



July 21, 2020

Anne Grandlund, Foreperson
2019-2020 Contra Costa County Civil Grand Jury
725 Court Street
P.O. Box 431
Martinez, CA 94553-0091

RE: City of Richmond's Response to Grand Jury Report No. 2004: "Police Department Staffing"

Dear Foreperson Granlund:

In accordance with California Penal Code Sections 933.05(a) and 933.05(b), please find below the response of the City of Richmond to the findings and recommendations of the Grand Jury. The City's response is in italics directly below each finding or recommendation.

FINDINGS

1. Low officer staffing ratios and/or unfilled officer positions present challenges in maintaining police services.

Response: We agree with this finding.

2. Low officer staffing ratios and/or unfilled officer positions have resulted in reducing or eliminating staffing of traffic units, school resource officers, community outreach, or other police services.

Response: We agree with this finding.

3. Due to low officer staffing ratios and/or unfilled officer positions, officers are often required to put in mandatory overtime to cover critical services.

Response: We agree with this finding.

4. Mandatory overtime can lead to officer stress, which creates retention challenges.

Response: We agree with this finding.

5. Low officer staffing ratios and/or unfilled officer positions may contribute to increased average response times for Priority 1 calls.

Response: We agree with this finding.

6. Recruiting officers is challenging due to fewer applicants who meet the required hiring standards and complete the rigorous testing process.

Response: We agree with this finding.

7. Negative perceptions of policing and the availability of less dangerous job opportunities contribute to few applicants for law enforcement positions.

Response: We agree with this finding.

8. Each Contra Costa police agency conducts its own recruiting program to attract potential candidates.

Response: We agree with this finding.

9. The process of hiring and training new officers takes an extensive amount of time and resources to complete

Response: We agree with this finding.

10. Each Contra Costa police agency manages its own screening process for police officer positions, resulting in a replication of efforts across the county.

Response: We agree with this finding, however believe that each municipality has unique needs that require attention during the screening and hiring process.

12. Recruits and young officers have different expectations than in the past regarding work/life balance.

Response: We agree with this finding.

13. Recruits and young officers' expectations about work/life balance contribute to the challenges of officer recruiting and retention.

Response: We agree with this finding.

14. Wellness and Employee Assistance Programs offered by Contra Costa police agencies aid retention of police officers.

Response: We agree with this finding.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. The City/Town Councils of Antioch, Brentwood, Clayton, Concord, El Cerrito, Hercules, Martinez, Moraga, Oakley, Pinole, Pittsburg, Pleasant Hill, Richmond, San Pablo, San Ramon, and Walnut Creek should consider identifying funds to study the cost/benefit of a countywide screening for police officer positions, to avoid replication of these steps while allowing each city police department to select and evaluate candidates, by June 30, 2021.

Response: The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted and is not reasonable. The City of Richmond wants to continue screening applicants in order to ensure that eligible candidates' best meet the needs of the Richmond community.

3. The City/Town Councils of Antioch, Brentwood, Clayton, Concord, El Cerrito, Hercules, Martinez, Moraga, Oakley, Pinole, Pittsburg, Pleasant Hill, Richmond, San Pablo, San Ramon, and Walnut Creek should consider directing their police departments to apply annually, or when offered in 2021, to the Department of Justice COPS Hiring Program, which provides funding for hiring additional officers, by June 30, 2021.

Response: The recommendation has been implemented in the past and may be sought in the next grant process. The City has acquired grants in the past from the Department of Justice (DOJ) COPS Hiring Program, but we have found at least two challenges with the program. The maximum amount they will fund per officer is lower than our actual costs, so we still have to find sufficient additional funds to make any new hire. Another requirement is that we are not to supplant city funds with grant funds. The DOJ will look at the number of officers prior to the grant and their expectation is that with the additional funds, our total number of officers will increase and remain at that increased level for three years. This is highly unlikely given Richmond's current budget situation and especially in light of the current interest in providing city services differently, including providing less police service.

4. The City/Town Councils of Antioch, Brentwood, Clayton, Concord, El Cerrito, Hercules, Martinez, Moraga, Oakley, Pinole, Pittsburg, Pleasant Hill, Richmond, San Pablo, San Ramon, and Walnut Creek should consider identifying funds to increase the number of authorized sworn officers to fill understaffed units, such as traffic patrol and school resource officers, by June 30, 2021.

Response: The recommendation will not be implemented due to budget cuts made to the department budget for this fiscal year. This does not mean we will not have a presence and influence in such areas but we will not be able to fill these positions with the current budget.

5. The City/Town Councils of Antioch, Brentwood, Clayton, Concord, El Cerrito, Hercules, Martinez, Moraga, Oakley, Pinole, Pittsburg, Pleasant Hill, Richmond, San Pablo, San Ramon, and Walnut Creek should consider identifying funds that would permit their police departments to over-hire officer positions as a strategy for keeping departments fully staffed, by June 30, 2021.

Response: The recommendation will not be implemented due to budget cuts made to the department budget for this fiscal year. While a laudable goal, given budget constraints, over-hiring is not possible at this time.

The Richmond City Council reviewed and approved this response at their meeting on July 21, 2020.

Should there be an interest in additional clarification, please contact Captain Louie Tirona at ltirona@richmondpd.net.

Sincerely,



Laura Snideman
City Manager

cc: Tom Butt, Mayor
Rachel Sommovilla, Interim City Attorney