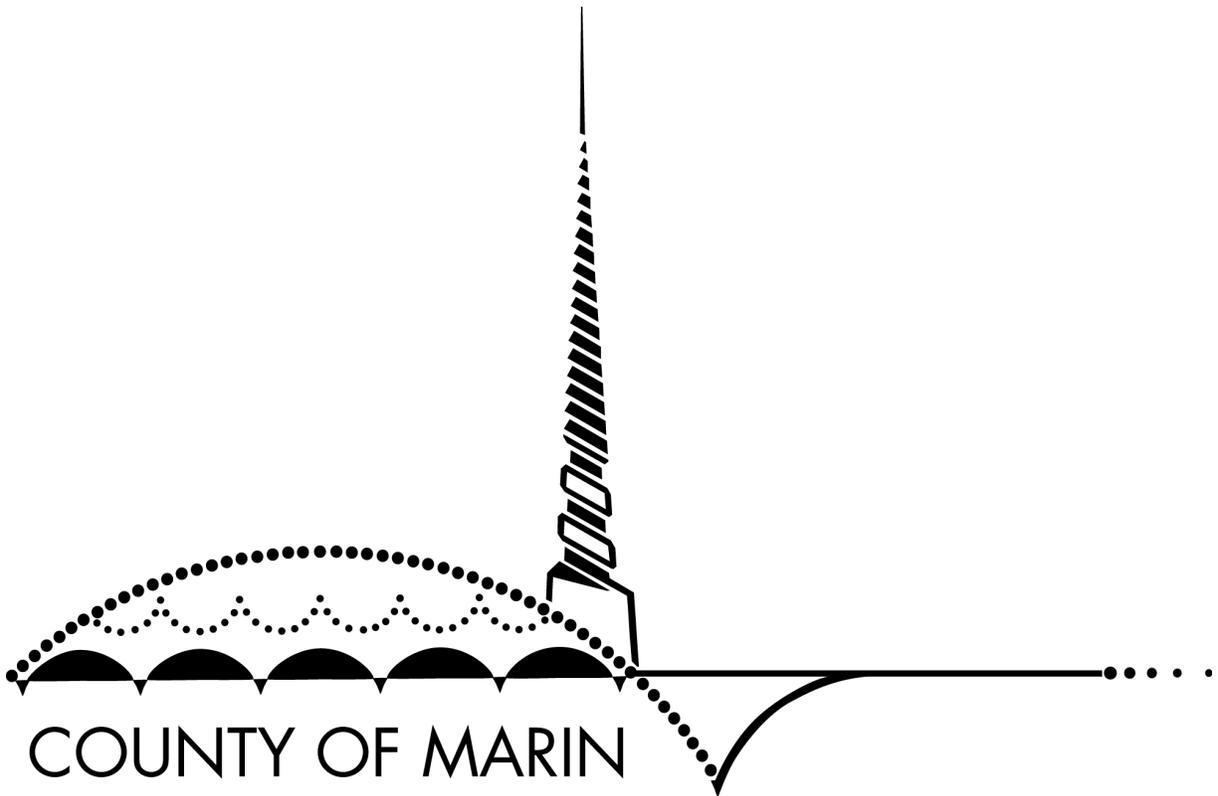
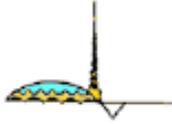

2012/2013 MARIN COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY

Evaluation of Responses To the 2011-2012 Marin County Civil Grand Jury Reports

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EVALUATION OF RESPONSES TO THE 2011-2012 MARIN CIVIL GRAND JURY REPORTS

INTRODUCTION

The 2011–2012 Civil Grand Jury issued eight formal reports on subjects relating to the governance of the County as well as its various cities, towns, and special districts. Seven reports included findings and recommendations, as well as requests for responses from the appropriate entities. One report was for information only and did not require a response. Interested parties may access this information via the Marin County Civil Grand Jury website:

<http://www.marincounty.org/depts/gj/reports-and-responses>

Because responses were due and provided after the tenure of the 2011-12 Civil Grand Jury, the 2012-2013 Civil Grand Jury reviewed and considered the legal adequacy of the responses pursuant to the requirements of the State Penal Code 933.05.

DISCUSSION

The following summarizes the issues, findings, recommendations and responses, for each of the seven Reports:

1. Death and Taxes

This Civil Grand Jury Report describes the difficulty in reading and understanding the annual property tax bill issued by Marin County. The County collects tax information from over 150 separate taxing entities covering over 700,000 individual assessments with a value in excess of \$150,000,000. Often, exemptions are allowed for many but not all of these taxing entities. The exemptions are granted on the basis of taxpayer income, age, veteran status, and/or disability. Determining whether a taxpayer qualifies for an exemption is the theme of this report. The report points out that taxing entities are not overly anxious to publicize possible exemptions because this would lower their tax revenue.

After a thorough investigation the 2011-2012 Civil Grand Jury issued a report recommending the following:

- Modifying the User Manual for Taxing Entities.
- Directing the County to inform local taxing entities to include exemption information on their website.
- Amending the tax statement to highlight exemption information.

- Rewriting the insert in the tax bill to include a paragraph on exemptions.
- Maintaining a complete list of all exemptions offered by the county

Responses were requested from the Marin County Board of Supervisors and the County Finance Department. The County's combined response agreed with the applicable findings. The County agreed to make changes to the tax bill and insert. .

The County pointed out that as coequals they have no authority to dictate to other taxing entities. The County did agree to pass along to all such entities the Civil Grand Jury's recommendations. The County's response is detailed, factual, and informative.

2. Independent Budget Office

This report recommended the creation of an independent Budget and Legislative Analysis Office for the County. The report gave sound reasons for the creation of such an oversight entity and many successful examples of this approach at the state, county, and city levels. The oversight groups were responsible for achieving significant savings vis-a-vis what might be expected from the current Marin County administrative structure.

Responses were requested from the Marin County Board of Supervisors, the Marin County Assessor, and the Marin County Sheriff. The Supervisors, County Assessor, and the County Sheriff in their separate responses indicated that they were not in agreement with creating this independent oversight group because it was unnecessary. The collective responses claimed that legally required audits and bond rating agencies reviews served the same purpose.

3. Marin Youth Alcohol Crisis

The focus of the report was underage drinking in Marin County, and particularly focused on the City of Novato's Blue Ribbon Coalition for Youth as the model for other Marin County towns and cities. The report illuminates the scope of binge drinking by Marin adolescents. The Civil Grand Jury asserted that programs for alcohol prevention are needed in all County schools. The report concluded that dangers of underage drinking must be emphasized in parallel with parents' role in prevention. The report emphasized that involvement of youth, parents, schools, law enforcement, businesses and faith-based and civic organizations is critical.

Responses were requested from the Marin County Board of Education, Marin County Office of Education, Superintendent of Schools, The City of Novato and The Director of the Marin County Department of Health and Human Services.

As for responses:

- The Marin County Board of Supervisors, the County Administrator and the Director of Health and Human Services agreed with the Grand Jury's recommendations and have implemented each one.
- The City of Novato's response to the Grand Jury recommendations was to implement two of the three. The recommendation that the City of Novato require Responsible Beverage Service training for anyone selling or serving alcohol will not be implemented. The city's mayor concluded that it is neither warranted nor reasonable.

- The Marin County Office of Education and Marin County Superintendent of Schools agreed with the Grand Jury recommendation within the scope of their authority.

4. Civic Center Volunteers Program

This report described the then-current Civic Center Volunteers Program, which places more than 8,000 volunteers in a broad spectrum of activities. The report estimates the value of these volunteered services to be in excess of \$9,000,000 per annum. The Civil Grand Jury recommended the restoration of a recently eliminated part-time position and the promotion to manager status of the position leading the program. An additional four recommendations dealt with program support in technology and training.

Responses were requested from four County Officers and the Marin County Board of Supervisors. The County's response stated that further study was needed regarding the two staffing recommendations. The County approved the implementation of the remaining four recommendations regarding technology and training.

5. Restorative Justice

This report recommends an alternative approach to incarceration and a criminal record for certain offenders. It also points out potential cost savings for the criminal justice system as well as realizing substantial financial savings and social benefits for Marin County communities.

Responses from the county's school districts agreed with the Grand Jury's recommendations and have either implemented them or plan for their future implementation. There was a joint response from the Marin County Superintendent of Schools and the Marin County Board of Education. All of the recommendations have been implemented.

Responses from the Marin County Board of Supervisors incorporated those from the County Administrator, Chief Probation Officer, District Attorney, Public Defender, and Sheriff. One recommendation, providing funding for restorative justice training and operations has been implemented. The recommendation for the Sheriff and Probation Department to initiate restorative justice programs at the county jail will be implemented in the future. Another recommendation for the Public Defender and District Attorney to initiate and expand programs to divert greater numbers of nonviolent criminal offenders from the courts and jails required further analysis.

6. Shared Services

This report explored the potential savings that could be realized from a concerted effort to identify opportunities for shared services among county departments, cities, towns, and a seemingly infinite number of special districts. The report describes the issues facing government from a cost perspective including the following:

- Labor and pension costs
- Labor demands
- Sharp increases in Retirees

- Aging infrastructure and equipment

Meanwhile revenues are not keeping pace due to the following:

- State Proposition 13 places a lid on property tax revenues
- Recession has cooled the housing market
- Homeowner reassessments due to falling home values further reduce property tax revenues
- Decreasing federal and state funds availability

The report then posits shared services as one way to deal with this cost/revenue dilemma. Many examples of consolidation or shared services are delineated and calculate the potential cost savings. The report enumerates many of the arguments against shared services, which include:

- Fear of losing local control
- Differing employment contracts
- Unions' truculence
- Institutional culture issues
- Good government mission issues
- Lack of political will

The Civil Grand Jury recommended:

- That the County maintain a website of all special districts, Joint Powers Agencies, and relevant contact information.
- That cities, towns, and the County be required to produce annual reports of shared services opportunities.
- That all agencies when facing major capital expenditures seek out partners to share the cost.
- That the County's Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) report all shared services or consolidation efforts accomplished during the year.

Responses were requested from forty four (44) entities including the County, cities, towns, and certain independent special districts. The responses were mostly positive and agreed with the findings and recommendations. To view those responses please go to the Marin County Civil Grand Jury website (MARINCOUNTY.ORG/DEPTS/GJ) and click on "reports 2011-2012".

7. Marin County Morgue

This report concerning autopsies conducted in Marin County was a follow-up report on two previous Civil Grand Jury reports. These reports all recommended the creation of a county managed Morgue and central forensics facility. This report made the following recommendations;

- The consolidation at one facility all morgue activity
- Regular consultation with the County pathologist
- The creation of a county managed permanent facility
- That the county follow all legal requirements in the construction of such facility

Responses were requested from the Marin County Sheriff and the County Administrator. The County agreed with one of the four recommendations and gave negative responses to the other three, citing cost considerations and unnecessary and undue hardship on families by placing the services in Napa.

8. Red Light Cameras

This was an informational report and as such no responses were requested.

FINDINGS

Other than as noted, the actions taken by the current Civil Grand Jury do not signify agreement or disagreement with the content of any or all of the responses to the prior Civil Grand Jury's findings and/or recommendations. Indeed, this Civil Grand Jury encourages future grand juries to review former Jury's reports and the findings and recommendations contained in each as well as the content of the responses and to thereafter conduct such investigations, as they deem appropriate.