



July 30, 2020

By U.S. Mail and email (ctadmin@contracosta.courts.ca.gov)

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

Re: City of Walnut Creek Response to Grand Jury Report No. 2004 - "Police Department Staffing"

Dear Ms. Granlund,

This correspondence will serve as the City of Walnut Creek's response to your May 20, 2020 letter regarding Grand Jury Report No. 2004 - "Police Department Staffing"

FINDING:

F1: Low officer staffing ratios and/or unfilled positions present challenges in maintaining police services.

Response: The City of Walnut Creek agrees with this finding.

F2: 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 Walnut Creek agrees with this finding.

F3: 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 Walnut Creek partially disagrees with this finding. The Walnut Creek Police Department is currently fully staffed and experiences very little mandatory overtime. However, this has not always been the case and we would agree with this finding if we were understaffed.

- F4: Mandatory overtime can lead to officer stress, which creates retention challenges.
Response: The City of Walnut Creek agrees with this finding.
- F5: 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 Walnut Creek agrees with this finding.
- F6: Recruiting officers is challenging due to fewer applicants who meet the required hiring standards and complete the rigorous testing process.

Response: The City of Walnut Creek agrees with this finding.
- F7: Negative perceptions of policing and the availability of less dangerous job opportunities contribute to fewer applicants for law enforcement positions.

Response: The City of Walnut Creek agrees with this finding.
- F8: 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 Walnut Creek agrees with this finding.
- F9: The process of hiring and training new officers takes an extensive amount of time and resources to complete.

Response: The City of Walnut Creek agrees with this finding.
- F10: 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 Walnut Creek agrees with this finding.
- F11: 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 Walnut Creek is not aware of the speed at which the Sheriff's Department of other non-contract cities are able to fill vacancies.
- F12: Recruits and young officers have different expectations than in the past regarding work/life balance.

Response: The City of Walnut Creek agrees with this finding.

F13: Recruits and young officers' expectations about work/life balance contribute to the challenges of officer recruiting and retention.

Response: The City of Walnut Creek agrees with this finding.

F14: Wellness and Employee Assistance Programs offered by Contra Costa police agencies aid retention of police officers.

Response: The City of Walnut Creek agrees with this finding.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

R2: 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 in the county has their own unique standards and minimum qualifications. For example, some departments require only a high school diploma, while others require 60 college units or more. A single screening process for all applicants does not take into account the individual needs of varying Police Departments and communities within the county.

R3: 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 has been implemented.

The Walnut Creek Police Department has applied for funding from the Department of Justice COPS Hiring Program. We recently applied (calendar year 2020) to the COPS Hiring Program to hire additional school resources officer(s) but were not selected this year. We will continue to apply for these funding opportunities in the future.

R4: 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 will not be implemented.

The Walnut Creek Police Department is currently fully staffed. Further analysis to determine whether or not an increase to the number of authorized sworn officers is warranted is not practical given the current budgetary constraints due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The financial considerations are not expected to improve in the current fiscal year.

R5: 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 Walnut Creek currently allows for the over-hiring of (4) officer positions above authorized staffing levels.

Jay Hill, Police Captain, is available to answer any questions or provide any additional information concerning the above responses. You may reach him at (925) 256-3568 or by email at hill@walnutcreekpd.com

The City Council approved this response at their July 21, 2020 regular meeting.

Sincerely,



Dan Buckshi, City Manager