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COUNTY OF SONOMA

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(INTERIM)

October 1, 2020

The Honorable Brad DeMeo
Presiding Superior Court Judge
Hall of Justice
600 Administration Drive
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

RE: Response to the 2019-20 Sonoma County Civil Grand Jury Report

Dear Honorable Judge DeMeo,

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the above stated Civil Grand Jury Report. The following is the County Administrator's Office response to the Report titled "Homeless Youth."

If you have any questions, or require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me at 707-565-2431.

Sincerely,

Sheryl Bratton
Sonoma County Administrator

cc: Grand Jury Foreperson DeBenedetti
Sonoma County Board of Supervisors
County Clerk Deva Marie Proto

Response to Grand Jury Report Form

Report Title: Homeless Youth

Report Date: August 2, 2020

Response by: Sheryl Bratton Title: Chief Administrative Officer

Agency/Department Name: Sonoma County Administrator's Office

FINDINGS: F11, F12

I (we) agree with the findings numbered: F11

I (we) disagree wholly or partially with the findings numbered: F12

(Attach a statement specifying any portions of the findings that are disputed with an explanation of the reasons.)

RECOMMENDATIONS: R13, R14

Recommendations numbered: _____ have been implemented.

(Attach a summary describing the implemented actions.)

Recommendations numbered: R14 have not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future.

(Attach a timeframe for the implementation.)

Recommendations numbered: R13 require(s) further analysis.

(Attach an explanation and the scope and parameters of an analysis or study, and a timeframe for the matter to be prepared for discussion by the officer or director of the agency or department being investigated or reviewed, including the governing body of the public agency when applicable. This timeframe shall not exceed six months from the date of publication of the Grand Jury report.)

Recommendations numbered: _____ will not be implemented because they are not warranted or are not reasonable.

(Attach an explanation.)

Date: October 1, 2010 Signed: 

Number of pages attached: 2

(refer to Civil Grand Jury Response Requirements)

FINDINGS: F11, F12

F11. The County does not currently track housing status in a way that permits a determination of how many homeless people it serves and the cost of those services.

Agree with Finding 11.

F12. Due to state and federal funding cuts, the Leadership Council has announced a 34% reduction for 2020-2021 that will severely affect the County's homeless programs and services across the board.

Disagree wholly or partially with Finding 12.

The funding reduction does not represent a budget reduction. In 2019, the Governor approved a one-time appropriation of \$12.1 Million of the State Emergency Aid Program (HEAP). At the time of this appropriation, it was uncertain whether there would be additional ongoing, annual appropriations. In 2020, the Governor's budget included an additional appropriation of funding with an allocation for the County and an appropriation for the Leadership Council. The Appropriation to the Leadership Council was \$6.5 million, approximately \$5.6 million less than the 2019 allocation. This is not a reduction in budget but rather the CoC received less one-time funding from the State of California.

RECOMMENDATIONS: R13, R14

R13. The Sonoma County Board of Supervisors and Sonoma County Administrator's Office identify, by December 31, 2020, a stable funding source to support sustainable programs that will reduce youth homelessness to functional zero. (F11, F12)

Recommendation 13 requires further analysis.

The County's Community Development Commission FY 2020-21 recommended budget includes \$11.3 million towards homeless initiatives and services. Further funding source identification is expected once the next 5-year Strategic Plan is approved in February 2021, and it is expected to guide resources allocation starting with FY 2021-22 budget year. Therefore, further consideration to identify a stable funding source is anticipated to be considered by the Board during the 2021 spring-fall budget discussions.

The Strategic Plan adoption is expected to occur on February of 2021. See 8/11/2020 Board materials here <https://sonoma-county.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4610971&GUID=D0BEE7D9-EBAC-4870-A905-DC8E4BFEAB35&Options=&Search>

The current framework includes the following pillars:

1. Healthy and Safe Communities; 2. Racial Equity and Social Justice; 3. Organizational Excellence; 4. Climate Action and Resiliency; and 5. Resilient Infrastructure

The “Healthy and Safe Communities” pillar includes Goal 4, as follows, reduce homelessness (including those in the youth age category) by enhancing services based on coordination and collaboration, and seeks to accomplish the following objectives: partner with cities to build a strategic plan for homeless strategies; reduce current homeless population by 10% annually; and create a housing resource tool for Safety Net departments to efficiently assist residents with housing.

R14. The Sonoma County Board of Supervisors and Sonoma County Administrator’s Office develop and implement, by June 30, 2021, a procedure for County departments to consistently identify and track the cost of services provided to the homeless population. (F11)

Recommendation 14 has not been implemented, but will be implemented in the future.

The County is evaluating the feasible options we have to begin budgeting and tracking actuals in alignment with our Strategic Plan. Reducing homelessness by enhancing services based on coordination and collaboration is one of the goals of the Strategic Plan, so, tracking costs associated with the Strategic Plan will represent a step toward capturing costs associated with homelessness services. It should be noted, however, that a move toward centralized capturing of costs throughout the County will be prioritized on the Strategic Plan as a whole, not on homeless services specifically. The County is just now evaluating options to track costs associated with the Strategic Plan, and while the goal is to begin tracking these costs in the FY21-22 budget, it is not yet known if that timeline is feasible.