

August 15, 2005

Judge Allan D. Hardcastle  
Superior Court State of California  
County of Sonoma  
3035 Cleveland Ave., Ste 200  
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

Dear Judge Hardcastle:

Please accept this letter as my required response to Finding #2 and Finding #3 in the 2004-2005 Grand Jury's Final Report entitled Housing Assistance for Sworn Officers.

Finding #2 states, "Sonoma County invests money and time into the training of officers. The goal is to retain these trained officers long term and have not only all sworn law enforcement officers live within the county boundaries, not only for safety reasons but to be an integral part of the community."

I firmly agree with this finding and taking it a step further, I feel that it is a high priority to have all city employees live within the community they serve. The City of Cloverdale has for some time now been in the unique position within the County of having a residency requirement for their police officers. In the past four months the Cloverdale Police Department has hired three new officers; one officer lives in Santa Rosa, one in Lakeport, Mendocino County and the third officer just bought a home in Cloverdale. The two new officers living outside of Cloverdale have indicated a desire to move to Cloverdale upon completion of their probation period. Prior to these new hires, all but one of our officers lived within the city limits.

The City of Cloverdale is experiencing difficulty in finding qualified police recruits and other city employees who currently live within our city limits. With our residency requirement and providing a take home car to officers, the police department has been able to achieve a certain degree of stability in where our officers reside. Cloverdale also is in the unique position of being only two miles from the county line, making it often times more convenient and affordable to live in Mendocino County.

Finding #3 states, "In some law enforcement agencies, more than 10% of the sworn officers live outside of Sonoma County due to the high cost of housing."

As noted in my response to Finding #2, we encourage our officers to live within the city limits and prior to our most recent hires, all but one of our thirteen officers lived within the city. We would encourage the county and cities to make the same effort to keep all employees living within the community as they do for police officers.

If I can be of any additional assistance, please contact me at 707 894 1736

Sincerely,

Stephen M. Willis  
Chief of Police