

October 7, 2026

Board of Directors
Joshua Basin Water District

Re: Public Comment, October 7, 2026, Agenda Item 7B: Resolution No. 26-1100 and San Bernardino County's Request Regarding Phase I Septic-to-Sewer Planning

Dear President Doolittle and Members of the Board:

I write to urge caution before the Board gives its support to the County's septic-to-sewer study.

A sewer system would be one of the biggest decisions Joshua Tree makes in a generation. It would affect the groundwater basin, costs to households, and who runs a system residents would depend on for decades. A decision that size works best when the agencies involved plan it together. JBWD manages the groundwater, holds the water-quality data, and has wastewater responsibilities of its own. It belongs at the table from the start.

That has not happened. On April 1, 2026, County representatives told this Board they would return regularly as Phase I moved forward. Since then, JBWD has asked more than once for presentations and an opportunity to work together. Those requests have not led to the engagement the County described.

There is also no memorandum of understanding. No written agreement sets out what the County decides, what JBWD decides, or how disagreements between the agencies are resolved.

Transparency has been limited as well. The County's September 28, 2026 letter answered four consolidated questions and described most of the Board's remaining questions as matters Phase I will answer. According to that letter, the public tracking mechanism for the project "remains to be determined." The August 20, 2026 letter suggested project funding was at risk, but the County has not identified a deadline.

The County has asked for a yes or a no. In that setting, even qualified support is likely to be read as simple support, and its conditions are likely to be set aside. According to the County, only \$4,525 has been spent and the consultant's scope of work has not been issued. There is no reason to rush.

I ask the Board to make its support depend on real collaboration first:

- a written agreement on the roles of the County and JBWD;
- a real voice in the Phase I scope of work; and
- regular public updates to the Board.

The Board should also keep every right to say no. If those conditions are not met, waiting is a reasonable answer.

Whatever the Board decides, I trust it to put the basin and the people it serves first. Thank you for considering these comments.

Respectfully submitted,

Erin Gatlin