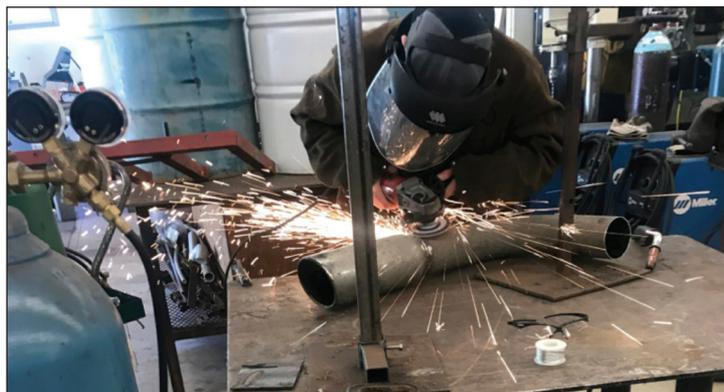


# MARIN COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY

FY 2018-2019

Final Report Summaries



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1st Row/Left to Right: Rebecca Suggs, Stephen Keese, Eileen Alexander, Bill Walton, Judge Paul Haakenson, Pat Randolph, Zia Ahari, Mark Steisel, Tom Escover

2nd Row/Left to Right: John Bloch, Charles Swensen, Mike Edridge, Ron Arlas, Lucy Dilworth, Greg Galeste, Janice Rosales, Bill Rankin, Matt O'Shea, Bruce Bartel, Patti Church, Mark Gainer Not Shown: Jack Govi

Photographer: Stuart Lirette

### To the Citizens of Marin County:

On behalf of the 2018-19 Marin County Civil Grand Jury, I am delighted to present summaries of our seven reports. It has been my privilege to work with a multi-talented group of volunteers from a wide range of professional backgrounds and interests, and a large geographical spread across Marin. The 19 volunteer members of the jury have devoted

endless hours to investigating, researching, writing, and publishing reports on a broad array of topics of interest and concern to the citizens of Marin. It is our hope that the response to the recommendations in these reports has a lasting impact on the county.

The topics for investigation were drawn from the experience of the Grand Jurors, an analysis

of the public requests for investigation received during the course of this year, and a review of previous Grand Jury reports.

I thank all of my fellow Grand Jurors for their dedication and for the thousands of hours devoted to this endeavor. I would also like to thank Presiding Judge Paul Haakenson for his wisdom and support, Assistant County Counsel Jack Govi for his advice

and encouragement, and Aide to the Grand Jury Patti Church for her assistance and care.

Respectfully submitted,  
**Pat Randolph**, Foreperson  
2018-2019 Marin County Civil Grand Jury

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

### Application and Contact Information

US Mail: Marin County Civil Grand Jury • c/o 3501 Civic Center Drive, Rm. 275 • San Rafael, CA 94903

Call: Aide to the Grand Jury • (415) 473-6132; TTY: (415) 473-2226

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## 2018-2019 MARIN COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT SUMMARIES

### WILDFIRE PREPAREDNESS: A NEW APPROACH

Marin faces unprecedented danger from wildfire. The Grand Jury reviewed conditions that make us vulnerable to wildfire, assessed plans currently in place to correct them, and recommends a new approach to meeting these challenges. Four areas of vulnerability stand out:

#### **Vegetation Management**

Fuel conditions make Marin extremely vulnerable to wildfires. Overgrown vegetation has created hazardous fuel loads throughout the county. Policies and procedures intended to manage and reduce vegetation are inadequate and inconsistent. Few inspectors are available to determine compliance, and enforcement is slow.

#### **Education of the Public**

The public's ignorance of how to prepare for and respond to wildfires makes Marin vulnerable. Most people do not know how to create defensible space by cutting back vegetation. Many have failed to collect emergency supplies or plan for evacuations. Nearly 90% of residents have not signed up to receive emergency alerts. Programs to educate the public for wildfire are not well known and are offered infrequently.

#### **Alerts**

The two crucial emergency alert systems in the county, Alert Marin and Nixle, as opt-in systems, warn only those who have registered.

#### **Evacuations**

Marin's topography creates



Photo Credit: iStockPhoto

danger for those who live far from the main evacuation routes. Connecting roads are narrow and overgrown. Some are constricted by traffic calming obstacles which impede traffic in emergency evacuations. Plans to ease emergency traffic flow are years away from implementation. Marin's roads lack the capacity for a mass evacuation in personal vehicles. Public transit is a neglected piece of evacuation preparedness. Inertia and complacency have prevented a proactive and nimble response to wildfire dangers.

The Grand Jury proposes the creation of a joint powers authority to coordinate a comprehensive, consistent approach to pre-ignition

planning funded by a ¼ cent sales tax. This approach will remedy the gaps in our

preparedness and demonstrate our political will to improve wildfire safety in Marin.



Video Podcast: <https://youtu.be/OLuK4ln46U4>

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

##### **Vegetation**

**R1.** Create a comprehensive, countywide vegetation management plan that includes vegetation along evacuation routes, a campaign to mobilize public participation, and low-income subsidies.

**R2.** Hire at least 30 new civilian vegetation inspectors and at least eight fire/fuels crews focused on fuel reduction in the high risk areas of the county, including federal, state and local public lands.

**R3.** Develop and implement a fast, streamlined procedure to enforce vegetation citations.

##### **Education**

**R4.** Adopt and deliver a comprehensive education program focused on action for all residents of Marin on a regular schedule by a team of expert trainers.

**R5.** Promote the creation of Firewise Communities in every neighborhood by all local jurisdictions.

**Recommendations**  
continued on page 4

**Recommendations** continued from page 3

**R6.** Employ individuals with skills in public speaking, teaching, curriculum design, graphics, web design, advertising, community organization, community relations, and diplomacy to educate the public.

**Alerts**

**R7.** Collect Marin residents' information and add it to Alert Marin and Nixle databases to make them opt-out systems.

**R8.** Expand the use of sirens with Long Range Acoustic Devices.

**Evacuations**

**R9.** Research, develop, and publish plans for the mass movement of populations along designated evacuation routes.

**R10.** Give the highest priority to mitigating known choke points and to maximizing the capacity of existing evacuation routes.

**R11.** Incorporate and prioritize plans for mass evacuations in

all pending and future traffic/road projects along major escape routes.

**R12.** Educate, prepare, and drill for evacuations in all communities.

**R13.** Fully integrate public transit into the Marin Emergency Radio Authority communications system without further delay.

**R14.** The Transportation Authority of Marin must convene all stakeholders no later than December 31, 2019, to address congestion on escape routes in an evacuation.

**Umbrella Entity**

**R15.** Establish in the form of a Joint Powers Authority an umbrella organization for wildfire planning and preparedness (vegetation management, public education, alerts, and evacuation), funded by a ¼ cent sales tax.

**SMART: First Mile/Last Mile Options**

Photo Credit: Marin County Civil Grand Jury

Sonoma Marin Area Rail Transit (SMART) has been operational since August 2017, providing passenger rail service between the Sonoma County Airport Station and downtown San Rafael. Expansion of service to Larkspur Landing is scheduled for late 2019. One of the objectives of SMART is to provide a transit alternative between Sonoma and Marin. SMART's success will, in part, depend on the convenience of east-west and north-south connectivity to/from the stations, often referred to as "first mile - last mile."

The Marin County Civil Grand Jury issued two earlier reports on SMART operations. The current Grand Jury report focuses on connectivity to SMART stations located in Marin County.

Measure Q, the voter initiative that established a sales tax to fund SMART operations, requires SMART to publish a strategic plan update every five years. With previous plans published in 2009 and 2014, the next update is due in 2019. SMART management has assured the Grand Jury that the 2019 update is under development and scheduled to be released in the fall of 2019.

All possibilities to enhance and improve first and last mile connections should be examined, including expansion of Marin Connect to include additional areas outside of the North San Rafael pilot zone. The feasibility of using autonomous shuttles should be considered since the technology is

**RESPONSE FROM MARIN AGENCIES**

*The Marin cities, towns, fire agencies and County are addressing this recommendation with a working group to explore the creation of a countywide wildfire prevention program governed by a countywide joint power authority. The program scope for ongoing, locally-controlled, countywide wildfire prevention program would include the following:*

- Fire fuel reduction and vegetation management
- Defensible-space home evaluations and education
- Evacuation planning and neighborhood preparedness

- Alert and warning enhancements
- Pursuit of grant funds for countywide efforts, as well as grant funding to assist seniors, financially disadvantaged and those with access and functional needs with preparedness measures.

*This program would require new, ongoing funding. We are currently exploring a potential countywide parcel tax measure in March 2020. Based on our feedback from Marin fire-responsible agencies, we believe that a parcel tax is the appropriate funding mechanism.*

## VAPING: An Under-the-Radar Epidemic

Marin County has a youth health crisis—vaping. Vaping among our seventh, ninth, and 11th graders more than doubled in two years, with 47% of 11th graders admitting to having vaped. The numbers may actually be higher, as teens notoriously under-report.

Vaping is inhaling aerosols created when fluids in electronic smoking devices (e-cigarettes and similar products) are heated. Most vaping products contain highly addictive nicotine. Vaping can cause irreparable damage to vapers' health and subject them to lifelong problems.

Vaping liquids come in adolescent-appealing flavors. Vaping products are gateway drugs and young vapers frequently move on to smoking cigarettes. Local school officials have called vaping their number one problem.

Billion-dollar corporations have expressly designed, flavored, and marketed their products to hook adolescents. A single vaping cartridge contains as much nicotine as a pack of cigarettes.

To combat vaping, a four-pronged approach is needed:

- Limit the availability of flavored tobacco.

**VAPING** continued on page 6



Photo Credit: iStockPhoto

**SMART** continued from page 4 available and is currently deployed in a number of pilot projects.

Given that SMART has been operational for less than two years, they and their partner transit agencies have done a commendable job in developing numerous modes for traveling to and from SMART stations. The expectation is that new options for first and last mile connections will be implemented as the system matures.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

**R1.** Transportation Authority of Marin and Marin Transit should conduct surveys and pertinent research, using the criteria of convenience, cost, and accessibility to determine optimal “first mile - last mile” connections to SMART stations.

**R2.** Marin Transit should expand the usage of Marin

Connect beyond northern San Rafael no later than the first quarter of 2020.

**R3.** SMART should complete and publish its feasibility study by July 2019 on the east-west track connecting to an Amtrak station in the East Bay.

**R4.** Upon completion of the SMART station in Larkspur, a free passenger shuttle between

the station and the Larkspur ferry terminal should be established.

**R5.** SMART, Transportation Authority of Marin and Marin Transit should prepare a joint feasibility study for the possible implementation of an autonomous shuttle for connection from the Larkspur SMART station to the Larkspur Ferry.

**VAPING** continued from page 5

- Educate students, teachers and parents.
- Enforce the new tobacco sales bans.
- Support students already addicted to nicotine.

The county and many municipalities have adopted ordinances banning flavored tobacco products. To be effective, the ban must be county-wide, and be enforced.

The Marin County Office of Education (MCOE) and the County of Marin Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), along with community

organizations, are providing strong leadership to curtail adolescent vaping. Peer-to-peer education programs are reaching students in high and middle schools.

MCOE and HHS should tap into the resources of Marin's largest healthcare providers. Kaiser Permanente, Sutter Healthcare, and the Marin Healthcare District can jointly develop adolescent nicotine addiction programs. If Marin County is to continue being the "healthiest county in California," it must increase its efforts to educate students and parents, restrict access, and support students who are addicted.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**R1.** The County of Marin Department of Health and Human Services, the Marin County Office of Education and all school districts should increase initiatives to provide students, parents, and the community with more information and support on vaping prevention and cessation. Initiatives should include digital and social media content, including materials for middle and high schools.

**R2.** Marin County Office of Education should create and make available resources for students, parents, teachers, and the community stressing the dangers of vaping and where cessation assistance can be obtained.

**R3.** The Marin County Office of Education should partner with high school coaches and the Marin County Athletic League, educate them on the dangers of vaping, and develop a program

to stress those dangers to the members of their teams.

**R4.** Each school district should install vaping detectors in school bathrooms and other areas where vaping frequently occurs.

**R5.** All municipalities in the county that have not banned the sale of flavored tobacco products should do so within the next year.

**R6.** Novato and Fairfax should amend their tobacco ordinances to include menthol flavored tobacco products.

**R7.** The County of Marin Department of Health and Human Services should work with the local medical community, including Kaiser Permanente, Sutter Healthcare and the Marin Healthcare District to establish teen nicotine cessation programs.

**R8.** All law enforcement agencies should coordinate the enforcement of sales bans on flavored tobacco.

## SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS REVISITED



(Novato police photo)

School Resource Officers (SROs) are law enforcement officers who serve as counselors, role models, and advocates for students while keeping them safe. SROs have received specialized training that enables them to develop positive working relationships with students, school staff, law enforcement, other first responders, and community groups. Because of this, their

physical presence at schools gives students, parents, teachers, and community members assurance that schools are safe learning environments.

SROs primary assignments are to:

1. Help provide a safe learning environment for students.
2. Counsel, educate, and build relationships with students.

**SRO Revisited** continued on page 7

**SRO Revisited** continued from page 6

### 3. Enforce laws.

Although SROs are sworn law enforcement officers, they do not enforce school policies or maintain discipline. Instead, they focus on building strong, approachable relationships with students and staff, and on identifying and preventing inappropriate behavior on school grounds and throughout the community.

School safety is a concern for every community in Marin. In preparing this report, the Marin County Civil Grand Jury consistently heard positive comments about the importance of SROs in maintaining school safety. The Grand Jury also learned that resources to help provide safety at schools differ significantly throughout the county. Only a few school districts have full-time SROs. Others are served by the single SRO employed by the Sheriff's Office, who covers 34 schools with over 9,200 students, throughout a 521 square mile territory. Disturbingly, some schools have no assigned SRO coverage.

Funding SROs to serve at schools in Marin County is a sound investment because it prevents crime and teaches students to trust and work with law enforcement officers and other authority figures. It also helps students become more civic-minded. Municipalities and school districts in Marin should work to find funding so they can provide SRO services at their schools.



(Novato police photo)

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**R1.** SRO programs in Marin County should be retained or expanded where they now exist. SRO programs should be established to cover those school districts where they do not exist.

**R2.** Municipalities, school districts, and law enforcement agencies in Marin County should make SRO programs a high budgetary priority.

**R3.** To insure continuity, each SRO should be assigned to serve for at least a four-year term.

**R4.** The Marin County Sheriff's Office should have two additional full-time SRO

positions.

**R5.** The City of San Rafael should have at least one additional full-time SRO.

**R6.** Mill Valley should employ a full-time SRO who regularly visits its schools rather than simply assigning an officer to be on call for its schools.

**R7.** All SROs should complete SRO Police Officer Standards of Training by July 1, 2020.

**R8.** Law enforcement agencies should fund additional training for SROs that will help them keep up with and handle their responsibilities.

**R9.** School districts should take the lead in working with

their city councils and law enforcement agencies to employ and maintain a sufficient number of SROs.

**R10.** School districts and municipalities should explore funding sources such as grants, bond issues, special taxes, and other sources.

**R11.** School districts and municipalities should consider sharing the costs and services of SRO programs.

**R12.** County law enforcement agencies should provide the time and facilities for the SROs to meet regularly to exchange information, ideas, and discuss new trends by October 1, 2019.

# MARIN'S TELECOMMUNICATIONS DISCONNECT

Marin has been short-changed by a lack of telecommunications leadership by county and municipal officials. Because of this, the public does not have countywide fiber to the home and has only limited ability to aggregate demand. Aggregation strengthens the ability to negotiate cost, coverage, and other contractual terms with telecom providers. Our officials have turned over network development policy to commercial network providers, resulting in a patchwork of network services that benefit the companies' profit-making priorities. Our officials have not ensured that all county residents receive the best value in telecom services. Effective leadership that has technical expertise in telecom business, regulation, and technology is needed.

Major telecom opportunities were missed by existing agencies. Few applications were made for available federal and state funds to provide high quality broadband internet access to unserved and poorly served areas such as West Marin and the Canal Area of San Rafael. The opportunities to use existing fiber optic networks to provide broadband for businesses and residents were ignored. The opportunity to negotiate favorable terms for countywide 5G (the next generation cellular technology) installations was ineffectively addressed.

The lack of countywide telecom leadership and coordination means that the



Photo Credit: iStockPhoto

various government entities did not and do not formally seek or use opportunities to plan and cooperate with each other.

The Marin Telecommunications Agency (MTA) was created to provide leadership, coordination, and policy guidance in the county; however, it has abandoned these functions. Over a decade ago, MTA's Board decided to focus on the collection and distribution of franchise fees and oversight of the Community Media Center of Marin (CMCM) and to ignore its policymaking leadership mission.

Marin County needs competent and effective guidance on telecom. The Board of Supervisors should set up a commission or a public

advisory group to monitor telecom activities and propose appropriate actions to best serve the telecommunications interests of Marin's residents.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**R1.** By December 31, 2019, the Board of Supervisors should appoint a citizen's advisory committee that will provide advice and information on telecommunications services and policy. The Grand Jury recommends that citizens with telecommunications expertise be

appointed to the committee.

**R2.** The MTA's franchise fee collection and disbursement responsibilities should be moved to the Marin General Services Authority.

**R3.** MTA's responsibilities for CMCM should be terminated.

**R4.** The MTA should be dissolved.

# SPECIAL DISTRICTS TRANSPARENCY UPDATE

Every year, Marin taxpayers spend hundreds of millions of dollars on special districts, but taxpayers know little about these districts, including what they are. According to the Marin County Department of Finance's list, 133 special districts operate in Marin.

A special district is a discrete local entity that delivers a limited number of public services in a specific geographic area. Special districts are separate and distinct from the cities and counties where they are located.

The 2013-2014 Marin Civil Grand Jury investigated Marin's special districts, and discovered that a complete list of special districts did not exist and information was hard to find. Therefore, it recommended that the county add a page to its website listing all special districts in the county with contact information.

In 2016, a follow-up report entitled *Web Transparency Report Card*, was issued that found that "The County of Marin does not currently publish a definitive list of all its dependent special districts and JPAs (Joint Powers Authority)." As a result, the jury recommended that:

- All agencies should update their websites to include the annual compensation of its directors, officers and employees.
- The Board of Supervisors should create a comprehensive 'digital'



Photo Credit: iStockPhoto

directory with links to all County of Marin's dependent special districts and JPAs.

In response to the above recommendations, the Board of Supervisors agreed to publish a list, but neither of these recommendations have been fully implemented. Marin Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) has a partial list. The County Clerk's Office has a different partial list as mandated by State law. The Marin County Department of Finance has yet another partial list composed primarily of districts that have a financial relationship with the County. The California Secretary of State publishes yet another list

covering the entire state.

To ensure transparency and accountability, the current Grand Jury recommends

that the Board of Supervisors implement the 2015-2016's recommendations by December 31, 2019.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**R1.** The Marin County Board of Supervisors should create and publish a comprehensive online "digital directory" of all the County of Marin's dependent and independent special districts, County Service Areas and JPAs, with links to their websites, no later than December 31, 2019.

**R2.** The Board of Supervisors, the County Director of Finance, and the County Clerk should determine how the list will be

compiled, who will be responsible for maintaining it, what formats it will have, and how it will be published.

**R3.** The list should include: the purpose of the district or JPA; complete compensation components and amounts (including salary, insurance, stipends, in kind goods, conference fees and other benefits, and reimbursements); how board member compensation is calculated; and if board meetings recorded/televised.

# STATUS OF CAREER TECHNICAL EDUCATION IN MARIN COUNTY

In affluent Marin County parents have an expectation that their children will attend and graduate from college. Schools have mirrored these expectations and have stressed the importance of higher education for all students. This focus does not serve the interests of a substantial number of students who will complete their formal education with graduation from high school or who will not ultimately attain a college degree. The Marin County Civil Grand Jury understands that schools in the county have a two-fold mission: prepare students to succeed in post-secondary education (two- and four-year college degrees or formal certificate programs) or train students to go into the workforce.

Vocational training, now included in what is called Career Technical Education (CTE), is not promoted sufficiently to accommodate those students who could benefit from such programs. Although the educational establishment in Marin County has increased opportunities for this group, the workforce bound group may be unaware of the programs that exist. More can be done.

Currently, school counselors often focus on college choices and admissions. Many students would be better served if some of this valuable time was used in guiding students towards CTE offerings when appropriate. Similarly, career information programs now center on vocations requiring extensive education — doctors, lawyers, engineers. Much more



Photo Credit: Marin County Civil Grand Jury

focus could be placed on CTE pathways — medical assisting, plumbing, auto repair.

Marin does not have sufficient facilities in place to train the numbers of students who are in the workforce bound group. To establish these programs is challenging, but it can be done. Such a program has existed for over a century at Silicon Valley Career Training Education, a high school focused on CTE located in San Jose. A similar campus in Marin could reach a broad range of students.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**R1.** During the 2019-2020 school year and annually thereafter, a career night should be offered at each high school for all students and parents featuring various CTE options as well as the more traditional offerings.

**R2.** Throughout the 2019-2020 school year and annually thereafter, parents should be made aware of the income potential and career security enjoyed by people in the trades.

**R3.** In the 2019-2020 school year and periodically thereafter, all high school counselors should receive in depth training in the available CTE opportunities to enable them to effectively counsel all students.

**R4.** The Marin County Office of Education should establish a working group by December 31, 2019, to collaborate with local employers and other entities to create post high school career pathways.

# THE CIVIL GRAND JURY EXPERIENCE

The California State Constitution requires the establishment of a Civil Grand Jury in each of the state's 58 counties. Each county's Civil Grand Jury is responsible for overseeing (in a civil "watchdog" role, rather than a criminal role) all of the public agencies within that county. Marin County has more than 130 public agencies: the county itself, cities, towns, school districts, sewer districts, police and fire agencies, other special districts, and joint powers authorities (JPAs).

Each Civil Grand Jury consists of 19 citizens from all walks of life who dedicate a year of their lives to studying, investigating, and improving their county. During the one-year term, Civil Grand Jurors issue reports detailing their findings and recommendations to which public agencies must respond.

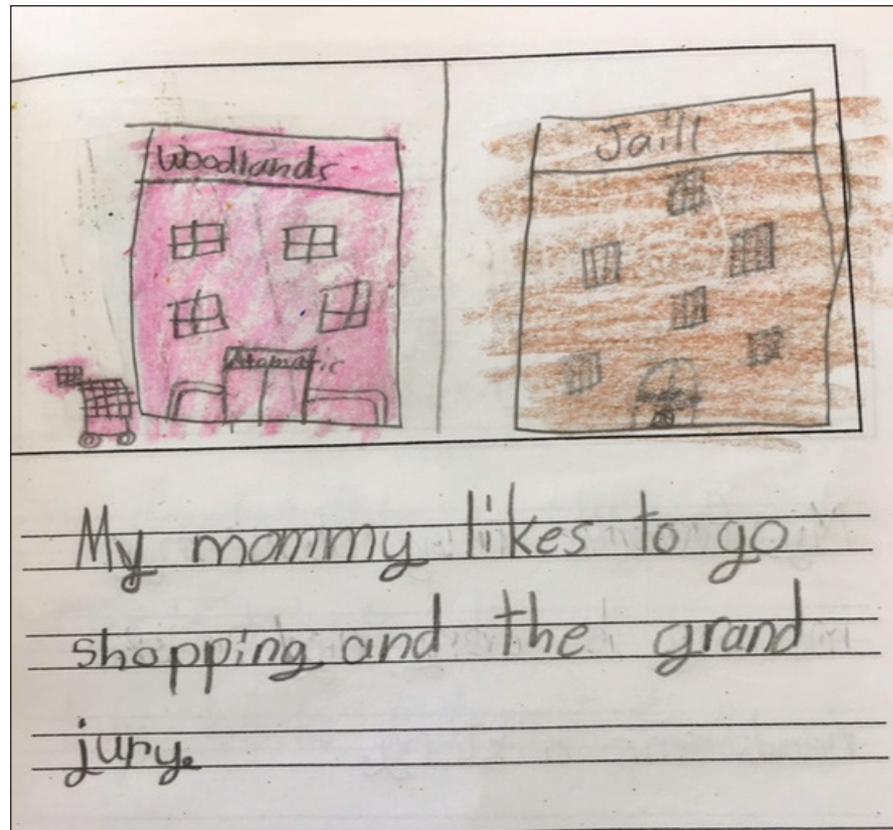
## WHY PEOPLE APPLY

People from all walks of life apply to the Civil 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 Civil Grand Jury's website) by April 22nd. In addition to requesting



name and professional background, some confidential information is requested to perform a preliminary background check. This check is needed because jurors will be given access to detention facilities and to confidential information. Those selected as jurors will also need to: be fingerprinted, share information about financial investments (Form 700), and have a second background check performed. All such information is kept confidential by the county and only released to agencies as required by law.

**Step two:** Applicants who meet basic requirements (residency, age, no conflicts of interest, etc.), are invited to interview in May. This interview is designed to ensure that there are no hidden agendas or conflicts of interest, and that applicants communicate well. It consists of both a personal and a panel interview (an opportunity to sample the

jury experience and see how well applicants interact). The best and most representative 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 and randomly selected by the presiding judge. 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 invited to join the jury immediately.

## HOW THE YEAR UNFOLDS (July-June)

The first week begins with a multi-day training for both the sitting jury and the alternates. In addition to learning about responsibilities and powers, committees

and investigation techniques, jurors start to get to know their fellow jurors — each of whom has a lifetime of expertise to share. Within a few weeks, jurors and alternates visit Marin County Juvenile Hall, Marin County Jail, and San Quentin State Prison. These visits are required by law and make a strong impression. Jurors and alternates see, talk to, and eat with people (including inmates) with whom they would not normally interact.

## Getting organized/a typical week

After the training, alternates are excused. Jurors organize into investigative and administrative committees and establish a weekly calendar. Committees meet weekly in two-hour time slots on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and on Thursday mornings. The entire Grand Jury meets once a week in plenary session. This is usually on Thursdays from 11:00 to 2:00.

## Finding a topic

Perhaps the most surprising thing for new jurors is that there is no assigned list of topics to investigate. Jurors may wish to follow up on a previous Civil Grand Jury report, research issues that they've heard about, or simply learn more about a local agency. By the end of the first month, committees start to explore potential topics. Is there a perception of wrongdoing, inefficiency, or need for improvement? After internal research and discussion, people are invited for interviews.

## The interview process

Each interviewee signs an admonition acknowledging the obligation not to reveal that they spoke

**Civil Grand Jury Experience**

Continued on page 12

## Civil Grand Jury Experience

continued from page 11

with the Civil Grand Jury or the content of conversation. Interviews provide background information and allow pointed questions to be asked in a confidential setting. The Civil Grand Jury is sworn to protect the anonymity of sources, not just for the current term, but forever.

### Continuity

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

### The RFI

When a committee has sufficient information and direction, they write an RFI (Request for Investigation). An RFI is an overview of what the committee plans to research and is presented to the entire 19-member body of the Civil Grand Jury (the "Plenary"). If the research proves fruitful, a report is written. The Plenary later reviews and votes on each report.

Sometimes a committee discovers that their "hot topic" is not viable (assumptions prove to be incorrect or changes are already underway) and has to abandon the topic and start anew. Excitement builds as expertise and experience develops. Jurors days are filled with meeting leaders, learning the lingo, understanding motivations, deciphering the law, and finding best practices. Jurors start thinking about solutions to problems, 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 jurors' thoughts or observations; they contain concepts and solutions based on facts.

### Field trips and plenary presentations:

The Civil Grand Jury is not all work and no play. There are opportunities to take "field trips" to learn as much as possible about the county. Jurors visit a wide variety of agencies and locales and ask questions of experts. In addition, leaders from throughout the county are invited to present at the weekly plenary sessions, sharing details of their organizations and responsibilities. These presentations give a comprehensive overview local government and the dedicated and talented individuals who serve county residents.

### Writing the report

While some investigations continually uncover new information and could go on indefinitely, the Civil Grand Jury must complete its work within its one-year term. At some point investigations must wind down and writing the report described in the RFI must begin. Before drafting the 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, com-

mittee 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 a committee agrees the report is ready, a draft is passed to the editorial committee. This is the first chance for "fresh eyes" to read the report and offer suggestions. The investigative committee can then make any necessary edits, eventually sharing the 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 to approve release. 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 the work, but to ensure that the specific language is legally appropriate (i.e., the report is not libelous) and within the jury's scope of responsibility. If they reject the report, the committee may opt to make necessary changes and seek re-approval. As required by the California Penal Code, a confidential copy is sent to agencies named in the report. This ensures that these agencies have an opportunity to request any factual mistakes be corrected before

publication. Finally, the report is published: It is placed onto the Civil Grand Jury's website and copies are sent to the media for possible coverage.

### THE RESULTS

The most tangible result of the jury's work are the published Civil Grand Jury reports expressing concerns and containing recommendations to which specific agencies publicly respond. By law elected individuals have 60 days to respond while boards and councils have 90 days. Responses may indicate the intention to implement the recommendations, further study the concepts, or reject the recommendations as too costly or infeasible. Responses are posted with the reports on the Grand Jury's section of the county website.

One 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, Civil 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 use of body cameras with well-developed policies, increased recycling, a plastic bag ban, increased senior care funding, and improved mental healthcare in our jail.

### INTERESTED?

If you have some free time and a passion to make a difference, apply to the next Civil 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, 2020.

**To APPLY for CIVIL GRAND JURY SERVICE visit:**

**[MarinCounty.org/GrandJury](http://MarinCounty.org/GrandJury)**

**Click on "Marin Grand Jury Application"**

**To request a CIVIL GRAND JURY INVESTIGATION visit:**

**[MarinCounty.org/GrandJury](http://MarinCounty.org/GrandJury)**

**Click on "Form to Request an Investigation"**