



Town of Moraga

TOWN MANAGER

August 27, 2020

Ms. Anne N. Granlund, Foreperson
Contra Costa County Civil Grand Jury
Post Office Box 431
Martinez, California 94553

Re: Town of Moraga Response to Grand Jury Report No. 2004, "Police Department Staffing"

Dear Ms. Granlund,

Pursuant to California Penal Code Sections 933.05(a) and 933.05(b), this letter serves as the Town of Moraga's response to the Contra Costa County Civil Grand Jury's findings and recommendations in Report #2004, entitled "Police Department Staffing." Earlier, you received a draft response from the Town, pending review and approval by the Moraga Town Council, which occurred at the August 26, 2020 meeting. The Town's response to the Contra Costa County Grand Jury's Report No. 2004 is listed below.

FINDINGS

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

Response: The Town of Moraga agrees with this finding.

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

Response: The Town of Moraga agrees with this finding.

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.

Response: The Town of Moraga agrees with this finding.

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

Response: The Town of Moraga agrees with this finding.

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

Response: The Town of Moraga agrees with this finding.

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

Response: The Town of Moraga agrees with this finding.

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

Response: The Town of Moraga agrees with this finding.

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

Response: The Town of Moraga agrees with this finding.

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

Response: The Town of Moraga agrees with this finding.

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

Response: The Town of Moraga partially agrees with this finding. Although each city manages its own screening process, each candidate has to be individually screened by the police agency. Each city has unique needs or community expectations and, as a result, has similar, but somewhat different, criteria that are used to screen applicants.

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

Response: The Town of Moraga agrees with this finding.

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

Response: The Town of Moraga agrees with this finding.

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

Response: The Town of Moraga agrees with this finding.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation #2 – The City/Town Councils of Antioch, Brentwood, Clayton, Concord, El Cerrito, Hercules, Martinez, Moraga, 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.

Response: The recommendation will not be implemented as it is not reasonable. Although each police agency must follow strict statewide regulations for police officer hiring, each community and police agency have unique standards and expectations. A countywide screening process would not have the ability to acknowledge these community expectations and would not be beneficial.

Recommendation #3 -- The Sheriff and the City/Town Councils of Antioch, Brentwood, Clayton, Concord, El Cerrito, Hercules, Martinez, Moraga, 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.

Response: The recommendation will not be implemented as it is not reasonable. The Department of Justice COPS Hiring Program requires a substantial amount of matching funding from the grant recipient agency. The Town of Moraga does not have the appropriate funding to fulfill this recommendation.

Recommendation #4 -- The City/Town Councils of Antioch, Brentwood, Clayton, Concord, El Cerrito, Hercules, Martinez, Moraga, Oakley, Pinole, Pittsburg, Pleasant Hill, Richmond, San Pablo, San Ramon, and Walnut Creek should consider identifying funds to increase the number of authorized sworn officers to fill understaffed units, such as traffic patrol and school resource officers, by June 30, 2021.

Response: The recommendation will not be implemented as it is not reasonable. The Town of Moraga does not have the appropriate funding to fulfill this recommendation.

Recommendation #5 -- The City/Town Councils of Antioch, Brentwood, Clayton, Concord, El Cerrito, Hercules, Martinez, Moraga, 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 departments fully staffed by June 30, 2021.

Response: The recommendation will not be implemented as it is not reasonable. The Town of Moraga does not have the appropriate funding to fulfill this recommendation.

The Town of Moraga appreciates the time and efforts expended by the Grand Jury in developing this report and the opportunity to provide input. Please direct any questions or concerns to Police Chief Jon King at 925-888-7049 or king@moraga.ca.us.

Sincerely,



Cynthia Battenberg
Town Manager