



CITY OF SIMI VALLEY

Home of The Ronald Reagan Presidential Library

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VENTURA COUNTY
GRAND JURY

July 16, 2013

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

Dear Judge Back:

The City of Simi Valley has received the 2012-2013 Grand Jury report, "Ventura County Library," and in accordance with Penal Code Section 933.05, we submit our response to the Grand Jury findings.

The City Council appreciates the efforts of the Grand Jury for its investigation regarding opportunities to enhance the Ventura County Libraries.

The Grand Jury requires a response from the City of Simi Valley to findings FI-01, FI-02, FI-05, FI-07, FI-10, however there was no FI-10 included in the report, and the Recommendations R-01, R-02, R-03, R-04.

Findings

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.

Response to FI-01: The City concurs with this finding. Prior to the City's withdrawal from the Ventura County Library System, and throughout the duration of the period in which the County was operating the Simi Valley Public Library on behalf of the City, minimal community outreach efforts were noted, and it appeared to be largely due to the lack of staff resources available to conduct community outreach.

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.

Response to FI-02: The City concurs with this finding. The Simi Valley Friends of the Library are very active in fundraising efforts through their bookstore location inside the Simi Valley Public Library. The Friends of the Library is supportive of the Simi Valley Public Library's programs and services, and donated \$5,000 for the 2013 Summer Reading Program, and over \$16,000 for the transition of the Simi Valley Public Library.

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.

Response to FI-05: The City concurs with this finding. The Summer Reading Program is a positive community program. Due to the City's transition from a County operated facility, to a City operated library, the City's Summer Reading Program did not begin until July 1, approximately two weeks following the normal start of the program. However, the registration for the program has been positive; between July 1 and July 10, 2013, 648 children and teen patrons have registered for the Summer Reading Program. Previously, outreach conducted for volunteers for the Summer Reading Program has been largely based in the Library, and returning volunteers were utilized.

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 services to the community.

Response to FI-07: The City concurs with this finding. The City has seen a positive response to its City library and will be offering new programs to continue to enhance the library as a community resource.

Recommendation

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

Response to R-01: The Summer Reading Program that the Ventura County Library System has previously used, and the Simi Valley Public Library currently uses, is part of a nationwide curriculum for the Summer Reading program. Expansion of the program could be positive for Library System patrons.

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 staffed with volunteers. Also the VCLS may find that the community will help support the development of new programs, such as: used book sales; 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; 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 libraries; and pursue and encourage book clubs, business groups and organized educational entities to use the facilities in their local library.

Response to R-02: The City is supportive of the County of Ventura's effort to expand the use of volunteers in the County Libraries and expand its programs and services to enhance the use of the County Library System.

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.

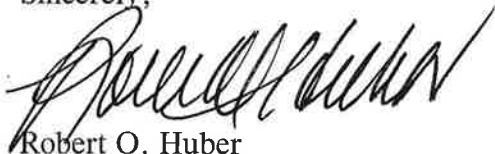
Response to R-03: The City of Simi Valley withdrew from the Ventura County Library System as a result of the restrictions that AB 438 was going to place on local cities should they wish to consider withdrawal from a County Library System in the future, effectively tying the hands of local government when determining the best method for the delivery of library services. The City's withdrawal was not based on monetary considerations, but rather, local control. As a result of the City's establishment of a municipal library, and the exercise of local control of the tax dollars allocated for Library services, library patrons in Simi Valley have experienced an enhanced collection of materials, an addition of nearly 6,000 materials, a new Teen Lounge, new meeting space, upgraded technology throughout the facility, and refreshed spaces throughout the Library.

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.

Response to R-04: Although the City is no longer a member of the Ventura County Library System, the City of Simi Valley would be willing to participate in any discussions related to Library services.

The City Council considered the Grand Jury's report at its July 15, 2013 meeting and authorized this response. We appreciate the efforts of the Grand Jury in reviewing this matter and providing the City an opportunity to respond.

Sincerely,



Robert O. Huber

Mayor

President of the Simi Valley Library Board of Trustees

cc: **Foreman, Ventura County Grand Jury**
City Council
City Manager
City Attorney
Interim Assistant City Manager, Government Affairs
Acting Director, Community Services