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VENTURA COUNTY
GRAND JURY

CITY OF
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August 10, 2010

Ventura County Grand Jury
800 S. Victoria Ave., L#3751
Ventura, CA 93009

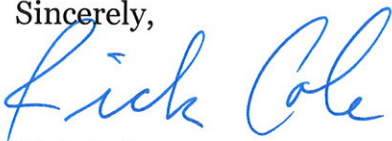
Dear H. G. Kelley:

The City of Ventura applauds the County Grand Jury for investigating the actual performance County and City agencies are making in implementing the landmark Ten Year Strategy to End Homelessness in Ventura County.

As the attached response details, we are in general agreement with both your findings and recommendations. We hope the report (and our responses) will be helpful in promoting achievement of the ambitious goal set forth in the Strategy.

As the City Council is in summer recess until September 20, I am sending along these responses on their behalf.

Sincerely,



Rick Cole
City Manager

C: Honorable Kevin J. McGee, Presiding Judge
Superior Court of California, Ventura County
Ventura City Council

City of Ventura
Response to Grand Jury Report:
Where are You Sleeping Tonight?
August 10, 2010

General Comments

The City Council of Ventura has consistently prioritized the prevention of homelessness and committed our City to active participation in the Ten Year Strategy to End Homeless in our County. City of Ventura staff wholeheartedly agrees with the Grand Jury report titled *Where are You Sleeping Tonight*. The findings are consistent with the specific and anecdotal data and point of contact observations across departmental lines. In addition, the report provides useful data that will be helpful in future grant applications.

Suggested Addition to Recommendation Section

The City of Ventura notes the data, findings and conclusions are all accurate. We would add that since the bottom line of ending homelessness is clearly rooted in creating new beds/housing units across the continuum of care, and since the 10-Year Strategy to End Homelessness identifies the need for 855 units (spread out among shelters, transitional living beds, permanent supportive housing units, affordable housing units and sober beds) it is important that the 10 cities and the County agree on the specific distribution of those beds in each city, and the unincorporated area. Unless and until each city and the unincorporated area have mandated and agreed-upon goals in each of the continuum sections the responsibility for creating and siting those units will be elusive. Following the recommendations of the local Interagency Council on Homelessness, and the VCHHC, city staff recommends that the distribution method mirror that of the Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) distribution ratio.

City of Ventura staff suggests an additional recommendation along these lines: The 10 incorporated Ventura County cities and the County should agree to, and formalize, a memorandum of understanding that distributes the 855 continuum of care housing units identified in the 10-Year Strategy to End Homelessness utilizing the distribution method identified in the Regional Housing Needs Assessment.

Responses to Specific Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Both public agencies and nonprofit organizations should be adding low-income rental housing. Other entities should be encouraged to do so by governmental agencies.

The City of Ventura is currently working with the Housing Authority of the City of San Buenaventura (HA) and People's Self Help to create new low-income rental housing units. In addition, since the 10-Year Strategy's inception the city facilitated and significantly funded the Working Artists Ventura (WAV) project including the SHORE component which specifically targets formerly homeless individuals and emancipated foster youth. In total, the city has helped facilitate or actively engaged in the development of nearly 150 units.

Recommendation 2: The cities should take a leading role in coordinating services and resources directed at eliminating or minimizing homelessness in their communities through marshaling and motivating volunteers to assist with programs for the homeless.

While the City of Ventura has a role in coordinating services and resources, we are puzzled that there was no mention of the County of Ventura Human Services Agency or Public Health Department in this recommendation. The County, the City, and the VSSTF share leadership roles in this area. The reality is that the County of Ventura receives dedicated funding from the state and federal government to provide services to homeless individuals, and the city of Ventura does not. Therefore it seems that a response to this recommendation is rooted firmly in what the definition of "a leading role" is. Granted the City of Ventura and the Ventura Social Services Task Force (VSSTF – tagline "Dedicated to ending homelessness in the city of Ventura") are leadership players, however roles and responsibilities are not clear. The point being made is that the County, City and the VSSTF share leadership roles in this area.

Recommendations 3,4 & 5.

Agreed.

Recommendation 6: Cities that have not pursued grant funds, or have been unsuccessful in receiving them, should aggressively seek such funds.

Not only is the city of Ventura participating in the pursuit of grant funds, the city of Ventura grants the VSSTF \$50,000 on an annual basis to address homelessness.

Recommendation 7: The County and all cities should continue to recognize and publicly thank the various nonprofit organizations, faith-based organizations, and other volunteer groups for the ongoing and highly effective support of the homeless population in Ventura County.

City of Ventura staff provides the Ventura City Council with bi-annual reports and updates on issues associated with homelessness in the city of Ventura. City Council meetings, and newspaper stories, along with volunteer recognition events are the venues that the city of Ventura has utilized the past and will utilize

in the future to recognize the impact of third-party entities on the reduction of homelessness in Ventura.

Conclusion

For the first time, the 2010 homeless count resulted in data that reflected that Ventura has the highest number of homeless in Ventura County. The city is surrounded by two dry river bottoms; it is a coastal community; and it is the location of the Ventura County Jail and the Ventura County Medical Center. The fact that there is not a repatriation policy associated with the release of inmates and patients from these facilities contributes to the number of homeless in Ventura. Absent a regional approach, the city of Ventura will continue to be disproportionately impacted in the area of homelessness. We are committed to doing our share locally and contributing to regional collaborative efforts. We applaud the Grand Jury for highlighting the need for regional action on this important issue.

Submitted by:

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rick Cole".

Rick Cole
City Manager
City of Ventura
(On behalf of the Ventura City Council)

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