

July 14, 2020

Anne N. Granlund, Foreperson
Contra Costa County Grand Jury
725 Court Street
P.O. Box 431
Martinez Ca, 94553



RE: City of San Pablo Response to Grand Jury Report No. 2004, "Police Staffing"

Dear Ms. Granlund:

As requested, the following is in response to Grand Jury Report No. 2004, "Police Staffing" in the format you requested. Please note that because many of the Grand Jury's findings are general and not necessarily specific to the City of San Pablo, we do not have the basis to agree or disagree on many of the findings since we do not have all the information to review from the cities/agencies in Contra Costa County as the Grand Jury did when they prepared this report. We appreciate the time that the Grand Jury spent considering these matters.

List of findings

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

Response: The City of San Pablo agrees with this finding.

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, and other police services.

Response: The City of San Pablo partially agrees with finding #2. The West Contra Costa Unified School District's five-member board voted unanimously on June 10, 2020 to cancel the District's contracts with local police departments for school resource officers, or campus police, thus eliminating the funding program effective July 1, 2020.

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

Response: The City of San Pablo partially agrees with finding #3. There are many factors that result in mandatory overtime to cover critical services including, scheduled vacation, mandatory court appearance, illness, FMLA, mandated training, comp time and other leaves.

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

Response: The City of San Pablo partially agrees with finding #4. There are many factors that contribute to officer stress including responding to critical incidents, frequent rotating shifts and regular changes in duties. Retaining qualified officers presents challenges that extend beyond reducing mandatory overtime. Lack of benefits and incentives, reduced pay, inadequate training, low morale, shift work and length of commute can also contribute to retention challenges.

Finding #5: Low officer staffing ratios and/or unfilled positions may contribute to increased average response times for Priority 1 (emergency) calls.

Response: The City of San Pablo agrees with finding #5.

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

Response: The City of San Pablo agrees with finding #6.

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

Response: The City of San Pablo agrees with finding #7.

Finding #8: Each Contra Costa police agency (except those that contract with the Sheriff's Office) conducts its own recruiting program to attract potential applicants.

Response: The City of San Pablo cannot answer this finding as the City cannot speak on the behalf of, or address, recruiting practices of another agency. The City of San Pablo conducts its own recruiting.

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

Response: The City of San Pablo agrees with finding #9.

Finding #10: Each Contra Costa police agency (except those that contract with the Sheriff's Office) manages its own screening process for police officer positions, resulting in a replication of efforts across the County.

Response: The City of San Pablo cannot answer this finding as the City cannot speak on the behalf of, or address, the screening processes of another agency. The City of San Pablo conducts its own screening process.

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

Response: The City of San Pablo agrees with finding #12.

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

Response: The City of San Pablo agrees with finding #13.

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

Response: The City of San Pablo agrees with finding #14.

City's Response to Grand Jury Recommendations 2,3,4,5

Recommendations

Recommendation #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 process 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 reasonable. Police agencies in the county have different needs based upon the communities they serve. The City has been successful in its recruitment efforts.

Recommendation #3: The Sheriff, and the City/Town Councils of Antioch, Brentwood, Clayton, Concord, Danville, El Cerrito, Hercules, Lafayette, Martinez, Moraga, Oakley, Orinda, 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 will not be implemented because it is not reasonable. The Department of Justice COPS Hiring Program grant requires matching funds from the applicant city. The City of San Pablo does not have funds available for the required grant match. The San Pablo Police Department actively participates in State and Federal grant programs that fund staffing, equipment and enforcement programs for tobacco, traffic and alcohol.

Recommendation #4: The Sheriff, and the City/Town Councils of Antioch, Brentwood, Clayton, Concord, Danville, El Cerrito, Hercules, Lafayette, Martinez, Moraga, Oakley, Orinda, 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 has been implemented. The City of San Pablo staffs a full-time traffic unit to include a motorcycle team and a commercial enforcement unit. The San Pablo Police sought and were awarded grant funding in 2020 through the Office of Traffic Safety to support staffing, education and enforcement. As to school resource officers, as previously addressed above, the West Contra Costa Unified School District's five-member board voted unanimously on June 10, 2020 to cancel the District's contracts with local police departments for school resource officers, or campus police, thus eliminating the funding program effective July 1, 2020.

Recommendation #5: The Sheriff, and the City/Town Councils of Antioch, Brentwood, Clayton, Concord, Danville, El Cerrito, Hercules, Lafayette, Martinez, Moraga, Oakley, Orinda, 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 because it is not reasonable. The city of San Pablo does not have funds available for over-hiring police officer positions.

We hope the City of San Pablo's responses to the findings and recommendations outlined in Grand Jury Report No. 2004 are helpful to the Grand Jury's purposes.

Sincerely,



Arturo Cruz
Mayor