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October 4, 2016

The Honorable Ernest J. LiCalsi
Presiding Judge
Madera, County Superior Court
200 S. G Street
Madera, CA 93637

Subject: Response to the 2015-16 Grand Jury Report entitled "Madera County Department of Animal Services"

Honorable Judge LiCalsi:

Pursuant to the California Penal Code 933.05, the Madera County Board of Supervisors submits this response to the findings and recommendations in the 2015-16 Madera County Grand Jury Report entitled, "Madera County Department of Animal Services." See Attachment #1.

The following are the Grand Jury's findings and recommendations and the Board of Supervisors' responses:

Finding 1:

The MCAS facility is old, in disrepair, and inadequate to accommodate the needs of the county.

Response to Finding 1:

Respondent partially disagrees with the finding. (Penal Code § 933.05 (a)(2).) Despite the fact that the MCAS facility presents challenges for the Department of Animal Services, the department is currently meeting the needs of the county. Attachment 1 of the Grand Jury report entitled, "Cost Comparisons for Local Animal Shelters 6/20/2015", appears to indicate that the MCAS compares similarly to other local agencies at least in terms of annual budget and animals impounded.

Finding 2:

Staffing levels at the facility are inadequate and the department is unable to deliver the services required by law.

Response to Finding 2:

Respondent partially disagrees with the finding. (Penal Code § 933.05 (a)(2).) On January 25, 2016, the Board approved the addition of a Supervising Animal Services Officer. During recent budget hearings for the 2016-17 fiscal year; the Board approved department budget for Animal Services includes the addition of one Animal Services Assistant. Despite these additions, the department continues to be understaffed following several years of fiscal challenges that have had County-wide implications. However, contrary to the Grand Jury's finding that the department is "unable to deliver the services required by law"; the department continues to meet its legal mandates. If the Grand Jury has information to the contrary, it should specifically include these deficiencies in its report.

Finding 3:

The MCAS budget is insufficient to allow the department to operate without relying on the support of volunteers and to be able to deliver the services required by law.

Response to Finding 3:

Respondent agrees with the finding. (Penal Code § 933.05 (a)(1).)

Finding 4:

At the time of this investigation, the Board of Supervisors has not taken decisive action regarding recommendations of the 2013-2014 Grand Jury.

Response to Finding 4:

Respondent disagrees with the finding. (Penal Code § 933.05 (a)(2).) The 2013-14 Grand Jury report contained three (3) recommendations. Pursuant to Penal Code Section 933(c), the Board of Supervisors appropriately responded stating that Recommendation 1, dealing with a recommended purchase of computer software to manage calls and record keeping, would not be implemented because the then recently implemented CRM/311 system could and would be used to achieve the same result. Further, the Board of Supervisors responded to Recommendations 2 and 3, concerning hiring of additional staff and upgrading facilities respectively, by stating that neither recommendation had been implemented but that they would be in the future subject to budget constraints. The Board of Supervisors responses to the 2013-2014 Grand Jury recommendations were, and continue to be, appropriate.

Finding 5:

No organized, detailed, written policy/procedure for orientation of new hires was produced nor did present staff know of a formalized orientation program.

Response to Finding 5:

Respondent partially disagrees with the finding. (Penal Code § 933.05 (a)(2).) On a County-wide basis, the Human Resources department provides new hire orientation for all permanent employees. To the extent that finding No. 5 only addresses the department, Respondent agrees.

Finding 6:

No organized, detailed, written policy/procedure for orientation of volunteers and extra help staff was produced.

Response to Finding 6:

Respondent agrees with the finding. (Penal Code § 933.05 (a)(1).)

Finding 7:

The Grand Jury could not substantiate that all full-time staff received an annual evaluation.

Response to Finding 7:

Respondent agrees with the finding. (Penal Code § 933.05 (a)(1).)

Finding 8:

The Grand Jury found that the Animal Shelter director was significantly underpaid compared to other similar counties.

Response to Finding 8:

Respondent partially disagrees with the finding. (Penal Code § 933.05 (a)(2).) Fact No. 19 of the Grand Jury report states:

“A January 2016 study of nine comparable counties indicated that those counties with a similar position and responsibilities paid anywhere from \$2,000 to \$5,000 more per month. (See attachment #2)”

A review of attachment #2 finds a document entitled “COMPARABLE CLASSES FOR THE POSITION OF MADERA COUNTY ANIMAL SERVICES DIRECTOR” dated 1/14/2016. This “study” which is unattributed, lists nine (9) counties that were presumably surveyed for the purpose of comparison to the Madera County Animal Director position with respect to salary. Of the nine counties surveyed, seven of the nine subject counties indicated no comparable job class. The remaining two counties indicated only a “possible comparable class” noting that further research would be required.

In March of 2015, the County commissioned a total compensation survey for all County classifications. The objective of the study was to determine how competitive the County is within its labor market of ten (10) county agencies. With respect to the classification of Animal Services Director, the survey found limited market data available in terms of comparable classes throughout the labor market. This seems to be consistent with the Grand Jury’s findings of limited comparable classes as reflected in attachment #2. Due to the lack of data to support the Grand Jury’s finding that the Animal Services Director may receive as much as \$5,000 less in monthly compensation than comparable positions in other counties, the Board of Supervisors cannot agree with finding no. 8. Nevertheless, the position of Animal Services Director did receive an increase in compensation effective July 1, 2016. (See response to recommendation no. 5)

Finding 9:

Pet owners experienced difficulties in complying with the Animal Shelters’ policies/procedures regarding showing proof of ownership (photograph) and/or having the monies to pay for redemption/adoption in full at the time of redemption.

Response to Finding 9:

Respondent agrees with the finding. (Penal Code § 933.05 (a)(1).)

Finding 10:

Euthanasia is mainly performed due to limited space at the facility. Euthanasia may be performed on a sick, injured, or vicious animal. Unclaimed pets may be euthanized.

Response to Finding 10:

Respondent agrees with the finding. (Penal Code § 933.05 (a)(1).)

Recommendation 1:

The Madera County Board of Supervisors allocate funds to build a new Animal Shelter within three years.

Response to Recommendation 1:

The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future. In November of 2013, the Board of Supervisors commissioned a Road 28 Campus Study to be performed by the architectural firm of Dreyfuss and Blackford. The Madera County Animal Services facility is one of several facilities located at this site. In September of 2014, the Board considered the findings and recommendations contained in the study. The study proposed a eight (8) phase plan to renovate or construct a number of buildings at the site including a new Animal Services facility. Based on need and funding, Animal Services was placed in phase seven (7) of the plan. The Board took action to incorporate the Road 28 Campus Study into the existing Madera County Capital Improvement Plan. Several projects outlined in the study are currently in the design phase including a new Health and Social Services building; however an exact date for the initiation of Phase 7 – Animal Services has yet to be determined.

Recommendation 2:

The Madera County Board of Supervisors increase the budget for the Department of Animal Services to reflect budgets of like facilities in like counties by the 2017-2018 budget year.

Response to Recommendation 2:

The recommendation requires further analysis. The Board of Supervisors recently approved the County budget for the 2016-17 fiscal year. The budget for the 2017-18 fiscal year will be developed over the course of the next several months. As is the case with all department budgets, appropriations will be in large part dependent upon revenue and this data will be developed over time.

Recommendation 3:

The Madera County Board of Supervisors budget enough money so that the Department of Animal Services does not have to rely on donations from volunteers and volunteer organizations to function.

Response to Recommendation 3:

The recommendation requires further analysis. The Board of Supervisors recently approved the County budget for the 2016-17 fiscal year. The budget for the 2017-18 fiscal year will be developed over the course of the next several months. As is the case with all department budgets, appropriations will be in large part dependent upon revenue and this data will be developed over time.

Recommendation 4:

The Madera County Board of Supervisors fund staff positions to a total of fifteen full-time employees at the Department of Animal Services now.

Response to Recommendation 4:

The recommendation requires further analysis. The Board of Supervisors recently approved the County budget for the 2016-17 fiscal year. The budget for the 2017-18 fiscal year will be developed over the course of the next several months. As is the case with all department budgets, appropriations, including staffing, will be in large part dependent upon revenue and this data will be developed over time.

Recommendation 5:

The Madera County Board of Supervisors increase the salary of the Animal Services Department director commensurate with comparable positions in comparable counties by the 2017-2018 budget year.

Response to Recommendation 5:

The recommendation has been implemented but also requires further analysis. As noted in the response to finding no. 8, the County commissioned a total compensation survey for all County classifications in March of 2015. The objective of the study was to determine how competitive the County is within its labor market of ten (10) county agencies. With respect to the classification of Animal Services Director, the survey found limited market data available in terms of comparable classes throughout the labor market. Despite the fact that the compensation survey could not develop enough data to benchmark the position of Animal Services Director within its labor market, the salary for the Director position was increased 4% during the implementation of the compensation study. This recommended increase contemplates a Director's salary that is 25% higher than that of a Supervising Animal Services Officer.

Recommendation 6:

The Madera County Board of Supervisors authorize the immediate installation of a shelter over the outside area used to wash equipment and bathe animals.

Response to Recommendation 6:

The recommendation requires further analysis. County General Services and Maintenance staff have been made aware of the recommended action and arrangements have been made to meet with the Director of Animal Services for the purpose of inspecting the affected area. A completion date for this modification is dependent upon the complexity and cost of the agreed upon solution.

Recommendation 7:

The Director of Animal Services develop standardized orientation programs for full-time staff, extra help staff and volunteers.

Response to Recommendation 7:

The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future. Under separate cover, the Director of Animal Services responded by stating:

"I agree with the recommendations. I will make a personal commitment to dedicate the time needed to provide an organized, detailed, written policy/procedure manual for both staff and volunteers. Evaluations will be done on a timely basis as per Madera County Policy."

Recommendation 8:

The Director of Animal Services ensure all full-time employees receive annual evaluations per Madera County policy.

Response to Recommendation 8:

The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future. Under separate cover, the Director of Animal Services responded by stating:

"I agree with the recommendations. I will make a personal commitment to dedicate the time needed to provide an organized, detailed, written policy/procedure manual for both staff and volunteers. Evaluations will be done on a timely basis as per Madera County Policy."

Recommendation 9:

The Director of Animal Services review, revise, and update a policy and procedures manual specific to the department. The manual needs to be dated.

Response to Recommendation 9:

The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future. Under separate cover, the Director of Animal Services responded by stating:

"I agree with the recommendations. I will make a personal commitment to dedicate the time needed to provide an organized, detailed, written policy/procedure manual for both staff and volunteers."

Recommendation 10:

The Director of Animal Services with approval from the Board of Supervisors institute a method of assisting animal owners in the redemption of their pets when payment in full at the time of redemption is a hardship. A payment plan or community service in lieu of monetary payments should be considered.

Response to Recommendation 10:

The recommendation has been implemented. Under separate cover, the Director of Animal Services responded by stating:

"We implemented a payment plan for constituents that don't have the immediate funds to claim their animal(s) approximately three years ago. The department has the constituent sign a billing agreement, agree to an amount they can afford monthly, and send them billings as required. It is mutually beneficial to the owner, the pet, and the department, to get the animal out of the shelter as quickly as possible. We recognized this fact and implemented the billing opportunities accordingly."

Recommendation 11:

The Board of Supervisors specifically respond to these recommendations and not just reference responses that may be submitted by the director of the department.

Response to Recommendation 11:

The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable. The Board of Supervisors endeavors to provide complete responses to all findings and recommendations in accordance with Penal Code Section 933.05(b).

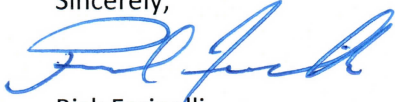
Recommendation 12:

The Board of Supervisors identify a specific date for implementing recommendations they endorse and not state "in the future" or some such vague time frame.

Response to Recommendation 12:

The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable. The Board of Supervisors endeavors to provide complete responses to all findings and recommendations in accordance with Penal Code Section 933.05(b).

Sincerely,



Rick Farinelli

Chairman of the Board of Supervisors