



August 29, 2018

Honorable Charles Margines
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court
700 Civic Center Drive West
Santa Ana, CA 92701

SUBJECT: CITY OF LAGUNA BEACH RESPONSE TO THE 2017-2018 ORANGE COUNTY GRAND JURY REPORT, "WHERE THERE'S WILL, THERE'S A WAY: HOUSING ORANGE COUNTY'S CHRONICALLY HOMELESS."

Dear Judge Margines:

The City Council has authorized me to submit the City of Laguna Beach's response to the 2017-2018 Grand Jury report regarding homelessness issues in Orange County. In accordance with the California Penal Code, the City's response addresses the Orange County Grand Jury Report findings and recommendations pertaining to the City of Laguna Beach.

Responses to Findings F1, F2, F4, F6, F7, F8, F9, F10

Finding F1: Homelessness in Orange County is a regional problem requiring regional approaches and solutions.

Response: The City of Laguna Beach agrees with this finding.

Finding F2: The lack of a regional plan designating specific development goals for Permanent Supportive Housing contributes to an insufficient number of available units to house the chronically homeless.

Response: The City of Laguna Beach agrees partially with this finding. While the City agrees that developing a regional plan regarding the development of Permanent Supportive Housing units would be beneficial, such units are only one component of a system of care that is needed to address homelessness. An appropriate system needs to also address emergency shelters/assessment centers, rapid rehousing, transitional housing, and other related services. Shelter, housing and support facilities should be logically distributed in the County to meet the needs of the participants and not unfairly burden any particular community.

Finding F4: Cities' reluctance to provide sites for Permanent Supportive Housing development has contributed to overcrowded emergency shelters and an increased unsheltered homeless population.

Response: The City of Laguna Beach partially agrees with this finding. Permanent Supportive Housing is needed as part of a comprehensive approach to homelessness; however, emergency

shelters/assessment centers, rapid rehousing, transitional housing, and other related services are also needed to provide immediate alternatives to living, camping and sleeping in public areas. An equitable, fair and logical distribution of facilities is needed to provide a successful system of care. The absence of available funding and land are impediments to providing Permanent Supportive Housing and these issues are not likely to be solved by individual cities.

Finding F6: Service Planning Area meetings have successfully brought together city, county and non-profit entities to share information on homeless issues, but have not fostered decision-making or action.

Response: The City of Laguna Beach agrees with this finding at this time and is hopeful that productive action will be forthcoming

Finding F7: NIMBYism has impeded the creation of housing for the homeless, including Permanent Supportive Housing, in the County of Orange.

Response: The City of Laguna Beach agrees with this finding and it also applies to the creation of emergency shelters/assessment centers, rapid rehousing, transitional housing, and other related services as part of a comprehensive system of care.

Finding F8: Orange County cities and the County have engaged in blaming and finger-pointing, hampering the collaborative efforts needed to site, finance, and maintain Permanent Supportive Housing.

Response: The City of Laguna Beach partially disagrees with this finding. Some progress has been made as the Grand Jury report indicates that there are 1,724 Permanent Supportive Housing units in Orange County and hundreds of additional units are currently in the planning process throughout the County. Providing additional funding to cities and the development community would encourage the creation of more Permanent Supportive Housing units in the County. However, although this report focuses on Permanent Supportive Housing, it is only a component of an overall solution needed to address homelessness.

Finding F9: Cities have taken a silo approach to developing Permanent Supportive Housing, resulting in inefficient leveraging and pooling of funds across municipal borders.

Response: The City of Laguna Beach agrees with this finding; however, over the past several months, cities and the County have been working together on collaborative solutions. AB 448 is pending legislation that may help form a Housing Trust in Orange County to help secure funding for Permanent Supportive Housing.

Finding F10: There is no established, independent leadership body in the County empowered to address regional homeless issues in an effective manner.

Response: The City of Laguna Beach agrees with this finding; however, the County of Orange has taken some steps to better position itself to address homelessness.

Responses to Recommendations R1, R2, R4, R6, R7, R8, R9

Recommendation R1: Orange County cities and the County should develop a Permanent Supportive Housing development plan, and should consider a plan structure similar to the proposal put forth by the Association of California Cities – Orange County, that proportionally allocates sites among the cities. (F1, F2, F4, F7, F8)

Response: The City of Laguna Beach is participating with other cities and Orange County to explore an appropriate system of care that includes Permanent Supportive Housing, emergency shelters/assessment centers, rapid rehousing, transitional housing, and other related services. No one agency can establish a plan without partnership from the County and other cities. The City of Laguna Beach continues to be the only city in Orange County that owns and operates a year-round low barrier emergency shelter for 45 persons each night and has been doing so since 2009. Located on city-owned land, the City's Alternative Sleeping Location (emergency shelter) program is paid for by the City of Laguna Beach with a small portion of the operating costs covered by a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG).

Recommendation R2: Each Service Planning Area should identify sites for Permanent Supportive Housing proportional to the allocation suggested in the Association of California Cities – Orange County proposal. (F1, F4)

Response: Since 2009, the City of Laguna Beach has provided the only low barrier municipal emergency shelter serving 45 persons every night of the year in Orange County. Given that Laguna Beach is already operating an emergency shelter, and given the limited funding and scarcity of available land in town, the County and other cities will need to step up and provide PSH opportunities in South County.

Recommendation R4: Cities should ensure decision-makers fully participate in their region's Service Planning Area meetings. (F1, F6, F8, F9)

Response: The recommendation has been implemented. The Mayor, City Manager and Assistant City Manager are participating in the South Service Planning Area meetings. Additionally, the City Manager is regularly updating the City Council.

Recommendation R6: Cities should collaborate with, and leverage the work done by, the United Way on their "United to End Homelessness" public awareness campaign. (F7)

Response: Cities in Orange County are working together in a variety of ways to implement this recommendation.

Recommendation R7: To streamline shelter and Permanent Supportive Housing development, the County and cities should establish a decision-making body, such as a Joint Powers Authority, that is empowered to identify and allocate sites and pool funding

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associated with housing and supportive services for the homeless. (F1, F3, F4, F7, F8, F9, F10)

Response: The City of Laguna Beach is participating in meetings to discuss the idea of establishing a county-wide Joint Powers Authority that would assist with the financing and funding of Permanent Supportive Housing and emergency shelters in the region.

Recommendation R8: Such a decision-making body should develop a comprehensive, regional housing business plan that identifies both the number of Permanent Supportive Housing units needed, as well as the associated costs of renovating existing units or building new ones. (F1, F2, F3, F4, F8, F9, F10)

Response: A comprehensive system of care should be developed, but it is not clear that the referenced "decision making body" is the appropriate body to take on this role. Additionally, Permanent Supportive Housing is only one component of a system and a comprehensive plan is needed.

Recommendation R9: Such a decision-making body should propose a plan for securing local, supplemental sources of funding for both Permanent Supportive Housing development and associated support services. (F1, F3, F8, F9, F10)

Response: If this body is formed, it would be great for it to explore additional regional funding sources, since homelessness is a regional problem.

Sincerely,


John Pietig
City Manager

cc: City Council