



July 28, 2020

Ms. Anne N. Granlund, Foreperson
Contra Costa County Civil Grand Jury, 2019-2020
P. O. Box 431
Martinez, CA 94553

RE: City of Concord Response to May 2020 Grand Jury Report No. 2004, “Police Department Staffing”

Dear Ms. Granlund:

This letter serves as the City of Concord’s response to the Contra Costa Grand Jury’s findings and recommendations set forth in Report No. 2004, entitled “Police Department Staffing.” This report was received by the City of Concord on May 27, 2020, and I was directed to submit the response for the City of Concord. For each response, please note that the City of Concord does not speak to the staffing, practices, or needs of other agencies.

I. FINDINGS

Finding No. 1: “Low officer staffing ratios and/or unfilled positions present challenges in maintaining police services.”

Response: The City of Concord agrees with this finding.

Finding No. 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 City of Concord agrees with this finding.

Finding No. 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 City of Concord agrees with this finding.

Finding No. 4: “Mandatory overtime can lead to officer stress, which creates retention challenges.”

Response: The City of Concord agrees with this finding.

Finding No. 5: "Low officer staffing ratios and/or unfilled officer positions may contribute to increased average response times for Priority 1 (emergency) calls."

Response: The City of Concord agrees with this finding.

Finding No. 6: "Recruiting officers is challenging due to fewer applicants who meet the required hiring standards and complete the rigorous testing process."

Response: The City of Concord agrees with this finding.

Finding No. 7: "Negative perceptions of policing and the availability of less dangerous job opportunities contribute to fewer applicants for law enforcement positions."

Response: The City of Concord agrees with this finding.

Finding No. 8: "Each Contra Costa police agency (except those that contract with the Sheriff's Office) conducts its own recruiting program to attract potential applicants."

Response: The City of Concord agrees with this finding.

Finding No. 9: "The process of hiring and training new officers takes an extensive amount of time and resources to complete."

Response: The City of Concord agrees with this finding.

Finding No. 10: "Each Contra Costa 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 City of Concord agrees with this finding. However, the City of Concord cannot speak to the specific hiring practices of other agencies.

Finding No. 11: "Contra Costa cities that contract with the Sheriff for police services are generally able to fill vacancies faster than non-contract cities."

Response: The City of Concord neither agrees nor disagrees with this finding, because the City of Concord is not aware of the specific contract requirements or provisions for police services provided by the Sheriff's Office.

Finding No. 12: "Recruits and young officers have different expectations than in the past regarding work/life balance."

Response: The City of Concord agrees with this finding.

Finding No. 13: "Recruits and young officers' expectations about work/life balance contribute to the challenges of officer recruiting and retention."

Response: The City of Concord agrees with this finding.

Finding No. 14: "Wellness and Employee Assistance Programs offered by Contra Costa police agencies aid retention of police officers."

Response: The City of Concord agrees with this finding.

II. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation No. 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.

Each law enforcement agency has unique standards and community expectations. A homogenous approach to applicant screening would disenfranchise the individual needs of communities within our diverse county. The City of Concord cannot speak to the needs of other agencies.

Recommendation No. 3: "The Sheriff, and the City/Town Councils of Antioch, Brentwood, Clayton, Concord, Danville, El Cerrito, Hercules, Lafayette, Martinez, Moraga, Oakley, Orinda, 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 requires further analysis.

Further analysis is needed to review our internal staffing levels to meet current budgetary constraints and community expectations. The scope, parameters, and time frame of this analysis is dependent on the duration and severity of the economic hardships created by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Concord City Council is currently analyzing this as they carefully balance the needs of the community against the limited financial resources of the City. The City of Concord cannot speak to the needs of other agencies.

Recommendation No. 4: "The City/Town Councils of Antioch, Brentwood, Clayton, Concord, Danville, El Cerrito, Hercules, Lafayette, Martinez, Moraga, Oakley, Orinda, 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 requires further analysis.

Further analysis is needed to review The City of Concord's internal staffing levels to meet current budgetary constraints and community expectations. The scope, parameters, and time frame of this analysis is dependent on the duration and severity of the economic hardships created by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Concord City Council is currently analyzing this as they carefully balance the needs of the community against the limited financial resources of the City. The City of Concord cannot speak to the needs of other agencies.

Recommendation No. 5: “The City/Town Councils of Antioch, Brentwood, Clayton, Concord, Danville, El Cerrito, Hercules, Lafayette, Martinez, Moraga, Oakley, Orinda, 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 has been implemented.

The City of Concord currently allows for the over-hiring of (3) officer positions above authorized staffing levels. The City of Concord cannot speak to the needs of other agencies.

James Nakayama, Police Captain, is available to answer any questions or provide any additional information concerning the above responses. You may reach him at (925) 671-3260 or by email at James.Nakayama@CityofConcord.org.

Sincerely,



Valerie J. Barone
Concord City Manager