

RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY REPORT

"TAILS OF MARIN"

Marin County Animal Control Services & the Marin Humane Society

Finding 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: Agree.

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: Agree.

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 jurisdictions.

Response: Agree

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

Response: Disagree

The 10% 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 MHS services that are difficult to separate in the provisioning of contracted services.

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

Response: Agree

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: Agree

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: Agree

While Marin County's licensing rate is above the national average, a target of 75% compliance may need to be revisited. Additionally, an educational promotion may help to increase the compliance rates. While the cities take the lead from the County of Marin, fees may need to be analyzed and adjusted.

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

Response: Agree

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: Disagree

In addition to MHS providing enforcement of these issues, our local Police Department does in fact cite or warn for violation of leash laws and "pooper-scooper" laws. Additionally, our Police respond to complaints of barking dogs and warn owners of these violations or act as mediators.

Recommendation 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: Agree

We are willing to offer information on our website which describes the nature of the JPA and its role in contracting for animal control services; along with any educational materials which may assist with public outreach.

Recommendation 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 or neutering.

Response: Partially disagree.

While we are willing to continue to recommend spaying and neutering of cats and dogs, we are unaware of our community having a large, unwanted cat population which would require mandatory micro-chipping and spaying/neutering.

Recommendation 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: Partially disagree

As noted above, we are willing to improve public education efforts as part of the achievement of the overall mission of the JPA and MHS, as well as to improve compliance with pertinent ordinances. However, as noted in Finding 9, the information that this recommendation is based on may not be complete with regard to compliance/enforcement of applicable laws.

Implementation of Recommendations:

As noted in our responses, we are willing to add educational materials to our website in order to make our residents more aware of applicable animal control ordinances and licensing issues. In order to do this, we will need to obtain information/suggestions from MHS and/or other JPA members. It would be our hope that these additions to our website, community magazines, and community e-mail services could come about within the next nine months.



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July 1, 2008

Roberta Robinson, Foreperson
Marin County Grand Jury
3501 Civic Center Drive, Room 275
San Rafael, CA 94903

RE: Grand Jury Response – “Tails of Marin”

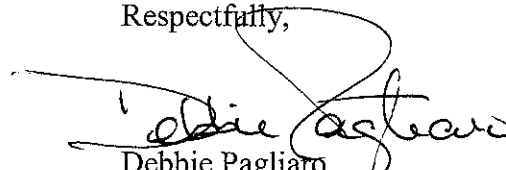
Dear Ms Robinson:

At their meeting of June 24, the Sausalito City Council reviewed and approved the response to the Grand Jury Report “Tails of Marin” Marin County Animal Control Services and the Marin Humane Society.

Enclosed you will find two copies of our response. By copy of this letter, Judge Adams will also receive one copy of the report.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Respectfully,


Debbie Pagliaro
Assistant to the City Manager

cc: Judge Verna Adams

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