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Mayor and City Council

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SAN DIEGO
COUNTY GRAND JURY

August 16, 2016

The Honorable Jeffrey B. Barton
Presiding Judge, San Diego Superior Court
Main Courthouse
220 W. Broadway, 3rd Floor
San Diego, CA 92101

SUBJECT: RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY REPORT

Honorable Judge Barton:

On May 19, 2016, a Grand Jury report was sent to the City of El Cajon titled "*East County Cities' Lack of Response to Homelessness.*"

In accordance with California Penal Code 933.05, the City of El Cajon is hereby submitting its response to the Grand Jury report within the required timeline.

The City of El Cajon's response to the report was discussed and adopted by the City Council at its regularly scheduled City Council Meeting on August 9, 2016.

Sincerely,

Bill Wells
Mayor
City of El Cajon

Grand Jury Report – East County Response to Homeless Issues

Finding 01: *East County emergency and transitional housing is available only in El Cajon and exists primarily for families and children, victims of domestic violence, veterans, the mentally ill, and those willing to join a one-year Christian discipleship program.*

Response: Partially agree.

Explanation: The Volunteers of America also houses 45 individuals per night within their facility and while they do not technically describe themselves as a homeless shelter, their program addresses at risk individuals who easily would end up homeless without the VOA program. In that sense, they are an acknowledged homeless prevention organization, which is every bit as important to this issue as servicing those who are already homeless.

Finding 02: *East County cities have marginal involvement in homeless issues.*

Response: The City of El Cajon will only respond to this particular community's involvement and not the remainder of the east county. As such, the City wholly disagrees with this Finding.

Explanation: The Grand Jury report significantly downplays the extent and depth of homeless services that are located within the City of El Cajon. The City has consciously and steadfastly permitted, provided for, and often funded the location of all of these services within El Cajon, in many cases, for decades. It is inconceivable that the Grand Jury could reach a conclusion that El Cajon has "marginal involvement in homeless issues", given the extensive nature of this list of services. It is likely, particularly given the modest size of this community, that other than within downtown San Diego, the City of El Cajon provides a greater concentration of homeless services than any other community within the region.

The Grand Jury's conclusion on this issue is entirely and provably wrong.

The following represents a list of some of the homeless services with the City of El Cajon:

City of El Cajon Veterans Commission Related

El Cajon Veterans Commission

Currently planning to be a part of the ECPD HOT Team in the near future to help with informing homeless vets about services afforded to them.

AMVETS El Cajon

Coordinated through El Cajon Veterans Commissioner Donn Dunlap, he secures short term housing for any veteran seeking immediate assistance.

211 San Diego

Resources can be accessed on the web or over the phone. A person can sign-up for Cal Fresh (food stamps) over the phone. The City provides assistance for any veteran asking for help at City Hall. Homeless resources are also available over the phone for assistance.

El Cajon Community-wide Agencies/Services

Crisis House

Has short term food and shelter assistance, including case management and housing placement. They served nearly 3,000 individuals last year. The City recently renewed its contract for Crisis House to remain for another five years, at no cost, in a City owned commercial building and to also to be given funds accruing from a cell tower on-site. Total City funding to Crisis House is now estimated to be \$110,000 per year. Over the past ten years, the City's funding toward Crisis House is almost \$1 million.

Project Homeless Outreach

An event hosted by Crisis House at the Ronald Reagan Community Center annually, with County of San Diego Health and Human Services support, to offer a wide array of services to the homeless population.

Downtown El Cajon Business Partners

In 2011, the City of El Cajon approved and facilitated the most recent Property Based Improvement District (PBID) with El Cajon's downtown and remains as the largest single financial contributor to this organization at approximately \$80,000 per year. As part of the Downtown El Cajon Business Partners efforts, they annually hire sheltered homeless individuals from East County Transitional Living Center in the successful "Clean and Safe Program", in which those individuals are able to work by providing cleaning services to the downtown areas. This group interacts with the homeless community on a regular basis, assists in making referrals to services and works with ECPD, as well.

Interfaith Shelter Network of San Diego

Coordinates through Crisis House in El Cajon to temporarily feed, clothe and house homeless.

El Cajon Collaborative – Homeless Subcommittee

The City of El Cajon serves as a member of the El Cajon Collaborative on the Core Team and Executive committees. We coordinate with the Homeless Subcommittee within the El Cajon Collaborative.

East County Transitional Living Center (ECTLC)

One of the largest and most successful homeless and transitional living centers anywhere in San Diego County, the center was fully supported and approved by the El Cajon City Council despite significant local opposition many years ago. Annually receives CDBG funds from the City of El Cajon for its homeless shelter program. ECTLC was awarded \$100,000 this fiscal year and over the last ten years, the City of El Cajon has provided \$735,000 of funding for this organizations' work.

Last year, they served approximately 230 individuals. ECTLC provides short term food and shelter assistance. ECTLC offers the Clean & Safe program through PBID to maintain Downtown El Cajon sidewalks and other paths of travel.

Homeless Outreach Team (HOT)

The El Cajon City Council recently approved a partnership between El Cajon Police Department and the County of San Diego Sheriff's Department and Health and Human Services Department to provide resource information to unsheltered homeless in El Cajon, for the specific purpose of getting them off the street.

East County Chamber of Commerce

The East County Chamber, based in El Cajon has recently begun a homeless outreach sub-committee of which the City of El Cajon is to become of member of. Its' purpose is to coordinate homeless issues and solutions within the El Cajon business community.

El Cajon Branch Library

The County Library in downtown El Cajon provides space to legal assistance services and other homeless outreach programs.

Salvation Army – El Cajon

The Salvation Army offers an all-encompassing “Adult Rehabilitation Program” for drug and alcohol abuse at no cost to the participants to include the homeless population. Additional services include classes on meal planning and proper nutrition, adult school, life skills, and food assistance. The City of El Cajon recently approved entitlements for an expanded and improved Salvation Army Center that will include a food service component.

Volunteers of America

A nationwide organization that includes a local facility in El Cajon, the Carlton G. Luhman Center for Supportive Living. The VOA currently has 45 beds for adult males. Six of those beds are for transitional patients from East County Mental Health. VOA provides counseling services to their resident clients. The average stay at VOA is 2-3 years. While not classified as a homeless shelter, they house individuals to prevent them from becoming homeless. Many of the clients do not have alternative housing options

Meals on Wheels

Provides low cost home-delivered food and safety checks to seniors. This effort allows low income seniors to allocate limited resources to housing cost and prevents homelessness. This organization was awarded \$15,000 in CDBG funds this fiscal. They act as a homeless prevention organization.

Mobile Home Rehabilitation Program

This program provides a no interest loan to low income seniors for needed repairs. There is no payback required until the mobile home is sold. This approach helps keep seniors in their home.

Home of Guiding Hands

Home of Guiding Hands was awarded \$38,000 by the City of El Cajon for improvements to single-family homes in order to provide housing for developmentally disabled adults. This program prevents homelessness.

Church Community

El Cajon’s church community provides food service and other services for homeless on a regular basis. Included in this effort is:

Warriors of God Ministries – El Cajon

Homeless Outreach Ministries – El Cajon

First Baptist Church – Prescott Promenade

The Rock East

East County Rock Disciples of Christ Evangelism

The Welcome Church of El Cajon

Recommendation 16-58: *Initiate coordinated homelessness-related efforts to increase prevention, shelter, and transitional housing service in East County.*

Response: The recommendation has been implemented.

Explanation: The City of El Cajon has already accomplished this recommendation, per the response to Finding 02. The City of El Cajon is perhaps the only suburban community within San Diego County to have funded and supported such a wide array of services and provided such attention to the homeless community.

Homelessness is fundamentally a regional issue, not a local one. There is a significant lack of homeless transitional housing and treatment and prevention programs throughout the region and attention needs to be paid to increasing such programs regionally, in locations that both make sense and are fair to all communities. For the Grand Jury to suggest and expect a single community, such as El Cajon, to take on an even greater burden regarding this issue than it already has, is wrong-minded and utterly fails to recognize the regional nature of this problem.

The City of El Cajon is very concerned that, given the preponderance of homeless services already provided in this community, this circumstance is now acting to attract even more homeless individuals from throughout the region. There is strong evidence over recent years that this has, in fact, happened.

The City of El Cajon fully agrees with the County Board of Supervisors Comprehensive Homeless Policy, which states, "The County supports the equitable distribution of facilities and services throughout the Region so that no one jurisdiction or community is impacted by providing more than its fair share of facilities and services."

This policy, unfortunately, has not been implemented. The City of El Cajon calls upon the Grand Jury to recommend that this Board of Supervisor's Policy be effectively implemented throughout the region.

Recommendation 16-59:

Join the Regional Continuum of Care Council and participate in its work.

Response:

The City of El Cajon has worked with the Regional Continuum of Care Council in the past and will formally join the organization within the next year.