

September 20, 2006

The Honorable Nancy Wieben Stock  
Presiding Judge, Orange County Superior Court  
700 Civic Center Drive West  
Santa Ana, CA 92701

Re: Orange County Grand Jury Report: Oversight of Orange County Law Enforcement Agencies, *Resolving a Dichotomy!*

Dear Judge Stock:

Pursuant to Penal Code §933 and §933.05, please accept the following responses on behalf of the City of Lake Forest to the Orange County Grand Jury Report: "Oversight of Orange County Law Enforcement Agencies, *Resolving a Dichotomy!*" Since incorporation, the City of Lake Forest has contracted with the Orange County Sheriff's Department (OCSD) for police services.

**Finding 6.2 *Independent reviews of LEAs: The use of independent reviews of LEAs' practices is limited to unique reviews rather than to periodic reviews of policies, procedures, and compliance.***

We disagree with this finding. Currently, the OCSD is subject to periodic and unique reviews in the form of internal and/or external audits. The purpose of these audits (reviews) is to maintain compliance with all applicable laws and statutes and to ensure *best practices* are incorporated into OCSD's policies and procedures. Various internal as well as external/independent entities are utilized to conduct these audits. Based on their reviews of our current policies and procedures, these reviewing bodies then make recommendations for change and/or improvement.

Moreover, community members have a myriad of options to seek redress if they believe they have been treated unfairly or unlawfully by Lake Forest Police Services, including contacting the City Council or City Manager. The City utilizes an online request system that allows any member of the public to send a request/complaint directly to the City Manager or City Council.

Additionally, complaints can be brought to the attention of the Orange County District Attorney, as well as several state and federal agencies that have substantial power and authority to change local police practices. Local police agencies are also subject to oversight by the media and privately funded interest groups, as well as independent community members.

**Finding 6.3 *Orange County is changing:*** Orange County and city LEAs will face new challenges as the number of crimes increase, reflecting those of surrounding counties.

We partially disagree with this finding. There is no evidence that Lake Forest will face the amount of criminal activity that has affected some cities in our surrounding counties. One cannot draw such conclusions by comparing counties with major cities like Los Angeles and San Diego to counties like Orange, which is made up of 34 suburban cities, none of which have a population over 400,000, and none of which are subject to the same social, political or infrastructure concerns as those of surrounding major urban areas. In reality, the number of Part I crimes in Lake Forest actually decreased from 2002 to 2004, as did the number of calls for service during that period. In 2005, Lake Forest was named the ninth safest city in the country by a national firm that annually compares Part-One crime rates for 369 cities around the country with populations over 75,000. Lake Forest, like many cities in Orange County, is consistently recognized as one of the safest cities in the country year after year.

Although we recognize that there are challenges ahead, the efforts that OCSD and the City of Lake Forest have made toward crime prevention, partnerships with other agencies, and problem solving will form the foundation for a safe and secure community for years to come. Every two years, the City of Lake Forest conducts an opinion survey of residents and businesses. In the most recent survey of Lake Forest residents, conducted for the City in November of 2004, 92% of those polled indicated they were satisfied with the City's efforts to maintain a low crime rate.

**Recommendation 7.2 *Near-term, independent review of LEA policies, procedures, and compliance:*** The Orange County municipal police departments, in cooperation with the Orange County City Mayors, should consider contracting for a near-term independent review of LEAs' current policies, procedures, and compliance to provide current status as compared to best practices (See Findings 6.2 and 6.3)

We cannot support expending funds for near-term independent review. The internal and external system of checks and balances currently in place are functioning effectively and there is no evidence to suggest that the recommendations proposed by the Grand Jury would enhance the systems currently in place. The OCSD is subject to periodic and unique reviews in the form of internal and/or external audits. As previously noted, residents as well as City leaders are very satisfied with Lake Forest Police Services. With these considerations in mind, the City of Lake Forest will not be implementing this recommendation.

**Recommendation 7.3 *Periodic, independent reviews of LEA compliance to policies and procedures:*** The Orange County municipal police departments, in cooperation with the Orange County City Mayors, should consider contracting for periodic, independent reviews of LEAs' policies and procedures, using best practices guidelines as criteria. (See findings 6.2 and 6.3)

Again, the OCSD is subject to periodic and unique reviews in the form of internal and/or external audits. Therefore, the City of Lake Forest will not be implementing this recommendation to contract for periodic, independent reviews. Moreover, the OCSD currently consults with independent firms that specialize in the review of law enforcement policies and procedures.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the recommendations prepared by the 2005/2006 Orange County Grand Jury in their report entitled, "Oversight of Orange County Law Enforcement Agencies, *Resolving a Dichotomy!*" Should you have any questions, please contact Lt. Jay LeFlore, Chief of Police Services, at (949) 461-3541.

Sincerely,

CITY OF LAKE FOREST

Richard T. Dixon  
Mayor

c: Robert C. Dunek, City Manager  
Lt. Jay LeFlore, Chief of Police Services