

Nicholas GHIRELLI

Shareholder

ORANGE COUNTY

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Nick is an experienced public agency attorney who advises on a wide range of transactional, land use, and compliance matters, with a special focus on NPDES permitting and stormwater compliance. Nick is the chair of the Public Law Department where he manages the attorneys assigned to the Department and the administrative functions of the Department. He is also the assistant chair of the Firm's Environmental Department.

WORK FOR CLIENTS

Nick serves as City Attorney for the cities of Rancho Cucamonga, Seal Beach, and Paramount. Nick has previously served as Interim City Attorney for the City of Laguna Niguel. In his capacity as City Attorney, Nick has negotiated development agreements for a variety of projects and advises on all types of CEQA documents.

He serves as General Counsel for the Gateway Water Management Authority and Southeast Water Coalition, two Los Angeles-based joint powers authorities. Nick also provides legal counsel to the Contra Costa Clean Water Program, which administers a county-wide stormwater program on behalf of its member agencies.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

From 2007 through 2010, Nick worked for U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein as a member of her legislative staff in Washington D.C.

During law school, Nick externed with the Honorable R. Gary Klausner at the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California and clerked for the Office of the Los Angeles City Attorney. He graduated Order of the Coif and was also a Senior Research Editor for the *Loyola of Los Angeles Law Review*.

PRACTICE AREAS

Environment & Natural Resources

Municipal & Public Agency Law

Water Rights and Water Law

FOCUS AREAS

Brown Act & Open Government

Land Use Planning & Zoning (Municipal)

Stormwater Discharge (NPDES Permits)

Subdivision Map Act

Water Rights & Water Law

EDUCATION

J.D., *cum laude*, Order of the Coif, Loyola Law School, Los Angeles

B.A., with honors, University of California, Santa Barbara

PROFESSIONAL AND COMMUNITY AFFILIATIONS

Member, Los Angeles County Bar Association

Member, California Stormwater Quality Association

City Attorneys Department representative, League of California Cities Environmental Quality Policy Committee (2021-2022)

Parliamentarian, League of California Cities (2022-2024)

Inland Empire Division Representative, League of California Cities Legal Advocacy Committee (2023-2025)

EXPERIENCE

HIGHLIGHTED PROJECTS

Nick has substantial experience representing municipal clients on stormwater (MS4) regulation and compliance matters relating to the Clean Water Act and Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act. He represented a diverse group of cities in Los Angeles County in litigation involving the 2012 Los Angeles County Stormwater Permit and then advised on the reissuance of the permit in 2021.

Nick assisted the City of Rancho Cucamonga in negotiating a complex real estate transaction to facilitate the development of a privately-owned high-speed rail station at the Cucamonga Metrolink Station. In connection with that transaction, Nick obtained a successful determination that the City's land sale to the high-speed rail developer is exempt from the Surplus Land Act.

Nick has been involved in drafting and negotiating agreements for major development and public works projects, including agreements between the City of Beverly Hills and the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority governing construction of the Purple Line Subway Extension.

NEWS

Legislatively Enacted Traffic Impact Fee Survives Constitutional Challenge
08.07.2025

"Beach Yoga" in a Public Park is Protected by the First Amendment
06.24.2025

Public Agencies Not Liable for Dog Bite Injuries Before a Potentially Aggressive Dog Is Officially Declared Dangerous
07.31.2024

Legislative Conditions on Land-Use Permits Are Subject to the Fifth Amendment's Takings Clause
04.18.2024

The Impact of One City's Designated Truck Routes on a Neighboring City's Streets Is Not a Public Nuisance
02.12.2024

Public Agencies May Levy New Development Impact Fees, Despite Contract Providing Otherwise
08.01.2023

Chemical Companies Will Pay Billions to Water Systems to Settle PFAS Claims
07.12.2023

A Public Agency Meeting Agenda Must Identify a Project's CEQA Exemption Under the Brown Act
10.27.2022

Governor Signs New Housing and Parking Legislation
09.29.2022

New Law Requires Ministerial Approval of Duplexes and Urban Lot Splits
09.21.2021

CEQA Lead Agencies Must Retain Project E-mails
08.21.2020

A Closed Session May Violate the Brown Act Where Litigation Threat Is Not Identified in the Publicly Available Agenda Packet
02.18.2020

City's Transfer of Revenue from Municipal Electric Utility to General Fund to Recover Costs of City Services Upheld
09.10.2018

Court of Appeal Holds that Provisions of San Diego County MS4 Permit Constitute Unfunded State Mandates
12.20.2017

Governor Brown Signs SB 231 Regarding Stormwater Fees
10.23.2017

California Supreme Court Rules That Municipal Stormwater Permit Requirements May Constitute Unfunded State Mandates

08.29.2016

PRESENTATIONS

The Brown Act in a Modern World

CSDA Annual Conference, 09.10.2024

Who Does What and Why: Establishing Good Governance

CSDA Special District Leadership Academy, San Diego, 04.16.2024

The Brown Act in a Modern World

CSDA Board Secretary/Clerk Conference, 11.08.2023

Your Board Member Resigned.....Now What?

CSDA Board Secretary/Clerk Conference, 11.08.2023

Recent Updates to the Brown Act and Social Media Usage

CSDA's Special District Leadership Academy, 09.2022

Understanding California's Prohibition on Gifts of Public Funds

California Special Districts Association 2021 Board Secretary/Clerk's Conference, 10.2021

How to Collect Unpaid Bills: New Restrictions on Discontinuing Water Service Under SB 998

California Special Districts Association Webinar, 03.11.2020

Stormwater Update

ACC-OC (Association of California Cities Orange County) Energy, Environment & Water Committee, 03.02.2020

Understanding Public Service Ethics Laws and Principles (AB 1234) Training for the New Mayors & Council Members Academy

League of California Cities 2020 New Mayors and Council Members Academy, 01.24.2020

The Public Records Act and the Brown Act

California City Clerks Association's Annual "Nuts and Bolts" Seminars

Untangling the Law: Important Legal Updates for Board Secretaries and Clerks

California Special Districts Association's Board Secretary/Clerk Conference, 11.13.2019

How to Collect on Unpaid Bills: New Restrictions on Discontinuing Water Service
California Special Districts Association Annual Conference, 11.25-28.2019

Los Angeles County MS4 Permit Litigation Update
City Attorney's Association of Los Angeles County Retreat, 03.15.2019

How to Build and Maintain the Public's Trust: Practical Ethics and the Law (AB 1234)
League of California Cities Planning Commissioners Academy, 03.06.2019

PUBLICATIONS

Decoding Meeting Requirements of AB 2449
California Special Districts Magazine, Volume 19, Issue 1, January - February, 2024

Senate Bill 998: How California Can Effectively Prepare for New Restrictions on Discontinuing Residential Water Service
California Special Districts Magazine, Volume 15, Issue 1, January - February 2020

Governor Brown Signs SB 231 Regarding Stormwater Fee Authority
CSMFO Magazine, 11.2017