



THE TOWN OF
CORTE MADERA
MARIN COUNTY CALIFORNIA

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PUBLIC WORKS
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RECREATION DEPARTMENT
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SANITARY DISTRICT NO. 2
415-927-5057

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POLICE AUTHORITY
415-927-5150

March 2, 2021

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

Foreperson Dilworth:

At its regular meeting on March 2, 2021, the Town Council reviewed the report "Roadblocks to Safer Evacuation In Marin" dated December 14, 2020. The report calls for a response from the Town of Corte Madera to Findings (F1-F5) and Recommendations (R1-R3), which is included as an attachment to this letter.

Should the members of the Grand Jury require any additional information, please contact the Town Manager Todd Cusimano at 415-927-5061 or tcusimano@tcmmail.org.

Sincerely,

Eli Beckman
Mayor

Attachment 1: Town of Corte Madera, Response to Marin Civil Grand Jury Findings & Recommendations

AGENCY RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY REPORT

Report Title: *Roadblocks to Safer Evacuation In Marin*

Report Date: December 14, 2020

Response Date: March 14, 2021

Agency Name: Town of Corte Madera **Agenda Date:** March 2, 2021

Response by: Eli Beckman **Title:** Mayor

FINDINGS (Respond to F1-F5)

- I (we) agree with the findings numbered: F1,
- I (we) disagree *partially* with the findings numbered: F5
- I (we) disagree *wholly* with the findings numbered: F2, F3, F4

(Attach a statement specifying any portions of the findings that are disputed; include an explanation of the reasons therefor.)

RECOMMENDATIONS (Respond to R1-R3)

- Recommendations numbered _____ have been implemented.
(Attach a summary describing the implemented actions.)
- Recommendations numbered _____ have not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future.
(Attach a timeframe for the implementation.)
- Recommendations numbered R1 require further analysis.
(Attach an explanation and the scope and parameters of an analysis or study, and a timeframe for the matter to be prepared for discussion by the officer or director of the agency or department being investigated or reviewed, including the governing body of the public agency when applicable. This timeframe shall not exceed six months from the date of publication of the grand jury report.)
- Recommendations numbered R2, R3 will not be implemented because they are not warranted or are not reasonable.
(Attach an explanation.)

Date: 3/2/21 Signed: 

Number of pages attached 5

The Grand Jury report requests that the Town of Corte Madera respond to Findings 1-5 and Recommendations 1-3:

FINDINGS:

F1. No single agency or jurisdiction is taking responsibility and authority for building infrastructure for safe evacuation routes across jurisdictions in Marin County.

Agree with the finding.

Comment: This is by design and in line with best practices. The responsibility is shared due to the numerous contributing factors related to evacuation readiness and safety. It is not yet clear that infrastructure is a major impediment to safe evacuation. Slow evacuation is not necessarily unsafe, but this issue would require further study. Central Marin Fire coordinates and engages with Corte Madera Public Works in hazard reduction along roadways. Additionally, vegetation fuel reduction along roadways is underway, and will soon be increasing, through the Marin Wildfire Prevention Authority (MWPA) and new funding made available as of July, 2020. Vegetation along the public right-of-way is the adjacent landowners responsibility, not a public agency's in most cases. However, the Town of Corte Madera, in coordination with the Central Marin Fire Authority, has implemented the highly successful Chipper Program to assist property owners in the reduction and maintenance of the vegetation on their properties as well as providing defensible space inspections, awareness and education.

F2. There is confusion in the county as to who has ultimate responsibility and authority for ensuring that Marin has safe evacuation routes.

Disagree with the finding.

Comment: There are many factors that contribute to safety and efficiency of evacuations, and responsibility for these factors lie with multiple public agencies, private entities, and landowners. Local emergency service personnel work very closely to address each incident. The order to evacuate, and responsibility for the evacuation, lies with the law enforcement agency having jurisdiction. Fire agencies and law enforcement have worked together to create pre-determined evacuation zones, multi-jurisdictional training exercises, common terminology and other initiatives that involve evacuation routes. Marin fire agencies, public works staff, and the Office of Emergency Services (OES) coordinate efforts around evaluation and prioritization of evacuation routes and infrastructure improvements.

F3. Marin County Board of Supervisors and town and city councils have the responsibility for safe evacuation routing, and they have not sufficiently considered evacuation as a criterion when approving improvements to roads and traffic infrastructure in their jurisdictions.

Disagree with the finding.

Comment: Roads and traffic infrastructure has not been identified as the major factor in evacuation safety in Marin. The MWPA evacuation study will evaluate potential hazards and

impediments as well as additional critical factors not addressed in the Grand Jury report, such as non-traffic related improvements that are significant components of evacuation safety: home hardening, near home defensible space, roadside vegetation, roadside combustible structures.

Traffic related improvements with the greatest impact are likely to be intersection related, including the ability to manage intersections effectively during power outages/Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS), or when public works and law enforcement availability is reduced (battery/generator backup for intersections, remote intersection control, real-time traffic monitoring, law enforcement control).

Evacuation routes may have garnered less attention in some regions prior to 2017, however, our regional understanding of wildfire potential has changed dramatically since the 2015-2019 fire seasons. Since then, regular coordination of fire agencies and public works has taken place. A local example of this is Central Marin Fire Department's active participation in the development of our Climate Adaptation Plan (CAP) which includes recommendations for new signs for roads and paths, enhancing hillside transportation network capacity and connections and improving traffic congestion controls and parking enforcement along evacuation routes.

F4. County and municipal administrators, public works, and traffic engineers have not adequately considered mass evacuation as a criterion for planning and funding traffic infrastructure improvements.

Disagree with the finding.

Comment: Public works professionals, traffic engineers, and other relevant staff consult with fire professionals and consider evacuation in concert with daily traffic impacts, pedestrian safety, and other traffic related considerations to best inform projects and spending priorities in Corte Madera. In addition, Public Works engineers heavily rely upon standards set by state and national transportation agencies for guidance on how to design roadways and other infrastructure improvements and thus if the Grand Jury believes there are deficiencies in our process they should pursue these changes at the state and federal levels. The Town of Corte Madera will not comment on the practices of other jurisdictions.

F5. Most Marin jurisdictions have not yet included urgently needed evacuation plans in their general plans as required

Partially disagree with finding.

Comment: Again, the Town of Corte Madera will not comment on the practices of other agencies. MWPA, which is composed of 17 member agencies including the Town of Corte Madera) plans to conduct an analysis of evacuation routes including hazards and risks. The analysis is anticipated to be completed in 2021, the study will include ratings of roads and contributing factors to evacuation impediments. It will provide the guidance necessary to inform the MWPA's annual workplan as well as local hazard mitigation plans, public works agencies, traffic engineers and others making infrastructure improvements.

The Town's existing Safety Element of its General Plan already includes policies and programs related to evacuation planning. The Town intends to work with the County of Marin on the next update to the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan and will incorporate the updated LHMP into our Safety Element.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

R1. Within 180 days of the date of this report, the governing boards of the County of Marin and its cities and towns should direct their respective planning and public works departments to include evacuation needs among their criteria for evaluating and recommending public works projects.

Partially Agree, requires further analysis.

Comment: The Town of Corte Madera agrees with the recommendation in concept, and will coordinate with the Central Marin Fire Authority, in coordination with MWPA, on the evaluation of evacuation needs during the planning process for public works projects. As stated previously, MWPA will be conducting an analysis of evacuation routes including hazards and risks. This study will include ratings of roads and contributing factors to evacuation impediments, and will provide the data and information necessary to inform public works projects. It should be further noted that MWPA is entering into a contract with the software vendor, Zonehaven. This software tool is designed to be used by law enforcement, firefighters, and Emergency Operation Centers in order to provide data driven capabilities during an actual event requiring evacuations.

R2. Within 180 days of the date of this report, the governing boards of the County of Marin and its cities and towns should adopt resolutions calling on the Transportation Authority of Marin to include evacuation needs among the criteria it considers when planning and funding public works projects.

Disagree.

Comment: The Transportation Authority of Marin (TAM) is not a planning agency, and it is not the role of local agencies to provide direction to TAM as to the administration of their programs. TAM assists the municipalities in Marin County with the implementation of capital projects by identifying sources of funding and by ensuring that funding is distributed from other State and regional agencies in a way that is consistent with law and other shared agreements. While TAM provides a high level of support and works to ensure there is communication and coordination among the communities in Marin County, each jurisdiction is responsible for determining their own capital improvement projects. Local governing bodies such as the Board of Supervisors and local City/Town Councils are best suited to address the needs and priorities of the communities they represent.

R3. In calendar year 2021, the County of Marin and its cities and towns should update the safety elements of their general plans to include evacuation planning.

Disagree.

Comment: The Town's existing Safety Element of its General Plan already includes policies and programs related to evacuation planning. The Town intends to work with the County of Marin on the next update to the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan and will incorporate the updated LHMP into our Safety Element.

Additionally, MWPA will be conducting an analysis of evacuation routes, including hazards and risks. This study will include ratings of roads and contributing factors to evacuation impediments, and will provide the data and information necessary to further inform public works projects, priorities, and policy. Since the Town of Corte Madera is not overseeing this project, and thus cannot influence the prospective timeline, the Town's ability to implement any of the recommendations that may come out of this study during calendar year 2021 cannot be assured.