

SAN DIEGO COUNTY WATERFRONT PARK EXCESSIVE COST FOR SECURITY

SUMMARY

When the San Diego County Waterfront Park opened on Mother's Day Weekend, 2014, county officials heralded it with great fanfare. Public reports of the opening described both the wide acceptance of the park by local citizens and the high cost the county was incurring to provide security and ensure a safe environment for visitors.

The 2014/2015 San Diego County Grand Jury (Grand Jury) found that although the Waterfront Park is an improvement to the area and widely used, the cost of security is excessive and the County should utilize the services of an independent security specialist to help determine the cost effectiveness of the security needed and help develop its future budgets.

INTRODUCTION

The Grand Jury learned the cost of security at Waterfront Park, which had just opened, was significantly greater than security for other venues in San Diego County. The purpose of the investigation was to determine how those local costs were determined and justified. The Grand Jury also looked into any plans for reviewing the Waterfront Park security, safety considerations and costs for the future.

PROCEDURE

- The Grand Jury interviewed various county administration officials and senior members of the San Diego County Sheriffs' Department.
- The Grand Jury gathered data about the level of security of several public parks of a similar nature in other parts of the country.
- The Grand Jury visited Waterfront Park.
- The Grand Jury also reviewed incident logs for the park obtained from the Sheriff's Department for the period between the opening of the park and the end of 2014.

DISCUSSION

The Grand Jury investigation found the cost of security and safety services at Waterfront Park was 2.3 million dollars for the initial budget year. A source told the Grand Jury that no intensive review of the amount of that budget would occur prior to the fall of 2015. More recently however, a senior County official informed the Grand Jury that the County would review the cost and scope of the Waterfront Park security services, so that any changes could be included in the new fiscal year budget starting July 1, 2015.

Security at the Waterfront Park consisted of two sheriff's deputies 24 hours/day 7 days/week, a minimum of two private security guards during operating hours, and a

memorandum of understanding for mutual support with the San Diego City police and the Harbor police. This is in addition to the existing sheriff's deputies and private security for the County Administration Building present during building operating hours. In a review of the incident logs and research of other parks, the Grand Jury found that incidents at the park appeared to be no different from those recorded elsewhere in the county and at parks in other parts of the country with less security. None of the parks investigated nor any of the other County parks had sworn officers assigned full time.

Testimony revealed that those charged with managing Waterfront Park were asked to create a security program that would allow families to visit the park with assurances as to their safety.

The Grand Jury found no evidence that when developing the security plan for the Waterfront Park County officials investigated the level of security used at other cities with similar public parks (adjacent to water, including play areas, in a metropolitan setting) to provide a safe and secure environment for the public.

FACTS AND FINDINGS

Fact: The County of San Diego uses a total of twelve sworn sheriff's officers and additional private security personnel to provide security for the San Diego County Waterfront Park.

Fact: The County of San Diego's budget (FY14/15) for security at the park is 2.3 million dollars.

Fact: No full or part time sworn sheriff's officers are assigned specifically for security or safety purposes at any other county park in San Diego County.

Finding 01: The cost of security at the San Diego County Waterfront Park is excessive.

RECOMMENDATION

The 2014/2015 San Diego County Grand Jury recommends that the Chief Administrative Officer for the County of San Diego:

15-09: Utilize the services of an independent security specialist to determine the most cost effective method for providing security services for the Waterfront Park while maintaining/ensuring a safe and secure environment prior to adoption of the next fiscal year budget.

REQUIREMENTS AND INSTRUCTIONS

The California Penal Code §933(c) requires any public agency which the Grand Jury has reviewed, and about which it has issued a final report, to comment to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court on the findings and recommendations pertaining to matters under the control of the agency. Such comment shall be made no later than 90 days after the

Grand Jury publishes its report (filed with the Clerk of the Court); except that in the case of a report containing findings and recommendations pertaining to a department or agency headed by an elected County official (e.g. District Attorney, Sheriff, etc.), such comment shall be made within 60 days to the Presiding Judge with an information copy sent to the Board of Supervisors.

Furthermore, California Penal Code §933.05(a), (b), (c), details, as follows, the manner in which such comment(s) are to be made:

- (a) As to each grand jury finding, the responding person or entity shall indicate one of the following:
 - (1) The respondent agrees with the finding
 - (2) 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.
- (b) As to each grand jury recommendation, the responding person or entity shall report one of the following actions:
 - (1) The recommendation has been implemented, with a summary regarding the implemented action.
 - (2) The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future, with a time frame for implementation.
 - (3) The recommendation requires further analysis, with an explanation and the scope and parameters of an analysis or study, and a time frame for the matter to be prepared for discussion by the officer or head of the agency or department being investigated or reviewed, including the governing body of the public agency when applicable. This time frame shall not exceed six months from the date of publication of the grand jury report.
 - (4) The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable, with an explanation therefor.
- (c) If a finding or recommendation of the grand jury addresses budgetary or personnel matters of a county agency or department headed by an elected officer, both the agency or 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 agency or department head shall address all aspects of the findings or recommendations affecting his or her agency or department.

Comments to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court in compliance with Penal Code §933.05 are required from:

| Responding Agency | Recommendations | Due Date |
|--|------------------------|-----------------|
| Chief Administrative Officer, County of San Diego | 15-09 | 08/11/15 |