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8	SUPERIOR COURT OF THI	E STATE OF CALIFORNIA	
9	CITY AND COUN	TTY OF SONOMA	
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11	FRIENDS OF NORTHWEST SEBASTOPOL, a California nonprofit mutual benefit corporation,	Case No. SCV-270053	
12	Petitioner,	EX PARTE APPLICATION FOR ALTERNATIVE WRIT OF	
13	v.	ADMINISTRATIVE MANDAMUS;	
14	CITY OF SEBASTOPOL, acting by and through	MEMORANDUM	
15	the Sebastopol City Council,	Petition filed: January 21, 2022	
16	Respondent.	Judge: Hon. Arthur Wick	
17	SONOMA APPLIED VILLAGES SERVICES, a	-	
18	California nonprofit mutual benefit corporation; and ST. VINCENT DE PAUL DISTRICT		
19	COUNCIL OF SONOMA COUNTY, INCORPORATED, a California nonprofit mutual		
20	benefit corporation,		
21	Real Parties in Interest.		
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## EX PARTE APPLICATION FOR ALTERNATIVE WRIT OF MANDAMUS

Petitioner Friends of Northwest Sebastopol hereby applies ex parte for an alternative writ of administrative mandamus directing respondent City of Sebastopol, at its first opportunity, to set aside its November 30, 2021 decision to move an RV encampment project from Morris Street, Sebastopol, to private property at 845 Gravenstein Highway, or in the alternative to show cause in this Court, by February 16, 2022, why it has not done so.

This ex parte application for an alternative writ is made under CCP §§ 1087, 1088, and 1107. An alternative writ of mandamus is issued ex parte when the allegations of the petition suffice to state a prima facie case for a writ of mandamus. (*Dare v. Board of Medical Examiners* (1943) 21 Cal.2d 790, 796.) Here, each of the four counts of the petition allege that respondent City of Sebastopol prejudicially abused its discretion by making a decision to approve an RV encampment, which decision was not in accordance with municipal law, including provisions prohibiting living in RVs (Sebastopol Municipal Code § 17.100.070(C)(4)), or State law, including CEQA, over the objections of current members of Petitioner and without any CEQA review or exemption. Prejudicial abuse of discretion is grounds for issuance of a writ of mandamus. (CCP § 1094.5(b).) Because the petition states a prima facie case for a writ of mandamus, an alternative writ should issue ex parte.

Proofs of service of the petition on respondent and real parties in interest will be filed by the ex parte application date of February 1. Petitioner's memorandum on the merits in support of a peremptory writ of mandamus is included with this application. Petitioner has lodged, and intends to proceed on the basis of, a partial administrative record. (*See Elizabeth D. v. Zolin* (1993) 21 Cal.App.4th 347, 355 (a partial record lodged by petitioner can be sufficient to establish prejudicial abuse of discretion).) Petitioner is content to proceed on the basis of the partial record it has lodged.

Petitioner seeks the earliest possible hearing date on the merits, so as to avoid undue hardship and uncertainty to the residents of the RV encampment the City seeks to move from Morris Street to

Granvenstein Highway,¹ and to avoid any need for Petitioner to seek a stay or temporary restraining order preserving the status quo before the merits are heard. CCP § 1088 allows for a hearing on the merits in writ cases so long as there is "at least ten days" notice. CCP § 1107 provides that a respondent and any motivated real parties in interest should file "points and authorities in opposition to the granting of the writ" "[w]ithin five days" after service.

Consistent with these statutes, and with Petitioner's interest in proceeding to the merits as soon as possible, Petitioner proposes the following schedule:

**February 2, 2022**: Court issues alternative writ and Petitioner to serve alternative writ by email.

**February 9, 2022**: Respondent and any real parties in interest to file points and authorities in opposition to the granting of the writ and serve by email.

February 11, 2022: Petitioner to file reply and serve by email.

February 16, 2022, 3pm: Hearing on the merits

Prior to filing this application, counsel for Petitioner met-and-conferred by phone and email with counsel for respondent City of Sebastopol and real party in interest St. Vincent De Paul District Council of Sonoma County Incorporated ("St. Vincent"), and by email with real party in interest Sonoma Applied Villages Services ("SAVS"). Sebastopol and St. Vincent would not agree to stay the project pending a hearing on the merits, and also would not agree to the schedule proposed by Petitioner. Sebastopol insisted on "the preparation and certification of an administrative record" which "cannot be done on the schedule" proposed. (Declaration of Peter Prows, Exhibit 1, January 28, 3:09pm email.) SAVS has not responded to any emails by Petitioner, but counsel for Sebastopol reported being in touch with SAVS and represented that SAVS also did not agree to Petitioner's proposed schedule. (*Id.*)

Petitioner then explained to Sebastopol that this case may proceed with a partial administrative record lodged by Petitioner, and that Sebastopol "should be free to argue on the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The press is reporting that the current plan may be to start moving the RV encampment in mid-February. ("Sebastopol neighborhood group files lawsuit to stop safe parking program for homeless people in RVs", *Press Democrat*, January 29, 2022.)

1	merits that [Petitioner has] not lodged a sufficient record to show an abuse of discretion, or to		
2	supplement the record with any other appropriate mat	terials [Sebastopol would] like." (Id., January	
3	28, 4:02pm email.)		
4	This application is based on the verified petition for writ of mandamus, the accompanying		
5	memorandum, the partial administrative record, the declaration of Peter Prows, and such other and		
6	further evidence as may be presented at the hearing of	n this application.	
7			
8	Dated: January 31, 2022	By: /s/ Peter Prows	
9		Peter Prows Briscoe Ivester & Bazel LLP	
10	$\parallel$	Attorneys for Petitioner	
11	F	FRIENDS OF NORTHWEST SEBASTOPOL	
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## MEMORANDUM IN SUPPORT OF WRIT OF MANDAMUS

## I. INTRODUCTION

The City of Sebastopol permitted a large RV encampment on a private lot, formerly used as a gas station, even though the Sebastopol Zoning Code flatly forbids RV encampments. Sebastopol rushed through this illegal RV encampment without even the minimum 12-days public notice required by the Zoning Code, any Planning Department Review, or any environmental review under CEQA. Sebastopol did not try to justify its failure to follow the law. Petitioner Friends of Northwest Sebastopol, a nonprofit, is concerned about the harm this illegal and rushed project is likely to have on the local community.

In rushing to approve this illegal RV encampment, Sebastopol passed over multiple Cityowned sites where the encampment could have been sited without any Zoning Code restrictions or CEQA requirements, and another site where the City had issued, or was prepared to issue, use permits that might have lawfully allowed the RV encampment.

A writ of mandamus should issue commanding the City to set aside its decision. A writ may help Sebastopol focus on alternative sites where this encampment may be legally sited.

## II. BACKGROUND

## A. The State Streamlines RV Encampments On City-Owned Or Leased Properties

The Sebastopol Zoning Code, comprising Chapter 17 of the Sebastopol Municipal Code, contains strict restrictions on RVs in the City.² The Zoning Code flatly forbids living or working in recreational vehicles anywhere within the City limits. (Sebastopol Municipal Code § 17.100.070(C)(4) ("Recreational vehicles may be stored on properties if placement conforms to applicable setback requirements, but shall not be occupied or used for residential, commercial, industrial, or other purposes"); *see id.* § 17.04.080 ("…no uses shall be established, substituted, expanded, constructed, altered, moved, or otherwise changed … except in conformity with the Zoning Code").) That particular prohibition controls over any more general provisions of the Zoning Code. (*See id.* § 17.08.020(A) ("The particular shall control the general.").)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> A recreational vehicle ("RV") is a motor home, travel trailer, truck camper, or camping trailer designed for human habitation. (Sebastopol Municipal Code § 17.08.119.)

Government Code section 8698.4 exempts "safe parking" projects for the homeless on "a parking lot owned or leased by a city" (para. (c)(1)) with a declared homeless emergency, from "any ... zoning ... laws" (para. (a)(2)(A)(ii)) and from CEQA (para. (a)(4)). Sebastopol has declared a homeless emergency. (Partial Administrative Record ("PAR") at 133 (approving resolution proclaiming the existence of a local homeless emergency in Sebastopol).)

Sebastopol could have relied on this exemption to approve an RV encampment on cityowned or leased property without concern for restrictions in its Zoning Code or for CEQA. But this Government Code section does not provide any exemptions for RV encampments on property not owned or leased by a city.

## B. Sebastopol Passes Over Several Potential Sites For The RV Encampment

The RV encampment at issue is currently located on City property on Morris Street in Sebastopol. (PAR at 5 (referring to "the relocation of the RVs on Morris Street").) Because those RVs are located on City-owned property, they are exempt from the Zoning Code prohibition on living in RVs and from any need for CEQA review to allow those RVs to stay. Yet Sebastopol decided to "clear[] Morris Street". (PAR at 141.)

Sebastopol also considered using a City-owned "Public Works Storage" yard for the RV encampment. (PAR at 8.) "The viability of the [Public Works] Storage Yard has been fully explored, with largely positive results"—except for the \$130,000-\$290,000 costs required. (PAR at 6-7.) As City-owned property, the Public Works Storage Yard site would also have been exempt from the Zoning Code RV prohibition and from CEQA. Yet Sebastopol rejected this "largely positive" location as well. (PAR at 95.)

Sebastopol has also gone through a normal use permit process, via the Planning Commission, for homeless-shelter projects at a community church. (PAR at 101.) But Sebastopol did not grant a use permit or involve the Planning Commission for the RV encampment here. (*Id.*)

## C. Sebastopol Decides To Permit The RV Encampment For 845 Gravenstein

Through at least November 17, 2021, Sebastopol had been planning to move the Morris Street RV encampment to the City-owned Public Works Storage yard. (PAR at 85.) On November

18, Sebastopol staff began exploring moving the RV encampment to 845 Gravenstein Highway in northwest Sebastopol. (*Id.*)

845 Gravenstein is the site of an abandoned former gas service station (PAR at 66 (street-level photo of property, with abandoned AmeriGas building visible)), and is within a quarter mile of a charter school (PAR at 109). Former gas station sites raise obvious concerns for public health. Although there are unresolved "environmental issues" with the site (PAR at 118), there is no evidence this site had ever been cleaned up. There are sufficient environmental concerns about the site for St. Vincent's to have commissioned a "phase one" environmental site assessment³, but as of the date of the City's decision that assessment had not been completed (PAR at 123).

After sitting unsold for almost 300 days (PAR at 118), on November 24, 2021, Real Party in Interest St. Vincent entered escrow to purchase 845 Gravenstein (PAR at 85).

Six days later, on November 30, the Sebastopol City Council first considered moving the RV encampment at Morris Street to 845 Gravenstein, in an arrangement by which Real Party in Interest Sonoma Applied Villages Services ("SAVS") would lease the property from St. Vincent for the RV encampment. (*Id.*) The Sebastopol Planning Commission did not review the project first. (*Id.*)

When there's a "land use issue", Sebastopol must give notice to all property owners near the site, but Sebastopol did not give notice of this project to property owners nearby to 845 Gravenstein, including members of Friends. (PAR at 95 (City Manager/City Attorney admitting that "[t]hat notice was not given"); Verified Petition For Writ Of Mandate ¶ 7.) The agenda for the November 30 City Council meeting incorrectly stated that 845 Gravenstein is "City Owned Property". (PAR at 1.) The agenda did not include the statement that Government Code section 65009(b)(2) requires to be included if the City wishes to defend its action based on failure to exhaust, and says nothing about CEQA or any intent by the City to rely on a CEQA exemption. (*Id.*)

The public commenters, who despite the lack of formal notice had managed to hear about the project by word-of-mouth, were overwhelmingly opposed to the project. (PAR at 105-120.) Those

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> A "Phase One" environmental site assessment "is a report prepared for a real estate holding that identifies potential or existing environmental contamination liabilities". (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phase I environmental site assessment)

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public commenters included several current members of Friends, who objected to the lack of adequate notice and the adverse impacts that the proposed RV encampment would have on their homes, neighborhood, businesses, and school children. (Verified Petition ¶ 24.)

Despite this opposition, the City Council approved moving the RV encampment to 845 Gravenstein. (PAR at 138-1 40 (Minute Order 2021-299).) The program was designed to allow "RVs" to be "used as primary residences" at the site. (PAR at 18.) As part of the same approval, Sebastopol also entered into a memorandum of understanding with SAVS on an "operational agreement" for the encampment in which Sebastopol "agrees to permit the use of the site for a temporary RV Village ...." (PAR at 18-20 (Memorandum Of Understanding with SAVS approved by Sebastopol at November 30 meeting).) The City Council did not consider or approve any variance or exemption from the Zoning Code's ban on living in RVs, because some of the Councilmembers (erroneously) considered an RV encampment to be an already "permitted" use. (PAR at 101 ("it is a permitted use in our zoning ordinance for this zone").) The Council also made no CEQA findings or determination whether a CEQA exemption applied. (See PAR at 138-140 (no CEQA determination).)

At the same hearing, the Council also resolved to "prohibit[] RVs from moving into [845] Gravenstein]" until the RV parking concerns at Morris Street are "addressed and resolved" per modifications of the City's parking rules. (PAR 141-142.) Sebastopol has not yet adopted any changes to its parking rules.

This suit timely followed.

#### III. **AUTHORITY TO ISSUE A WRIT**

CCP § 1094.5 compels a court to "set aside" (para. (f)) agency action, and authorizes the court to "enjoin[]" the agency (para. (f)), if the agency has committed "any prejudicial abuse of discretion" (para. (b)). "Abuse of discretion is established if the respondent has not proceeded in the manner required by law". (Id. para. (b).)

Here, Sebastopol did not proceed in the manner required by law, and prejudicially abused its discretion, when it rushed to approve the RV encampment for 845 Gravenstein, even though the Zoning Code prohibits living in RVs and no variance was approved or CEQA done.

## IV. SEBASTOPOL PREJUDICIALLY ABUSED ITS DISCRETION

# A. The RV Encampment Violates The Zoning Code's Ban On Living In RVs (First Count)

The first count in the petition alleges an abuse of discretion because the RV encampment violates the Zoning Code's prohibition on residential use of RVs. Sebastopol approved an RV encampment at 845 Gravenstein, intended to be "primary residences", without any variances. (See Section II.C above.) Yet the Sebastopol Zoning Code forbids living or working in recreational vehicles anywhere within the City limits:

C. Restrictions on Certain Uses.

 $[\ldots]$ 

4. <u>Recreational vehicles</u> may be stored on properties if placement conforms to applicable setback requirements, but <u>shall not be occupied</u> <u>or used for residential</u>, commercial, industrial, or other <u>purposes</u>.

(Sebastopol Municipal Code § 17.100.070(C)(4) (underlining added added).) This particular prohibition controls over any more general provisions of the Zoning Code. (*See id.* § 17.08.020(A) ("The particular shall control the general.").)

This prohibition is to "apply throughout Sebastopol". (*Id.* § 17.100.010.) "Except as otherwise allowed by the Zoning Code, no uses shall be established, substituted, expanded, constructed, altered, moved, or otherwise changed ...." (*See id.* § 17.04.080.) "Zoning consistency shall be required for all ... structures hereinafter erected, constructed, repaired or moved ..., and for the use of vacant land or for a change in the character of the use of land, within any district established by this code." (*Id.* § 17.400.060.) Because Sebastopol approved an RV encampment even though the Zoning Code bans RV encampments in Sebastopol, Sebastopol abused its discretion by not complying with the law. This case is as simple as that.

The City Council's approval of the RV encampment cannot reasonably be characterized as the approval of a variance from the Zoning Code prohibition on living on RVs. (*See* Sebastopol Municipal Code §§ 17.420.010 *et seq.* (prescribing "the procedure for the relaxation of any substantive provision of the zoning regulations ...").) The City Council nowhere characterized its

decision as a variance. Nor could it have: variances are decided by the Planning Commission. (*Id.* § 17.420.030; *see id.* Table 17.400-1 (variance decisions made by the Planning Commission).)

The City Councilmembers who viewed an RV encampment to be a "permitted" use were just wrong. The Zoning Code flatly bans residential use of RVs. (Sebastopol Municipal Code § 17.100.070(C)(4).) This particular prohibition controls over any more general provisions of the Zoning Code. (*See id.* § 17.08.020(A) ("The particular shall control the general.") .) For example, while the Zoning Code generally permits a "homeless shelter" on properties zoned "General Commercial" (Zoning Code Table 17.25-1), that general permission does not override the particular prohibition on residential use of RVs. So while a traditional full-service homeless shelter facility, where individual rooms for people are all under the same roof, would be permitted, an RV encampment for the homeless is prohibited. (*See also* Sebastopol Municipal Code § 17.08.100 (defining "Homeless shelter" to include a "facility" with "individual rooms", but excluding any facility with "individual dwelling units").) An RV encampment at 845 Gravenstein is not permitted.

Sebastopol abused its discretion in approving an RV encampment over the Zoning Code's flat prohibition on RV encampments.

## B. Sebastopol's Approval Violated Its Permitting Procedures (Second Count)

The petition's second count alleges an abuse of discretion because the City's approval did not follow its own permitting procedures. Sebastopol agreed with SAVS "to permit" the RV encampment. (PAR at 18.) But the Zoning Code requires permits to be preceded by applications, fees, review and recommendation by the Planning Department, and CEQA compliance. (Sebastopol Municipal Code § 17.400.030(D).) But none of that was done here: the RV encampment project came straight to City Council, without any Planning Department review or CEQA. (See Section II.C above.) The City Council abused its discretion in not following its own permitting procedures before deciding to permit the RV encampment here.

## C. Sebastopol Did Not Give The Required Notice (Third Count)

The petition's third count alleges an abuse of discretion because the City did not give the public the advance notice the Zoning Code required. The Zoning Code requires that the public be given at least 12 days notice for variances, and that the notice include specific notice by mail to

owners of all properties within 600 feet of the site; even a temporary use of a year under the Zoning Code requires 12 days-notice to adjacent property owners. (Sebastopol Municipal Code § 17.400.050 and Table 17.400-2, *id.* at § 17.460.020(B)(2).) Because the Zoning Code prohibits residential RV use (see Section IV.A), such use could be allowed only with a variance. But here, because certain City Council members viewed this RV encampment as an already "permitted" use under the Zoning Code without any need for a variance (see Section II.C above), the Council acknowledged that the notice required for a variance was not given (*see id.*). Because the notice required to permit this nonpermitted use was not given, Sebastopol abused its discretion.

## D. Sebastopol Did Nothing To Comply With CEQA (Fourth Count)

The petition's fourth count alleges an abuse of discretion because the City did nothing to comply with CEQA. The City needed to comply with CEQA before approving this RV encampment.<sup>4</sup> But because certain City Council members viewed the project as a "permitted" use, the Council gave no consideration at all to CEQA. (See Section II.C above.) This was an abuse of discretion.

As an initial matter, because the RV encampment is supported by a grant from the City (PAR 18 ("Sebastopol agrees to grant reimbursement for lease amounts SAVS is required to pay for use of the site")), it may be subject to CEQA regardless of whether it requires a permit or a variance. (See Pub. Res. Code § 21065(b) (activity may be a "project" subject to CEQA if it "is supported, in whole or in part, through contracts, grants, subsidies, loans, or other forms of assistance from one or more public agencies").) The City rightly did not invoke any exemption or exception to CEQA, which generally do not apply to "changes in land use" (14 Cal. Code Regs. § 15305) such as this change

First, the agency must determine whether the proposed activity is subject to CEQA at all. Second, assuming CEQA is found to apply, the agency must decide whether the activity qualifies for one of the many exemptions that excuse otherwise covered activities from CEQA's environmental review. Finally, assuming no applicable exemption, the agency must undertake environmental review of the activity, the third tier.

(Union of Medical Marijuana Patients, Inc. v. City of San Diego (2019) 7 Cal.5th 1171, 1185.)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> CEQA compliance is a three-step process:

from a commercial gas-service station to a residential RV encampment. The property, which has unresolved "environmental issues" concerning enough for St. Vincent's to commission a Phase One environmental site assessment, would add 22 new residential units to the property and cause potentially significant negative impacts to the neighborhood, the nearby school, and surrounding businesses. (See Section II.C above.) Environmental review under CEQA was required. (See Union of Medical Marijuana Patients, Inc., 7 Cal.5th at 1187 (if there is substantial evidence of potentially significant environmental impacts, then an EIR or mitigated negative declaration is required).) The City's failure to do any kind of CEQA review to a City-funded project to which CEQA applies was an abuse of discretion.

## E. The City's Violation Of The Law Was Prejudicial

These violations of the law were prejudicial. The City failed to appreciate that residential RV uses are banned by its Zoning Code, and would require at least a variance. But the real parties likely could not get a variance here. To get a variance, they would need to show that "exceptional or extraordinary circumstances" apply to the property, that a variance "is necessary for the preservation and enjoyment of substantial property rights", and "will not ... materially affect adversely" the neighborhood. (Sebastopol Municipal Code § 17.420.020.) But no extraordinary circumstances apply to this property: the City could have more easily permitted the same project on City-owned property, but declined to do so simply to save on costs. (See Section II.B above.) Real parties made no complaints at the November 30 hearing about their property rights should the project be denied. And the neighborhood will face material adverse effects to the environment, schools, and businesses—impacts that could have been more fully fleshed out with the CEQA review the City was required, but failed, to do. (See Section II.C above.) The City's abuse of discretion was prejudicial.

## V. CONCLUSION

Sebastopol's approval of this project was a prejudicial abuse of discretion. A peremptory writ of mandamus should issue ordering the City to set aside its November 30, 2021 approval of the project.

1	DATED: January 31, 2022	BRISCOE IVESTER & BAZEL LLP
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3		Dry /a/ Daton Drossia
4		By: /s/ Peter Prows Peter Prows Attorneys for Petitioner FRIENDS OF NORTHWEST SEBASTOPOL
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CASE No. SCV-270053

APPLICATION FOR ALTERNATIVE WRIT

### PROOF OF SERVICE 1 I declare that I am over the age of eighteen years and not a party to this action. I am 2 employed in the City and County of San Francisco, and my business address is 235 Montgomery 3 Street, Suite 935, San Francisco, California 94104. 4 On January 31, 2022, at San Francisco, California, I served the following document(s) 5 EX PARTE APPLICATION FOR ALTERNATIVE WRIT OF ADMINISTRATIVE **MANDAMUS; MEMORANDUM** 6 7 on: 8 Edward Grutzmacher Robert M. Bone 9 Law Office of Robert M. Bone Meyers Nave 555 Capitol Mall, Suite 1200 645 4th Street, Suite 205 Santa Rosa, CA 95404 Sacramento, CA 95814 10 (916) 556-1531 (phone) (707) 525-8999 (phone) (916) 556-1516 (facsimile) (707) 542-4752 (facsimile) 11 Email: egrutzmacher@meyersnave.com Email: bob@robertbonelaw.com 12 Gregory Carlton Fearon 13 Sonoma Applied Villages Services 1275 4<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 101 14 Box 196 Santa Rosa, CA 95404 15 (707) 861-0646 (phone) (916) 556-1516 (facsimile) Email: tinvvillages@sonomavillages.org 16 17 ☑ BY E-MAIL OR ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION: On the date written above, I e-mailed the 18 documents to the persons on the service list at the e-mail addresses listed above. I did not receive, within a reasonable time after transmission, any electronic message or other indication that 19 transmission was unsuccessful. 20 BY FIRST CLASS MAIL: On the date written above, I deposited with the United States Postal Service a true copy of the attached document in a sealed envelope, with postage fully prepaid, 21 addressed as shown on the service list. I am aware that on motion of the party served, service is presumed invalid if the postal cancellation date or postage meter date is more than one day after the 22 date of deposit for mailing contained in this declaration. 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 document was executed on January 31, 2022, at San Francisco, California. 24 25 26 27 Arlene Won 28

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PROOF OF SERVICE