

## RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY REPORT FORM

**Report Title: "Tails of Marin" Marin County Animal Control Services & The Marin Humane Society**

**Report Date: April 7, 2008**

**Response by: San Anselmo Town Council**

### FINDINGS

- I (we) agree with the findings numbered: **F2, F3, F5, F6, F7 and F8**
- I (we) disagree wholly or partially with the findings numbered: **F1, F4 and F9**  
(Attach a statement specifying any portions of the findings that are disputed; include an explanation of the reasons therefor.)

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Recommendations numbered **N/A** have been implemented.  
(Attach a summary describing the implemented actions.)
- Recommendations numbered **R2** have not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future.  
(Attached is a time frame for the implementation)
- Recommendations numbered **N/A** require further analysis.  
(Attach an explanation and the scope and parameters of an analysis or study, and a time frame 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 time frame shall not exceed six months from the date of publication of the Grand Jury report.)
- Recommendations numbered **R4 and R5** will not be implemented because they are either not warranted or are not reasonable.  
(Explanation attached)

Date: **June 25, 2008**

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_



Number of pages attached \_\_\_\_\_

**San Anselmo Town Council's**  
Response to Findings and Recommendations from Grand Jury Report  
"Tails of Marin: Marin County Animal Control Services & the Marin Humane  
Society," April 7, 2008

**FINDINGS**

- F1. The nonprofit Marin Humane Society is nationally respected and honored. It has served Marin's citizens and animals well over the past 100 years.**

Response: The San Anselmo Town Council disagrees wholly or partially with this finding.

This finding indicates all animals both wild and domestic have been served well by the Marin Humane Society over the past 100 years. It is the Town Council's experience that the Humane Society does not afford wild animals the same level of care that domestic animals receive. Therefore we cannot agree with this finding.

- F2. The Marin County Board of Supervisors and Marin's city councils have supported the Marin Humane Society and its mission for many years, and historically contracted with the Marin Humane Society as the county's sole animal service agency. The current MHS contract expires on June 30, 2008.**

Response: The San Anselmo Town Council agrees with this finding.

- F3. The Joint Powers Agreement between Marin County, Marin's cities and MHS promotes uniform ordinances, equitable enforcement and cost-effective delivery of animal control services throughout Marin's jurisdiction.**

Response: The San Anselmo Town Council agrees with this finding.

- F4. The Marin Humane Society subsidizes 10 percent or more of animal control services costs with its own charitable funds.**

Response: The San Anselmo Town Council disagrees with this finding..

According to the County of Marin the 10 percent of the costs of MHS Animal Control Services not covered by the JPA allocation supports services that are

not required by the JPA or mandated by the state. This arrangement allows MHS to provide its services – including those that are not part of the JPA contract – more flexibly and effectively. Additionally, there are overlapping administrative costs for JPA-contracted Animal Control services and Marin Humane Society services that are difficult to separate in the provisioning of contracted services.

- F5. MHS collects fees for dog-licensing, impound, boarding, permit, quarantine, veterinary and disposal services. These funds are remitted to the county. County and city taxpayers fund the balance of animal control services costs.**

Response: The San Anselmo Town Council agrees with this finding.

- F6. MHS's dual role as both a private nonprofit organization and as a contractor to the county for animal control services is not widely understood and is not clearly explained to the public.**

Response: The San Anselmo Town Council agrees with this finding.

- F7. Two performance goals set forth in the Joint Powers Agreement are not being met: (1) licensing of all dogs in Marin County is targeted at 75 percent, while MHS estimates compliance at 25-33 percent; and (2) license and other fees were to be set at a level to fund 20 percent or more of animal control services costs, while actual fee revenues account for only 10 percent.**

Response: The San Anselmo Town Council agrees with this finding.

According to the County of Marin the original 1979 Joint Powers Agreement set a dog-licensing target of 75 percent, a goal that reflected public health concerns about rabies rates which, at the time, were much higher. At the inception of the JPA, stray dogs were a common sight in the county. So serious was the public health concern that paid canvassers visited Marin households checking for unlicensed dogs. Even this initiative did not meet the 75 percent goal.

Over the 29 years since the JPA's inception, the JPA and MHS have successfully eliminated rabies threat, through vaccination efforts, education, and other measures. This has changed the goal and function of dog licensing. Licensing now allows dogs to be more easily reunited with their owners and facilitates the enforcement of animal control ordinances. As a consequence of these changes, the most common national range for licensed dogs is 10-20 percent. As noted, Marin County's rate stands at 25-

33 percent. The 75-percent dog-licensing compliance rate should be reevaluated in the context of these changes.

- F8. Novato has been a strong advocate for control of its cat population by mandatory micro-chipping and spaying or neutering.**

Response: The San Anselmo Town Council agrees with this finding.

- F9. Pet-owner compliance with leash laws, noise ordinances, and waste pickup is dismal. The need continues for improved enforcement of local animal control ordinances**

Response: The San Anselmo Town Council disagrees with this finding.

The information upon which this finding is based is incomplete. While Animal Control Services does provide countywide patrols and enforcement of the animal control ordinance, it does not act alone. Each of the JPA members' twelve law enforcement agencies also enforces the animal control ordinance. Therefore, enforcement statistics provided solely by Animal Control Services reflect only one-thirteenth of the story. Statistics from all eleven police departments and the County Sheriff's Department would be needed to provide an objective assessment of the rates of ordinance compliance.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

**The 2007-2008 Marin County Civil Grand Jury recommends that the County take the following action:**

- R2. The county, Marin's municipalities and MHS work to update their websites and public outreach materials to explain their cost sharing agreement and the relationships established by the Joint Powers Agreement.**

Response: The San Anselmo Town Council agrees with this recommendation which will be implemented in the future.

The Town, as a member of the JPA, will update its website in Fiscal Year 2008-2009 with information reflecting the nature of the JPA and its role in contracting for countywide animal control services.

- R4. The county and Marin's other cities adopt measures similar to Novato's progressive ordinances to control their unwanted cat population through mandatory micro-chipping and spaying and neutering.**

Response: The San Anselmo Town Council partially disagrees.

We believe that it should be left to individual JPA member jurisdictions to address this issue. According to the County of Marin, jurisdictions around the State, including the JPA, are evaluating the effectiveness of efforts to control their unwanted cat populations.

- R5. The county, city and MHS staffs take appropriate steps to improve pet-owner compliance with all animal control, annual licensing and animal protection ordinances. These steps could include, but are not limited to: (1) holding public workshops; and (2) conducting intensive public education efforts.**

Response: The San Anselmo Town Council partially disagrees.

The JPA and MHS will consider broader public education efforts as part of the achievement of its overall mission as well as to improve compliance with pertinent ordinances. As explained in the response to Finding 9, the information upon which this finding and recommendation are based is incomplete.

Ted Freeman  
*Mayor*

Peter Breen  
*Vice Mayor*



Ford Greene  
*Councilmember*

Judy House  
*Councilmember*

Barbara Thornton  
*Councilmember*

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June 25, 2008

The Honorable Verna Adams  
Presiding Judge  
Marin County Superior Court  
P.O. Box 4988  
San Rafael, CA 94913-4988

Re: Responses to the April 7, 2008 Civil Grand Jury Report- "Tails of Marin" Marin County Animal Control Services & the Marin Humane Society.


Honorable Verna Adams:

The Town Council of the Town of San Anselmo has received a copy of the April 7, 2008, Grand Jury Report "*Tails of Marin*" *Marin County Animal Control Services & the Marin Humane Society*.

As required, I have enclosed two (2) copies of the Town Council's response to Findings F1 through F9 and Recommendations R2, R4, and R5.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you need additional information or clarification.

Respectfully,

  
Ted Freeman  
Mayor