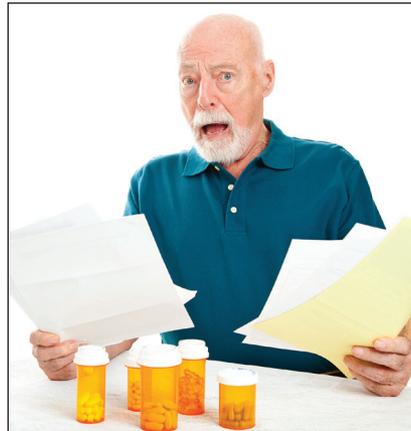
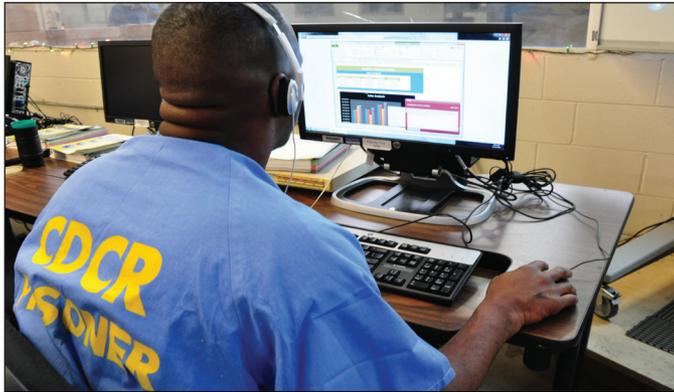


MARIN COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY

FY 2016-2017

Final Report Summaries



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Front row (left-to-right): Jon Showstack, Sheila Lyons, Court Executive Officer James Kim, Presiding Judge Kelly V. Simmons, Foreman Jay Hamilton-Roth, Assistant County Counsel Jack Govi, Jackie Dagg, Victor Harris, Joan Lunderville
 Back row (left-to-right): René Rondeau, David Gabriel, Ron Brown, Wanda Sarti, Larry Reed, Brian Salmen, Sara Klein, Richard Rozen, Barbara Grosso, Robin Keller, Bill Werner. Not shown: Peter Wardle and Riva Nelson

Photographer: Stuart Lirette

To the Citizens of Marin County:

On behalf of my fellow jurors, I am pleased to present the following synopses of the eight reports published by the 2016-2017 Marin County Civil Grand Jury. The 19 volunteer members of our jury dedicated their one-year term of service to investigating, researching, writing and publishing reports on topics that affect the citizens of Marin. During our

term we launched 38 investigations, reviewed 55 public complaints, toured 15 facilities (including Marin County Juvenile Hall, Marin County Jail and San Quentin State Prison) and monitored 126 agencies' responses to previous grand jury reports.

As Foreman of the 2016-2017 Marin County Civil Grand Jury it was my pleasure and honor to serve with 18 other dedicated,

passionate and committed Marin residents.

In addition to those on this year's jury, I would like to thank Presiding Judge Kelly V. Simons for her wisdom, Assistant County Council Jack Govi for his legal advice, Aide to the Grand Jury Patti Church for her devotion, the Marin Chapter of the California Grand Jury Association for their support, and prior members

of the Marin County Civil Grand Jury for their collective knowledge.

Respectfully submitted,
Jay Hamilton-Roth, Foreman
 2016-2017 Marin County Civil Grand Jury

Full versions of all Grand Jury reports (and their public responses) are accessible online at:
<http://MarinCounty.org/GrandJury>

Application and Contact Information:

For more information or a civil grand jury application, please write, Marin County Civil Grand Jury c/o 3501 Civic Center Drive, Rm. 275 San Rafael, CA 94903 or call Patti Church, Aide to the Grand Jury, Phone: (415) 473-6132; TTY: (415) 473-2226 or email: PChurch@marincounty.org

2016-2017 MARIN COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT SUMMARIES

OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

Marin is an expensive place to live, not only for low-income residents but also the average wage earner. This report offers solutions to improve housing affordability for all households. The residents of Marin experience the results of the high cost of housing in many ways, including the fact that our roadways are congested with the cars of commuters, the financial strain that high housing costs put on low and moderate income households, problems caused by homeless living on the streets, and the likelihood that our children will have to leave the county to find someplace where they can afford a home.

The Grand Jury researched how communities (both inside and outside of Marin County) have addressed key problems of housing affordability that could be applied throughout Marin:

- **Community resistance** forms a barrier to virtually any new development in Marin. Vocal opposition serves to constrain the actions of civic leadership. Attempts to satisfy the needs of the developer and the needs of the community simultaneously are often ineffective. We highlight several examples where proactive involvement of the community with planners and developers has been successful in creating projects that are win-wins. We suggest that efforts to create early discussions between these parties will help to overcome this barrier.
- **It is expensive to build in Marin.** The high cost of land and construction form a formidable barrier to affordability, particularly in

the case of low-income affordable housing. No one solution will completely overcome this barrier, but a creative approach to address some construction fees will make Marin more attractive for development.

- Developers cite **the planning process** in Marin as a clear barrier to progress. Regulatory delay becomes burdensome when developing low-income affordable housing. We suggest that models exist where successful early cooperation between developers, and planners, and neighborhoods has made the planning process more efficient. These models could easily be adopted across Marin's communities.
- **While housing affordability is a countywide problem, each of the 11 towns and cities of Marin and the County have their own approach to the problem.** Municipalities should coordinate available resources to develop low-income affordable housing that would benefit all of the citizens of Marin. This effort would be best coordinated through a central Housing Coordinator.

A problem as complicated as housing affordability is not easily solved and it will not be solved overnight. However, our research suggests that it should be possible to make incremental changes that will overcome some of the barriers to affordability. These changes form the recommendations made in this report.



Video Podcast:
<https://goo.gl/iKv37i>



RECOMMENDATIONS

- R1.** Each planning department should begin regularly scheduled meetings at which developers can speak, early in the process, with all relevant members of staff to discuss impacts of proposed development and potential solutions to problems.
- R2.** Each planning department should develop a proactive community outreach strategy for any project that might be considered potentially controversial (including going beyond legal noticing minimums and initiating outreach efforts as early as possible in the development cycle).
- R3.** Each planning department should use succinct “plain-speak” to convey issues in their outreach.
- R4.** Each school district should investigate building teacher and

staff workforce housing on their land.

R5. Each utility district should adopt waivers for hook-up fees for low-income housing projects and accessory dwelling units.

R6. Each jurisdiction should adopt procedures so that low-income housing projects are fast-tracked through the planning and permitting process.

R7. The County should create and fund the position of Regional Housing Coordinator. The Coordinator's responsibilities should include: working with funding sources and developers, identifying underutilized properties, working with jurisdictions to create specific plans, and creating a County-wide Civic mediation program for all civic project community dialogues.

MARIN'S RETIREMENT HEALTH CARE BENEFITS

The Money Isn't There

Four years ago, the Grand Jury released a report titled *Marin's Retirement Health Care Benefits: The Money Isn't There*, that discussed the funding of public agency liabilities for retiree health benefits. They discovered that most agencies were neither saving adequately nor implementing best practice cost containment strategies, and warned of the consequences.

Since then, some agencies have started paying more attention to their unfunded benefit liabilities and are choosing to prepay at least a portion of their liabilities, as financial advisors recommend. However, while 16 of the 39 agencies we studied in this report collectively *decreased* their unfunded liability by \$108.1 million (the County of Marin reduced its unfunded liability by \$88.3 million), the remaining 23 agencies collectively *increased* their unfunded liability by \$41.9 million. This problem has been escalating for years and will not be magically gone tomorrow. Left unchecked, the growing liabilities may eventually challenge agencies' fiscal health.

The Grand Jury recognizes



that all agencies face day-to-day operational challenges and that retiree health liabilities are likely not top-of-mind for many agencies. Officials and board members may not be expert at interpreting financial documents nor aware

of the long-term implications of retiree health liabilities for their agency's viability – but they need to be. In this report, we offer strategies to help Marin agencies deal with their Other Postemployment Benefits liability (OPEB) and make

it easier for the average person to understand the scope and potential effects of such liabilities on our communities.



Video Podcast:
<https://goo.gl/o0E3ao>

RECOMMENDATIONS

R1. Each agency should adopt a *formal, written policy* for contributions to its OPEB plan.

R2. Each agency's standard practice should be to consistently satisfy its formal, written OPEB contribution policy.

R3. Each agency's OPEB contribution policy and practice should support a projection under GASB

75 that its OPEB plan assets will be sufficient to make all projected OPEB benefit payments.

R4. Each agency that uses special reserve funds for Postemployment Benefits should transition to a trust meeting the criteria of GASB 75.

R5. Each term of service, elected or appointed officials of each agency should take a public agency financial class.

R6. Each agency should make its CAFRs, Audits, and GASB valuations more readily understandable by the general public.

R7. Each agency should ensure that all of its public financial *presentations* are more readily understandable and scheduled during hours convenient for the public.

R8. Each agency should have

the following downloadable and text-searchable documents readily accessible on their website: the last five years of CAFRs/Audits and the last three actuarial reports.

R9. Before the next round of bargaining begins, each agency should prioritize the cost containment strategies to be used, including reducing or eliminating OPEB benefits for future employees.

THE BUDGET SQUEEZE

How Will Marin Fund Its Public Employee Pensions?

Twenty years ago, the only people who cared about public employee pensions were public employees. Today, taxpayers are keenly aware of the financial burden they face as unfunded pension liabilities continue to escalate. The Grand Jury estimates that the unfunded liability for public agencies in Marin County is approximately \$1 billion.

In 2012, the state passed the California Public Employees' Pension Reform Act of 2013 (PEPRA), which reduced pension benefits for new employees hired after January 1, 2013. PEPRA was intended to produce a modest reduction in the growth rate of these obligations but it will take years to realize the full impact of PEPRA. In the meantime, pension obligations already accumulated are undiminished.

This report will explore several aspects of this issue:

It's Worse than You Thought

– While a net pension liability of

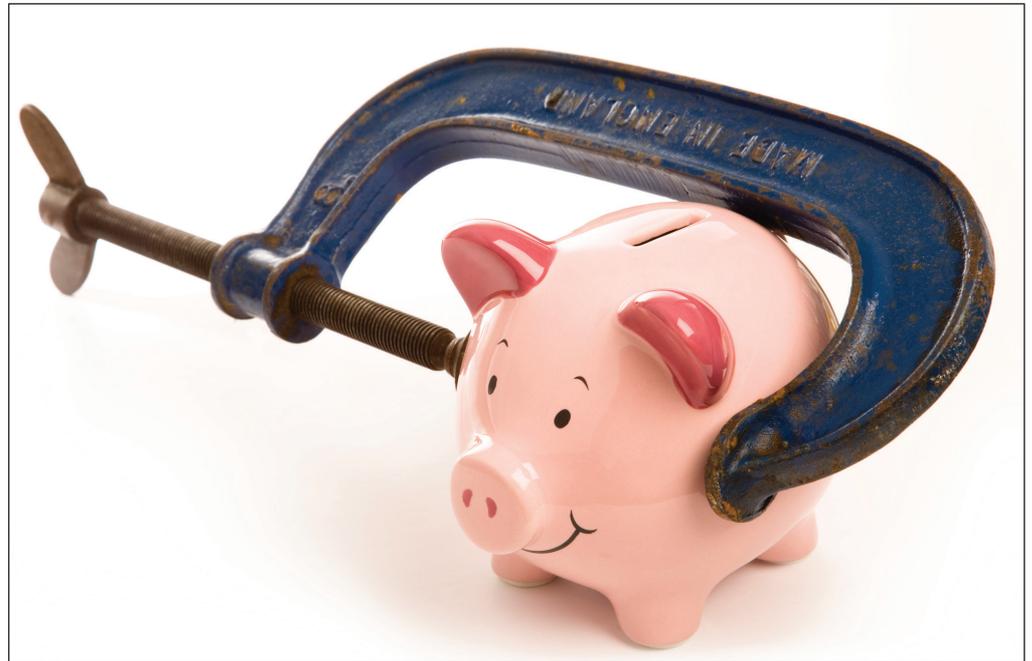
\$1 billion may be disturbing, the true economic measure of the obligation is significantly greater than this estimate.

The Thing That Ate My Budget

– The annual expense of funding pensions for current and future retirees has risen sharply over the past decade and this trend will continue; for many agencies, it is likely to accelerate over the next five years. This will lead to budgetary squeezes. While virtually every public agency in Marin has unfunded pension obligations, some appear to have adequate resources to meet them, while many do not. We will look at what agencies are currently doing to address the issues and what additional steps they should take.

The Exit Doors are Locked

– Although there are no easy solutions, one way to reduce and elimi-



nate unfunded pension liabilities in future years would be transitioning from the current system of *defined benefit pension* plans to *defined contribution pension* plans, similar to a 401(k). However, this approach is largely precluded by existing statutes and made impractical by the imposition of termination fees by the pension funds that

manage public agency retirement assets.

The Grand Jury's aim is to offer some clarity to a complex issue and to encourage public agencies to provide greater transparency to their constituents.



Video Podcast:
<https://goo.gl/r4kvoE>

RECOMMENDATIONS

R1. The Marin Board of Supervisors should empanel a commission to investigate methods to reduce pension debt and to find ways to keep the public informed. The panel should be comprised of Marin citizens with no financial interest in any public employee pension plan and should be allowed to engage legal and actuarial consultants to develop and propose alternatives to the current system.

R2. CalSTRS and MCERA should provide actuarial calculations based on the risk-free rate as CalPERS does in its termination calculations.

R3. Agencies should publish long-term budgets (i.e., covering at least five years), update them at least every other year and report what percent of total revenue they anticipate spending on pension contributions.

R4. Each agency should provide 10 years of audited financial

statements and summary pension data for the same period (or links to them) on the financial page of its public website.

R5. For the purposes of transparency, MCERA, CalSTRS and CalPERS should publish an actuarial analysis of the effect of Cost of Living Allowances (COLA) on unfunded pension liabilities on an annual basis.

R6. Elected state officials should support legislation to permit public agencies to offer defined

contribution plans for new employees.

R7. Elected state officials should support legislation to implement a statewide financial economic health oversight committee of all public entities similar to that implemented in NY.

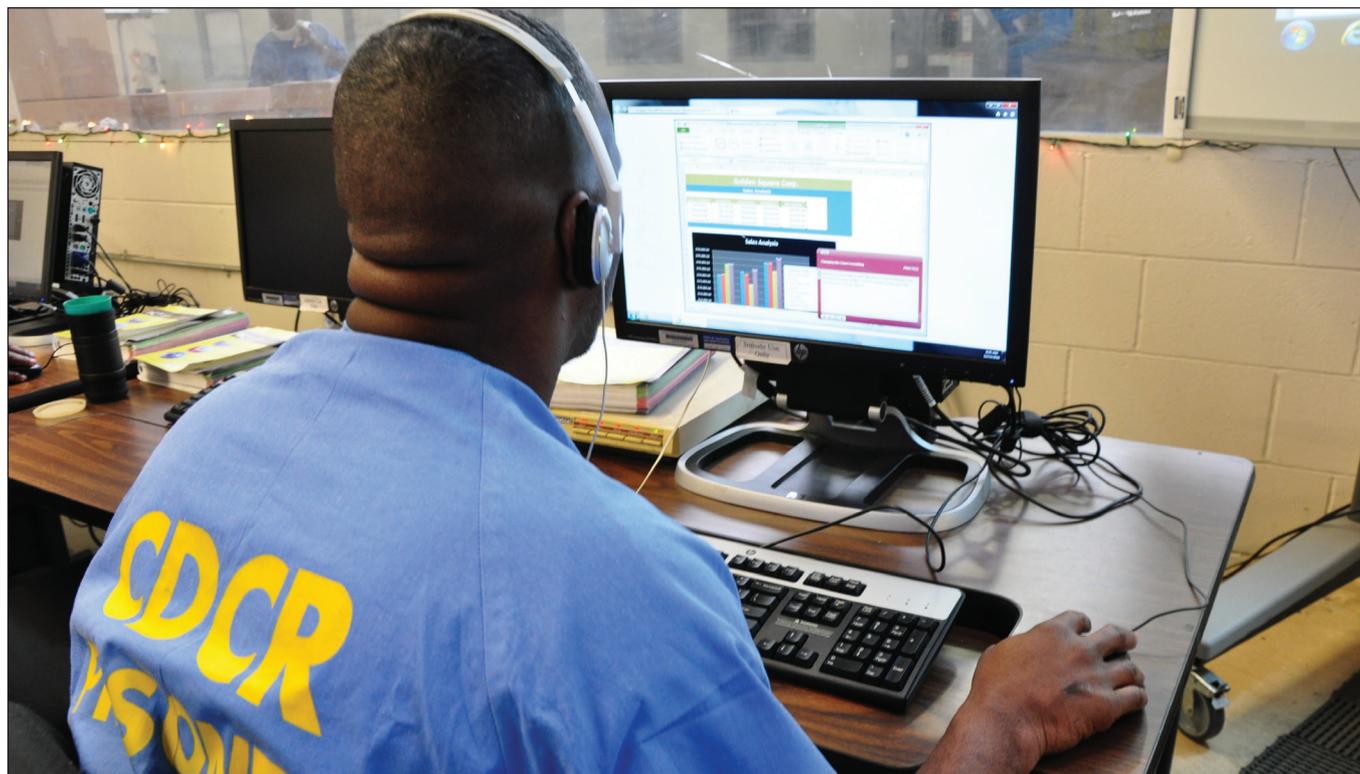
R8. Public agencies and public employee unions should begin to explore how introduction of defined contribution programs can reduce unfunded liabilities for public pensions.

MARIN COUNTY JAIL EDUCATION: *No One Should be Barred*

If you are one of the 376 inmates in the Marin County Jail, most of your time is spent in a cell waiting to be released, transferred or to serve your sentence. During your jail stay, you might fill the time reading books, watching television, or taking a group support class to improve your social skills.

In 2011, the California State Legislature passed Assembly Bill 109 (AB 109). This legislation realigned the prison system in order to reduce overcrowding in the state prisons. It allowed for non-violent, non-sexual and non-serious offenders to be reassigned to the county jails. While state prisons were designed to support the long-term housing and rehabilitation of inmates, jails were simply designed for short-term stays for those awaiting trial. Inmates in San Quentin told the Grand Jury that they felt lucky to be in state prison because the educational opportunities were so much greater than in the Marin County Jail.

The Marin County Civil Grand Jury is mandated every year to visit and learn about the correctional facilities in Marin County: San Quentin State Prison, the Marin County Jail and Marin County Juvenile Hall. The Grand Jury was impressed with the depth and scope of the educational programs at San Quentin. In comparison, the academic program at the Marin County Jail was clearly lacking in resources.



San Quentin Prisoner in computer literacy class



Marin County Jail inmates in self help class

Continued on page 7

CARE OF MENTALLY ILL INMATES IN MARIN COUNTY JAIL

Prisons and jails nationwide now house nearly 10 times as many mentally ill persons than do mental hospitals. With the closing of most of California's mental hospitals, and recent changes in state laws, a burden has been placed on California's county jails resulting in an increased number of felons (including those with mental illness) being sentenced to jails rather than prisons.

In 2010 and 2012, Marin County Jail and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) commissioned reviews of care received by the mentally ill in the Jail. The reviews suggested numerous changes be made to raise the level of care of these inmates to meet community standards. The Grand Jury found that the Jail and the DHHS have

only recently begun to implement some of the recommended changes. These changes, however, have not yet resulted in adequate improvement of conditions. Practices in the Jail, particularly the isolation of the mentally ill and the placement of inmates in safety cells for extended periods of time, might be cruel and unusual punishment and potentially a violation of inmates' constitutional rights.

Some progress has been made, including increases in staffing and the decision by Marin County's Board of Supervisors to support a national initiative to reduce the number of people with mental illness in jails. However, current staffing, provision, and organiza-

Continued on page 8



Marin County Jail safety cell

Jail Education

continued from page 6

Education is the single most effective path to personal and social opportunity. Education is a proven remedy to recidivism, saves on cost of jail services, provides better chances for employment, and helps inmates become better citizens. This report compares the educational programs at San Quentin, the Marin County Jail and the San Francisco County Jail. It offers suggestions to improve the Jail's basic education and training for successful reintegration into the community.

RECOMMENDATIONS

R1. The Marin County Office of Education (MCOE) should review educational programs in other jail facilities to develop an improved curriculum in the Marin County Jail.

R2. The Jail should facilitate implementation of the programs developed by MCOE.

R3. The MCOE should evaluate the academic program at the County Jail to determine whether inmates are making progress toward obtaining their GED or HiSet tests.

R4. Marin County Jail and MCOE should hold regularly scheduled meetings.

R5. The MCOE should apply for

additional funding for the jail's educational program.

R6. MCOE and Marin County Jail should work together to increase the hours of teacher contact time with inmates.

R7. The Jail should forward each inmate's level of education to the MCOE teachers.

R8. Each inmate booked into the Jail without a high school diploma, should be assessed within two weeks to ascertain their reading and math levels.

R9. Each inmate without a high school diploma, GED or HiSet certificate should be given an individual instructional program to work toward obtaining a certificate of completion.

R10. A joint technology committee should be formed between the Jail and MCOE so that new devices can be researched before purchase.

R11. The vocational program should teach computer skills and basic applications such as Microsoft Office, Google Documents, etc., as many jobs now require these as basic skills for employment. Many programs are available in electronic tablet form and should be considered for jail use.

R12. GED or HiSET testing should be available year round.

R13. The Jail and MCOE should develop literature about the courses available in the MCOE's academic program and make them available for all inmates.



Video Podcast:
<https://goo.gl/iggbHY>

Mentally Ill Inmate Care

continued from page 7

tion of mental health care in the Jail are inadequate, and care does not conform to communi-

ty standards. The County must find resources to provide mental health care that meets the requirements of both the law and accepted clinical practices.

RECOMMENDATIONS

R1. Mentally ill inmates should not be kept in a safety cell longer than 24 consecutive hours unless the jail psychiatrist certifies that no other remedy is available to prevent the inmate from harming themselves or others.

R2. Safety cells should never be used for mentally ill inmates as a substitute for adequate medication and/or other psychiatric treatment.

R3. Any inmate placed in a safety cell should be evaluated by mental health staff within one hour for the appropriateness of the placement and the evaluation of possible alternative placements.

R4. The Jail should, within 6 months, establish or contract with a local facility where involuntary administration of psychiatric medication can take place.

R5. The Jail should identify and adopt, within 6 months, policies that ensure mentally ill inmates are provided a minimum of one hour per day outside their cell, with a minimum of seven hours per week, while meeting adequate clinical and custodial standards of care.

R6. A psychiatrist should be available at the jail 8 hours per day, 5 days per week, and be available by telephone 24 hours per day, 7 days per week.

R7. A Mental Health Crisis Specialist or a Psychiatric Nurse should be available at the jail 24 hours per day, 7 days per week.

R8. The Jail should immediately institute programs to provide appropriate professional mental health (non-medication) therapy to all mentally ill inmates, particularly those incarcerated for longer than 7 days.

R9. Booking of inmates should at all times include screening for mental illness by a nurse using an accepted mental health screening tool.

R10. Classification of inmates as mentally ill should be reviewed by a member of the mental health staff within one hour of booking.

R11. All policies and procedures in the Sheriff's Manual related to the care of inmates should be reviewed and updated within 6 months and following that, as necessary, at least biennially.

R12. The Jail should develop, implement, and enforce a quality improvement procedure and establish a quality improvement plan for mental health services.

R13. The County should provide adequate funding to implement these recommendations.

THE BIG PICTURE

Funding Marin's Public Employee Pensions & Retirement Health Care Benefits



This year, the Grand Jury published two reports that examined the issue of employee retirement funding facing Marin's public agencies. We found that collective unfunded pension liability for the 46 public agencies we studied in Marin County is \$1.0 billion and unfunded retiree health care (OPEB) liability is \$548.1 million. Together, these 46 public agencies' liabilities exceed \$1.5 billion – and are growing.

While the Grand Jury conducted separate investigations on pension and retiree health care, we believe that publishing a consolidated

report, which provides the total of current unfunded liabilities, provides a more comprehensive perspective to the public.

While there are significant differences between the OPEB and pension obligations, the combined impact has serious implications for the county's public agencies, taxpayers and employees. The Grand Jury suggests that an agency wishing to reduce its unfunded liabilities might start by first reducing its unfunded OPEB liability, which is more straightforward than reducing its unfunded pension liability.

2016-17 WEB TRANSPARENCY REPORT CARD UPDATE

Bringing Marin County's Local Governments to Light

Between October 2015 and January 2016, the Marin County Civil Grand Jury audited local government agencies' websites to evaluate the accessibility of online information. This included budgets, audits, and board member information. Serious deficiencies were found. The 2015-2016 Grand Jury report may be found here: <https://goo.gl/Ey49gr>

Last year's 2015-2016 Grand Jury provided each agency with their preliminary audits and all agencies were offered the opportunity to improve their websites before a final audit. Many websites significantly improved, while others remained deficient. The current Marin County Civil Grand Jury has continued to monitor these websites using the methodology developed by last year's Grand Jury, and has encouraged each agency to carry out further improvements. This

audit report provides the status of agency websites as of May 2017.

After last year's report was issued, several agencies noted that the Grand Jury's own website was not transparent by its own criteria. In the interim, we have updated our website. We thank those agencies for their input.

130 local agencies were audited by this year's grand jury: 12 municipalities, 20 school districts, 63 special districts, 34 joint powers authorities (JPAs), and 1 rail district. Of these, we found that:

- 76 local agencies have improved their websites since the initial audit by the 2015-2016 Grand Jury.
- 57 received a grade of B- or better compared with 34 a year ago.

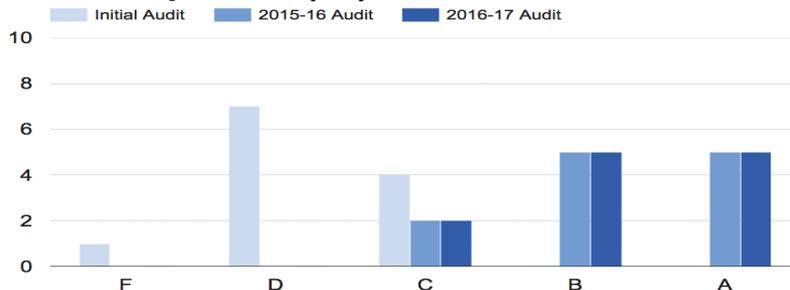


Video Podcast:
<https://goo.gl/ehhACS>

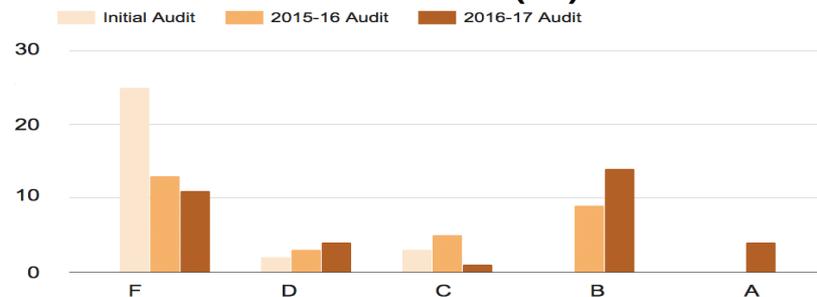


Web Transparency Grade Distribution (F to A)

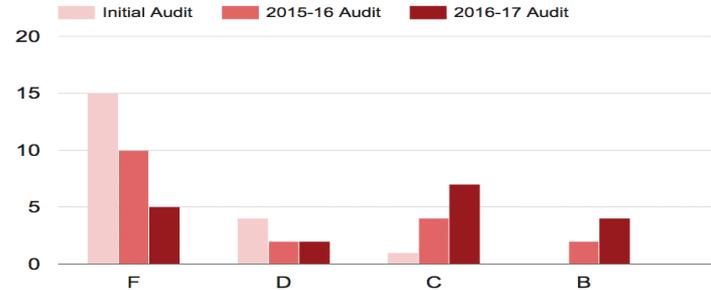
Municipalities (12)



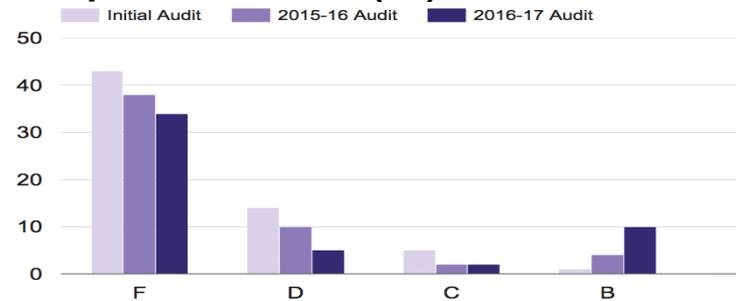
Joint Powers Authorities (34)



School Districts (20)



Special Districts (63)



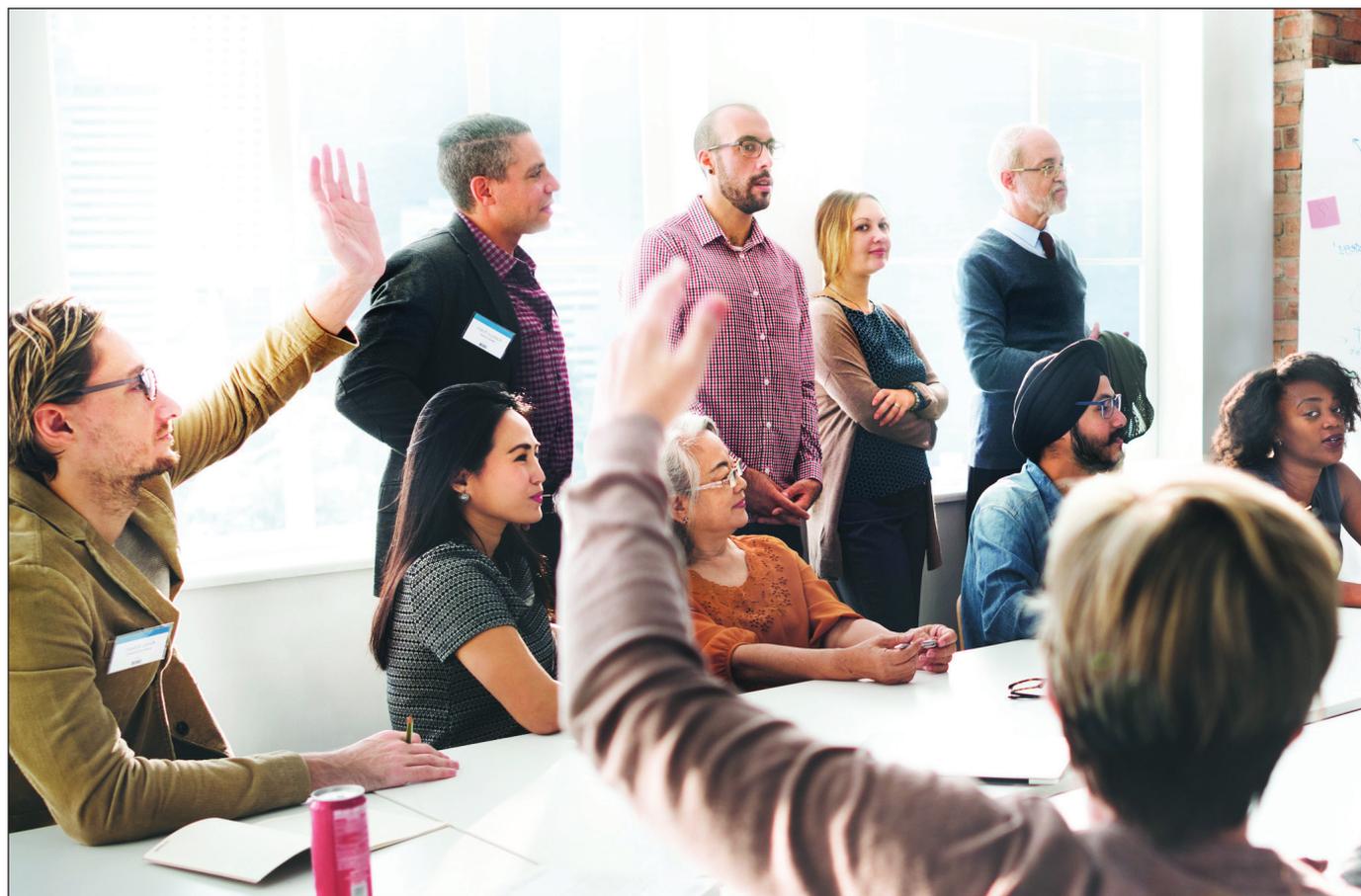
PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT IN MARIN

A Pathway to Inclusive Governance

Last year's Grand Jury released a report entitled "2015-2016 Web Transparency Report Card" which rated the information quality of local agencies' websites. This year's jury decided to go a step further and look at how well our cities, towns and the County engage with the public. We first surveyed each of the agencies to learn about their public engagement strategies and their perceived effectiveness. We then surveyed residents of our municipalities and unincorporated areas to get a "snapshot" view of their experience with their local government's engagement. Finally, we looked at the reporting of local issues by local media.

We found that public engagement (PE) in Marin takes different forms depending on where you live. In addition, while every agency is making efforts to engage, some have more political will, more resources, and/or a more active public to make that happen. Public engagement may take many forms, but all have the goal of enabling more inclusive governance.

The report provides an overview of current public engagement throughout Marin and suggests methods of improvement for our 11 municipalities and the County. With this report, the Grand Jury hopes to illuminate a pathway to inclusive governance, inspiring both our local government and the public they serve.



RECOMMENDATIONS

R1. Each agency without a formal PE Plan should develop either a PE Plan or PE Guidelines tailored to the needs of their public and publish the results.

R2. Each agency should obtain input from the public in the planning and design or update of its plan/guidelines.

R3. Agency managers should regularly share their PE Plans and "lessons learned" with their counterparts in other Marin agencies.

R4. Each agency should provide early and ample opportunity for PE in the form of proactive

engagement in order to ensure that the public is aware of all their PE opportunities.

R5. Post-engagement, each agency should follow up with the public, informing them of the results of projects and issues.

R6. Each agency should create an easy-to-find area on their website dedicated to describing current community issues and explaining how the public can get involved.

R7. Each agency should make PE a required responsibility of at least one staff person and publicize that responsibility.

R8. Each agency should offer regular PE professional development to its staff.

R9. Each agency should develop meaningful and ongoing partnerships with their local community-based organizations.

R10. Each agency should include on all written communications the social media platforms they use.

R11. Each agency should communicate and emphasize to the public the importance of participation in PE.

R12. Each agency should publish an annual report describing the effectiveness of their PE efforts.



Video Podcast:
<https://goo.gl/QGqd2n>

THE CIVIL GRAND JURY EXPERIENCE

As required by the California State Constitution, the Civil Grand Jury is responsible for overseeing over 130 public agencies in our County (in a civil “watchdog” role, rather than a criminal role). The Grand Jury consists of 19 citizens from all walks of life who dedicate a year of their life learning, investigating, and improving our county. During our one-year term we issue reports detailing findings and recommendations, which public agencies must respond to.

WHY PEOPLE APPLY

People from all walks of life apply to the Grand Jury for a multitude of reasons:

- *Since I am close to retirement I'd like to continue to be productive and to understand my community in depth.*
- *I love living in Marin and am eager to use my analytic and interpersonal skills to see that the many public entities continue to function optimally for the benefit of the residents of Marin.*
- *I want to be able to serve the community I live in better and build an even better future for coming generations.*

THE APPLICATION PROCESS (January-June)

Step one:

Complete the *Application to Serve on the Marin County Civil Grand Jury* form (available on the Grand Jury's website) by April 22nd. Besides requesting your name and professional background, some confidential information is required to per-

form a preliminary background check. Jurors will be allowed access to detention facilities and to confidential information. If you are selected as a juror, you'll also need to: get fingerprinted, share information about your financial investments (Form 700), and have a second background check performed. All such information is held confidential by the County and only released to agencies as required by law.

Step two:

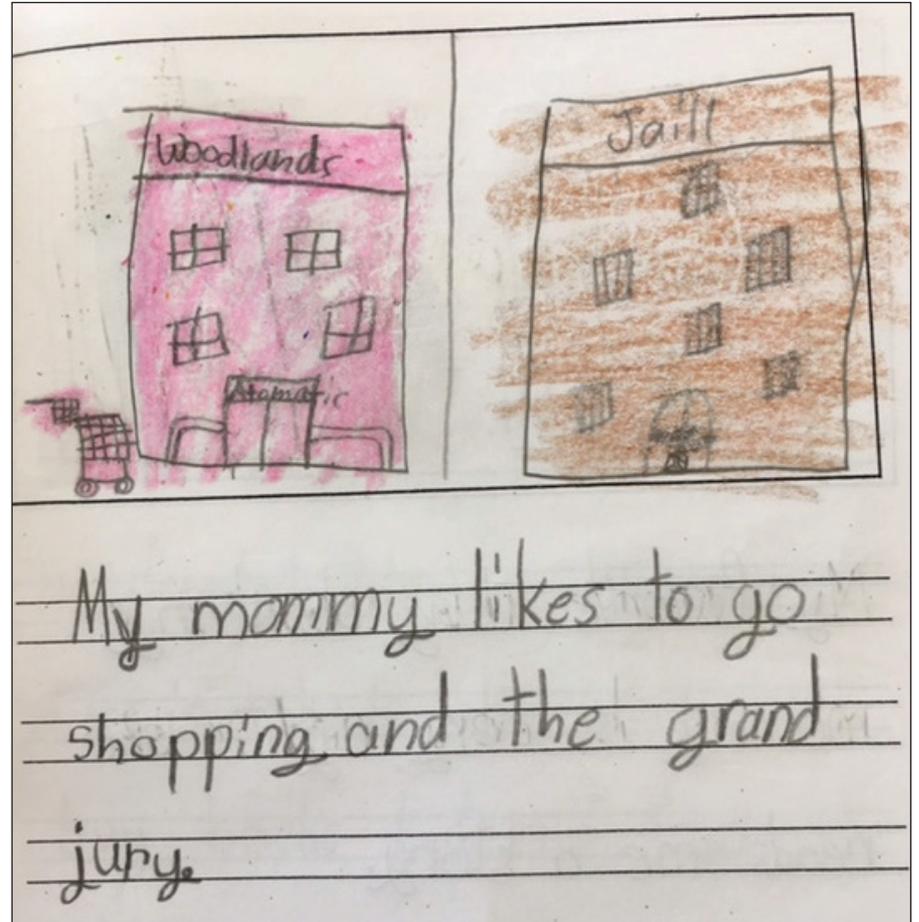
If your application meets requirements (residency, age, no conflicts of interest, etc.), you are invited to attend an interview in May. This interview is to ensure that there are no hidden agendas or conflicts of interest, and that you communicate well. It consists of both a personal interview and a panel interview (an opportunity to sample the jury experience and see how well you interact with others). The best 30 applicants are then selected.

Step three:

In June, these “30” are invited back for the final selection round. All applicants' names are placed into a drum, which the presiding judge randomly selects from. The first 19 selected will be the “sitting jury.” The remainder are invited to be “alternates.” The sitting jury is immediately sworn in (to start in July). If a sitting juror resigns for any reason, the next alternate is contacted and is invited to join the jury immediately.

HOW IT UNFOLDS (July-June)

The first week begins with a multi-day training for both the sitting jury and the alternates. Be-



sides learning about your responsibilities and powers, committees and investigation techniques, you start to get to know your fellow jurors – each of whom has a lifetime of expertise to share. Within a few weeks, jurors visit Marin County Juvenile Hall, Marin County Jail, and San Quentin State Prison. These visits make a strong impression since jurors see, talk to, and eat with people (including inmates) who they would not normally interact with.

Finding a topic

Perhaps the most surprising thing for new jurors is that there's no assigned list of topics to investigate. Jurors may wish to follow-up on a previous grand jury report, research issues that they've

heard about, or simply learn more about a local agency. Jurors meet weekly in small themed committees (such as finance or health) to ensure thorough and unbiased research. By the end of the first month, many committees start to explore potential topics. Is there a perception of wrongdoing, inefficiency, or need for improvement? After reading and talking amongst themselves, the next step is to invite people in for interviews.

The interview process

Each interviewee signs an admonition promising not to reveal that they spoke with the Grand Jury or the subject of conversation. Such conversations provide

Continued on page 12

Civil Grand Jury Experience

continued from page 11

background information and allow pointed questions to be asked in a private setting. The Grand Jury is sworn to protect the anonymity of our sources, not just for our term, but for the rest of our lives.

Continuity

In addition to ongoing investigations, the Grand Jury also has administrative responsibilities. Perhaps the most important of these is reviewing public agencies' responses to previously published Grand Jury reports for adequacy, completeness, and timeliness. For example, if an agency promised to make a change by a certain date, the Grand Jury seeks confirmation. Such monitoring ensures that promised changes happen.

The RFI

Eventually a committee will have enough information and direction to warrant writing an RFI (Request for Investigation). An RFI is an overview of what the committee plans to further research and is presented to the entire 19-member body of the jury (the "Plenary"). If the research pans out, a report is then written that the Plenary later reviews and votes on.

Sometimes a committee discovers that their "hot topic" is no longer appropriate (assumptions prove to be incorrect or other agencies are already investigating) and has to abandon the topic and start anew. Excitement builds as expertise is developed: learning the lingo, meeting leaders, understanding motivations, deciphering the law, and finding best practices. Jurors start thinking about solu-

tions to issues, validating these solutions through additional research, conversation, and surveys. One key investigative principle is triangulation: To prove anything, three independent sources are required. Triangulation takes time but is key to a report's effectiveness. Reports don't simply contain our thoughts or our observations, they contain concepts and solutions that we prove as best we can.

Field trips

The grand jury is not all work and no play. There are opportunities to take social "field trips" to learn as much as we can about our County. These optional trips may include: public utilities, safety and public transportation facilities. We visit a wide variety of agencies up-close and ask questions on matters we've always been curious about. In addition, leaders throughout the County are invited to our year-long speaker series, sharing details of their organizations and responsibilities.

Writing the report

While some topics feel like they would take years to examine and report on, the Grand Jury must complete its work within its one-year term. At some point it becomes clear that investigations must wrap up to begin writing the report described in the RFI presentation. Before drafting their report, jurors can attend a "Report Writing 101" class. The writing process can be the most emotionally-charged phase of the term. During meetings, people agree on high-level concepts but when articulated in detail, committee members may disagree on language, intent, specifics, or logical flow. Members review each other's

contributions, negotiate phrasing, and merge separate ideas into a cohesive, rigorous report draft.

The editing process

Once the committee is ready, they pass their report draft to an editorial committee. This is the first chance for "fresh eyes" to read the report and offer suggestions. The investigative committee then makes any necessary edits, eventually sharing their report with the Plenary.

Report approval

Members of the Plenary read the committee's report, share suggestions and ask additional questions before discussing and voting on the report. As in other Plenary actions, a supermajority (at least 12 of the 19 jurors) must vote to approve.

After Plenary approval, both County Counsel and the presiding judge must sign off on the report. Their role is not to censor our work, but to ensure that the specific language is legally appropriate. (For example, the report is not libelous.) If they reject the report, the committee may wish to make necessary changes and seek re-approval. As required by the California Penal Code, the report is then sent confidentially to agencies named in the report. This ensures that these agencies have an opportunity to request any factual mistakes in the report be

corrected before publication. Finally, the report is published: It is placed onto the Grand Jury's website and copies are sent to the media (for possible coverage) and named agencies.

THE RESULTS

The most tangible result of our work is a published Grand Jury report expressing concerns and containing recommendations that specific agencies publicly respond to. The goal of each independently researched report is to stimulate community awareness and conversation – in the media, at board meetings, and within neighborhood groups. Over the years, grand jury reports have addressed a wide variety of topics and have encouraged many measurable changes including: improved website transparency, reduced school bullying, increased police body cameras, increased recycling, a plastic bag ban, and increased senior care funding.

INTERESTED?

If you have some free time and a passion to make a difference, apply to the next grand jury. You'll learn, share, and connect with other Marinites. Join us.

The Civil Grand Jury works on a fiscal year basis and accepts applications throughout the year. The deadline for submitting an application for next year's Civil Grand Jury is April 22, 2018.

To APPLY for GRAND JURY SERVICE visit the Grand Jury website: <http://MarinCounty.org/GrandJury> Click on "Marin Grand Jury Application"

To request an investigation by the Marin County Civil Grand Jury visit our website: <http://MarinCounty.org/GrandJury> Click on "Form to Request an Investigation"