

January 14, 2015

Good Morning, Jody Timms, Fairfax, MCERA retiree Chair, 350Marin  
Divest-Invest Committee.

I thought I'd take a more personal approach today as once again, here we are at public comment time. Let me just name the obvious--This is a frustrating process, it's certainly not structured for any creative public dialogue.

Instead I have to try to squeeze my passion and perspective into three short minutes and you have to sit and listen, or not... You have no opportunity to respond to anything I say, like, "I've heard it all before, or gee, I wasn't aware of that," and I get no information back that you agree, disagree or are already working on that...

It seems like the best way for me as a pension holder to know what MCERA thinks and does, is through the Marin IJ or through more or less private appointments I set up or via personal emails I send to Mr. Wickman (which is not a very public process but has been incredibly valuable and much appreciated, I might add).

I sent an email to Mr. Wickman in mid-December asking if MCERA was actually involved in any constructive engagement. He responded, "*We meet with all of (our asset) managers at least once a year to review performance... During the reviews we ask the managers how climate change and other external factors might impact our investments.*"

*We've also met with CalPERS to understand how they go about constructive engagement. I expect we'll continue to build out our engagement process, within the limits of our organization and staff, and look for ways to partner with larger organizations where appropriate."*

This was really good to hear and I wanted to know more—what did the fund managers have to say about risks to investment? How is CalPERS going about constructive engagement? Is it working?? And what might be next for MCERA?

Do I just keep emailing Mr. Wickman all my questions? I wondered if it was legitimate for me to even share with others what I'm told through these basically private emails?

And then there is public media, the Marin IJ. Reporters can obviously have a dialogue with you, they can report gathered information in the paper and even write their own editorials. It appears the IJ would also like you to make your engagement efforts public.

I have two requests today—the first, as my own editorial stated, please take initiative, constructively engage if you will, and don't just politely ask the fossil fuel companies to reduce their emissions but be more bold and call them out on their blatant efforts to ignore the effects of their products.

Second, let at least us pension members know what you're learning from your fund managers and what you are doing to keep our pensions safe—both to keep the returns rolling in AND to ensure we have a planet to live on. Perhaps via the next quarterly newsletter.

Oh, and one more thing, any chance of having these meetings recorded, at least the audio so those of us interested can hear more of the conversations you have with each other, after work and online.

As the IJ said, returns and reforms can be done hand in hand. Marin County needs to take a lead in turning this crisis into an opportunity to change radically how we communicate, how we build resiliency, and how we survive as a species.