press Dispatch article, "Contract for PR services made a public record." The contract calls for a \$7,500 monthly payment from Respondent to 20/20 Network in exchange for public relations services and was secretly approved during a closed session Town Council meeting. A true and correct copy of the article is attached as Exhibit D.
- 41. Having learned in March that this contract existed, Petitioner requested a copy of the contract and related payments in her April 13 CPRA request.

  Respondent's May 11 response implied that the contract did not exist.
- 42. After initiating this action, Petitioner obtained a copy of the contract from the newspaper. A true and correct copy of the document Petitioner received from the newspaper is attached to this Petition as Exhibit E.
- 43. The parties to the contract appear to be 20/20 Network and BB&K; however, from the language of the contract, it's clear that the purpose of the contract is

- to provide public relations services to Respondent. BB&K isn't even obligated to pay 20/20 Network until it first receives payment from Respondent.
- 44. John Brown, Respondent's Town Attorney, signed the agreement on behalf of BB&K. John Brown is both Respondent's Town Attorney and a BB&K partner. He has dual roles. While the words on paper suggest he was acting as a BB&K partner when signing the agreement, the terms of the agreement and the contract's purpose both suggest he was signing the agreement on Respondent's behalf in his capacity as Respondent's Town Attorney.
- 45. Based on the purpose and terms of the contract, Petitioner is informed and believes that the purpose of having BB&K as a party to the agreement was to (A) avoid disclosure of payments from Respondent to 20/20 Network by entangling the payments with Respondent's payment to BB&K; and (B) to avoid disclosure of any documents related to the public relations agreement by wrapping them up with BB&K to support a false claim that the documents are protected by attorney-client privilege.
- 46. To this end, BB&K is no longer providing only legal services. Instead, this agreement shows that BB&K is also providing public relations services, which are unrelated to its role as Respondent's legal advisor.

## **Documents Related to August 2014 True North Research Phone Survey**

- 47. In response to Petitioner's request for the contract, invoices, and payments associated with an August 2014 phone survey conducted by True North Research ("True North"), Respondent provided a contract with True North from 2011. A true and correct copy of the 2011 contract is attached as Exhibit F.
- 48. The 2011 contract describes the costs associated with a "RDD Survey" (Exh. F, p. 2).
- 49. Petitioner is informed and believes that a RDD Survey randomly samples the population at large in order to measure the opinions held by the entire

- community. This is consistent with a survey True North conducted for Respondent in 2011.
- 50. Petitioner is informed and believes the 2011 True North contract was related only to the 2011 survey True North conducted on Respondent's behalf.
- 51. The August 2014 survey was different. The 2014 survey was not designed to measure the opinion of the entire community. Instead, the 2014 survey regarding the water company was intended to measure the opinion of Apple Valley's registered voters and did not use the RDD methodology.
- 52. The research report prepared by True North for the 2014 survey states the report was prepared both for Respondent and Best Best & Kreiger, LLP ("BB&K"). A true and correct copy of this report is attached as Exhibit G.
- 53. In the report, True North Research thanked both BB&K and Respondent "for the opportunity to conduct the study" (Exh. G, p. 8) and stated it worked closely with BB&K to develop the questions for the voter opinion survey (Exh. G, p. 30).
- 54. Considering this, it is possible BB&K is a party to the agreement with True North and payments from Respondent to True North were funneled through BB&K.
- 55. The purpose of the 2014 phone survey was to determine whether the elected Town Council would suffer any Election Day consequences or other political fall-out if they moved forward with plans to take over the private water company that services the Town.
- 56. Petitioner is informed and believes that if BB&K was a party to the agreement with True North and/or made payments to True North on Respondent's behalf, that the purpose for BB&K's involvement was to avoid public disclosure of the contact and related payments under the guise of attorney-client privilege.

- 57. Helping the elected Town Council determine whether this action would hurt their chances for reelection cannot be considered legal services by any stretch of the imagination.
- 58. Regardless of whether BB&K stepped into Respondent's shoes and was a party to the agreement with True North, Respondent possesses records responsive to Petitioner's request.

## FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION

(Declaratory Relief)

- 59. Petitioner incorporates by reference each prior allegation.
- 60. An actual controversy has arisen between the parties as to their rights and obligations under the CPRA.
- 61. The CPRA specifically authorizes a cause of action for declaratory relief.
- 62. The actual controversy between the parties includes a dispute as to whether Respondent should have made its determination as to Petitioner's request within 10 days or whether it was justified in asserting a 14-day extension.
- 63. For reasons fully set forth in prior allegations, Petitioner requests a declaratory judgment that
  - A. Respondent violated Gov. Code § 6253, subdivision (c) when it failed to make a determination as to Petitioner's CPRA request within ten days; and
  - B. Respondent's assertion of a 14-day extension to make its determination was not justified because Petitioner's CPRA request did not trigger any of the "unusual circumstances" necessary to justify a delayed response.

### **SECOND CAUSE OF ACTION**

- 64. Petitioner incorporates by reference each prior allegation.
- 65. One of the specific checks at issue in Petitioner's request was a check to BB&K for \$149,644.79 dated February 9, 2015. The check number is 110498.

- 66. Respondent's determination as to this request was "The requested records are exempt from disclosure under the California Public Records Act and are protected by the attorney/client privilege rule."
- 67. Even though the CPRA expressly requires that local agencies justify any denial of access to public records, Respondent did nothing more than state that the records were exempt.
- 68. Since the request was for financial records related to legal bills, a justification should have, at minimum, described why the billing records were confidential communications between Respondent and its attorney.
- 69. With such a broad denial, it's not clear whether Respondent is improperly asserting this exemption to all attorney records or has properly limited the exemption only to those attorney records containing confidential client communications.
- 70. Furthermore, Respondent's response did not include the name and job title of the person(s) responsible for the denial.
- 71. While Debra L. Thomas, Deputy Town Clerk, signed the letter denying Petitioner's request for the records, the letter does not state she is the one responsible for denying Petitioner's request.
- 72. Petitioner is informed and believes that Ms. Thomas does not have the authority to approve or deny CPRA requests. Ms. Thomas' role is to communicate to requestors decisions that someone else makes.
- 73. Ms. Thomas' letter was copied to Marc Puckett, Assistant Town Manager; John Brown, Town Attorney; and La Vonda M-Pearson, Town Clerk. Petitioner is informed and believes that at least one of these individuals was responsible for denying Petitioner's access to public records. Under the express terms of the CPRA, Petitioner is entitled to know which of these individuals denied her request.

- 74. To resolve the actual controversy that has arisen as to Respondent's manner of denying Petitioner's request, Petitioner requests a declaratory judgment that Respondent violated the CPRA by failing to justify withholding the records and not providing the name and job title of the person(s) responsible for the denial.
- 75. Petitioner also requests a writ of mandate to compel disclosure of the person(s) responsible for the denial.

### THIRD CAUSE OF ACTION

- 76. Petitioner incorporates by reference each prior allegation.
- 77. After asserting the attorney-client exemption with respect to the BB&K records, Respondent failed to provide any records whatsoever.
- 78. The CPRA does not permit local agencies to categorically deny requests for public records on the sole basis that the records contain exempt information.
- 79. When exempt information can be redacted, redacted records must be disclosed.
- 80. Petitioner is informed and believes that even if the BB&K records contain some exempt information, not all of the information is exempt.
- 81. Since the records in question related primarily to financial dealings between Respondent and BB&K, it's likely that none of the requested information is exempt because the attorney-client privilege only applies to confidential communications related to legal services.
- 82. Financial dealings with public agencies are not confidential communications.
- 83. The services BB&K provides to Respondent are not limited to legal services. The agreement between Respondent and/or BB&K and 20/20 Network is just one example. To the extent that BB&K has provided non-legal services, all of the records related to non-legal services are subject to disclosure under the CPRA.

- 84. If necessary, the court may review the records in-camera to determine the mix of exempt and non-exempt information.
- 85. To resolve the actual controversy that has arisen as to whether Petitioner was permitted to completely withhold all BB&K records, Petitioner requests a declaratory judgment that it was improper for Respondent to completely withhold all BB&K records.
- 86. Petitioner also requests a writ of mandate to compel disclosure of the nonexempt portions of the BB&K records.

#### FOURTH CAUSE OF ACTION

(Declaratory Relief)

- 87. Petitioner incorporates by reference each prior allegation.
- 88. Respondent did not provide Petitioner with a copy of the 20/20 Network contract because it did not have the contract in hard-copy format.
- 89. Petitioner is informed and believes that Respondent has the contract in a PDF or other electronic format.
- 90. Respondent failed to fulfill its obligations under the CPRA by failing to provide electronic records that were responsive to Petitioner's request.
- 91. Even if Petitioner's request could be interpreted so narrowly that it applied only to hard-copy documents, Respondent had a duty under the CPRA to assist Petitioner in locating records that would be responsive to the purpose of Petitioner's request.
- 92. The purpose of Petitioner's request to obtain a copy of the contract was self-evident from the language of Petitioner's request.
- 93. Respondent made no effort to assist Petitioner in locating documents that were responsive to the purpose of her request.
- 94. To resolve the actual controversy that has arisen as to whether Respondent fulfilled it duty to search electronic and non-electronic records and assist Petitioner in locating documents that would have been responsive to the

purpose of its request, Petitioner seeks a declaratory judgment that Respondent failed to adequately search its records for the 20/20 Network contract and failed to fulfill its duty to assist Petitioner in locating records responsive to her request.

#### FIFTH CAUSE OF ACTION

(Declaratory Relief)

- 95. Petitioner incorporates by reference each prior allegation.
- 96. Since Petitioner ultimately received a copy of Respondent's contract with 20/20 Network from the newspaper, a writ of mandate to compel disclosure of the contract is not necessary.
- 97. However, there is an actual controversy as to whether Respondent should have provided this document in response to Petitioner's request.
- 98. Petitioner requests a judgment for declaratory relief that Respondent should have provided Petitioner with a copy of the 20/20 Network contract.

#### SXITH CAUSE OF ACTION

- 99. Petitioner incorporates by reference each prior allegation.
- 100. From the time Petitioner requested public records to the time of Respondent's response, Petitioner is informed and believes that Respondent would have received and paid at least two invoices for services 20/20 Network provided.
- 101. While it's likely that the invoices for these services were from BB&K with payment made to BB&K, the invoices and related payments were not related to legal services and must be disclosed under the CPRA regardless of whether the invoices for 20/20 Network's services were from BB&K, 20/20 Network, or both.
- 102. To resolve the actual controversy that has arisen as to this cause of action, Petitioner requests a declaratory judgment that Respondent is required to

disclose any invoices and payments related to the services it received from 20/20 Network.

103. Petitioner also requests a writ of mandate to compel disclosure of the 20/20 Network invoices and payments.

#### SEVENTH CAUSE OF ACTION

(Declaratory Relief & Writ of Mandate)

- 104. Petitioner incorporates by reference each prior allegation.
- 105. Petitioner's request number 1.A included a request for Respondent's contracts, invoices, and prior expenditures related to Hayward Consulting Group.
- 106. Respondent did not provide a contract nor did it provide an invoice for Respondent's December 2014 payment to Hayward Consulting Group.
- 107. Petitioner is informed and believes Respondent possesses a contract with and a December 2014 invoice from Hayward Consulting Group.
- 108. Petitioner requests declaratory judgment that Respondent violated the CPRA and a writ of mandate to compel disclosure of these records.

#### **EIGHTH CAUSE OF ACTION**

- 109. Petitioner incorporates by reference each prior allegation.
- 110. Petitioner's request number 3 was a request for the contract with True North Research ("True North") along with invoices and payments related to a phone survey True North conducted for Respondent in August 2014.
- 111. The only document Respondent provided was a 2011 contract with True North. As fully set forth above, this document was not responsive to the request.
- 112. Petitioner is informed and believes Respondent possesses a separate contract for the 2014 phone survey.

- 113. Petitioner is further informed and believes that Respondent paid True North, whether directly or through BB&K as its agent, for the phone survey and possesses records related to the payment(s).
- 114. While Respondent has not asserted that this information is exempt from disclosure, the possible inclusion of BB&K on the contract and related records does not trigger any CPRA exemptions because BB&K's involvement in the phone survey was not related to legal services.
- 115. Petitioner requests declaratory judgment that Respondent violated the CPRA and a writ of mandate to compel full disclosure of the records Petitioner requested.

## **NINTH CAUSE OF ACTION**

(Writ of Mandate)

- 116. Petitioner incorporates by reference each prior allegation.
- 117. In its response to Petitioner's request related to 20/20 Network,
  Respondent disclaimed possession of responsive hard-copy records. Petitioner
  is informed and believes that Respondent possessed responsive electronic
  records related to the request.
- 118. In its response to every other request, Respondent provided hard-copy records, leaving open the possibility that there were also undisclosed electronic records.
- 119. Petitioner is informed and believes Respondent limited its search only to hard-copy documents and did not search for nor provide any electronic records it possesses.
- 120. Petitioner is informed and believes that Respondent possesses PDF and other electronic records responsive to Petitioner's other requests that were not disclosed because they are not "hard-copy" documents.
- 121. Petitioner requests a Writ of Mandate ordering Respondent to search for and disclose any electronic records responsive to Petitioner's requests.

1	VERIFICATION
2	
3	I, Leane Lee, declare that I am the petitioner in the above-entitled action. I have read the
4	foregoing VERIFIED FIRST AMENDED PETITION FOR WRIT OF MANDATE;
5	COMPLAINT FOR DECLARATORY RELIEF and know the contents thereof to be true
6	of my own knowledge, except as to those statements made upon information and belief,
7	and as to those I believe them to be true.
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9	I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of California that the
10	foregoing is true and correct.
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12	Executed on July 20, 2015 in Apple Valley CA.
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14	Leane Lee
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## **TABLE OF EXHIBITS**

Exhibit	Description	Reference
A	Petitioner's April 13, 2015 CPRA Request.	¶ 19
В	Respondent's April 23, 2015 response to Petitioner's request.	¶ 21
С	Respondent's May 11, 2015 response to Petitioner's request.	¶ 28
D	March 15, 2015 Press Dispatch article: "Contract for PR services made a public record."	¶ 40
E	Contract for PR services between BB&K, 20/20 Network, and Respondent.	¶ 42
F	The 2011 contract with True North Research Respondent provided in response to Petitioner's request for records related to 2014 phone survey.	¶ 47
G	Research report regarding 2014 phone survey conducted by True North Research.	¶ 52

1	PROOF OF SERVICE	
2	I, the undersigned, declare under penalty of perjury that:	
3	I am a citizen of the United States, over the age of 18, and not a party to this action. My business address is 1101 California Ave., Ste 100, Corona, CA 92881.	
5	On July 20, 2015, I served the following:	
6 7	1. Verified First Amended Petition for Writ of Mandate; Complaint for Declaratory Relief	
8 9 10	on the following party(ies) in this action: see attached list	
11		
12 13 14	_X_ BY MAIL: I enclosed the documents in a sealed envelope or package addressed to the persons at the addressees listed above and deposited the sealed envelope with the United States Postal Service, with the postage fully prepaid.	
15 16	BY OVERNIGHT DELIVERY: I enclosed the documents in an envelope addressed to the parties at the addresses listed above. I placed the envelope or package for collection and overnight delivery at an office or regularly utilized drop box of the overnight delivery carrier.	
17 18	BY FAX: By causing said document(s) to be faxed to said party(ies) at the fax number(s) listed above. The fax number from which I served the electronic documents is (866) 495-9985.	
19 20	BY ELECTRONIC MAIL: By causing true copy(ies) of PDF versions of said document to be sent to the e-mail addresses of each party listed. The email address from which I served the documents is chad@chadmorgan.com.	
21   22   23	I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of California that the foregoing is true and correct, and that this declaration was executed on July 20, 2015 at Corona, California.	
23   24		
25	CHAD D. MORGAN	
26		
27		
28		

1	SERVICE LIST		
2			
3	Richard T. Egger and Jessica K. Lomakin	<b>Attorneys for Respondent</b> Town of Apple Valley	
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