

**TOWN OF FAIRFAX
STAFF REPORT**

To: Mayor, Members of the Town Council

**From: Michael Rock, Town Manager
Christopher Morin, Acting Police Chief**

Date: December 2, 2009

Subject: Grand Jury Report: Marin's Homeless: The "Invisible" Problem That Won't Disappear

RECOMMENDATION

The Town Council is required to respond in writing to the Findings and Recommendations contained in the Marin County Civil Grand Jury Report, pursuant to Penal Code § 933.05.

Staff recommends the Town Council approve the response prepared by staff.

DISCUSSION

On October 29, 2009, the Town of Fairfax was sent the Marin County Civil Grand Jury Report entitled Marin's Homeless: The "Invisible" Problem That Won't Disappear, April 13, 2009. The purpose of the report is to evaluate the numbers of homeless in Marin, and the programs and housing available to them, with intent to improve existing resources, while creating new means of help.

A major problem for local jurisdictions is determining the numbers of homeless along with the kinds of help needed. While police routinely encounter homeless people with substance abuse problems or mental health issues, there are many more that are not obvious within the community. There are adults and children doubled up with friends or family, some are in shelters or foster care, and there are others who retreat to open space areas to sleep. Non-profit organizations like Homeward Bound, St. Vincent's, Ritter Center, Helen Vine Detox, and Buckelew Programs, among others, do a lot to help the homeless, but they have limitations on their resources, and don't always know who needs the help.

The Grand Jury identified many strengths in the services provided by the various organizations, but also noted that there were some weaknesses due to lack of coordination among groups, and general lack of awareness on the part of the citizens of Marin. The Grand Jury felt the County Board of Supervisors should appoint a full-time coordinator and office dedicated to helping the homeless via the assorted non-profit agencies. They also thought municipalities working together could create greater public awareness to bring greater attention to the needs of the homeless.

The need for public awareness and a dedicated office with coordinator for the homeless resulted in the Grand Jury's list of eleven (11) Findings, and four (4) Recommendations. The Grand Jury has requested that Fairfax respond to the Findings 5, 6, and 7 and to Recommendations 4, by stating Agree or Disagree with an explanation. The Grand Jury's findings and recommendations are all essentially on point and worthy of support by the Town. A copy of the response is attached.

Fairfax has contributed over the years to various agencies working with the homeless. Implementation of the Grand Jury's Recommendations will help bring an invisible problem to light, and help the residents of our community.

FISCAL IMPACT

No significant financial impact anticipated.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Marin County Civil Grand Jury Report: Marin's Homeless: The "Invisible" Problem That Won't Disappear
2. Recommended Marin County Civil Grand Jury Report Response from the Town of Fairfax