RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY REPORT FORM

Report Title:

School Resource Officers: A Proactive Approach to School Safety

Report Date: June 22, 2010

Response by: Town of San Anselmo, Mayor Barbara Thornton

FINDINGS

- I (we) agree with the findings numbered: **F1, F2, F3, F4, F5, F6, F7 and F8**
- I (we) disagree wholly or partially with the findings numbered:

  (Attach a statement specifying any portions of the findings that are disputed; include an explanation of the reasons therefor.)

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Recommendations numbered_____ have been implemented.

  (Attach a summary describing the implemented actions.)

- Recommendations numbered_____ have not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future.

  (Attach a timeframe for the implementation.)

- Recommendations numbered_____require further analysis.

  (Attach an explanation and the scope and parameters of an analysis or study, and a timeframe for the matter to be prepared for discussion by the officer or director of the agency or department being investigated or reviewed, including the governing body of the public agency when applicable. This timeframe shall not exceed six months from the date of publication of the grand jury report.)

- Recommendations numbered **R1, R2, and R3** will not be implemented because they are not warranted or are not reasonable.

  (Attach an explanation.)

Date: **August 25, 2010** Signed: Barbara Thornton

Number of pages attached____

The San Anselmo Town Council's
Response to Findings and Recommendations from Grand Jury Report
"School Resource Officers: A Proactive Approach to School Safety,"
June 22, 2010

FINDINGS

F1. THE ROLE OF A SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER SIGNIFICANTLY DIFFERS FROM THAT OF A PATROL OFFICER AND REQUIRES SPECIALIZED TRAINING.

Response: The Town Council of the Town of San Anselmo agrees with this finding.

The role of the School Resource Officer (SRO) does significantly differ from that of a patrol officer. In order to function effectively within an educational setting, the SRO requires a great deal of specialized training. The SRO needs to be effective in dealing with juvenile issues, including criminal investigations, acting as a counselor/mentor to students, as well as being a educator in a law enforcement capacity. This takes a tremendous amount of training and dedication on the part of the SRO and the sponsoring agency.

F2. THE SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER PROMOTES A STRONG COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOLS AND LAW ENFORCEMENT THAT BENEFITS THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY.

Response: The Town Council of the Town of San Anselmo agrees with this finding.

There isn't a more important or more influential position than that of an SRO in terms of establishing and maintaining a strong and collaborative relationship between law enforcement, the respective schools, students, and the community as a whole. The SRO is the officer whom the students, parents, and school staff members come in contact with on a daily basis. For many, they are the face of law enforcement in general and their actions and relationships are what many individuals within the community base their opinion of local law enforcement upon.

F3. SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS HELP CREATE A SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT WHERE TEACHERS FEEL SAFE TO TEACH AND STUDENTS FEEL SAFE TO LEARN.

Response: The Town Council of the Town of San Anselmo agrees with this finding.

In the wake of the terrible events that have taken place on various campuses throughout the United States in recent years, other jurisdictions have reported that School Resource Officers are often seen as a very comforting and reassuring presence on campus.

F4. SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS, ALONG WITH FAMILIES AND SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS, ARE A CRITICAL PART OF INTERVENTION TO PREVENT UNLAWFUL OR HARMFUL BEHAVIORS.

Response: The Town Council of the Town of San Anselmo agrees with this finding.

Jurisdictions who utilized School Resource Officers in their schools report that SRO's, along with involved families, school staff and administrators, are a critical part of the intervention process to prevent unlawful or harmful behavior. The combination of the SRO's presence on campus, their cultivated and tended lines of communication with parents and school staff, and their collaborative and proactive approach to problem identification and problem solving all help to support an environment and system that can effectively intervene to prevent unlawful or harmful behaviors.

F5. FOR MOST COMMUNITIES, SRO FUNDING IS NOT ASSURED BEYOND THE 2010/2011 SCHOOL YEAR.

Response: The Town Council of the Town of San Anselmo agrees with this finding.

As with many programs that are not considered mission critical, SRO funding is not assured, particularly beyond the 2010/2011 school year.

F6. THE COST OF THE SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER PROGRAMS ARE BORNE BY THE LOCAL POLICE AND THE SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENTS WITH NO FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION BY THE SCHOOL DISTRICTS.

Response: The Town Council of the Town of San Anselmo agrees with this finding.

In Marin County, the cost of the SRO programs tends to be entirely borne by the local police departments and the Sheriff's Department. The programs receive little or no financial contributions by the school districts. Some agencies may have applied for and received some governmental grants that help to support their SRO programs.

F7. SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS ARE UNIQUELY POSITIONED TO MONITOR AND ADDRESS GANG AND DRUG ACTIVITY IN MARIN COUNTY SCHOOLS.

Response: The Town Council of the Town of San Anselmo agrees with this finding.

The School Resource Officers tend to be the most knowledgeable and effective officers when it comes to identifying and addressing issues, on and around school grounds, relating to drug and gang activity. The SROs see the students on a daily basis, get to know them, develop relationships with the various students, and gain insight into problems and concerns that exist on the various campuses. The SROs are qualified professionals who can identify gang and drug activity and will take steps to address them, correct them (with the aid of the students, administration, and parents), and prevent them in the future.

F8. THE LOSS OF SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS WILL DEPRIVE YOUTH OF AN IMPORTANT POSITIVE CONNECTION WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT.

Response: The Town Council of the Town of San Anselmo agrees with this finding.

The loss of School Resource Officers would have a detrimental effect on the relationship that has been nurtured, particularly within the last decade, between law enforcement and students. School Resource Officers, through a caring and humanitarian approach, tear down the idea that law enforcement is some kind of abstract and menacing force or entity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

R1. SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER PROGRAMS BE RETAINED IN SCHOOLS WHERE THEY CURRENTLY EXIST AND ESTABLISHED IN DISTRICTS WHERE THEY DO NOT EXIST.

Response: The Town Council of the Town of San Anselmo will not be implementing this recommendation.

School Resource Officers should be retained in schools where they currently exist, providing the program continues to be effective and remains supported by their individual communities and school districts. The same should be said for communities and school districts considering the establishment of a School Resource Officer Program. In 2004, the Towns of San Anselmo and Fairfax received grant funding from the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, for the establishment of a School Resource Officer program under the *"COPS in Schools 2003"* grant program. Unfortunately the idea was not supported by the community and the grant funding was returned.

R2. MARIN COUNTY PUBLIC ENTITIES MAKE THE SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER PROGRAM A BUDGET PRIORITY.

Response: The Town Council of the Town of San Anselmo will not be implementing this recommendation.

The Town of San Anselmo does not currently have a School Resource Officer Program in place. If, in the future, the community or the school district along with community support, requested the Town once again explore funding opportunities for the creation of such a program, then the Town would consider such a request.

R3. MARIN COUNTY SCHOOL COMMUNITIES TAKE THE LEAD IN WORKING WITH THEIR CITY COUNCILS AND LAW ENFORCEMENT TO IDENTIFY SUSTAINABLE FUNDING TO MAINTAIN A SUFFICIENT NUMBER OF SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS.

Response: The Town Council of the Town of San Anselmo will not be implementing this recommendation.

The Town of San Anselmo does not currently have a School Resource Officer Program in place. If, in the future, the community or the school district along with community support, requested the Town once again explore funding opportunities for the creation of such a program then the Town would consider such a request.

Barbara Thornton
Mayor

Ford Greene
Vice Mayor

Kay Coleman
Councilmember

Jeff Kroot
Councilmember

Tom McInerney
Councilmember

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August 25, 2010

Ms. Judy H. Chapman, Foreperson
Marin County Civil Grand Jury
3501 Civic Center Drive, Room 275
San Rafael, CA 94913-4988

Re: Responses to the June 22, 2010, Civil Grand Jury Report- "School Resource Officers: A Proactive Approach to School Safety"

Dear Ms. Chapman:

The Town Council of the Town of San Anselmo has received a copy of the June 22, 2010 Grand Jury Report, *"School Resource Officers: A Proactive Approach to School Safety"*.

As required, I have enclosed a copy of the Town Council's response to Findings F1, F2, F3, F4, F5, F6, F7, F8 and R1, R2 and R3.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you need additional information or clarification.

Respectfully,

Barbara Thornton

Barbara Thornton
Mayor