



**City of Madera
Parks & Community Services
2017-18
Madera County Grand Jury
Final Report 1718-04**

Published on: May 3, 2018

2017-2018

**Madera County Grand Jury
Final Report 1718-04
City of Madera Parks & Community Services**

Summary:

City of Madera Parks & Community Services (PCS) is charged with the management of a very diverse department, with responsibilities ranging from maintenance of city parks and medians to providing specialized recreational and educational programs for the people of Madera. Madera County Grand Jury (MCGJ) found PCS to be effective and efficient despite limited financial resources.

Background:

MCGJ selected PCS because it had not been reviewed since 2009. The scope of the investigation included funding, workspace allotment, staffing, programs, and services. The findings are a result of interviews with management team members of PCS who have responsibility for program operations, landscape maintenance and planning.

Discussion:

The mission of PCS is "... to develop and maintain high quality parks, trails and recreational facilities; preserve open and natural spaces; and provide diverse programs and services to enhance the quality of life for the people of Madera." PCS staff stated that safety of park users and employees is a primary goal in pursuing its mission.

PCS collaborates with other city departments as well as many agencies, civic organizations and various medical service providers. For example, PCS is working with Madera Unified School District to develop new green space by planning parks near the future Matilda Torres High School on Road 26 and its surrounding neighborhoods.

PCS administration and program staff operate out of the John C. Wells Center. The PCS landscape division operates out of a small, old house on Olive Avenue which is used for storage, office and meeting space. The landscape staff meets weekly within the former living room and kitchen. PCS also uses storage space at the Public Works building on Gateway Drive.

The 2017-18 budget for PCS is \$5,204,798, some of which is derived from grants. Funding varies from year to year, which affects staffing levels and the services that can be provided. Some PCS programs are fee-based and others are offered to the

public at no cost. MCGJ noted that PCS is developing more fee-based programs to offset costs. Currently, PCS does not have an assigned grant writer to assist with seeking additional funds.

PCS plans and schedules special events during the year: Easter egg hunts, 4th of July fireworks, golf tournaments, senior bus tours and the Pomegranate Festival. Other programs operated by PCS are youth and adult sports, health clinics, after school programs, career readiness workshops, adult day care and the ongoing downtown Madera's Beautification Project. PCS has recently added subject-specific youth programs, such as robotics and nature studies. PCS has a user-friendly website informing the public about its programs.

PCS operates and maintains recreational facilities, parks and trails. It also maintains and improves roadway medians, curbing, sidewalks and landscape irrigation systems. PCS is currently working with city engineering to repair or replace sidewalks throughout the city.

Water conservation continues to be a major concern. PCS is converting to more efficient watering systems. Conservation strategies include replacing the old sprinklers with a deep root watering system for plants and trees, using more drought-tolerant plants and hardscaping, such as decorative boulders and pathways.

Findings:

- F1. PCS staff takes pride in providing public safety as a priority for all programs.
- F2. The landscape office is inadequate for conducting meetings.
- F3. By collaborating with other agencies, PCS is able to operate more recreational facilities, community parks and trails.
- F4. Fluctuating funding levels create uncertainty and concern in program development, operation and staffing.

Recommendations:

The Madera County Grand Jury recommends that:

- R1. Weekly landscape staff meetings be moved to the storage area at the Public Works building by July 1.
- R2. City administration help PCS seek additional funds from sources such as grants, beginning with the 2018-19 fiscal year.
- R3. PCS continue to collaborate with other agencies.
- R4. PCS be commended for working cohesively and creatively to enhance the quality of life for Madera residents with limited funds and staff.

Required Response:

Pursuant to Penal Code Section 933, the Grand Jury specifically requests responses as follows:

Madera City Council
205 W. 4th Street
Madera, CA 93637

Invited Response:

City of Madera
Director of Parks & Community Services
701 E. 5th Street
Madera, CA 93638