



# TOWN OF FAIRFAX

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September 7, 2017

The Honorable Kelly V. Simmons, Presiding Judge  
Marin County Superior Court  
3501 Civic Center Drive  
San Rafael, CA 94903

Jay Hamilton-Roth, Foreperson  
Marin County Civil Grand Jury  
3501 Civic Center Drive, Room 275  
San Rafael, CA 94903

Re: Marin County Civil Grand Jury Report entitled *Public Engagement in Marin: A Pathway to Inclusive Governance*

Dear Judge Simmons and Mr. Hamilton-Roth:

Enclosed please find the Town of Fairfax responses to the above-referenced report. The Fairfax Town Council reviewed and approved the responses at a duly noticed public meeting on September 6, 2017.

Sincerely,

Michele Gardner  
Town Clerk

Enclosure

## RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY REPORT FORM

**Report Title:** Public Engagement in Marin: A Pathway to Inclusive Governance

**Report Date:** June 15, 2017

**Public Release Date:** June 26, 2017

**Response By:** Town of Fairfax

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Recommendations numbered: 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, and 11 have been implemented.

*See attached explanations.*

- Recommendation numbered: 10 has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future.

*See attached explanations.*

- Recommendations numbered: 7 and 8 require further analysis.

*See attached explanations.*

- Recommendations numbered: 1, 2, 12 will not be implemented because they are not warranted or reasonable.

*See attached explanations.*

Date: 9/7/17

Signed:   
Garrett Toy, Town Manager

ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_  
Town Clerk

Number of pages attached: 3

## **TOWN OF FAIRFAX RESPONSES: EXPLANATIONS**

**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.*

As Finding F4 states, smaller municipalities such as the Town of Fairfax do not necessarily have the need, or budget, to develop a formal PE plan. We are fortunate in Fairfax to have a high level of public engagement with many people speaking at Council meetings during open time for items not on the agenda. Public meetings typically draw a large number of residents. In general, the level of public outreach is tailored to the needs of the specific project. The following are the public engagement activities that the Town currently undertakes:

- Meet with members of the public as requested;
- Conduct surveys through the use of an on-line forum (i.e., Peak Democracy);
- For some projects, the Town maintains a separate website with all the information on the project (e.g., fairfaxbridges.com) and a separate electronic mailing list for interested residents;
- The Town Council and/or Planning Commission holds public workshops/study sessions on issues of community interest;
- Use Banners across Sir Francis Drake and/or signs around to announce workshops/meetings;
- Post on NextDoor to keep the community informed;
- Town Council agendas often include reports as to the status of pending issues as well as regular agenda items for Council and Town Manager reports;
- Residents can sign up to receive electronic agendas of Council and Planning Commission meetings;
- Post meeting notices in three public locations in Town and on the Town website.
- Publish a monthly electronic newsletter with updates to the community (emailed to over 1,000 people) and post on the Town website; and
- The Town's municipal code allows members of the public (a petition with 25 resident signatures) to add items to the Council agenda for discussion.

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

While Fairfax makes it a priority to obtain input from the public on all matters, including PE, a plan/guideline is not contemplated at this time. Please see responses to R1.

That being said, Fairfax has implemented suggestions from the public with regard to PE on particular issues. Some examples include: public workshops on the General Plan/Housing Element, numerous public meetings (approximately 12) with the Planning Commission and/or Town Council for a proposed senior affordable housing project including study sessions; study sessions regarding the "Wall property" with the developer to discuss his concept; and study session with the School Street Plaza owner regarding his development ideas.

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

The Marin Managers Association meets on a regular basis to share lessons learned.

**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.*

Please refer to responses to R1 and R2.

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

The Town Newsletter includes a summary of key actions taken by the Council at their meetings. Usually the interested residents attend the meeting and are aware of the Town Council's decision. The Town follows up with people directly affected by a decision who are unable to attend the meeting (e.g., neighborhood residents).

**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.*

The Town's homepage has a “Current Topics” section, a calendar of Town meetings with links to agendas, Town newsletter, and links to various Town websites for more detailed information on projects and activities (e.g., bridge replacement projects, Recreation and Community Service activities).

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

As a smaller agency, the Town uses a team approach to PE. In general, each department is responsible for its PE with oversight by the Town Manager. However, we are willing to further analyze this recommendation.

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

As a smaller agency, this would depend on budget priorities and staff availability.

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

The Town meets monthly with the local Chamber of Commerce, and participates in quarterly “chamber mixers.” In addition, Town does meet with the Marin Organizing Committee (MOC) on issues as needed. The Town has also created resident committees dedicated to issues such as climate change, the needs of our aging residents, and the use of our open space and parklands. The Council has also formed a Neighborhood Liaison Subcommittee consisting of two Councilmembers tasked with working with neighborhoods on such issues as noise, parking,

traffic calming and sidewalk access. The Town partners with the local non-profit "Sustainable Fairfax" to enhance and implement zero waste goals, to sponsor community events including the Fairfax Festival and Streets for People.

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

We will evaluate the information to be included in the staff signature block and incorporate as appropriate.

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

The Council and staff is always encouraging the public to participate in PE. The level of community participation is directly related to the issue.

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

We don't believe an annual report would make our PE efforts more effective. More importantly, how would one gauge the effectiveness of PE – by the amount of public comment? If this were a measure, the process to approve the affordable senior housing project was hugely successful since the Town received hundreds of comments on the project.

The Grand Jury relied on 16 self-selected responses to evaluate Fairfax's PE efforts. That's less than 0.2% of all the residents in Town and not necessarily reflective of the Fairfax community as a whole. It anything it demonstrates the challenge all communities face in encouraging public participation. Again, the level of participation is directly related to the issue and the Town tailors its PE efforts toward the specific issue.