



Santa Cruz County Civil Grand Jury

2014-2015 Response Packet

**Recipe for Failure: Shrinking Budgets and Increasing
Needs for Emergency Homeless Shelters**

Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors

Due date: 90 Days (by Thursday, September 10, 2015)

When finished, email the completed response packet as a file attachment to:
grandjury@co.santa-cruz.ca.us

Instructions for Respondents

California law PC § 933.05 requires that those responding to a Grand Jury report must provide a response for each individual finding and recommendation within a report, not a generalized response to the entire report. Explanations for disagreements and timeframes for further implementation or analysis must be provided.

Please follow the format below when preparing your response.

Response Format

1. Find the Responses Required table that appears near the end of the report. Look for the row with the name of the entity you represent and then respond to the Findings and/or Recommendations listed in that row using the custom packet provided to you.
2. For Findings, indicate one of the following responses and provide the required additional information:
 - a. AGREE with the Finding,
 - b. PARTIALLY DISAGREE with the Finding and specify the portion of the Finding that is disputed and include an explanation of the reasons therefor, or
 - c. DISAGREE with the Finding and provide an explanation of the reasons therefor.
3. For Recommendations, select one of the following actions and provide the required additional information:
 - a. HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED, with a summary regarding the implemented action,
 - b. HAS NOT YET BEEN IMPLEMENTED BUT WILL BE IMPLEMENTED IN THE FUTURE, with a timeframe or expected date for implementation,
 - c. REQUIRES FURTHER ANALYSIS, with an explanation and the scope and parameters of an analysis or study, and a timeframe for that analysis or study; this timeframe shall not exceed six months from the date of publication of the grand jury report,
 - d. WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTED because it is not warranted or is not reasonable, with an explanation therefor.

If the respondent is a governing body, please provide the voted response of the body as a whole. Individual responses from members of a governing body will not be published.

If you have questions about the response report please contact the Grand Jury by calling 831-454-2099 or by sending an e-mail to grandjury@co.santa-cruz.ca.us.

How and Where to Respond

1. Please download and fill out the Response Packet provided to you for your responses. Please respond to each finding and recommendation. Be sure to save any changes you make to the packet.
2. Print and send a hard copy of the Response Packet to:
The Honorable Judge Rebecca Connelly
Santa Cruz Superior Court
701 Ocean Street
Santa Cruz, Ca 95060
3. Email the completed Response Packet, as an attachment, to the Grand Jury at grandjury@co.santa-cruz.ca.us.

Due Dates

Elected officials or administrators are required to respond within 60 days of the Grand Jury report's publication. Responses by the governing body of any public entity are required within 90 days.

Penal Code § 933.05

1. For Purposes of subdivision (b) of § 933, as to each Grand Jury finding, the responding person or entity shall indicate one of the following:
 - a. the respondent agrees with the finding,
 - b. the respondent disagrees wholly or partially with the finding, in which case the response shall specify the portion of the finding that is disputed and shall include an explanation of the reasons therefor.
2. For purpose of subdivision (b) of § 933, as to each Grand Jury recommendation, the responding person shall report one of the following actions:
 - a. the recommendation has been implemented, with a summary regarding the implemented action,
 - b. the recommendation has not yet been implemented but will be implemented in the future, with a timeframe for implementation,
 - c. the recommendation requires further analysis, with an explanation and the scope and parameters of an analysis or study, and a timeframe for the matter to be prepared for discussion by the officer or director of the agency or department being investigated or reviewed, including the governing body of the public agency when applicable. This timeframe shall not exceed six months from the date of the publication of the Grand Jury report, or
 - d. the recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable, with an explanation therefor.
3. However, if a finding or recommendation of the Grand Jury addresses budgetary or personnel matters of a County department headed by an elected officer, both the department head and the Board of Supervisors shall respond if requested by the Grand Jury, but the response of the Board of Supervisors shall address only those budgetary or personnel matters over which it has some decision-making authority. The response of the elected department head shall address all aspects of the findings or recommendations affecting his or her department.
4. A Grand Jury may request a subject person or entity to come before the Grand Jury for the purpose of reading and discussing the findings of the Grand Jury report that relates to that person or entity in order to verify the accuracy of the findings prior to their release.
5. During an investigation, the Grand Jury shall meet with the subject of that investigation regarding that investigation unless the court, either on its own determination or upon request of the foreperson of the Grand Jury, determines that such a meeting would be detrimental.

A Grand Jury shall provide to the affected agency a copy of the portion of the Grand Jury report relating to that person or entity two working days prior to its public release and after the approval of the presiding judge. No officer, agency, department or governing body of a public agency shall disclose any contents of the report prior to the public release of the final report.

6.

Findings

Finding 1: Local jurisdictions have not provided adequate emergency shelter to accommodate the vast majority (80%) of the more than 3,500 total homeless persons in Santa Cruz County (using 2013 PIT data).

AGREE

PARTIALLY DISAGREE - explain disputed portion below

DISAGREE - explain below

Response explanation (required for responses other than “Agree”):

The County and the four cities work together under the auspices of the Homeless Action Partnership (HAP). The HAP’s strategy is to prioritize permanently ending homelessness for people experiencing it through national best practice strategies such as permanent supportive housing and homelessness prevention and rapid rehousing programs. While we believe this is the right approach to end homelessness for individuals experiencing it, we recognize the on-going need for emergency shelter, and we have worked to fund and ensure availability of emergency winter shelter each year in both North and South County.

Finding 2: Despite persistent unmet needs, local jurisdictions have chosen not to fund or plan to increase the number of emergency shelter beds and services.

AGREE

PARTIALLY DISAGREE - explain disputed portion below

DISAGREE - explain below

Response explanation (required for responses other than “Agree”):

Over the last several years there has been an increased number of emergency shelter beds and services in North County. Those projects include the Paul Lee Loft in 2008, and the Recuperative Care Center in January of 2014 serving medically vulnerable people who are homeless and being discharged from hospitals. In addition, while not the subject of this report, additional shelter beds in Watsonville have been or are being opened through the Pajaro Rescue Mission/Teen Challenge and the Paget Center serving homeless veterans, which opened in 2013.

Although as a region we are prioritizing permanent supportive housing, rapid rehousing and prevention, considering additional emergency and interim services is a key action strategy under *All-In*, the recently adopted county-wide strategic plan, which states:

“Engage the community around developing additional emergency and interim services for unmet health and safety needs of persons living outdoors, including small shelters around the county, warming centers and improvements to existing shelters.” (*All-In* page 28)

Obviously, as long as people are sleeping outside more needs to be done to identify the resources needed to end homelessness and to shelter individuals who are experiencing it. The FY 2015/16 budget adopted by the Board of Supervisors includes an additional Homeless/Housing Coordination staff person who will be located in the County Administrator's Office and will work with the Inter-agency Staff Coordinating Group.

Finding 3: Reliance on the National Guard Armory with its strict rules and regulations limits the effectiveness of the North County Emergency Winter Shelter.

AGREE

PARTIALLY DISAGREE - explain disputed portion below

DISAGREE - explain below

Response explanation (required for responses other than "Agree"):

The National Guard Armory is accessed through a "License to Use State Military Facility" between the County of Santa Cruz and the Military Department, State of California. The License makes the armory facility available for use as an Emergency Shelter nightly between the hours of 6:00 PM through 7:00 AM October 15th through April 15th except "during any period that any organization of the State Militia or of the Armed Forces of the United States is conducting drills or other military training or activity at the armory". Besides limiting hours of use the License prohibits the use of intoxicating beverages and tobacco, and stipulates daily cleaning requirements.

Use of the facility is in accordance with California Government Code §15301-15301.6 as an emergency response operation in order to prevent "the loss of life" of homeless persons during winter weather conditions. The State requires the operator to ensure basic safety and security.

Limited nighttime-only access to shelter in a cavernous crowded facility is not a program that anyone would design to effectively end homelessness. The goal of the winter shelter program is to provide emergency night-time shelter. Cold weather emergency shelter does not solve homelessness for individuals but is a last resort humanitarian provision of shelter.

Parameters set by the State Military Department are not the primary factor limiting effectiveness of the Armory; it is likely that any site used for this purpose would have many of the same limitations. The primary factors that limit the effectiveness of the Armory are outlined elsewhere in the Grand Jury report, and include the number of beds and the costs associated with transporting clients to the site.

Finding 4: The absence of a back-up plan to replace the National Guard Armory threatens the continuing existence of the North County Emergency Winter Shelter program.

AGREE

PARTIALLY DISAGREE - explain disputed portion below

DISAGREE - explain below

Response explanation (required for responses other than “Agree”):

As described above, the Armory is a facility that provides minimal emergency winter shelter. The building is owned by the State Department of the Military and access to it for cold weather shelter is dependent on the State’s ability to provide staffing at the facility. While the State’s ability to provide access is assessed annually, the Military Department has demonstrated a commitment to continue the program.

The County and the four cities jointly provide funding to operate emergency winter shelter programs through the Homeless Action Partnership (HAP) and have demonstrated their commitment to emergency winter shelter by providing decades of funding for the programs.

On multiple occasions the jurisdictions have sought to identify alternative sites for winter shelter. There are very limited sites that could serve this purpose. Potential alternative sites have been ruled out for reasons ranging from neighborhood concerns, transportation requirements, access to services required to safely run an emergency program (meals, bathrooms, showers) and funding. Finally, an alternative site would require significant investments of financial capital and political will.

As stated above, emergency shelter does not end or shorten an individual’s experience of homelessness and the significant reduction of homelessness (44% reduction since 2013 according to the 2015 Santa Cruz County Homeless Census and Survey) can be attributed, at least in part, to prioritizing effective programs proven to end homelessness. These programs include permanent supportive housing and prevention and rapid rehousing. Each of the jurisdictions participates in funding for programs that employ these strategies.

The jurisdictions appreciate the Grand Jury’s concern with the issues at the Armory and the jurisdictions will continue to seek alternative sites for emergency cold weather shelter.

Finding 5: Insufficient emergency shelter capacity limits access to coordinated entry services for the homeless population.

AGREE

PARTIALLY DISAGREE - explain disputed portion below

DISAGREE - explain below

Response explanation (required for responses other than “Agree”):

Developing a coordinated entry system is a key strategy identified in *All-In* the county-wide strategic plan to address homelessness. A coordinated entry system streamlines and targets crisis response that quickly assess a household’s needs and provides tailored resources for persons in crisis. Coordinated entry is required by the Department of Housing and Urban Development for Continuum of Care under the HEARTH Act. The HAP is in the process of developing and identifying funding to implement such a system.

The essential premise of a coordinated entry system is to streamline access to services so that there is no “wrong door” for entry to services. While we agree with the Grand Jury’s assessment that emergency shelter is a potential point for a homeless person to access a coordinated entry system, it is not the only access point for services and we are striving to provide a streamlined range of access to homeless services. We fully intend to have all County and City funded emergency shelters participate in the coordinated entry system.

Finding 6: Insufficient numbers of personnel and case managers at the emergency shelters limit the services that can be provided to homeless individuals.

AGREE

PARTIALLY DISAGREE - explain disputed portion below

DISAGREE - explain below

Response explanation (required for responses other than “Agree”):

There is no question that case management services are a key component to end homelessness for many individuals. This need is recognized by local nonprofit agencies, jurisdictions, the Homeless Action Partnership and Smart Solutions to Homelessness. Case management support linked with access to housing is the solution to homelessness for a significant share of the people experiencing it and there are shelter programs focused specifically on pairing emergency shelter to case management to lead to permanent housing.

Services that are offered at the Armory are limited to those required to operate a safe cold weather shelter. Homeless individuals can and do form relationships and build trust with staff with the Homeless Services Center, the program operator, but case management is not specifically part of the program. There is a much more pressing need for case management services for people who are on a path to permanent housing. Recognizing the role of year round shelter programs to resolve homelessness, HSC has recently adapted their program at the Pau Lee Loft to pair case management with housing resources for people on a pathway to permanent housing.

While resources are constrained, we are constantly looking for opportunities for additional case management funding. In the absence of sufficient funding the community has been providing volunteer resources such as the Wings and the Housing Navigator programs associated with the 180/2020 Initiative. Additional case management is supported through Community Grant programs and has been included in an application for CDBG funds submitted by the County.

Finding 7: Insufficient number of staff dedicated to grant writing results in missed grant funding opportunities.

AGREE

PARTIALLY DISAGREE - explain disputed portion below

DISAGREE - explain below

Response explanation (required for responses other than “Agree”):

When it was announced this spring that the Homeless Services Center (HSC) was not awarded funding through the State’s Emergency Solutions Grant program it became clear that funding and operating a multi-service program is complex and dynamic. Skilled response to varied and changing funding opportunities is a vital component to stability, and the level of staffing dedicated to fund development is determined by HSC.

The HAP has been very successful in raising funds for homeless services from federal and State sources, bringing in close to \$30,000,000 since 2001.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors and the cities of Santa Cruz, Capitola and Scotts Valley should develop plans to provide increased emergency shelter on a priority basis to the most vulnerable populations first, including families, youth, women, and the elderly.

HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED

HAS NOT BEEN IMPLEMENTED BUT WILL BE IMPLEMENTED IN THE FUTURE

- indicate timeframe below

REQUIRES FURTHER ANALYSIS - explain scope and timeframe below (not to exceed six months)

WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTED - explain below

Response summary, timeframe or explanation:

Strategies to end homelessness for vulnerable populations is underway. These include the following:

- The County’s Human Services Department is providing CalWorks housing support program through a partnership with the Homeless Services Center Rebele Shelter that is shortening the length of stay for homeless families and transitioning them to stable housing quickly;
- The County’s Planning Department provides the maximum funding allowed for its former redevelopment funds in the Low and Moderate Income Housing Asset Fund for

homeless prevention and rapid rehousing targeted to prevent and shorten family and individual experiences of homelessness;

- The Homeless Action Partnership is developing a Coordinated Entry system that will streamline access to services and end homelessness quickly.
- The Coordinated Entry system will implement the VI-SPDAT, a vulnerability index that ensures that the most vulnerable homeless individuals in our community access appropriate services;
- Community Programs funding across jurisdictions is focused on outcome based approaches;
- The opening of the Paul Lee Loft in 2008 provided 48 year round emergency shelter beds. This program is currently being revised to focus on vulnerable populations on a path to housing;
- The Recuperative Care Center was opened in 2014 providing medical respite for people who are homeless and are being discharged from the hospital but require follow up care and a safe and healthy environment;
- The County has established an Inter-agency Staff Coordinating Group to ensure that a system approach for care coordination is in place for vulnerable populations.

The jurisdictions believe that these and other strategies more quickly and effectively end homelessness among the most vulnerable individuals experiencing homelessness than emergency shelter.

Recommendation 2: Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors and the cities of Santa Cruz, Capitola and Scotts Valley should seek a more permanent, accessible and expandable site for the North County Emergency Winter Shelter program.

HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED

HAS NOT BEEN IMPLEMENTED BUT WILL BE IMPLEMENTED IN THE FUTURE

- indicate timeframe below

REQUIRES FURTHER ANALYSIS - explain scope and timeframe below (not to exceed six months)

WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTED - explain below

Response summary, timeframe or explanation:

Jurisdictions have been and will continue to seek to identify an alternative site to the Armory for emergency winter shelter. Considerations include neighborhood impacts and competing priorities for funding.

During the next 6 months the following steps will be taken to identify an alternate site: the HAP Executive Committee will meet and will identify potential sites that include a building or buildings that could safely shelter a minimum of 75 people for emergency night time shelter, if any sites are found that appear potentially feasible, the HAP will performed a more detailed analysis and present such report to the Board of Supervisors and the relevant city councils.

Recommendation 3: Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors and the cities of Santa Cruz, Capitola and Scotts Valley should allocate more funds for additional case managers for the local emergency shelters.

HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED

HAS NOT BEEN IMPLEMENTED BUT WILL BE IMPLEMENTED IN THE FUTURE

- indicate timeframe below

REQUIRES FURTHER ANALYSIS - explain scope and timeframe below (not to exceed six months)

WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTED - explain below

Response summary, timeframe or explanation:

Additional funding for case management has been a priority of both local jurisdictions and nonprofit agencies. Funding has been provided by County Human Services CHAMP program, identified above, HSC has been awarded HUD funds through the HAP to provide case management and permanent housing for chronically homeless disabled individuals, a County application for CDBG funds has been submitted that, if successful, would provide three additional case managers for chronically homeless and medically vulnerable people. In addition, case management positions have been funded through Supportive Services for Veteran Families grants and the HUD VA Supportive Housing (VASH) program.

All jurisdictions have adopted *All-In* and are coordinating funding efforts for implementation based upon its principles.

Recommendation 4: Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors and the cities of Santa Cruz, Capitola and Scotts Valley should allocate additional staff to seek more grant funding for emergency shelters.

HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED

HAS NOT BEEN IMPLEMENTED BUT WILL BE IMPLEMENTED IN THE FUTURE

- indicate timeframe below

REQUIRES FURTHER ANALYSIS - explain scope and timeframe below (not to exceed six months)

WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTED - explain below

Response summary, timeframe or explanation:

The County's Fiscal Year 2015-16 Budget includes funding for a full time Homeless Coordinator working out of the County Administrator's Office.

The HAP is providing funding to the Homeless Services Center for technical assistance to support the organization's competition for future State Emergency Solutions Grant program funding.