



City of Salinas

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August 19, 2014

The Honorable Judge Marla O. Anderson
Presiding Judge, Superior Court
County of Monterey
240 Church Street
Salinas, California 93901



Re: City of Salinas's Responses to Monterey County Civil Grand Jury Final Report No. 10 and Final Report No. 11

Dear Judge Anderson:

This letter is the City of Salinas's response to the Findings and Recommendations of the 2013-2014 Monterey County Civil Grand Jury Final Reports No. 10 and No. 11. I would first like to thank the members of the Civil Grand Jury for their time and effort taken to assist us in improving our ability to provide services to our community. In Final Reports No. 10 and No. 11, the Civil Grand Jury made a total of thirteen Findings and seven Recommendations regarding improvements to the Salinas Police Department and two Recommendations regarding tactical training needs within Monterey County.

With these times of budget cuts and staffing shortages the City of Salinas has been forced to take drastic measures to balance the City's budget, including substantial service and personnel reductions. The Civil Grand Jury accurately addressed shortages and needs within the Salinas Police Department. Currently the Salinas Police Department is functioning with 139 sworn officers, down from a high of 187 sworn in 2008. As noted by the Grand Jury the ratio is 1 officer to every 1,111 residents, which is the highest officer to resident ratio in Monterey County. The current staffing levels forces the Department to fill many shifts by mandatory overtime, further burdening the City's budget and overloading the officers.

As requested by the Civil Grand Jury, the City of Salinas respectfully submits the following responses to the Findings and Recommendations identified for a response in the Final Reports.

Final Report No. 10

Finding 1: *The SPD has a well-qualified and trained staff of officers and investigators. Unfortunately, there are not a sufficient number of sworn officers and full-time civilian employees to fully staff the department and adequately meet the needs of the community.*

Response: The City Council agrees with this finding.

Finding 2: *The SPD headquarters was built in 1958 and it has out-lived its design capabilities and is in dire need of replacement. The structure has severe problems with mold, and mildew caused by water leaks from the roof, which no amount of repair can remedy. Many areas of the structure have distinct musty odor, as well as mildew and mold. Sump pumps installed in the basement area are insufficient to remedy the situation. The CGJ observed a 30 gallon plastic bag taped to the wall of an area to funnel the leakage of water from the roof into a plastic 30 gallon bucket. When it rains, this bucket must be emptied frequently. It is estimated that 30 gallons of water weighs 250.5 lbs. or 113.55 kg. Simply lifting the bucket and taking the water out to be disposed of could cause physical injury to an employee.*

Response: The City Council agrees with this finding.

Finding 3: *The physical structure itself was not designed even for the current number of 139 sworn officers and 47 civilian employees. The facility does not have sufficient locker space to store the officers' equipment and uniforms, etc., while off-duty, and therefore, some equipment is stored in hallways.*

Response: The City Council agrees with this finding.

Finding 4: *The ratio of all sworn officers to residents in Salinas as of the 2010 Census is 1 to 1,111. The ratio of officers on duty is 1 officer to 11,034 residents. The number of sworn officers in relationship to the population is insufficient to meet the needs of Salinas.*

Response: The City Council agrees with the finding.

Finding 5: *The ratio of officers in Salinas to residents is currently the lowest when compared to other cities in Monterey County with the highest of 1 to 276 residents (in Carmel) the next lowest is 1 to 945 residents in Seaside.*

Response: The City Council agrees with the finding.

Finding 6: *The SPD headquarters' physical structure is not designed to hold and maintain evidence, records, and forms in a central location and therefore, these materials are stored throughout the building wherever space available. At times this makes tracking evidence difficult. As difficult as it may be the SPD continues to do a great job keeping written records and evidence at various locations throughout the facility and in various secure locations around the city. Often documents and evidence must be stored and maintained for a number of years making it even more difficult to find adequate storage for new case material.*

Response: The City Council agrees with this finding.

Finding 7: *The SPD houses a small arms and shotgun range in the basement of the facility. This range is inadequate to provide an environment for officers to train with long range and heavy weapons used by the Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) Division. The only convenient facility where SPD SWAT officers may train with their assigned weapons is in San Benito County.*

Response: The City Council agrees with this finding with the understanding that "heavy weapons" refers to rifles and not military grade weaponry such as mortars or artillery.

Finding 8: *Due to changes in modern warfare environments from battle found in open territory to a house to house battle environment the US Army began developing Urban Tactical Training facilities or Military Operations Urban Terrain (MOUT) facilities. One of these training facilities was developed and constructed by the 7th Infantry Division in the late 1970s or early 1980s. The facility is located on what is now the former Fort Ord, California. The Army used this "mock city" sometimes referred to as the Impossible City to train personnel in Urban Warfare tactics to be employed in Kuwait City during the 1st Gulf War. Lessons learned from that war were employed in Afghanistan and Iraqi cities such as Bagdad during the 2nd Gulf War. The former Fort Ord MOUT is in the process of being transferred from the Fort Ord Reuse Authority (FOR A) to Monterey Peninsula College (MPC) for use by MPC's Police Academy.*

Response: The City Council agrees with this finding.

Finding 9: *The most convenient and cost effective resolution to the lack of an adequate facility to train SWAT Officers, would be for the SPD to enter into an agreement with MPC for the use of the "Impossible City". The use of this facility would allow SWAT to train in an environment where they could practice home extraction techniques.*

Response: The City Council agrees with this finding.

Finding 10: *MPC in support of their Police Academy training program intends to add a long rifle and heavy weapons range to the Impossible City facility. The addition of this range would provide a fully functional environment for both MPC Police Academy and SPD SWAT training.*

Response: The City Council agrees with this finding.

Finding 11: *It is expensive to live in Monterey County, the high cost of living here makes it difficult to recruit, train and retain Officers. As in many other agencies in Monterey County, personnel are recruited and once fully qualified they move to other locations where pay is higher and the cost of living is lower than Monterey County.*

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Response: The City Council disagrees with this finding in that the cost of living does not appear to be the issue with recruitment. Law enforcement agencies throughout the state face the same difficulty in recruiting qualified candidates that SPD faces.

Recommendation 1: *A new facility should be built to replace the current SPD facility.*

Response: The Grand Jury noted, "the police facility was built in 1958 and was designed to support a population of less than one-fourth of the current population." The City has recognized the need for a new facility, but does not have the financial means to undertake such a project. The City Council is placing a sales-tax measure on the November 2014 ballot as an opportunity to increase revenues to the City's general fund. The City of Salinas has already contracted with an architectural firm to identify the building needs of the Police Department. It is anticipated that if the sales-tax measure passes in November of 2014, the plans to build a new police building will continue.

Recommendation 2: *Recruit for the SPD (where possible) personnel who already reside in the Salinas area. This would enhance the probability that the officers would remain with the SPD after their training is complete.*

Response: The City and the Police Department recognize the importance of recruiting from within the community. We encourage local people to apply for positions within the Police Department through local media, community forums, high school and college job fairs and daily contacts with community members. We also include community members during the hiring process for new officers. A community member sits on the oral board process to provide a non-law enforcement perspective on possible officer candidates. Local candidates with comparable test scores are generally processed ahead of applicants from outside the area.

Recommendation 3: *It should be priority to increase the number of officers on the force. This number should be determined and agreed upon by the Salinas City Council, City Manager and the Chief of the Salinas Police Department.*

Response: The City has recognized the need for more police officers to enhance services and safety for the community. The City and Police Department regularly explore and apply for federal and state grant funding opportunities to increase staffing levels. The City and city employees have worked to maintain current law enforcement employees through budget cuts in other areas and employee concessions to allow the City to meet its financial obligations for employee costs.

As previously mentioned a portion of the upcoming tax measure, if passed and subject to the discretion of the City Council, may be used to increase the staffing of officers and support personnel needed to bring the Police Department up to recommended industry standards. The City and the Police Department constantly evaluate the staffing levels.

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Recommendation 4: *All officers should attend annual training on proper lifting techniques in order to minimize injuries.*

Response: The Police Department and the City have taken several steps to increase employee health and decrease injuries. The City offers an annual fitness incentive program where employees earn a monetary incentive for scoring high on a set of fitness standards. The Police Department provides regular training on back safety and general fitness suggestions during its annual in-house training sessions. These training courses include a physical therapist providing instruction on proper lifting techniques and proper body mechanics.

The City takes an active role in reviewing the causes of injuries and recommendations for preventative steps to avoid further similar injuries.

Recommendation 5: *Local Law Enforcement Agencies should coordinate on an agreement with the Monterey Peninsula College for the use of the Impossible City training Facility.*

Response: The Salinas Police Department participates in many collaborative training events each year. An agreement between allied law enforcement agencies and local educational institutions would be a venture we would gladly participate in. The MOUT (Military Operations, Urban Terrain) Site has been used by many local law enforcement agencies and provides an invaluable training opportunity in an urban setting without disrupting the lives of residents of any particular neighborhood.

Final Report No. 11

Finding 2: *With the addition of a long rifle and heavy weapons range, Impossible city would provide an ideal solution to the lack of adequate facilities within Monterey County to train SWAT and bomb disposal officers of the Monterey County Sheriff's Department, and the Salinas Police Department SWAT officers.*

Response: The City Council agrees with this finding with the understanding that "heavy weapons" refers to rifles and not military grade weaponry such as mortars or artillery.

Recommendation 1: *The County of Monterey and the City of Salinas should enter into negotiations with Monterey Peninsula College for the joint use of Impossible City. These negotiations should include the Monterey County Board of Supervisors, the Salinas City Council, Salinas City Manager, and representatives of the Monterey County Sheriff's Department and the Salinas Police Department.*

Response: See response to Recommendation 5 in Section No. 10 above.

Thank You for the opportunity to respond to the Civil Grand Jury's Reports.

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Respectfully submitted,



Joe Gunter
Mayor

Cc: City Manager
City Attorney
Police Chief