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MAYOR PRO TEM
Jessie Lopez
COUNCILMEMBERS
Phil Bacerra
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Benjamin Vazquez



CITY MANAGER
Kristine Ridge
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Jennifer L. Hall

CITY OF SANTA ANA

CITY MANAGER'S OFFICE
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September 14, 2023

Via E-mail and U.S. Mail

Ms. Maria Hernandez, Presiding Judge
Orange County Grand Jury
700 Civic Center Drive West
Santa Ana, CA 92701

Subject: Response to Grand Jury Report Entitled Gimme Shelter and a Pound of Advice "The State of Animal Welfare Overseen by the County of Orange"

Honorable Presiding Judge Maria Hernandez:

Please accept this letter as the City of Santa Ana's response to the June 2, 2023 Grand Jury's report for information related to Animal Welfare. Attached is information on these items requested by the Grand Jury.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to your request. If you have any questions, please feel free to call me at (714) 647-5200.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kristine Ridge".

Kristine Ridge
City Manager

Attachments: City of Santa Ana Staff Report to City Council dated August 15, 2023

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City of Santa Ana
20 Civic Center Plaza, Santa Ana, CA 92701
Staff Report
August 15, 2023

TOPIC: Receive and File - Orange County Grand Jury's Investigative Report, Findings, and Recommendations Regarding Group Homes and the Orange County Animal Care Shelter

AGENDA TITLE

Receive and File the Orange County Grand Jury's Investigative Report, Findings, and Recommendations Regarding Group Homes and the Orange County Animal Care Shelter and Authorize the City Manager to Deliver the City's Response to the Findings and Recommendations to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Receive and File the Orange County Grand Jury's Investigative Report, Findings, and Recommendations Regarding Group Homes and the Orange County Animal Care Shelter and Authorize the City Manager to Deliver the City's Response to the Findings and Recommendations to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court.

DISCUSSION

Respectively on June 2nd and June 7th of 2023, the Orange County Grand Jury (OCGJ) issued two investigative documents. These documents contained findings and recommendations based on their investigations and further compel responses from the City of Santa Ana and other (city and county) jurisdictions regarding the identified issues and suggestions.

The first report, titled *"The State of Animal Welfare Overseen by the County of Orange: Gimme Shelter and a Pound of Advice,"* issued by the OCGJ on June 2nd, appears to have been partially prompted by recent direct complaints to the OC Grand Jury. These complaints were related to operational concerns of Orange County Animal Care (OCAC), which had been discussed in five previous Grand Jury reports. The main goal of the June 2nd OCGJ report was to present an overview of the current operations, internal mechanisms, culture, and challenges faced by OCAC. The Grand Jury's investigation was based on interviews, public and shelter documents, surveys, site visits, news sources, and accounts related to the shelter's activities. As a notable outcome, this Grand Jury report highlights unresolved deficiencies in the shelter's operations. The complete report is provided as Exhibit 2.

The subsequent OCGJ report, published on June 7th and titled "*Welcome to the Neighborhood: Evaluating the Management of Group Homes' Integration by Cities*," delved into the issue of Group Homes and their effects on cities and their communities. The Grand Jury examined how Orange County cities managed the inflow and placement of group homes, with the aim of identifying effective local governance strategies for this industry. The underlying premise was that individual cities bear the responsibility of integrating group homes, which should ensure the well-being of group home residents while minimizing any negative impacts on the surrounding neighborhoods. This OCGJ report particularly recognized the State of California's role in challenging and restricting local jurisdictions' authority to effectively address group homes through zoning regulations. The full report is attached as Exhibit 1.

In accordance with California Penal Code Sections 933 and 933.05, the OCGJ mandates that the City must respond to the conclusions and recommendations outlined in both reports. An overview of the OCGJ's findings, recommendations, and the City's corresponding responses, are attached as Exhibits 3 and 4. Once authorized by the City Council, the responses documented in Exhibits 3 and 4 will be submitted to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

There is no environmental impact associated with this action.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact associated with this action.

EXHIBIT(S)

1. County of Orange Grand Jury Investigative Report, Findings and Recommendations Regarding Group Homes ("Welcome to the Neighborhood" Are cities responsibly managing the integration of group homes?)
2. County of Orange Grand Jury Investigative Report, Findings and Recommendations Regarding the Orange County Animal Care shelter (Gimme Shelter and a Pound of Advice, "The State of Animal Welfare Overseen by the County of Orange)
3. City Response to County of Orange Grand Jury Findings and Recommendations Regarding Group Homes
4. City Response to County of Orange Grand Jury Findings and Recommendations Regarding the Orange County Animal Care shelter

Submitted By: Minh Thai, Executive Director of Planning and Building

Approved By: Kristine Ridge, City Manager

Grand Jury Findings – “The State of Animal Welfare Overseen by the County of Orange”

Finding	City Position (1 or 2)	Response to Finding	Can Be Accomplished by Staff Administratively (Y or N)	Requires City Council Policy Direction (Y or N)	Need Budget Allocation (Y or N)	Completion Date
F4 Based upon industry standards and best practices, Orange County Animal Care kennel attendants are understaffed to meet the needs of animals under care.	N/A	City lacks foundational awareness to corroborate or otherwise comment on the finding.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
F6 The Orange County Animal Care Volunteer program was stopped during COVID-19 and restarting the program has been slow, resulting in decreased animal socialization and enrichment.	N/A	City lacks foundational awareness to corroborate or otherwise comment on the finding.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
F7 Orange County Animal Care’s Behavior Evaluation Committee evaluates dogs for euthanasia without written guidelines, policies, or procedures, resulting in inconsistent outcomes over time. Behavior evaluated euthanasia outcomes are dependent on the experience and personal considerations of the individual committee members and management rather than written objective standards.	N/A	City lacks foundational awareness to corroborate or otherwise comment on the finding.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
F8 The rate of behavioral euthanasia of dogs has increased significantly over the last 2 years.	N/A	City lacks foundational awareness to corroborate or otherwise comment on the finding.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
F9 Orange County Animal Care does not employ a professional or trained and certified animal behaviorist to oversee the shelter’s dog enrichment program, resulting in dogs with declining behavior being placed at greater risk of being euthanized.	N/A	City lacks foundational awareness to corroborate or otherwise comment on the finding.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Grand Jury Findings – “The State of Animal Welfare Overseen by the County of Orange”

Finding	City Position (1 or 2)	Response to Finding	Can Be Accomplished by Staff Administratively (Y or N)	Requires City Council Policy Direction (Y or N)	Need Budget Allocation (Y or N)	Completion Date
F10 While many county and city animal shelters throughout the state have active Trap, Neuter, and Return programs, Orange County Animal Care stopped its Trap, Neuter, and Return program, reportedly on the basis of the County Counsel's legal opinion that the program violates a California statute related to willful animal abandonment.	1		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
F11 The termination of the Trap, Neuter, and Return program is correlated with an increase in adult cat euthanasia rate at the shelter.	N/A	City lacks foundational awareness to corroborate or otherwise comment on the finding.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
F12 There have been public concerns and requests expressed over the years for public programs to include a spay/neuter program by Orange County Animal Care.	1		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
F13 The current adoption appointment system restricts public access to the dog kennels, thereby limiting potential adopters' access to all available animals.	N/A	City lacks foundational awareness to corroborate or otherwise comment on the finding.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
F15 Internal and community engagement does not adequately communicate the shelter's mission and operating strategy.	N/A	City lacks foundational awareness to corroborate or otherwise comment on the finding.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
F16 The information currently on the Orange County Animal Care website for low-cost spay/neuter is not up to date with regard to referrals and prices for spay/neuter procedures.	1		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A