



CITY OF NOVATO
CALIFORNIA

922 Machin Avenue
Novato, CA 94945
415/899-8900
FAX 415/899-8213
novato.org

Mayor
Denise Athas
Mayor Pro Tem
Pat Eklund
Councilmembers
Eric Lucan
Amy Peele
Susan Wernick

City Manager
Adam McGill

July 16, 2020

The Honorable Judge Andrew Sweet
Marin County Superior Court
P.O. Box 4988
San Rafael, CA 94913-4988

Re: Response to Grand Jury Report "Follow-Up on Web Transparency of Agency Compensation Practices,"

Dear Judge Sweet,

At its regular meeting of July 14, 2020, the Novato City Council reviewed the above report which requests they City of Novato respond to Findings F3 and F5 and Recommendations R3, R4, and R6 of the report. The City's response to all is attached.

If the members of the Grand Jury require additional information, please contact City Manager Adam McGill at amcgill@novato.org.

We appreciate the work of the Grand Jury and thank you for your service to our residents and Marin County.

Sincerely,

Denise Athas
Mayor
City of Novato

Cc: Lucy Dilworth, Foreperson
Marin County Civil Grand Jury
3501 Civic Center Drive, Room #275
San Rafael, CA 94903

**CITY OF NOVATO
RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS
MARIN COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY
*"Web Transparency of Agency Compensation Practices"***

GRAND JURY FINDINGS

F3. Any link to publicpay.ca.gov on an agency's website that fails to go directly to the agency's current compensation data on that website does not satisfy the intent of the Government Code that information be easily located.

F5. Regarding detailed disclosure of total compensation paid, most public agencies do not break out all components of compensation paid to their elected officials, including salary, meeting fees or stipends (including compensation for serving as liaison to other advisory committees, councils and forums), reimbursements, health and retirement benefits, and other benefits such as equipment.

RESPONSE TO FINDINGS

- The City agrees with Finding F3; and
- The City partially agrees with Finding F5.

F5 Explanation: The City believes that it is appropriate to disclose the salary, health and retirement benefits received by elected officials from the City of Novato. The City however does not support including reimbursement for travel, attending conferences or industry events or including reimbursement for cell phones, computers, or tablets (or free use of such equipment). Travel, attending conferences and industry events are expectations put upon the councilmember and are included in the City's budget as it behooves the City for them to be present at such approved engagements and conferences. Equipment is not kept by the member after their term expires so therefore it is the City's property and not owned by the councilmember. Compensation, health benefits and retirement benefits given to the councilmember benefit them and therefore should be reported

RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS:

R3. No later than 90 days after the date of this report, agencies should modify their existing publicpay.ca.gov links so that they provide a direct link to their current compensation data on the state site. To eliminate the need for annual updates, the URL used for the link should exclude any parameter specifying a year. Formatted URL examples are shown on Appendix A.

Response: The City agrees with Recommendation R3. The City's Human Resources Department's "Salary and Benefits" webpage currently displays a link that takes the user directly to the City's most recent posted employee compensation data on the publicpay.ca.gov website. In addition to this already existing link, the City has added to its Human Resources Department homepage a direct link to the current employee compensation data page on publicpay.ca.gov. To eliminate the need for annual updates, the URL used for these links exclude any parameter specifying a year. Additionally, the City has created a transparency webpage which includes direct links to current City compensation data, as well as additional informative links to improve public access to information about the City and its services.

R4. No later than 90 days after the date of this report, in addition to any other compensation links, agencies should include a link on their board or council web pages that leads directly to their “Elected Officials” page on the publicpay.ca.gov site, conforming to the format suggested on Appendix A.

Response: The City agrees with Recommendation R4. The City has included a link on its City Council webpage that leads directly to the City’s Elected Officials page on the publicpay.ca.gov site. However, a link will not be added to the City’s Boards, Commissions and Committees webpage as the webpage already states that these members serve without compensation. Additionally, the City has created a transparency webpage which includes direct links to current City compensation data, as well as additional informative links to improve public access to information about the City and its services.

R6. No later than 120 days after the date of this report, agencies should adopt a practice to compile and publish each year an annual report detailing the compensation actually paid to their elected officials for the previous calendar year. Compensation disclosures should include, at a minimum, salary, meeting fees or stipends (including compensation for serving as liaison to other advisory committees, councils and forums), reimbursements, health and retirement benefits, and other benefits such as equipment. A link to this report should be posted on the agency’s board or council web page.

Response: The City partially agrees with Recommendation R6. The City will adopt a practice to compile and publish each year an annual report detailing the compensation actually paid to their elected officials for the previous calendar year. Compensation disclosures will include salary and health and retirement benefits paid by the City of Novato. Compensation disclosures will not include meeting fees or stipends (including compensation for serving as liaison to other advisory committees, councils and forums), reimbursements, and other benefits such as equipment. A link to this report will be posted on the City’s City Council webpage under “Compensation”. As with finding F5 above, the City does not support including reimbursement for travel, attending conferences or industry events or including reimbursement for cell phones, computers, or tablets (or free use of such equipment). Travel and attending conferences and industry events are expectations put upon the councilmember and are included in the City’s budget as it behooves the City for them to be present at such approved engagements and conferences. Equipment is not kept by the member after their term expires so therefore it is the City’s property and not owned by the councilmember. Compensation, health benefits and retirement benefits given to the councilmember benefit them and therefore should be reported.

2020 JUL 20 P 4: 03

MARIN COUNTY
COUNSEL'S OFFICE