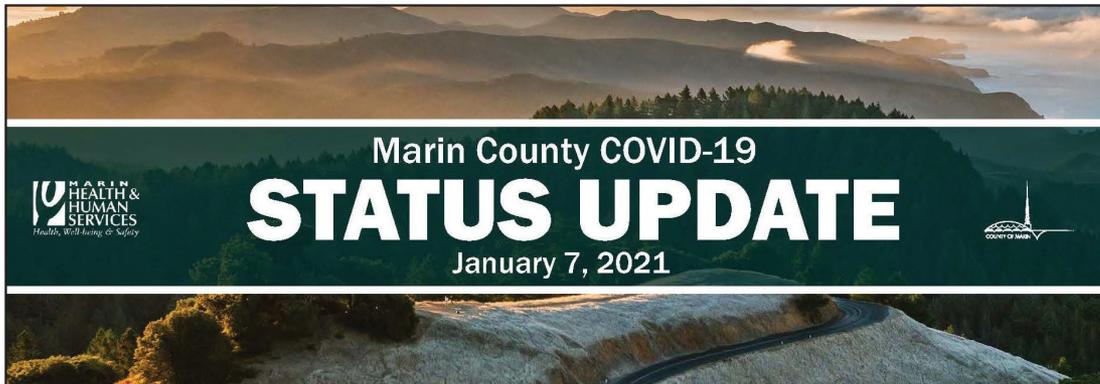


# MARIN COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY

2021-2022 Final Report Summaries



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Photo Credit: Stuart Lirette

**Bottom Row L-R: Kris Rockwell, Tom Theodores, Tom Gannon, Judge James Chou, Foreperson Deborah Haase, Bernie Samet, Pat Shepherd, Len Gorelick**  
**Top Row L-R: Aide Heather Callan, Scott Smith, Brad Sharp, Jodene Isaacs, Dick Gunn, Will Carroll, Spencer Sias, Peter Behr, Gary Stabile**  
**Not Shown: Erik Aranda-Wikman, Jeff Babcock, Dustin Daza, Lauren Hallinan**

### To the residents of Marin County,

On behalf of the 2021-2022 Marin County Civil Grand Jury, I am pleased to present our final report. It has been my privilege to work with an extraordinary and dedicated group of volunteers from a wide range of professional backgrounds and interests. The 19 members of the jury devoted thousands of hours, both remotely and in person, to investigating, researching, writing, and publishing reports on a broad range of topics of interest and concern to the residents of Marin.

The topics for these reports represent timely and pressing issues for our local governments and communities. It is our hope that the responses to the recommendations in these reports have a positive lasting impact on the county.

I thank each and every one of my fellow Grand Jurors for their dedicated efforts over our 15 month grand jury term. I would also like to thank Presiding Judges Andrew Sweet and James Chou for their wisdom, Assistant County Counsel Renee Brewer for her ready

guidance, and Aides to the Grand Jury Rachael Porter and Heather Callan for their invaluable support.

Respectfully submitted,  
**Deborah Haase**, Foreperson  
 2021-2022 Marin County Civil Grand Jury

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

### 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 • Email: [HCallan@marincounty.org](mailto:HCallan@marincounty.org)

# Marin County Civil Grand Jury in the News



**Grand jury report rips water supply planning**

Long effort to preserve key land



**Panel faults housing strategy**

Watchdog report calls for greater coordination



**Panel: Pandemic hurt Marin schools**

Formation of county task force urged to address learning losses

Marin County Civil Grand Jury said in a new 14-page report. "Marin's schools are now open, but damage caused by the pandemic will have lasting effects on a generation of students."

The report, titled "Marin Schools: A Prescription for COVID Recovery," was released on April 27. Its main recommendation is that the county should form a "lost learning task force" by Aug. 1 to unite various groups in Marin toward a common goal of stabilizing and strengthening schools and the students' experiences.

"The pandemic exposed a critical need for more active collaboration among Marin's 18 school districts to share best practices," the report said. "A lost learning recovery program is urgently needed."

Although Marin had 18 school districts before the pandemic,



**Marin's grand jury sets all-electric goal**

The Marin County Civil Grand Jury on June 13 recommended reducing greenhouse gases by eliminating natural gas as an energy source for new construction, along with the replacement of gas appliances and equipment within existing structures when outdated or nonfunctioning.

Detailing the path toward electrifying the county, the report writers said the state's next building code update will not occur until 2026.

In the interim, it is up to local jurisdictions to decide whether to adopt more restrictive "reach" codes (that reach beyond the state's minimum requirements for energy use) or take other measures banning or limiting the use of natural gas in newly constructed buildings.

Currently, more than 50 local jurisdictions throughout California have adopted codes that reach beyond state minimum requirements for energy use in building design and construction. Some jurisdictions in the North Bay have moved to ban natural gas, though in some cities, that action has triggered legal action.

So far within Marin County, Fairfax is the only city to have adopted an all-electric requirement for new buildings. Within Santa Clara and San Mateo counties, 20 cities have adopted their own building electrification reach codes.

In January, 2021, the Journal reported that construction experts cite California Energy Commission numbers that say residential housing accounts for 7% of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, compared with transportation at 41% and industry at 24%. They say their industry is not a major contributor to the climate change, which some scientists say is accelerated by those emissions.

That vote is set for Aug. 2, at which time the board may decide to end the temporary ban as the regulations go into effect.



Fredrick Nordgard stands on the deck of his rental property on the Russian River in Monte Rio on Wednesday, March 15, 2022. Nordgard owns two rental properties and is upset the Sonoma County Planning Commission will consider a revised vacation rental ordinance for the unincorporated county.

**Vacation rental pause extended in Sonoma**

**Mortgage rates, home prices may stabilize**

**House finds SBA approved loans with signs of fraud**

The Small Business Administration

rentals in many parts of the county for up to another 11 months while it weighs additional regulations for short-term rental properties.

Officials say the moratorium is needed to prevent a run on permits before the board makes a decision on the proposed vacation rental regulations, which are meant to alleviate residents' concerns about noise, public safety and housing availability.

The vacation rental moratorium, which was initially set to last 45 days, went into effect May 10. When it was approved, supervisors signaled they would be prepared to extend the moratorium at least until they held a vote on the new vacation rental rules.

Some changes are expected for the housing market in the coming year, but not all of the changes are negative. For buyers who have been frustrated by the lack of homes for sale and the overwhelming competition for homes, some relief may be on the way. In addition, while mortgage rates and home prices are not expected to drop, they are anticipated to somewhat stabilize. That, too, may bring some relief to buyers who have been struggling to stay ahead of price increases and rising rates.

Frans of a recession and general uncertainty about the economy mean that economists are adapting their forecasts for the year to take into account these changes.

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Applications with obvious signs of fraud, according to a report released Tuesday by a congressional oversight committee.

The report, which examined the agency's actions during the Trump administration, also found that the contractor hired by the SBA to handle the relief applications, called REB Solutions Inc., was a small business that could not handle the flood of applications during the worst days of the economic crisis caused by the pandemic, even though it was ultimately paid \$78 million in a 2020 no-bid contract to do so. The company subcontracted much of the labor to two other firms, but it still received \$840 million for the work of six employees in one year, the report found.

The Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) program is administered by the SBA and offers low-interest loans to businesses in areas struck by disasters. With the onset of the coronavirus pandemic in the United States in March 2020, millions of businesses were suddenly eligible for



**Sheriff Oversight**

Marin County finally takes steps toward implementing a watchdog group

BY NIKKI SILVERSTEIN

**DISTRUST** Marin City and other communities will benefit from a sheriff's oversight board, according to the Marin County Civil Grand Jury.

that law enforcement agencies across the country have made policy changes in recent years, yet there has been little change in the sheriff's office.

"We are not an organization that needs substantial change, but we will make organizational change along the way as long as it best serves the Sheriff's Office and the community," Scardina said in an email.

Obviously, the grand jury disagrees. The report provides concrete examples of the need for change, specifically pointing to sheriff's office activities in unincorporated Marin City as justification for establishing a watchdog group.

Delving into the history of injustice experienced by Black residents in Marin City and two recent incidents, the grand jury's report states there is a "strained" relationship between the community and the sheriff's office.

Marin City was founded in 1942, when the federal government constructed temporary housing for the men and women building WWII Liberty ships in nearby Marinship. Both Black and white families lived in the community together. After the war ended, white workers bought homes. Black families remained in Marin City because of the county's redlining policy, which prevented them from buying property.

Newspapers from the late 1940s chronicled alleged racial discrimination against Black residents, the report stated. Other incidents over the decades have reinforced the community's distrust of the sheriff's office, which continues today.

The report notes that Marin City currently has a population of 3,265 and 35% of residents are Black or multiracial, a much higher percentage than anywhere else in the county. Since Marin

**Sheriff Oversight**

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power. Although activists and citizens have lobbied the Marin County Board of Supervisors to implement AB 1185, it has been slow to respond.

Robert Doyle, who served as Marin County sheriff for more than 25 years, retired two weeks ago. The former sheriff opposed a transparent public oversight board with teeth—subpoena power—and had previously stated that as an elected official, he only answered to the board of supervisors during the budgeting process.

Undersheriff Jamie Scardina is running unopposed in November to replace Doyle. Although Scardina also has resisted the idea of a citizen oversight board,

In its report titled "Sheriff Oversight: The Time is Now," the grand jury states that a "civilian oversight board, along

**MARIN CO. SHERIFF'S OVERSIGHT PROPOSAL**

11:03 74°

## 2021-2022 MARIN COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT SUMMARIES

# An Update on the Issues Covered by the 2019–2020 Marin County Civil Grand Jury

This report reviews agency responses to the 2019–2020 Grand Jury reports. Key outcomes include:



### Cyberattacks

Following security breaches and subsequent Grand Jury recommendations, Marin's county and municipal governments strengthened their cybersecurity policies and systems.



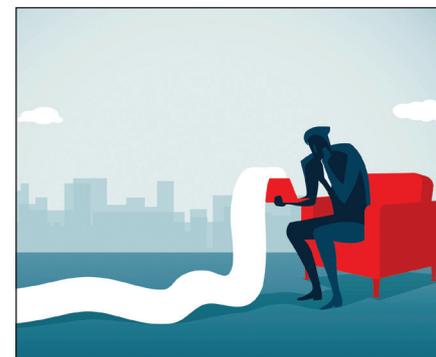
### Evacuations in Marin

Marin's municipalities, and the Transportation Authority of Marin (TAM), were asked to consider wildfire-evacuation when planning projects. While most of the jury's recommendations were rejected, TAM adopted language in its 2021 strategic plan encouraging Marin's planners to include wildfire evacuation projects.



### Web Transparency of Agency Compensation Practices

The jury found that many of Marin public agencies failed to make compensation for their elected officials and employees fully transparent on their websites. However, a subsequent audit by the jury indicated that agencies had successfully updated their websites to report the required information properly.



### A Comprehensive List of Marin's Public Agencies

Marin County has more than 150 local government agencies. Several Marin County Civil Grand Juries have recommended the development and maintenance of a single comprehensive list. A recommendation that the list be maintained by the County was rejected.



### Opioid Misuse

Due to the growing number of opioid overdoses in Marin, the Grand Jury made recommendations to improve and expand treatment. Most of these recommendations were implemented.



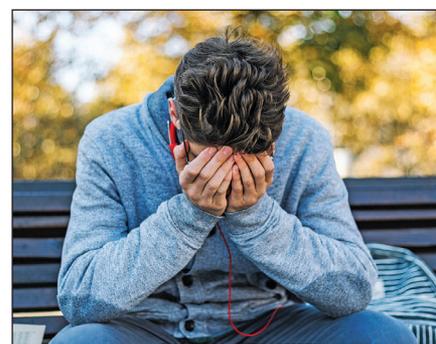
### Firearm Safety in Marin

Against a backdrop of proliferating gun sales, a trend that only accelerated during the COVID pandemic, the jury addressed a range of gun safety issues. Respondents reacted favorably and took steps to increase gun safety in Marin.



### Climate Change

The County and most of Marin's municipalities rejected a Grand Jury recommendation to establish a multi-jurisdictional climate change task force. Instead, local agencies opted to continue relying on established strategies.



### Mental Health Challenges in Our Schools

The Grand Jury made recommendations for improvements in programs to mitigate the mental health crisis in Marin's schools. Marin County schools have implemented and expanded access to mental health services.

# Marin Schools: A Prescription for COVID Recovery

In Marin's history, schools have never experienced anything as disruptive as the 2020 onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. This forced campus closures and required tremendous efforts in all districts to safely reopen classrooms. Marin's schools are now open, but damage caused by the pandemic will have lasting effects on a generation of students. The pandemic exposed a critical need for more active collaboration among Marin's 18 public school districts to share best practices. A lost learning recovery program is urgently needed.

## During the pandemic:

- In-person instruction, which educators agree is best for academic, social, and emotional development, was significantly reduced for almost every student.
- The amount of in-person instruction varied considerably across Marin's 18 school districts, creating disparities among school districts in the quality of education for Marin's students.
- Students' learning progress slowed according to tests administered by several school districts.
- Marin public schools' enrollment declined by five percent, putting schools that rely on attendance



Photo Credit: iStockPhoto

for state funding at risk of losing needed resources.

This report examines how Marin's public school districts responded to the pandemic while dealing with the varied concerns of the Marin County Health Department, the Marin County Office of Education, school staff, students, parents, labor unions, and other stakeholders.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**R1.** By August 1, 2022, the Marin County Superintendent of Schools and all Marin public school districts should convene a countywide Lost Learning Task Force to rapidly develop lost learning recovery models that are available for implementation by all of Marin's public school districts.

**R2.** By August 1, 2022, the Marin County Superintendent of Schools and all Marin public school districts should also call on the Lost Learning Task Force, as a second but vital priority, to develop and recommend protocols and policies for minimizing the length of emergency school closures during future disruptions.



# Marin County COVID-19 STATUS UPDATE

January 7, 2021



Permissions obtained from County of Marin

## COVID-19 Response in Marin County: Successes and Next Steps

Marin County's response to the COVID-19 pandemic has rightfully been held up as an example of strong and capable public health leadership and coordinated emergency response across multiple communities, partners, and agencies. To address the pandemic, nearly 1,300 county staff were mobilized and more than \$100 million in county, state, and federal funds were spent to address a myriad of needs, including testing, rent relief, food distribution, emergency housing, and vaccinations. While Marin's overall COVID-19 response has been excellent, there are opportunities to improve responses to the ongoing pandemic and to future emergencies by reviewing and documenting lessons learned

during this pandemic.

### Over the past two years of the pandemic:

- Marin's COVID-19 infection, hospitalization, and vaccination rates were better than most other counties in the U.S.
- Collaborations with trusted community agencies were critical to communicating with and assisting underserved communities.
- The Marin County Office of Emergency Services capably managed the COVID-19 response on top of other emergencies.
- Businesses and schools were

significantly impacted, with effects expected to last for years to come.

- The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation mishandled the COVID-19 outbreak at San Quentin, creating

unnecessary strain on Marin's healthcare systems.

- Reviews of the pandemic response were conducted but have not yet been comprehensive enough to capture and document broad lessons learned for the future.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

**R1.** By October 31, 2022, the Marin County Board of Supervisors should initiate a comprehensive review of the countywide COVID-19 pandemic response, with the involvement of municipalities, schools,

community-based organizations, and businesses.

**R2.** By October 31, 2022, the Marin County Board of Supervisors should conduct a formal review to determine and establish the optimal reporting relationship for the Marin County Office of Emergency Services.

# Electrifying Marin's Buildings: A Countywide Approach

Marin County's electricity supplies are becoming cleaner due to the expanding role played by solar and other renewable sources. As this trend continues, local governments have become increasingly engaged in reducing greenhouse gas emissions by electrifying the county's transportation and building sectors. "Building electrification" refers to the elimination of natural gas-fueled appliances in households and businesses. It aims for adoption of four electric appliances: heat pump space heaters, heat pump water heaters, induction cooktops or ranges, and upgraded service panels. Because the life cycles of appliances are long—often 10 to 20 years or more—decisions made today can have long-term impacts. The timely pursuit of building electrification will depend in no small measure on local regulations and consumer decisions that are shaped and supported by local communities.

Initial steps are currently being taken by the county and its cities to pave the way toward building electrification. But as the stakes grow higher with each passing year, the time has come for Marin to pursue an integrated and comprehensive countywide building electrification planning process that will strengthen and accelerate decision-making by public officials throughout the county.



Photo Credit: iStockPhoto

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**R1.** On or before January 1, 2023, Marin County and each of its cities and towns that have not already done so should adopt a reach code banning natural gas connections in newly constructed buildings.

**R2.** On or before January 1, 2023, Marin County and each of its cities and towns that have not already done so should adopt a reach code requiring

energy efficiency measures in connection with renovations of existing residential buildings. The reach code should specify the size of the renovation that will trigger the requirement and provide flexibility by allowing the applicant to choose from a list of energy efficiency measures, including electrification of gas appliances.

**R3.** Marin County and each of its cities and towns,

collaborating through the Marin Climate and Energy Partnership or otherwise, should develop a comprehensive Countywide Building Electrification Plan to be completed on or before January 1, 2024. The Plan should identify those strategies, programs, and concrete actions necessary to bring about an equitable, prompt, and material acceleration of building electrification throughout the county.



Photo Credit: MMWD

## A Roadmap to Water Resilience for Marin Municipal Water District

For most of 2021, people living within the Marin Municipal Water District (MMWD) anxiously faced the prospect of the District literally running out of water. Luckily, the worst-case scenarios did not materialize, thanks to unexpected and historic amounts of rainfall in late 2021. But the drought has not ended. Nor has the likelihood of future droughts, which experts agree will be more frequent and severe as greenhouse gasses continue to heat our climate.

Last year's drought emergency could have been avoided, if MMWD had taken sufficient measures to provide for a resilient water supply. With the mounting challenges posed by climate change, the mistakes of the past cannot be repeated. MMWD must establish a roadmap for achieving water supply resilience without delay. In this report, the

Grand Jury addresses the reasons why a roadmap is necessary, the options for achieving water supply resilience, and the financial commitments needed to secure resilience. This report also discusses the importance of

prioritizing drought-proof water supplies, which are less vulnerable to the statewide competition for water that the future may hold. Finally, it addresses the likely financial commitments and rate increases necessary to fund

resilience measures.

The time has come for MMWD to take action and ensure that the District has a sound plan to secure adequate water supplies in the face of an uncertain future.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

**R1.** By September 30, 2022, MMWD should commit to securing 10,000 to 15,000 Acre-feet per year of additional water supply before 2035.

**R2.** By December 31, 2022, MMWD should develop and act on a detailed long-term roadmap to resilience by identifying and prioritizing sources of additional supply.

**R3.** In its resilience roadmap, MMWD should prioritize the development of drought-proof sources of water, including direct potable reuse and regional desalination.

**R4.** In its resilience roadmap, MMWD should include strategies for collaborating with other Bay

Area water districts to enhance its competitiveness in seeking federal and state grants.

**R5.** By December 31, 2022, MMWD should adopt a near-term plan for increasing Russian River imports and expanding the District's relationship with the Sonoma County Water Agency.

**R6.** By December 31, 2022, MMWD should commit to completing a District-wide installation of Advanced Metering Infrastructure by the end of 2024.

**R7.** By December 31, 2022, MMWD should develop a long-term plan for financing the prioritized resilience options and communicate this information to ratepayers.



## Sheriff Oversight: The Time Is Now

New legislation, commonly referred to as Assembly Bill 1185 and effective January 2021, authorizes each county

to create a sheriff oversight board. It grants subpoena power enforceable by superior court action. The bill was created to provide oversight and increased accountability for sheriffs across the state.

This legislation, in conjunction with an impending leadership change at the Marin County Sheriff's Office, presents a rare opportunity to reset relations between the Sheriff's Office and the communities it serves. Many communities in the county may benefit from an oversight

board. However, the Grand Jury focused specifically on Marin City's Black community for two reasons: first, the history of concerns and injustices they have experienced; and second, two recent incidents involving the Sheriff's Office which have brought community concerns to the forefront.

The members of the Marin County Sheriff's Office are hardworking and dedicated public servants who may benefit from civilian oversight and accountability. Oversight can improve the quality of

internal investigations of alleged misconduct by confirming complaints or exonerating law enforcement officers who are wrongfully accused.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

**R1.** By December 31, 2022, the Marin County Board of Supervisors should enact a county ordinance, pursuant to Assembly Bill 1185, creating a sheriff oversight board. The oversight board should be provided with subpoena power and subject to the Brown Act.



Permissions obtained from County of Marin



Photo Credit: iStockPhoto

## Affordable Housing: Time for Collaboration in Marin

Lack of affordable housing is a problem throughout Marin County. The housing shortfall, characterized by the county as a “crisis,” was addressed in a 2016-2017 Marin County Civil Grand Jury report that called on the county, cities, and towns of Marin to work collaboratively on affordable housing issues. The recommendation was rejected, and the county has continued to fail to create sufficient affordable and workforce housing for Marin’s low to median income earners.

Since that report was issued, the State of California has passed significant legislation intended to increase the affordable housing stock in the state. Simultaneously, the state has drastically increased the amount of housing that counties, cities, and towns are required to build. Failure to meet these housing allotments will trigger mechanisms of this new state legislation that will limit local control over housing and allow for construction that would otherwise not comply with local development laws.

Since at least 1973, the county and its cities and towns have acknowledged the benefits of a countywide approach to affordable and workforce housing issues with several different agreements for collaboration. Currently, however, the approach to housing policy in Marin is fragmented. No single agency is tasked with the coordination and implementation of solutions to affordable housing issues that affect the entire county. It is time to renew a collaborative, countywide

approach for affordable and workforce housing in Marin.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

**R1.** No later than December 31, 2022, the Marin County Board of Supervisors and Marin’s city and town councils should jointly create a regional authority, or empower an existing authority such as the Transportation Authority of Marin, to coordinate affordable and workforce housing policy on a countywide basis.

# THE CIVIL GRAND JURY EXPERIENCE

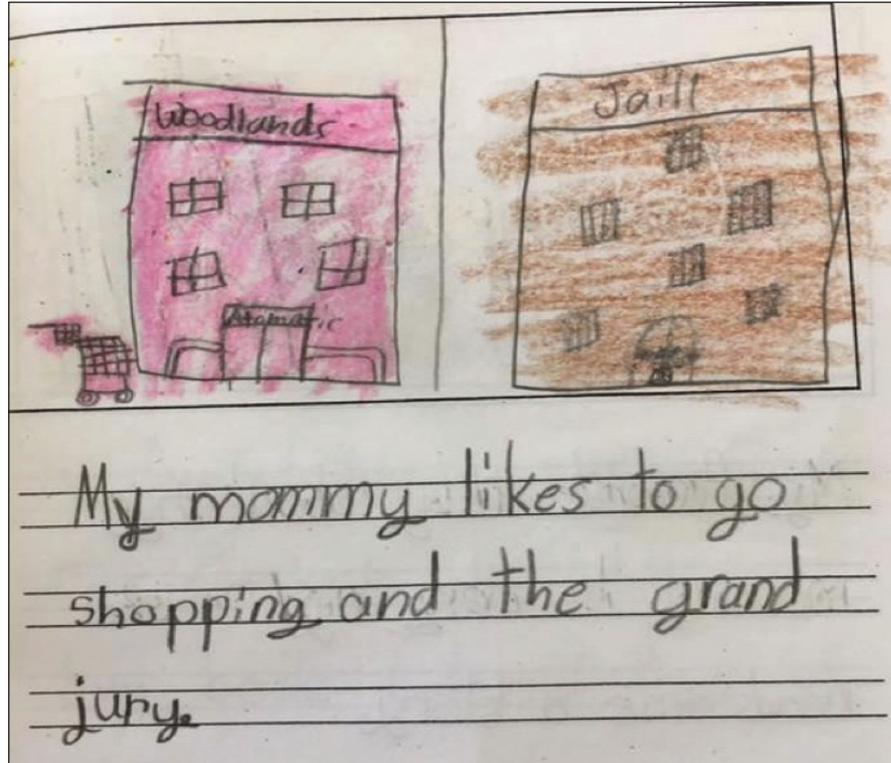
The California State Constitution requires the establishment of a Civil Grand Jury in each of the state's 58 counties. Each county's Civil Grand Jury acts as a civil "watchdog" to oversee the performance of its local government agencies. This is a different function from a Grand Jury's role of issuing criminal indictments that may be more familiar to you. Marin County has more than 152 public agencies: including the county itself, cities, towns, school districts, sewer districts, police and fire agencies, other special districts, and joint powers authorities (JPAs). All of these are subject to Grand Jury oversight and investigation.

Each Civil Grand Jury consists of 19 citizens from all walks of life who dedicate a year of service to studying their county and considering ways to improve its local governance. In addition, 11 alternates are selected to stand ready to replace a juror when needed. During its one-year term, the Civil Grand Jury issues 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 my community and build an even better future for coming generations.*

## THE APPLICATION PROCESS

**Step one:** Complete the "Application to Serve on the Marin County Civil Grand Jury" (available on the Civil Grand Jury's website – link below). In addition to requesting your 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 be fingerprinted, required to 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 the basic requirements are invited for an interview. This interview is designed to ensure that there are no hidden agendas or conflicts of interest, and that applicants communicate well. The strongest and most representative 30 applicants are then selected.

**Step three:** The "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. If a sitting juror resigns for any reason, the next alternate is contacted and invited to join the jury immediately.

## HOW THE YEAR UNFOLDS

The jurors' and alternates' first week is occupied with training. In addition to learning about responsibilities and powers, committees and investigation techniques, participants start to get to know each other — each of whom has a lifetime of expertise to share. In a typical year, 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 usually meet weekly in two-hour time slots on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. The entire Grand Jury meets once a week in plenary session.

## 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, review citizen complaints, 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

**Civil Grand Jury Experience**

Continued on page 12

## Civil Grand Jury Experience

continued from page 11

need for improvement? After internal research and discussion, government officials are invited for interviews.

### The interview process

Each interviewee signs an admonition acknowledging the obligation not to reveal that they spoke 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 a Request for Investigation (RFI). 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, and then 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 Marin 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 of 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, committee 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 identifying issues and containing recommendations to which specific agencies publicly respond. 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.

### 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 accepts applications throughout the year.

**To APPLY for CIVIL GRAND JURY SERVICE**  
[MarinCounty.org/GrandJury](https://MarinCounty.org/GrandJury) • Click on "Grand Jury Application"  
**To request a CIVIL GRAND JURY SERVICE INVESTIGATION -**  
[MarinCounty.org/GrandJury](https://MarinCounty.org/GrandJury) • Click on "Request an Investigation"