

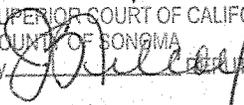
Approved: 
Superior Court Judge
AUG 28 2012

Sonoma County Community Development Commission
Sonoma County Housing Authority
1440 Guerneville Road, Santa Rosa, CA 95403-4107

August 23, 2012

FILED

AUG 28 2012

SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA
COUNTY OF SONOMA
By:  DEPUTY CLERK

Members of the
Commission

Shirlee Zane
Chair

David Rabbitt
Vice Chair

Valerie Brown
Mike McGuire
Efren Carrillo

Kathleen H. Kane
Executive Director

Honorable Rene Auguste Chouteau
Presiding Superior Court Judge
Hall of Justice
600 Administration Drive
Santa Rosa, CA. 95403

Re: Civil Grand Jury Report - Human Services Commission

Dear Judge Choteau:

This letter responds to the June 28, 2012 Sonoma County Civil Grand Jury Final Report section entitled "2011 Disbanding of the Human Services Commission". The report includes four findings and three recommendations, and requires me, as the Executive Director of the Sonoma County Community Development Commission, to respond specifically to Recommendations R2 and R3 on page 32.

Findings:

I agree with all findings, which are numbered F1, F2, F3, and F4, without reservation. The language of finding F2 leaves a conclusion open to further analysis and determination, as discussed further below under Recommendation R2.

Recommendations:

Recommendation R2: *The Executive Director of the Sonoma County Community Development Commission consider expanding the CDC committee to eight or nine members.*

- This recommendation is being considered for implementation as discussed below.

State Health & Safety Code Sections 34100 *et seq.* govern the formation and composition of community development commissions such as the Sonoma County Community Development Commission (CDC), which are established to operate community development functions along with a redevelopment agency and/or a housing authority under a single operating entity and board. The Sonoma County Board of Supervisors, by Ordinance No. 3257, created and declared itself to be the governing board of the Sonoma County CDC, and established the Community Development (CD) Committee to review and make recommendations on matters to come before the Commission prior to Commission action. While Health & Safety code allows community development committees to have up to nine members, County Ordinance No. 3257 stipulates that the Sonoma County CD Committee is comprised of seven



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members. Per the Ordinance, each member of the Board of Supervisors nominates one Committee member to represent his or her supervisorial district. Vacancies for these five district seats are posted publically and interested people may apply through the Board of Supervisors' office.

For agencies like the CDC, which combine their housing authority with their community development commission, the law requires that the Committee include two members who are tenants of the housing authority, at least one of whom must be at least 62 years of age. Federal law governing funding that the CDC receives from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) further requires that at least one member of the CD Committee must be homeless or formerly homeless. Typically, this is met by one of the tenant representatives having been homeless prior to receiving Housing Authority assistance. When vacancies for these two tenant seats occur, CDC staff sends notices to Sonoma County Housing Authority assisted households to solicit interested volunteers. Per the County Ordinance, the five Committee members in district seats nominate the two tenant representatives and recommend their appointment by vote of the Board.

Additionally, the Director of the Human Services Department, or their designee, sits with the Committee as an *ex-officio* member with no voting privileges. This *ex-officio*, non-voting seat was added by the Board in 1993, with no Ordinance amendment required, to help ensure effective coordination between the funding functions of the CDC and the Human Services Department.

We agree with the Grand Jury report's assertion that it would be beneficial for the Committee to include "individual(s) with prior community partner and/or local safety net funding experience"; however, it does not necessarily follow that the number of Committee members needs to be increased to meet this goal. In fact, the CD Committee's work with the HUD-funded Community Development Block Grant and Emergency Solutions Grant programs and grantees overlaps significantly with the programs and grantees funded by the former Human Services Commission (HSC). Thus, the current CD Committee members already possess this experience. Future CD Committee members will continue to come from a broad range of backgrounds, bringing a diversity of experience and knowledge to the Committee. The qualifications of the members will vary and change over time as appointees change. We believe that the selection process for the current seats has and will continue to result in the appointment of members who meet this criterion. Former HSC members and others with similar qualifications can apply for appointment to one of the district seats as vacancies occur.

Regardless of prior experience with human services programs prior to being appointed to the CD Committee, all members are volunteers who apply for appointment to the Committee; all are interested in and have an affinity for helping to address and resolve the needs of the low-income residents of the County. CDC staff works with the Committee members throughout the year to help them prepare for their grant proposal review and recommendation functions. This preparation includes an annual tour during which Committee members visit the sites of existing and potential grantees to become more familiar with their operations and the way in which they conduct their programs. In addition, because the Committee cannot visit all sites each year and travels to different parts of the County on a rotational basis, a portion of their monthly Committee meetings is set aside for nonprofit agency and other educational presentations. Through these means, Committee members gain the knowledge needed to aid their funding recommendation processes during their annual public hearings.

As noted above, the Board of Supervisors could amend the County's Ordinance to increase the Committee's voting membership by one or two seats, in compliance with State law and federal regulation. Any such additional seats could be designated specifically to represent the interest of human services/local safety net program experience. The CD Committee discussed this issue during their meetings on July 10 and August 14, 2012. Following their discussions, the Committee voted to recommend revisions to County Ordinance to include the *ex-officio* Human Services Department Director or designee as an eighth voting member of the Committee. This would help to ensure that knowledge of, and experience working with, local safety net programs is consistently and effectively represented during Committee discussions and actions. The Committee's recommendation will be forwarded to the Board of Supervisors for their consideration during October or November 2012.

Recommendation R3: *The Executive Director of the Sonoma County Community Development Commission annually provide to the Grand Jury the CSF funding recommendations once they have been approved by the Board of Supervisors.*

- This recommendation will be implemented in the future, beginning in May 2013 when the Board of Supervisors is scheduled to approve CSF and other funding recommendations for FY 2013-14. These reports are always made public and readily available to all public and the Grand Jury, online and in hard copy.

Commendations: *The Grand Jury commends both the HSC and CDC for ensuring that CSF grantees continue to receive funding in Sonoma County to assist at-risk and in-need members of the community despite the economic downturn.*

- I would like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation for the commendations included in the Grand Jury's report. The CD Committee members and CDC staff have strived to ensure that CSF grantees will be smoothly integrated into the agency's annual grant funding process so that these County funds can continue to help those most in need in our community.

Please feel free to contact me at 707-565-7505, or kathleen.kane@sonoma-county.org, if you have questions or would like to further discuss the information presented in this response.

Sincerely,



Kathleen H. Kane, Executive Director

c: Foreperson, Grand Jury, PO Box 5109, Santa Rosa, CA 95402
Sonoma County Board of Supervisors
Sonoma County Community Development Committee
Veronica A. Ferguson, Sonoma County Administrator
Janice Atkinson, Sonoma County Clerk
Jerry Dunn, Interim Director, Human Services Dept.
Don Schwartz & Jennifer Rogers, County Administrator's Office