



September 21, 2016

Send via Email

Cheryl Clower
Administrative Assistant to the Grand Jury
600 Union Avenue
Fairfield, CA 94533

Dear Ms. Clower,

Attached please find the response to the 2015/16 Solano County Grand Jury Report, "Homelessness- Omnipresent and Invisible?", specifically:

Finding 5

The City of Vallejo has established a city-wide Participatory Budget Process to engage citizens to develop and recommend projects under the annual budget.

Recommendation 5

The Solano County Board of Supervisors and the Mayors/City Managers of Solano County engage citizens to develop and recommend priorities and projects through the adoption of a Participatory Budget Process.

Response to Recommendation 5

The City of Benicia believes that input from its citizens in developing budgetary priorities is very important. The City of Benicia utilizes a strategic planning process to help develop goals and priorities, including how budget priorities are established. Each strategic planning cycle is extremely inclusive and the City goes to great efforts to obtain feedback during the process. Every staff report must articulate the connection to the strategic plan as a way of grounding prioritization of projects in that plan; a plan that the citizens of Benicia have helped create. Additionally, before proceeding to council many items are required to go through the various commissions, boards and committees of the City of Benicia to gain further citizen input in prioritization of spending, including:

1. Arts and Culture Commission
2. Library Board of Trustees

3. Civil Service Commission
4. Community Sustainability Commission
5. Economic Development Board
6. Finance Committee
7. Historic Preservation Review Commission
8. Human Services Board
9. Open Government Commission
10. Parks, Recreation, and Cemetery Commission
11. Planning Commission
12. Sign Ordinance Committee
13. Sky Valley Open Space Committee
14. Traffic, Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Committee

The City of Benicia goes to great lengths to include its citizenry in an open and transparent budgeting process. We are always open to new ideas about how we can improve on connecting and collaborating with the community.

Finding 7

All cities in Solano County need to understand the real cost of homelessness and how it impacts services, safety, loss of retail revenue, damage to the infrastructure in their cities, etc.

Recommendation 7

7A. At such time that the county implements recommendation Number 6, the county openly shares the findings, methodology and accounting principles encompassed with the seven county cities to provide them the ability to replicate the study.

Response to Recommendation 7A

The City of Benicia is looking forward to the work that has been implemented by CAP Solano as a part of a county-wide strategic action plan that will examine the costs related to homelessness in Solano County. We are hopeful about the potential information that the analysis may provide the City of Benicia regarding its homelessness issues as well as the potential to replicate or piggyback on their analysis.

7B. All cities in Solano County conduct a cost assessment analysis to supplement the county results to develop a true depiction of the costs associated with homelessness to the cities of Solano County.

Response to Recommendation 7B

The City of Benicia hopes to gain further insight into the true costs associated with homelessness in Benicia through the work being conducted by CAP Solano in the process of developing their five-year strategic action plan. As a part of this plan they have contracted to conduct an analysis estimating certain costs related to homelessness in Solano County. The City of Benicia is an active partner in this process and will utilize the analysis to further examine the costs and/or determine future steps to more specifically capture the costs to the City of Benicia.

Finding 9

The Grand Jury understands regional planning is a necessary and vital component to creating solutions to homelessness and has been informed that efforts are underway to develop a regional approach to the homelessness issues.

Recommendation 9C

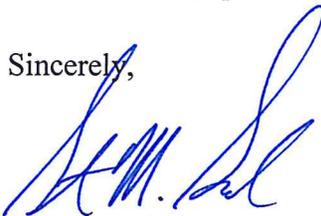
The Mayors of the seven cities in the county, serving in the capacity of the Solano City County Coordinating Council, establish homelessness as a priority item on their agenda and support the implementation of a regional plan as part of their responsibilities.

Response to Recommendation 9C

The City of Benicia agrees with Finding 9 and is an active partner working with CAP Solano on their countywide strategic action plan to prevent and end homelessness.

If you have any questions or require any additional information, please let me know.

Sincerely,



Steven M. Salomon
Interim City Manager