



"Citrus Capital of the World"

City of Santa Paula

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August 19, 2013

The Honorable Brian J. Back
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court
County of Ventura
800 S. Victoria Avenue
Ventura, CA 93009

Re: Response to Grand Jury Report – Ventura County Library

Dear Judge Back:

The Ventura County Grand Jury issued its report entitled "Final Report – Ventura County Library" on May 9, 2013. The Report addresses the administration of the Ventura County Library System (the "VCLS"). At the conclusion of the Report, the Grand Jury requested a response from the City to Finding FI-01, FI-02, FI-05 and FI-07 and FI-10 and Recommendations R-01, R-02, R-03 and R-04. We provide the following responses to these Findings and Recommendations pursuant to Penal Code §933.05.

Finding:

FI-01 *The Grand Jury found that the VCLS is not conducting adequate outreach into the community to gain volunteers. It also limits their ability to meet with school administration in order to demonstrate their available services, and to obtain the assistance of the community to provide specific programming, all due to limited staff.*

The City agrees with this finding. VCLS performs minimal outreach due largely to a lack of financial resources. We note, however, that the City is not a member of the VCLS. The City is served by the Blanchard Community Library, which first opened in 1910. Since 1995, the Blanchard Community Library has been operated by the Blanchard/Santa Paula Library District.

FI-02 *Used book sales provide extra income. However, not all of the libraries in the VCLS take part in this venture. Ojai appears to be the most successful due to its volunteer base.*

The City agrees with this finding. The Blanchard Community Library sells donated, damaged and duplicate books through the Santa Paula Friends of Library on a semi-annual basis. Both the Blanchard Community Library and the Santa Paula Friends are very active in the book sale and in other fundraising efforts.

FI-05 *The summer reading program is very successful. It deserves an opportunity to expand through greater networking. The program would also be enhanced by asking for more volunteer assistance.*

The City agrees with this finding. The Blanchard Community Library has a vibrant summer reading program that is run by the Children's Librarian, Ilene Gavenman. The program is designed to encourage kids and teens to read throughout the summer with a goal of fostering a lifelong love of reading. The summer reading program offers book reading sessions and movie screenings, among other activities, and awards prizes to kids based on the number of pages read over the summer. Kids throughout the County take part in the summer reading program.

FI-07 *Based on interviews, observations, and analysis of information, the Grand Jury determined that a well-functioning and community supported library system can potentially provide invaluable service to the community.*

The City agrees with this finding. The Blanchard Community Library offers a safe place to read, study, access and search databases, apply for a job, and hear interesting speakers discuss a wide range of topics. The Blanchard Community Library is trying to expand its mission by actively engaging the community through its services, outreach and volunteer campaign.

Recommendations:

R-01 *The Grand Jury recommends that a strategy to expand the most successful summer reading program be established.*

The Blanchard Community Library's summer reading program, as noted above, is very successful due in large part to the vision of Ms. Gavenman. Parents who took part in the summer reading program when they were kids are now bringing their own kids to the program. As noted above, Blanchard's program attracts kids from all over the County to take part in the summer reading program.

R-02 *The Grand Jury recommends that a means to reach out to potential volunteers be initiated. There are a number of programs that could be staff with volunteers. Also, the VCLS may find that the community will help support the development of new programs, such as: used booksales; tutoring for remedial reading, English and mathematics; to relieve the VCCCD and enhance the services provided by the VCLS; enhanced study programs; research assistance and guidance; encourage more help from the list of organizations, identified as "Friends of the Library" and the local public; provide programs that showcase the library and expand public awareness, such as professional workshops and entertainment; pursue electronic and Internet programs that offer the library participants volumes of information and references that could not be housed within a small library;*

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investigate the potential of linking the libraries within the VCLS, whereby every library in the system has total access to the collective information sources of the system of libraries; and pursue and encourage book clubs, business groups and organized educational entities to use the facilities in their local libraries.

The Blanchard Community Library has a large group of dedicated and supportive volunteers who assist with the operation and programming of the library and conduct fundraising activities. The Blanchard Community Library makes effort to reach out to new volunteers to expand its current volunteer base. The City is supportive of VCLS's efforts to do the same.

R-03 *The Grand Jury recommends that the library system be viewed on the basis of what it can provide to the community rather than from a monetary position. This may provide the incentive to find a means to allow libraries to meet or exceed the claims of independent systems and to become a credit to the County.*


As noted above, libraries are vital meeting places within the community that provide a wealth of information, activities and services to Santa Paula citizens of all ages, incomes and ethnic backgrounds. The Blanchard Community Library is always looking for ways to improve in this regard.

R-04 *The Grand Jury recommends that the VCLS administration invite city managers to discuss ways and means to assist in the improvement of libraries within their cities. This may initiate more involvement, enlightenment as to the potential of libraries, new ideas and possibly additional funds and resources.*

As noted above, the City is not a member of the VCLS. However, the City would be more than willing to participate in discussions relative to the provision of library services.

We thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Report. Should you have any further questions or desire any further information, please contact me or City Manager Jaime Fontes.

Sincerely,



Ralph J. Fernandez, Mayor

cc: City Council
Jaime M. Fontes, City Manager
Rosemary Reitz, Ventura County Grand Jury Foreperson
Ned Branch, Interim Director
Blanchard/Santa Paula Community Library