

RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY REPORT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

REPORT TITLE: "Climate Change: How Will Marin Adapt?"

REPORT DATE: September 11, 2020

RESPONSE BY: City of Mill Valley

GRAND JURY FINDINGS:

- We agree with the findings numbered: **F1-F3; F5;**
- We disagree wholly or partially with the finding(s) numbered: **F4 and F7.**

GRAND JURY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Recommendation **R4** has been implemented.
- Recommendation **R1 and R6** requires further analysis.

See Attachment A for details.

Date: 12/8/2020

Signed: Sashi McEntee

Sashi McEntee, Mayor
City of Mill Valley

Attest: Kelsey Rogers
Kelsey Rogers, City Clerk

ATTACHMENT A:
CITY OF MILL VALLEY
RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY REPORT,
"CLIMATE CHANGE: HOW WILL MARIN RESPOND?"

FINDINGS

The responses below are based on the perspective of City staff's experience in planning for and implementing policies and programs to address climate change.

F1. Climate change mitigation efforts by Marin governments have been notably effective in meeting their goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Response: Agree.

The City of Mill Valley has worked collaboratively with our local partners (cities, towns, interest groups and agencies) to develop an integrated approach to streamline staff resources and the implementation of various Climate Action Plan policies and programs, which include greenhouse gas emission reduction and adaptation strategies.

The City of Mill Valley's General Plan includes a Climate Element, which outlines 21 programs for implementation in order to successfully meet the following emission reduction targets:

- 15 percent below 2005 baseline emission levels for community-generated emissions by the year 2020; and
- 20 percent below 2005 baseline levels for municipal operations by the year 2020.

The Mill Valley community has successfully achieved its emission reduction targets. In fact, Mill Valley is one of the highest performing cities, reducing its total emission generated by 33%. In 2018, the City received the League of Cities Silver Beacon Award for its achievements in community greenhouse gas reductions, agency greenhouse gas reductions, energy savings, and sustainability best practices. Key factors in the City and community's success in its emissions reductions include the generation and use of cleaner energy; improved efficiency of buildings and residential appliances; composting organic waste; and the use of cleaner fueled vehicles such as hybrid and electric vehicles.

Through its involvement with Marin Climate and Energy Partnership (MCEP), the City has begun to evaluate how it can successfully achieve new state emission reduction targets aimed at 40% below baseline (2005) conditions by the year 2040.

F2. Adaptation planning is essential to protect local public utility and transportation infrastructure as well as private property interests, and to enable Marin's citizens to maintain their current standards of living.

Response: Agree.

F3. With the BayWAVE and C-SMART initial vulnerability assessments completed, the county is now well-positioned to focus on adaptation planning and policies related to sea level rise.

Response: Agree.

F4. The existing adaptation efforts across the county pay insufficient attention to the other potential effects of climate change, including impacts on public health, ecosystems, and social equity.

Response: Disagree.

The discussion and implementation of Climate Change is quite broad. Effects related to public health, ecosystems and social equity are typically linked to the implementation with improvements to health, ecosystems and/or social equity. With additional funding or data sources, more could be done in quantifying these effects. Below are some examples of climate action work Mill Valley City staff has been involved with, conducted through the County of Marin and the Transportation Authority of Marin, that resulted in improvements to health, ecosystems and/or social equity.

- Social equity improvements through the identification of vulnerable populations and facilities. There have been several **Sea Level Rise Vulnerability Studies** conducted by the County that identifying vulnerable facilities and areas of potential inundation. These Vulnerability Studies identify risks and establish steps intended to improve resiliency of the community, and then help support further programs that identify vulnerable populations. Such programs include transit-assistance and emergency centers.
- Social Equity and ecosystems improvements through the **Local Hazard Mitigation Plan**. In 2017, the City of Mill Valley participated in the working group of Marin County and municipal staff to develop a county-wide, multi-jurisdictional Local Hazard Mitigation Plan that was adopted by the City of Mill Valley City Council (referenced on page 18 of the Grand Jury Report). The City continues to participate in this working group, which is collaborating to help integrate climate adaptation planning in all the planning efforts of the local jurisdictions.
- Social equity improvements through emergency response. The **Marin Wildfire Prevention Authority** is in the process of developing a County-wide Evacuation Plan. This document will include a review of vulnerable populations.
- Social equity and public health improvements through **access to alternative transportation**. Access to alternative forms of transportation for either health or access is supported through various emission reduction programs sponsored by the Transportation Authority of Marin.
- Ecosystem improvements through wetland restoration adaptation programs sponsored by the County of Marin. **Wetland restoration** projects include Bothin Marsh and Richardson Bay beach, which reduce impacts from wind, waves and water levels; address habitat restoration; and increase flood protection.

F5. There are insufficient staff and financial resources devoted to climate change adaptation efforts across county government as well as in the cities, towns, and other agencies, and many of the existing efforts are highly dependent on grant funding.

Response: Agree.

The challenge for adaptation projects is the scale of the project--where to draw the line in terms of the issue you are trying to address—within city limits; locally; regionally or even state-wide.

Adaptation projects must generate projects that can address a given problem; gain consensus; and be funded sufficiently from planning and construction (including long-term maintenance).

Adaptation projects are very expensive and, without large-scale state and federal funding and staffing to supplement local efforts, smaller jurisdictions cannot design, fund or implement adaptation projects necessary.

Many adaptation projects also face hurdles to implementation due to the lack of consensus among permitting or regulatory agencies that are typically involved in adaptation planning. For instance: the County has discussed some adaptation projects that would involve some fill in the Richardson Bay as a means of slowing down the effects of Climate Change—allowing tidal areas and ecosystems to adapt to changing conditions. However, any type of restoration work and/or construction in wetlands areas is limited and quite difficult (and expensive). These are implementation barriers outside of the City or County's control and will likely require significant changes to the regulatory permitting and environmental review process (including endangered species laws).

F7. Cross-jurisdictional collaboration and coordination will be required for successful adaptation efforts, but Marin lacks any overarching organizational or governance structure to facilitate this.

Response: Partially Disagree.

The City of Mill Valley agrees that all jurisdictions must work together to develop and implement mitigation and adaptation strategies. However, while there is no single entity directing the work of current adaptation and climate change work, it is also unclear if an overarching organizational or governance structure is the best approach to facilitate such work and/or collaboration. Additional analysis and information is required to determine if an overarching organizational or governance structure is needed. In doing so, funding sources should be identified to adequately staff and implement such an organizational structure.

Climate mitigation and adaptation measures are very complex and consist of a broad range of topics, as illustrated through the Grand Jury's report. There are often overlapping natural disasters or threats (such as fire and flooding); other direct effects (social equity, health, ecosystems); and require a wide range of stakeholders and regulatory structures, depending on the work (from studies through implementation).

Currently, there is *flexibility* to collaborate and coordinate with the appropriate stakeholders, as needed. Allowing for flexibility in governance has spurred the ability for staff to swiftly apply for grants and implement various programs at the local level. This is illustrated by the various programs noted in the report, including:

- The new **Marin Wildfire Prevent Authority** (MWPA), approved by voters in March 2020, includes a joint powers resolution that underscores: 1) the role that climate change plays in the escalating threat of wildfires and 2) the importance of collaboration and coordination. This program has a dedicated funding source and is directly related to fire prevention.
- County-Wide Local **Hazard Mitigation Plan** that provides an overall structure of programs for all of the local jurisdictions to work from. This joint document facilitates coordination and collaboration, and makes efficient use of resources in terms of the implementation of various programs contained in the Plan.
- **Marin Climate and Energy Partnership** (MCEP) consists of eleven Marin towns and cities, the County of Marin, and three public agencies that serve Marin. The partnership establishes and funds a part-time sustainability coordinator, and has generated collaborative, streamlined and consistent reporting in GHG emissions and the implementation of Climate Action Plan programs. This partnership has also assisted with continued collaboration in the review/development of programs to incorporate into Climate Action Plan updates.
- County-led Sea Level Rise program based on **BayWAVE** vulnerability assessment. BayWAVE maintains a countywide, multi-jurisdictional, multi-agency group through the Technical Working Group formed for the Vulnerability Assessment. A steering committee is made up of county and local elected officials and reports out to their constituency and to larger networks like the Marin County Council of Mayors and Councilmembers.
- County-led **DRAWDOWN: Marin** effort addresses both climate change mitigation, adaptation and resilience. This program is being developed and finalized by the County of Marin. Currently there are six Focus Areas identified to “draw down” carbon emissions to below zero by designing and implementing solutions in: Renewable Energy, Transportation, Buildings and Infrastructure, Carbon Sequestration, Local Food and Food Waste, and Climate Resilient Communities. The effort will include an Executive Steering Committee, Community Outreach Partnership Council and Stakeholder Collaboratives.
- Collaboration and **coordination among the County and local jurisdictions, including Public Works and Planning** to discuss grant opportunities; resource sharing; and implementation across programs. For instance, the County’s Department of Public Works currently has a grant from Caltrans that funds work with Marin County Parks and the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy to plan adaptation for Bothin Marsh and the Mill Valley-Sausalito Bay Trail. The City of Mill Valley is a stakeholder in this process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

R1. The board of supervisors, in collaboration with the municipalities and other agencies affected by climate change, should convene a multi-jurisdictional task force (referred to in this report as the Marin Climate Adaptation Task Force) charged with developing a single, comprehensive, multi-jurisdictional adaptation strategy for all of Marin.

Response: This recommendation requires further analysis (see also response to F4 above).

This recommendation is most directly addressed to the Board of Supervisors as it recommends action on part of the County.

Existing efforts, including those items bulleted in Response F4 above all point to the collaborative approach to address climate change and adaptation for Marin. It is unclear whether a single, comprehensive, multi-jurisdiction adaptation strategy for all of Marin is the best way to approach the various impacts of climate change. There is already a county-wide Local Hazard Mitigation Plan, which all Marin jurisdictions are party to, which includes climate impacts as well as threats from other non-climate specific standards. All of the local Climate Action Plans are also quite similar in terms of the goals, policies and programs identified for implementation. Consideration should also be made for specific sectors, such as wildfire that is coordinated under the Marin Wildfire Prevention Authority or sea level rise through the BayWAVE program. These threats are quite specific and require significant (and different) stakeholder involvement; regulatory approaches; and expertise. Most importantly, they also require flexibility in order to implement and apply solutions at the local and regional level.

Staff has also received comments from Marin Climate Action Network, suggesting the development of a Marin Climate Resilience Plan to collaborate and address all climate impacts, including flooding, sea level rise, wildfire, heat, drought, health, air quality, and additional results of warming conditions, and should be further evaluated as part of the discussion.

The City of Mill Valley looks forward to continued discussions and work with the County and Board of Supervisors to further explore the best approaches to coordinate around the myriad of threats and vulnerabilities due to climate change, and will review the Grand Jury's recommendation through its collaboration with the County. In addition to governance concerns addressed above, funding and access to resources will need to be addressed as part of these conversations. Limited resources (funding and staff time) and competing priorities (of local jurisdictions, community groups, and individuals) speak to a significant and complex challenge ahead on this national and global issue.

R4. Each member of the Marin Climate & Energy Partnership, should declare its support for broadening the partnership's mission and increasing its funding as necessary to enable it to support overall climate change planning efforts, including both mitigation and adaptation in cities, towns, and other member agencies throughout the county.

Response: R4 has been implemented, see MCEP mission statement (<https://marinclimate.org/about-us/>).

Created in 2007, the Marin Climate and Energy Partnership (MCEP) is a partnership of the eleven Marin towns and cities, the County of Marin, and three public agencies that serve Marin. MCEP coordinates to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to prepare for a changing climate in Marin as a whole. Its mission is focused on discussion, study and implementation of overarching policies

and programs, ranging from emission reduction strategies to adaptation contained in each agency's Climate Action Plan.

MCEP is supportive of expanded opportunities to make further progress, and would welcome additional or new on-going funding sources which could support the expanded role and required staff. In these budgetary challenged times, attention needs to be given to funding strategies and sources, as well as staff resources available to execute work. Expansion of staff or roles should be coordinated to make sure there is not duplication with other efforts underway, including work that occurs through Zero Waste; Transportation Authority of Marin; and through the Marin Wildfire Prevent Authority.

R6. Each City and Town, if it does not have a full-time sustainability coordinator (or similar position), should appoint a committee or commission charged with monitoring and reporting on its climate mitigation and adaptation efforts.

Response: This recommendation requires further analysis.

The City of Mill Valley has a very small staff with limited funding and budgetary resources. As a result the City does not have a full-time sustainability coordinator. Monitoring and reporting on climate mitigation and adaptation efforts occurs through MCEP in terms of producing emission reduction reports and annual reporting to City Council on its implementation of Climate Action programs.

The sustainability coordinator role is currently managed through the Advance Planning/Senior Planner role, and coordinated through various scopes of work outlined in F7 above. The Advance Planning position focuses on General Plan implementation. Currently the Advance Planning Work Plan includes working with a stakeholder group to update the Mixed Use and Multi-Family Design Guidelines; Zoning Code updates such as the Accessory Dwelling Unit Ordinance; and several work items related to the Housing Advisory Committee.

Additional discussion and further analysis is required to determine the budgetary and staff priorities. Should a committee be formed, staff suggests that it focus on implementation of Climate Action programs. This would provide the largest impact in terms addressing climate change and would benefit staff in terms of providing additional resources to assist staff in promoting programs that are intended for the community, such as reducing emissions and increasing sustainable practices.