



County of Ventura
Sheriff's Administration
Memorandum

GRAND JURY FILE
6

To: Honorable Charles Campbell
Presiding Judge, Superior Court
From: Sheriff Larry Carpenter
Date: January 12, 1998
Subject: RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY REPORT

The Sheriff's Department would like to thank the Grand Jury for its annual administrative and operational review and comments related to the Department's policies and procedures. The Department strives to deliver efficient and cost-effective law enforcement services to the citizens of Ventura County. The Grand Jury's comments are always welcomed and considered an objective barometer of the Department's performance.

POLICE COMPLAINT PROCEDURES

The 1996-97 Ventura County Grand Jury performed an inquiry into police complaint procedures and reported on the same in their final report. Many of the recommendations raised echoes similar to Sheriff's Department concerns. The citizen complaint process and public employee discipline are issues which are extremely sensitive both from the view of the public and the employee. In addressing these recommendations, the Department is obligated to consider not only the interest of the public, but also the rights of the employees as have been determined by both the courts and legislature. Police complaint procedure is an issue we have memorialized and continue to address within the Department's policies and procedures.

- Recommendation #1: "Law enforcement agencies should create a citizen complaint process which is not intimidating, but rather help to build confidence with the public."
- Recommendation #2: "Agencies need to make complaint forms accessible to the public."

It is the Sheriff's Department's position that the citizen complaint process should be accessible to all members of the public. To that end, we make the written forms available at all Sheriff's stations, and instruct all our personnel that they are to accept citizen complaints, if presented. While we encourage citizen complainants to use our written form we, by written policy, will accept citizen complaints from any source including verbal or telephone contacts. Additionally, we will mail citizen complaint forms to complainants if they prefer not to come to a Sheriff's station. The Department's Citizen Complaint Procedure form includes information explaining the reporting process, in addition to the Sheriff's statement relating to his policy on citizen complaints:

"While the Sheriff's Department does not actively solicit complaints against its personnel, it encourages any citizen who believes that he or she has a valid complaint to come forward. Only by knowing about internal problems can the Sheriff deal with them properly."

- **Recommendation #3: "Enforcement of the written policies and procedures for handling a complaint should be a priority."**

The Sheriff's Department agrees that these policies and procedures must be enforced if the public is to have any confidence in the Department's complaint process. The Department does not tolerate violation of these policies.

- **Recommendation #4: "All law enforcement agencies need to computerize complaint data by putting it in a five-year database. They should be more observant and proactive in looking for early warning signs that may indicate intervention or training needs."**

Recommendation #7: "The type, number, and resolution of complaints should be closely monitored. Law enforcement should look upon complaints as a barometer of police performance."

The computerization of the Sheriff's Department's personnel information is an area fraught with security concerns both operationally and legally. We have developed a database system which allows managers to research complaint information on their employees. In addition, a complaint triggers an automatic evaluation of the involved employee's disciplinary history. This database does allow the Department to monitor trends, both as an agency and as to individual employees, on an ongoing basis. The Department has proposed a more sophisticated solution to automation of its Personnel operation. County ISD has developed a requirements document for the system and we are currently seeking funding for its development.

- **Recommendation #5: "Law enforcement should take the lead and encourage an independent review process, one that the community can trust which could be made up of city council members, retired judges, former grand jurors, and community members."**

The Sheriff's Department is satisfied that the current process which allows full review of the Department's internal process, and an internal investigation by the sitting Grand Jury, is a process that the community can support. Furthermore, as a general rule, grand juries are made up of members of the community, which may include retired judges or city council members. Finally, one of the final steps in any disciplinary issue is a review of the matter by the Civil Service Commission, a civilian review board whose members are appointed by the Board of Supervisors.

- **Recommendation #6: "Law Enforcement agencies should be required to publicly report annually the number of complaints received and their disposition, such as at city council or Board of Supervisors meetings."**

Current law requires all police agencies, including the Sheriff's Department, to annually report its statistics to the State Attorney General. Current law also authorizes the release of raw data regarding internal investigations (type, number, disposition, etc.), providing that the information released does not identify the involved officer. Such information is available upon request to the Board of Supervisors or the City Council of each city contracting with the Sheriff's Department for police services.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

The Sheriff's community oriented policing philosophy is based on the establishment of partnerships with the respective city governments, service clubs, schools, social service groups, business communities, private citizens and citizen groups. Although impacted by limited fiscal resources and the level of community participation, implementation of this philosophy has been very successful throughout the Sheriff's policing jurisdiction.

- **Recommendation #1: "Law Enforcement should make every effort to encourage Community Policing principles."**

East County Area Station/City of Thousand Oaks

With the advent of the police department's Community Oriented Policing and Problem Solving (C.O.P.P.S.) Unit in 1995, the City accepted the challenge and responsibility to improve the health and well-being of the community. City government and the private sector have given tremendous support to the Police Department.

Following the creation of the C.O.P.P.S. Unit, the City established a Crime Prevention Task Force (CPTF) to assess the community's needs. This task force includes representatives from City Manager's Office, City Attorney's Office, Code Compliance, Area Housing, Inter-Neighborhood Watch Committee, business groups, social service agencies, schools, community leaders and the police. The result has been that since 1995, the City has consistently been ranked among the safest in the nation with a population over 100,000.

Ongoing efforts include the development of a 24-hour C.O.P.P.S. training program for all station personnel. The training includes problem analysis, facilitation, mobilizing and empowering communities, communications, mediation, conflict resolution, resource awareness and development, networking and cultural sensitivity. Additionally, the business community is being educated about what the police can and cannot do.

Neighborhood Watch programs have grown from 50 to 140 locations since 1995. City Code compliant staff works closely with the C.O.P.P.S. Unit to address public health and safety issues. The Sheriff's Mounted Enforcement Unit is regularly brought into the City and special emphasis is placed on citizen contacts which allow any communication gaps between citizens and police to diminish. The City deploys a 36-foot Mobile Resource Center which was purchased with narcotics asset seizure funds. Ten Citizens Information Academies have been conducted since 1994. Four Volunteers in Policing (VIP) academies have been conducted and trained more than 50 citizens. Lastly, the C.O.P.P.S. Unit successfully collaborated with the City Attorney, County Youth Services and the Courts in establishing a successful daytime curfew ordinance, effectively reducing truancy and daytime crime.

The *City of Moorpark* and the Moorpark Police Department have also embraced Community Oriented Policing and Problem Solving. By promoting partnerships between the police and the community and through proactive problem solving, the police are identifying and reducing the causes of crime in its early stages.

This police-community partnership has resulted in the establishment of the Moorpark Police Resource Center which is fully staffed by more than 25 community volunteers who are trained to help provide access to law enforcement and other community services. This partnership includes Neighborhood Watch groups with more than 400 active residents and a Business Watch group encompassing more than 100 local businesses.

Additionally, Moorpark funds a Police Community Services Officer that serves as a community problem solver through community outreach working in a collaborative effort with citizens, businesses, schools, and public agencies.

The *community of Oak Park*, though not specifically identified, has benefitted from community oriented policing during the past year. A 40-hour per week patrol car has been added with the intent that its schedule will be flexed to meet the community's changing needs. In addition, DARE and Crime Prevention duties were included within this increased level of services.

Santa Clara Valley Area Station/City of Fillmore

The Santa Clara Valley Area Station continues to support the principles of community policing in both its storefront locations, located in the City of Fillmore and the community of Piru. All deputies assigned to this station are rotated throughout the Station's patrol jurisdiction to become familiar with the communities and their residents. Sheriff's personnel assigned to this station are generally residents of the Santa Clara Valley and are encouraged to involve themselves in their respective communities.

Ojai Valley Area Station/City of Ojai

The Sheriff's Department has established a partnership with the City and the citizens of the Ojai Valley. Over the last two years the police department's entitlement of State COPS grant funds has been provided as in-kind funding for the Ojai Valley Youth Master Plan, related youth programs, and support for civilian station assistance to free up sworn personnel for additional law enforcement field deployment. This example of community policing is a collaboration with the Valley's public and private sectors working to improve the quality of life for the youth of the Ojai Valley.

Under the heading of support for youth programs, COPS funding has provided critical assistance to the City in developing a plan to address the needs of the Ojai Valley's youth population and thereby prevent crime and other youth gang related law enforcement problems.

To date, this commitment has resulted in receipt of a \$125,000 California Wellness Foundation grant intended for empowering a healthy and supportive environment for the Ojai Valley's young people. The City's Chief of Police (a Sheriff's Captain), and a Youth Foundation member have been selected to serve on Attorney General Dan Lungren's initial Youth Council on Violence Prevention. Working with the Ojai Unified School District, COPS funding supports the establishment of a peer counseling program at Nordhoff High School. Additionally, COPS funding supported the establishment of a juvenile intervention and restitution program, Concerned Resource and Environmental Workers, (CREW).

Headquarters Area Station-Ventura

One of my main goals is to build partnerships between the Sheriff's Department and the communities we serve. This station is committed to the community-based policing philosophy and serves the communities of Saticoy, El Rio, Nyland Acres, Silverstrand, Hollywood Beach, Montalvo and the Rincon.

A Sheriff's Mobile Resource Center is the platform used for the delivery of this service philosophy. Established in 1994 because of the area's segregated populations, the Mobile Resource Center is staffed daily by a Deputy and bilingual civilian staff member. Rotating daily from community to community, personnel provide the means for addressing ongoing neighborhood problems that affect quality of life issues. Additionally, the Mobile Resource Center staff establish and coordinate community block parties bringing together both public and private community service providers, establish and coordinate neighborhood watch groups, and participate in homeowners association meetings.

Community based policing efforts also include bicycle patrol, off-road motorcycle patrol and DARE programs. Additionally, station personnel work closely with Code Enforcement and Animal Control officers to address community problems.

Training in Community oriented policing is mandated for all station personnel as part of the Department's Master Training Plan. The station's primary goal is to have all patrol personnel trained in community-based policing by the end of 1998. All station supervisors are encouraged to participate in community group meetings to gather and share information, thereby better addressing community needs.

Camarillo Area Station/City of Camarillo

All station personnel are required to complete training in community oriented policing. The Department's community oriented policing philosophy is very visible throughout this area station.

The City funds a deputy sheriff as a full-time Community Services Officer. The City is about to launch a volunteer citizen's patrol program that will provide non-enforcement patrol assistance in specially marked vehicles. Camarillo has conducted two Citizens Academies for citizens and/or interested volunteers. The police department in partnership with the community's Neighborhood Watch groups throughout the City, conducted its inaugural celebration of "National Night Out." Additionally, the police department conducts an annual station open house, bringing together for public display all Sheriff's Department resources available to respond to the City's needs.

Participation in juvenile programs is also a major partnership between the city, schools, and the police department. A Deputy Sheriff Youth Officer is assigned full-time to Camarillo High School. Plans are underway to conduct a Youth Academy, similar to the Citizens Academy, but tailored for students/youths.

- **Recommendation: "An effort needs to be developed by the communities to establish measurable goals for each facility."**

East County Area Station/City of Thousand Oaks

Annually, at the direction of the City Council, the police department is required to establish measurable goals and objectives for the Police Department and the City. The following are the goals identified for the 1997-98 fiscal year:

- *Begin to develop the necessary resources to create a new patrol beat in the City by the end of FY 1998-99;*
- *Develop civilian patrol support personnel to free patrol officers from non-critical incidents for optimum utilization of officers;*
- *Upgrade Police Department computers to be compatible with the City's Local Area Network and other law enforcement networks;*
- *Increase the number of volunteers assisting the police department in all functions safe to do so;*

- *Provide a citywide deployment schedule for the Police Mobile Resource Center in all areas of the City; and*
- *Pursue federal grants to assist the police departments operations and crime prevention programs.*

Similarly, the remainder of the East County Area Station, including personnel assigned to the *City of Moorpark*, has established goals and objectives for the current fiscal year.

Santa Clara Valley Area Station/City of Fillmore

Each of the storefronts in the City of Fillmore and community of Piru tracks the number of citizens/youths that visit and/or participate in programs and services offered at each respective storefront. The impact of community policing is identifiable via crime statistics which are available for each of the Sheriff's jurisdictional areas and reported to the State by the Sheriff's Crime Analysis and Decision Support Unit Crime. Crime statistics continue to show significant declines in the Santa Clara Valley Area Stations jurisdiction. Much of this trend is directly attributable to the community's participation in the principles of community oriented policing.

Ojai Valley Area Station/City of Ojai

Specific identifiable goals related to the Ojai Valley Youth Master Plan are identified within the specific components selected for funding within the Valley's Master Plan. In addition to the previously identified \$125,000 California Wellness Foundation grant, the Peer Counseling Program created in cooperation with Nordhoff High School and the juvenile intervention and restitution program (CREW) established in cooperation with County Youth Services and the Courts each include measurable goals within their respective programs.

Headquarters Area Station-Ventura

The Headquarters Station relies on the reduction of the area's crime statistics as an objective measure of the effectiveness of community oriented policing programs. Staff is presently preparing a listing of more applicable indicators that can be used to measure the effectiveness of its delivery of community oriented policing.

Camarillo Area Station/City of Camarillo

Measurable community policing goals for all City programs are identified and articulated within the Federal COPS AHEAD grant, City and Camarillo High School programs budget items found within their respective fiscal reports. The effects of this station's community oriented policing efforts are objectively reflected in the crime statistics reported annually to the State.

- **Recommendation #3: "Annual detailed financial records and reports should be established by the communities to maintain accountability for continued funding."**

East County Area Station/City of Thousand Oaks

To date, the City of Thousand Oaks has been awarded \$150,000 through a federal COPS AHEAD grant which funded two full-time deputies over a three-year period; an additional federal grant award of \$225,000 over three years to fund two additional patrol officers and one school liaison officer; an annual State COPS grant of \$260,000 which funds two full-time bicycle patrol officers and one detective; and a local Law Enforcement Block Grant of approximately \$74,000 to fund one full-time civilian volunteer coordinator.

Funding for these positions is a joint effort between the City of Thousand Oaks, and the State and Federal governments. Separate, detailed financial accounts are maintained by the City Finance Office where expenditures are tracked. Additionally, there are strict State and Federal guidelines with quarterly reporting mandates for the expenditure of funds.

Santa Clara Valley Area Station/City of Fillmore

The City of Fillmore initially began community oriented policing with the assistance of a federal grant which the City now funds from its own budget. The City continues to fiscally track all expenditures related to community policing as originally required by federal grant regulations.

The City Council is committed to maintaining its North Fillmore Police Storefront and the two staff positions associated with the community policing program. New funding options are always being explored, including the feasibility of placing a local initiative before voters to establish a special assessment district to fund continuing public safety programming.

Ojai Valley Area Station/City of Ojai

All expenditures relating to community oriented policing expenditures are tracked within the Sheriff's Department and City's respective financial management reports. Expenditures specifically funded via COPS appropriations and received directly by the City are tracked within City fiscal reports.

Headquarters Area Station-Ventura

Annual expenditures for the station's Mobile Resource Center are approximately \$109,000 and are tracked within the Sheriff's fiscal reporting system. This program is funded through the reallocation of existing fiscal resources and is supplemented by staffing made possible by Proposition 172 appropriations authorized by the Board of Supervisors.

Camarillo Area Station/City of Camarillo

The City of Camarillo accounts for all contract police expenditures related to community oriented policing expenditures in support of all applicable programs. The City was also the recipient of Federal COPS AHEAD grant funding and provides concise quarterly reports as required by federal grant regulations.

SECURITY OF VENTURA COUNTY COURT FACILITY

The 1996-97 Grand Jury Report contains concerns regarding the safety and security of both employees and the public who do business within the court facilities of Ventura County. The Sheriff shares those concerns. Courthouses have indeed become lightning rods for violence around the nation over the past several years. Every day, highly emotional issues involving families, financial futures, and criminal behavior are discussed and decided.

- **Recommendation #1: "Review, initiate, and implement a total security system at all County of Ventura Court Facilities."**

Recommendation #2: "All persons entering the courts must be required to pass through metal detectors; the contents of any boxes, briefcases or purses searched with an e-ray screening machine. Hand-held metal detectors must be made available for additional searches."

Recommendation #3: "A minimum of two screening lanes should be provided for this purpose. Provisions for exiting, handicap access, including seeing-eye-dogs, and employee accommodations will be provided."

As the report indicates, the Sheriff's Department has developed a comprehensive plan to implement "full-entry screening" at the Hall of Justice in Ventura. Another such plan is being developed for the East County Courts Facility. Additionally, increased security involving alarm systems and personal identification technology is being considered at the East County Courts Facility.

Each of these plans would regulate admittance to these buildings in much the same fashion as is now common at most airports and many court facilities in the country. Current estimates indicate the cost for such a program at Ventura's Hall of Justice would be \$1.4 million initially with an annual cost thereafter of approximately \$550,000 for personnel. This plan was rejected by the Board of Supervisors during budget deliberations earlier this fiscal year due to fiscal constraints faced by the County.

- **Recommendation #4: "Provide roving security details manned by deputy sheriffs to spot check grounds, restrooms, hallways, and library seven days a week at the Hall of Justice, as well as Simi Valley."**

Currently, Burns Security Service provides a contracted number of personnel to assist with security duties in and around the Government Center campus, including the Hall of Justice. Their function is to "observe and report," much the same as the assumed responsibility of other tenants and visitors to the courthouse. Sheriff's personnel enjoy a good working relationship with these security officers. The Department recognizes that sworn officers would provide a higher level of security, but again, cost must be a factor in creating the most effective security based on fiscal resources available.

- **Recommendation #5: "The Sheriff's Department should provide random canine searches to detect explosives."**

The Department believes that the random use of canines for the detection of explosives would provide an excellent training opportunity when done on an occasional basis, however a scheduled and ongoing program would be impractical and not cost effective.

c: Ventura County Grand Jury
Lin Koester, CAO