



CITY MANAGER

July 23, 2019

Honorable Anita Santos, Judge of the Superior Court
Anne N. Garlund, Foreperson, 2019-2020 Contra Costa County Civil Grand Jury
Contra Costa County Civil Grand Jury
725 Court Street
P.O. Box 431
Martinez, CA 94553
Also via email to ctadmin@contracosta.courts.ca.gov

RE: City of Hercules' Response to Report No. 2004 "Police Department Staffing"

Dear Judge Santos and Foreperson Garlund:

In May 2020, the Contra Costa County Civil Grand Jury issued Report No. 2004 entitled "Police Department Staffing." This response was approved by the Hercules City Council on July 28, 2020.

Below find the City of Hercules' required responses to the report's findings and recommendations as requested by the Grand Jury:

FINDINGS

Finding 1. Low officer staffing ratios and/or unfilled officer position present challenges in maintaining police services.

City Response: Agree.

Finding 2. Low officer staffing ratios and/or unfilled officer positions have resulted in reducing or eliminating staffing of traffic units, school resource officer, community outreach, or other police services.

City Response: Partially disagree, while the inability to recruit may hamper filling these types of positions, the lack of adequate revenues often precludes the ability to even offer these specialized units or positions.

Finding 3 Due to low officer staffing ratios and/or unfilled officer positions, officers are often required to put in mandatory overtime to cover critical services.

City Response: Agree.

Finding 4: Mandatory overtime can lead to officer stress, which creates retention challenges.

City Response: Agree.

Finding 5: Low officer staffing ratios and/or unfilled officer positions may contribute to increased average response times for Priority 1 (emergency) calls.

City Response: Agree.

Finding 6: Recruiting officers is challenging due to fewer applicants who meet the required hiring standards and complete the rigorous testing process.

City Response: Agree.

Finding 7: Negative perceptions of policing and the availability of less dangerous job opportunities contribute to fewer applicants for law enforcement positions.

City Response: Agree.

Finding 8: Each Contra Costa police agency (except those that contract with the Sheriff's Office) conducts its own recruiting program to attract potential positions.

City Response: Agree.

Finding 9: The process of hiring and training new officers takes an extensive amount of time and resources to complete.

City Response: Agree.

Finding 10: Each Contra Costa police agency (except those that contract with the Sheriff's Office) manages its own screening process for the police officer position, resulting in a replication of efforts across the county.

City Response: Agree.

Finding 11: Contra Costa cities that contract with the Sheriff for police services are generally able to fill vacancies faster than non-contract cities.

City Response: Partially disagree, though the City of Hercules does not have access to information that would allow us to offer a fully informed opinion.

Finding 12: Recruits and young officers have different expectations than in the past regarding work/life balance.

City Response: Agree.

Finding 13: Recruits and young officers' expectations about work/life balance contribute to the challenges of officer recruitment and retention.

City Response: Agree.

Finding 14: Wellness and Employee Assistance Programs offered by Contra Costa police agencies aid retention of police officers.

City Response: Agree.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 2. The City/Town Councils of Antioch, Brentwood, Clayton, Concord, El Cerrito, Hercules, Martinez, Oakley, Pinole, Pittsburg, Pleasant Hill, Richmond, San Pablo, San Ramon, and Walnut Creek should consider identifying funds to study the cost/benefit of a countywide screening process for police officer positions, to avoid replication of these steps while allowing each city police department to select and evaluate candidates, by June 30, 2021.

City Response: This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or reasonable as the use of a one-size fits all approach does not accommodate the unique nature of the County's disparate communities and hiring for fit and community character are increasingly of greater importance in the current climate.

Recommendation 3. The City/Town Councils of Antioch, Brentwood, Clayton, Concord, El Cerrito, Hercules, Martinez, Oakley, Pinole, Pittsburg, Pleasant Hill, Richmond, San Pablo, San Ramon, and Walnut Creek should consider directing their police departments to apply annually, or when offered in 2021, to the Department of Justice COPS Hiring Program, which provides funding for hiring additional officers, by June 30, 2021.

City Response: This recommendation will not be implemented by the City of Hercules based on current COPS Hiring Program requirements including a local match, the limited 36 month duration of the funding, and the requirement that the officers be retained after the grant period ends.

Recommendation 4. The City/Town Councils of Antioch, Brentwood, Clayton, Concord, El Cerrito, Hercules, Martinez, Oakley, Pinole, Pittsburg, Pleasant Hill, Richmond, San Pablo, San Ramon, and Walnut Creek should consider identifying funds to increase the number of sworn officers to fill understaffed units, such as traffic patrol and school resource officers, by June 30, 2020.

City Response: The recommendation will not be implemented as the City of Hercules restored a traffic unit in the 2018/19 fiscal year and that continues, and the West Contra Costa

Unified School District has discontinued their funding of two school resource officers as of FY 2020-21. However, the City has retained the two former SRO positions and those will be reassigned to general policing.

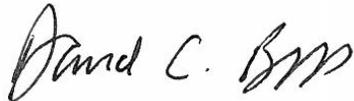
Recommendation 5. The City/Town Councils of Antioch, Brentwood, Clayton, Concord, El Cerrito, Hercules, Martinez, Oakley, Pinole, Pittsburg, Pleasant Hill, Richmond, San Pablo, San Ramon, and Walnut Creek should consider identifying funds that would permit their police departments to over-hire officer positions as a strategy for keeping fully staffed, by June 30, 2020.

City Response: This recommendation has been something done in Hercules for a number of years already and was initially implemented by the City of Hercules in the 2015-16 Fiscal Year with funding provided for two over-hire police officer positions and that has been included in each budget since.

We appreciate the Grand Jury's efforts on behalf of our communities and the residents of Contra Costa County.

Please feel free to contact me for additional information regarding the City's response at (510) 799-8216.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David C. Biggs". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

David Biggs
City Manager