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**OFFICE OF THE  
CITY ATTORNEY**

SHARON SIEDORF CARDENAS  
CITY ATTORNEY

THEODORE H. KOBEY, JR.  
ASSISTANT CITY ATTORNEY

SR. DEPUTY CITY ATTORNEYS:  
SAMUEL L. JACKSON  
WILLIAM P. CARNAZZO

**CITY OF SACRAMENTO  
CALIFORNIA**

921 TENTH STREET  
SUITE 700  
SACRAMENTO, CA  
95814-2717

PH. 916-449-5346  
FAX 916-449-6755

May 22, 1991

DEPUTY CITY ATTORNEYS:  
EVELYN M. MATTEUCCI  
DIANE B. BALTER  
RICHARD F. ANTOINE  
TAMARA MILLIGAN-HARMON  
RICHARD E. ARCHIBALD  
TIMOTHY N. WASHBURN  
SABRINA M. THOMPSON  
JOSEPH MCINERNEY  
JOE ROBINSON  
LESLIE R. LOPEZ

Law and Legislation Committee  
Sacramento, California

**SUBJECT: AB 883 (Boland) Regarding Public Liability**

Honorable Members in Session:

**SUMMARY**

This report recommends that the Law and Legislation Committee express the City's opposition to AB 883 (Boland) regarding public liability.

**BACKGROUND**

The Government Code currently provides an immunity to governmental entities and their employees for injuries caused by the issuance, denial, suspension or revocation of, or by the failure or refusal to issue, deny, suspend or revoke a permit, license or similar authorization when the public entity or its employee is authorized to determine whether it should be issued, denied, suspended or revoked. Judicial decisions have limited this immunity to discretionary decisions.

AB 883 expands local liability.

AB 883 expresses its intent to codify one of the judicial decisions. However, it appears to go further than necessary. Moreover, the expansion of liability would apply only to local entities, not the state, even though the immunity is granted to both local and state entities. The most troubling aspect of the bill is that it provides for the local entity to pay attorney fees.

**FINANCIAL DATA**

It is likely that enactment of AB 883 would lead to increased litigation and settlement expenditures for cities, including Sacramento.

**POLICY CONSIDERATIONS**

None.

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**MBE/WBE**

Not Applicable

**RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Law & Legislation Committee express its opposition to AB 883 (Boland).

Respectfully submitted,

SHARON SIEDORF CARDENAS, City Attorney



DIANE B. BALTER  
Deputy City Attorney

Contact Person to  
Answer Questions:

Diane B. Balter  
Deputy City Attorney  
449-5346

Law and Legislation  
May 30, 1991  
All Districts

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY APRIL 2, 1991

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE—1991-92 REGULAR SESSION

**ASSEMBLY BILL**

**No. 883**

**Introduced by Assembly Member Boland**

February 28, 1991

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An act to amend Sections 818.4 and 821.2 of the Government Code, relating to civil liability.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 883, as amended, Boland. Public liability: property development.

Existing law specifies that public entities and employees are not liable for failure to issue a permit or other authorization where the public entity or employee is authorized by enactment to determine whether the permit or other authorization should be issued.

This bill would make a *local* public entity ~~or employee~~ liable for wrongful refusal, after a proper request, to issue an authorization for development of property where issuance of the authorization is a ministerial act or mandatory duty. This liability would include liability for attorney's fees. The bill would also declare legislative intent and specify that the bill's remedy is nonexclusive.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: no. State-mandated local program: no.

*The people of the State of California do enact as follows:*

1 SECTION 1. Section 818.4 of the Government Code  
2 is amended to read:

3 818.4. (a) A public entity is not liable for an injury  
4 caused by the issuance, denial, suspension or revocation  
5 of, or by the failure or refusal to issue, deny, suspend or  
6 revoke, any permit, license, certificate, approval, order,  
7 or similar authorization where the public entity or an  
8 employee of the public entity is authorized by enactment  
9 to determine whether or not such authorization should  
10 be issued, denied, suspended or revoked.

11 (b) Where issuance of a permit, license, certificate,  
12 approval entitlement, or other authorization for the  
13 development of real property constitutes a ministerial act  
14 or mandatory duty of a *local* public entity and the *local*  
15 public entity wrongfully refuses to perform that  
16 ministerial act or mandatory duty after a proper request  
17 by the applicant, the *local* public entity shall be liable to  
18 the applicant for damages, including attorney's fees,  
19 caused by that refusal. This remedy is nonexclusive and  
20 shall be in addition to any other available remedy, and  
21 nothing in this subdivision shall be construed to limit or  
22 supersede other remedies.

23 SEC. 2. Section 821.2 of the Government Code is  
24 amended to read:

25 821.2. (a) A public employee is not liable for an  
26 injury caused by his *or her* issuance, denial, suspension  
27 or revocation of, or by his *or her* failure or refusal to issue,  
28 deny, suspend or revoke, any permit, license, certificate,  
29 approval, order, or similar authorization where he *or she*  
30 is authorized by enactment to determine whether or not  
31 such authorization should be issued, denied, suspended  
32 or revoked.

33 (b) Where issuance of a permit, license, certificate,  
34 approval entitlement, or other authorization for the  
35 development of real property constitutes a ministerial act  
36 or mandatory duty of a public employee *of a local public*  
37 *entity* and the public employee wrongfully refuses to  
38 perform that ministerial act or mandatory duty after a

1 proper request by the applicant, the *local* public entity  
2 shall be liable to the applicant for damages, including  
3 attorney's fees, caused by that refusal. This remedy is  
4 nonexclusive and shall be in addition to any other  
5 available remedy, and nothing in this subdivision shall be  
6 construed to limit or supersede other remedies.

7 SEC. 3. The Legislature finds and declares that this  
8 act is intended to codify the holding in *Ellis v. City*  
9 Council, 222 Cal. App. 2d 490.