

To: Kristina Lawson, Chair

Bay Area Council Executive Committee

Subject: All Things Must Pass

Some of you will recall George Harrison released that song and triple album by same name back in 1970. It can be interpreted in a number of ways but basically it's about life moving on.

So, well into my 22nd year as CEO of the Bay Area Council, it is time for me to move on. Of course I've given this a lot of thought, and I feel the time is right both for me and our organization.

I'm incredibly proud of what we've built. BAC had a strong foundation as a regional leadership group back in 2004 when I was named CEO. But over a generation, we've become an unusually influential and powerful group, highly sought after by decision makers, opinion leaders, and the media.

There are too many items I'm proud of to list them all here. And of course, there is so much more that needs to be done. But clearly, over the years the franchise has steadily grown as has our clout. So, a little reflection seems called for.

Early in my time, we stood up tall when Governor Schwarzenegger proposed a flat bridge would replace the damaged eastern span of the Bay Bridge. We fought, and we won. We developed a "global" strategy to recognize the power of our Pacific Rim geography to complement our regional focus, which resulted in building amazing relationships throughout Asia, as well as Europe and more recently in Africa. In terms of our geography, we expanded the concept of our Bay Area region to incorporate many more counties into a "Northern California Megaregion" and convinced the regional agencies from the Bay Area, Sacramento, and San Joaquin, for the first time, to formally work together on projects and policies of joint significance.

We merged the Bay Area Economic Forum into the Bay Area Council, creating an amazingly strong research arm that primes the pump for much of our policy work, and which deeply explores our region's economic connections with other nations and regions. We organized the Bay Area Legislative Caucus to ensure our elected state leaders would thoughtfully put the region first. We developed and passed state and regional transportation measures to address major traffic bottlenecks and shortcomings, electrifying CalTrain and replacing the BART fleet, for example. I'm thrilled that we've made so much incredible progress expanding our regional ferry system, itself a creation of the BAC.

We fought successfully to achieve universal child care in California for four year olds and created a major campaign – “Talk, Read Sing” – that became the state’s effort, and copied nationally, to address early brain development among children in disadvantaged communities. Over the past decade we’ve sponsored a series of bills that have set the stage for our region and state to address our critical housing shortage, making accessory dwelling units something most homeowners can now build at their own discretion, and we’ve cut through the CEQA nightmare to enable faster permitting and denser communities. Over the years, we’ve consistently shown huge influence over water policy, resilience and sustainability. In more recent times we’ve developed competency in public safety, for example, challenging BART leadership to make the system safe for passengers, which it has done. Now we are getting deeply involved in AI policies and data centers to assure the continued growth of the region’s most promising industries.

As I write this note, I and BAC are leading a delegation of California leaders – over 50 of them, including several state Senators, mayors, and public officials – to visit homelessness services facilities in San Antonio and Austin, TX – cities that have created successful, scaled programs to deal with the challenge, and seen the results. Two weeks ago, our delegation traveled to Illinois to explore that’s state’s leadership in clean energy and small, modular nuclear reactors. Very possibly these learning experiences will lead to new initiatives in how we deal with major challenges.

Finally, we created the New California Coalition to bring together like minded groups throughout our state to rationalize state policies going forward. It’s been exciting to see it develop.

All of this work has been incredibly rewarding. Clearly the defining job of my life. I couldn’t be prouder of the team we’ve built and the organization you are part of. None of it could have happened without the unbridled support of a series of amazing BAC Chairs, and an Executive Committee that has been consistently supportive.

However, as I opened with, I’ve been in this role for quite a long time, certainly longer than I anticipated, and I believe for any organization there comes a good time to consider new leadership, to take BAC to next plateau.

So, what’s next?

I’ve accepted a position as head of Public Affairs for California Forever, led by Jan Sramek, to build a major new city, advanced manufacturing zone, and major working shipyard in Solano County. I was intrigued by this project from the time I first heard about it since it so strongly aligns with our work on the California Megaregion (Solano sits right in the middle). I was informed by economic impact work our BACEI performed exploring the viability of

new cities in our state, focusing on this one (and another study on the economic impact of this incredible project is well underway; the number of good paying jobs is simply amazing). Anyone who has paid attention to our monthly SF Bay Ferry Board meetings knows I routinely speak to my desire to build our own ferries in our own region - but we lack the capacity. The shipyard will enable just that – but much more – it will allow the United States to begin to catch up on commercial shipbuilding, while serving the needs of our Navy and national defense. And bring a legacy industry back to the Bay Area.

In my view the California Forever proposal is the most important initiative in California, in a very long time. The notion of producing quality, affordable, dense, market rate housing and middle wage jobs at scale is so attractive and epitomizes everything we stand for. After working on so many policy objectives, I am really excited to make this my focus.

I plan to work full time through the end of 2025 and join California Forever in January. However, Jan has made it very clear that he very much supports BAC (they are an active member) and will support my continuing to help BAC through the transition period, in whatever form that takes.

Again, I deeply value the Bay Area Council, its leadership, members, team, and the region we support.

All the Best,

Jim