



COUNTY OF SAN MATEO
Inter-Departmental Correspondence

County Manager's Office

DATE: June 7, 2005
BOARD MEETING DATE: June 21, 2005
SPECIAL NOTICE: None
VOTE REQUIRED: None

TO: Honorable Board of Supervisors
FROM: John L. Maltbie, County Manager
SUBJECT: 2004-05 Grand Jury Response

Recommendation

Accept this report containing the County's responses to the following 2004-05 Grand Jury reports: Improving Water Quality Flowing to the Ocean and Bay, and the Burlingame Long-Term Care Center.

VISION ALIGNMENT:

Commitment: Responsive, effective and collaborative government.

Goal 20: Government decisions are based on careful consideration of future impact, rather than temporary relief or immediate gain.

This activity contributes to the goal by ensuring that all Grand Jury findings and recommendations are thoroughly reviewed by the appropriate County departments and that, when appropriate, process improvements are made to improve the quality and efficiency of services provided to the public and other agencies.

Discussion

The County is mandated to respond to the Grand Jury within 90 days from the date that reports are filed with the County Clerk and Elected Officials are mandated to respond within 60 days. It is also the County's policy to provide periodic updates to the Board and the Grand Jury on the progress of past Grand Jury recommendations requiring ongoing or further action. To that end, attached are the County's responses to the Grand Jury's reports on Improving Water Quality Flowing to the Ocean and Bay issued March 7, 2005; and the Burlingame Long-Term Care Center issued April 18, 2005.

Burlingame Long-Term Care Center

Findings:

Staff is in general agreement with the Grand Jury's findings. The County and San Mateo Medical Center acquired a long-term lease for the Burlingame Long-Term Care facility (BLTC) because of the imminent threat of relocation of 250+ long-term patients. Patients at BLTC are 96% Medicare/Medi-Cal eligible. To prevent a complete shut-down that would have required residents to relocate many miles from their community, the County and landlord jointly decided to make improvements to the existing building and implement training, policies and procedures to ameliorate certain structural deficiencies.

The Grand Jury commends the staff for its training and performance in handling evacuations in an emergency. Staff have been trained and are competent to safely and effectively evacuate residents while working with the limitations of the building. The Grand Jury's positive remarks about the cleanliness of the facility and the professionalism and high morale of the employees were noted.

Recommendations:

1. The Board of Supervisors should immediately begin the search for better facilities for the long-term care of the patients at the Burlingame Long-Term Care Center. This facility, or its replacement facility, should have safe and efficient ingress and egress for non-ambulatory or disabled patients in both emergency and routine situations.

Response: Disagree. The San Mateo Medical Center agrees that a better facility would be desirable; however, the feasibility of locating such a large facility (the largest in the County) is prohibitively expensive under current Medi-Cal reimbursement rates and is effectively not possible. The County's 20-year lease for the current facility is the only practical way these patients can be housed in San Mateo County. This recommendation will not be implemented.

Improving Water Quality Flowing to the Ocean and Bay

Findings:

1. Preventing Dumping of Pollutants

Staff agrees with the finding. The majority of water quality degradation is due to citizens or businesses dumping pollutants down storm drains or onto the ground. Environmental Health will continue to educate the public on pollution prevention through outreach and onsite education of regulated businesses.

2. Improvement of Storm Water Quality

Staff agrees with the finding. The quality of storm water can be improved by frequent street sweeping, using storm drains that dissipate the energy of the water flow to decrease erosion, designing slow water flow in new developments, preventing construction site debris from reaching streams, and providing a means for the public to properly dispose of household hazardous wastes. Environmental Health will continue to offer a means for proper disposal of household hazardous waste through collection events located throughout the County.

3. Watershed Assessment and Monitoring

Staff agrees with the finding. Environmental Health samples various recreational beach areas and has had success in identifying and remediating sources of contaminants. Beach monitoring will be continued and, within existing resources, investigations will be conducted into possible sources of contamination.

Recommendations:

1. C/CAG should, by September 1, 2005, develop and implement a plan to increase the awareness of residents and businesses of the repercussions of dumping pollutants into storm drains.

Response: A separate response to this recommendation was submitted by C/CAG on May 31, 2005.

2. The Board of Supervisors should provide funding for the Environmental Health Services Division for a staff person whose function is to determine pollution sources and to monitor ranches for compliance.

Response: This recommendation requires further analysis. The monitoring of pollution sources from ranches and agriculture endeavors occurs on a complaint response basis. Environmental Health staff will analyze the scope of work, cost, regulatory framework, and staffing needed to actively monitor pollution from all sources. It is anticipated that additional monitoring, over and above the current level, would be labor intensive and require additional staffing.

3. The Board of Supervisors should direct the Environmental Health Services Division to expand the focus of manure management plans to include an the emphasis on decreasing creek pollution.

Response: Concur. The County Planning and Building Department through the Zoning Ordinance requires owners of livestock to obtain a permit. A condition of the permit approval is a manure management plan, which is reviewed and approved by Environmental Health staff. Environmental Health staff will evaluate the existing process as it relates to preventing creek pollution from manure sources.

4. The Board of Supervisors should support a request from the Environmental Health Services Division to provide sufficient funding to inspect each septic system every three years.

Response: This recommendation requires further analysis. The re-inspection of septic systems has been in place for five years. The inspection program is an important component of the Land Use Program since the only other means for managing septic systems after installation is complaint-based. There are over 5,000 septic systems in the county. Currently, inspections are conducted on a periodic basis at a rate of approximately 700 per year; this roughly equates to an inspection every seven years. The Environmental Health Advisory Committee has prioritized the septic inspection system based on situations where potential failure could cause contamination; i.e., for septic systems where there is a well on the property. Environmental Health will evaluate the staffing required to inspect each septic system every three years.

Environmental Health staff will report back to the Board of Supervisors on the results of their findings in a future quarterly update.