

RESPONSES
TO THE
SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY
2025 GRAND JURY FINAL
REPORT



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**RESPONSES
TO THE SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY
2025 GRAND JURY
FINAL REPORT**

SECTION 1:

- City of San Bernardino

SECTION 2:

- San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors and San Bernardino County Fire Protection District

SECTION 3:

- Town of Apple Valley

SECTION 1

CITY OF SAN BERNARDINO

Honorable Lisa Rogan, Presiding Judge
March 19, 2026

FILED
SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA
COUNTY OF SAN BERNARDINO

MAR 26 2026

BY 
DULCE ZUNIGA, DEPUTY

**City Response to the
Final Report of the Grand Jury (December 12, 2025)
City of San Bernardino's Complaint Process**

The following is the City's response to the above-referenced Final Report of the 2025 San Bernardino County Civil Grand Jury as it pertains to the City of San Bernardino's complaint process:

Finding No. 1.

"The City of San Bernardino has one single central database (CRMS). Not all complaints go through the system causing confusion and inconsistencies among residents and city employees."

Recommendation No. R1.

"The GJ recommends that the City of San Bernardino use one single, central database only."

City Response: Agree. City intends to utilize the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system to the fullest extent possible when it is within the control and operational ability of City staff. However, the City cannot prohibit anyone including members of the public from submitting complaints or service requests directly to individual employees, elected officials, or through other methods outside the system. When City staff become aware of such requests, they will enter the service request into the CRMS to ensure it is documented and tracked.

Finding No. 2.

"The City of SB does not currently keep complainants informed of the progress of the complaint. Thus, there is no consistent method of informing all complainants of receipt and progress of the complaint, leaving residents with the thought that nothing is being done."

Recommendation No. R2.

"The GJ recommends that the City of San Bernardino keep residents complainants apprised of the progress on every logged complaint. The city needs to report to all complainants every ten days 1) the receipt, 2) the progress, 3) the outcome or resolution of the complaint and 4) an explanation of why it may be taking longer, if applicable."

City Response: Partially agree. 1) If an email is provided, the City's CRM system is programmed to automatically notify the reporting party via email. The system relies upon the reporting party accurately entering details regarding contact information for follow-up. 2) The City plans to implement steps to ensure the reporting party is notified of the status within a reasonable timeframe. 3) As noted above, if the reporting party provides contact information, they will automatically be notified when the complaint is resolved.

Finding No. 3.

"The City of San Bernardino has no consistent system for ensuring that every speaker at the city council meetings is contacted, with the complaint logged into the centralized log, causing frustration among residents and the appearance that the city does not follow through on speakers' concerns."

Recommendation No. R3.

"The GJ recommends that ALL complaints from speakers at City Council meetings are logged into the city's one central database and assigned a tracking number for future reference."

City Response: Agree. The City appreciates this recommendation and expects to implement prior to the end 2026.

Finding No. 4.

"Many complaints are reported directly to a variety of individuals and may not be logged into CRMS leading to frustration among complainants."

Recommendation No. R4.

"The GJ recommends that all staff enter complaints directly into the CRMS."

City Response: Partially agree. Staff will continue to ensure that complaints are entered into the CRM system upon becoming aware of them. As mentioned in Finding No. 1, the City acknowledges that not all complaints may be captured within the system, depending on the method by which they are submitted. The City is unable to restrict members of the public from submitting complaints or service requests directly to individual employees, elected officials, or through channels external to the CRM system. Notwithstanding these limitations, staff will make reasonable efforts to document all service requests in the CRM system once they come to their attention.

Finding No. 5.

"The CRMS data is not available on the city website, nor reported to the city council and the public at meetings, causing a lack of transparency and frustration among some residents."

Recommendation No. R5.

"The GJ recommends that the city council direct the Call Center to publish the CRMS monthly reports online and report it to the city council quarterly at its meetings."

City Response: Agree. The City appreciates this recommendation and will evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of implementing.

Finding No. 6.

"As of the writing of this report, the City of San Bernardino has not completed a study to determine if the Call Center has an adequate number of employees to consistently handle and process all the complaints that are lodged which can cause uncertainty among some residents."

Recommendation No. R6.

"The GJ recommends that the city council authorize and implement a separate study to see if more employees are needed to work at the Call Center."

City Response: Partially agree. The City appreciates this recommendation and will utilize the ongoing Classification and Compensation study to assess the workload of Call Center staff within the Neighborhood Services Division. Any future staffing decisions will also take into account the City's position within the fiscal year budget process.

Finding No. 7.

"The GJ has found that the city does not have a formal written policy and/or procedure manual for handling complaints, causing inconsistency in the handling of residents' issues."

Recommendation No. R7.

"The GJ recommends that a formal written procedure manual be produced to ensure that there is consistency across departments for the handling of all complaints."

City Response: Agree. The City appreciates this recommendation and will evaluate establishing a written policy for handling complaints, reinforcing the importance of response timeframes and consistency across all City departments.

SECTION 2

SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY BOARD OF
SUPERVISORS AND SAN BERNARDINO
COUNTY FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT



San Bernardino County

Legislation Text

FILED
SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA
COUNTY OF SAN BERNARDINO

MAR 11 2026

BY *Dulce Zuniga*
DULCE ZUNIGA, DEPUTY

File #: 13778, Agenda Item #: 65

**REPORT/RECOMMENDATION TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
OF SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT
AND RECORD OF ACTION**

March 10, 2026

FROM

DAN MUNSEY, Fire Chief/Fire Warden, San Bernardino County Fire Protection District

SUBJECT

2025 Grand Jury Final Report - Proposed Response

RECOMMENDATION(S)

Acting as the governing body of the San Bernardino County Fire Protection District, approve the Proposed Response to the 2025 Grand Jury Final Report and direct publication and filing with the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court, and the Secretary of the Board of Directors of the San Bernardino County Fire Protection District.

(Presenter: Dan Munsey, Fire Chief/Fire Warden, 387-5779)

COUNTY AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER GOALS & OBJECTIVES

Improve County Government Operations.

Operate in a Fiscally-Responsible and Business-Like Manner.

Foster Sustainable Development Through Strategic Partnerships.

Provide for the Safety, Health and Social Service Needs of County Residents.

Enhance Readiness for Major Emergency Responses.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Approval of this recommendation will not result in the use of Discretionary General Funding (Net County Cost).

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

California Penal Code Section 933(c) requires local government agencies to formally adopt and file with the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court a response to the findings and recommendations contained in the Grand Jury's Final Report on matters under the agency's purview no later than 90 days after the Final Report is submitted. The 2025 Grand Jury submitted its Final Report on December 12, 2025, giving the governing body of the San Bernardino County Fire Protection District through March 12, 2026 to adopt and file its response.

The 2025 Grand Jury Final Report includes one section that includes findings and recommendations on matters under the governing body's purview pertaining to the San Bernardino County Fire Protection District. The Proposed Response addresses the pertinent findings and recommendations in compliance with PC 933 (c).

PROCUREMENT

File #: 13778, Agenda Item #: 65

Not applicable.

REVIEW BY OTHERS

This item has been reviewed by County Counsel (Richard Luczak, Deputy County Counsel, 387-5455) on February 11, 2026; and County Finance and Administration (Ivan Ramirez, Administrative Analyst, 387-4020) on February 12, 2026.

SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT'S RESPONSE TO THE 2025 SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT

(Verbatim Grand Jury Findings and Recommendations are in italics)

FINDING F-1

The SBCFPD's maintenance personnel must go back and forth between the two maintenance yards and department's parts warehouse, which is in a third location. This causes delays in the repair of out-of-service fire apparatuses.

The San Bernardino County Fire Protection District (SBCFPD) partially disagrees with this finding. SBCFPD's Vehicle Services Section (Vehicle Services) currently has two locations – one at 210 South Lena Road in San Bernardino and the second two miles away at 120 South D Street. The parts warehouse/storeroom is at the Lena Road location. Vehicle Services also has three parts specialists and one parts chaser. The parts chaser is located at Lena Road. The parts chaser delivers parts between the two locations when the required parts are not already in stock at the work location. When the parts chaser is not available, one of the parts specialists delivers parts. A third parts specialist was added to Vehicle Services last year, assigned to the D Street location, since then maintenance personnel are rarely required to travel between the two maintenance facilities.

RECOMMENDATION R-1

That the SBCFPD consolidates these three locations.

SBCFPD has been taking action to effectively implement this recommendation. In addition to staffing improvements, SBCFPD is actively working to acquire land for the relocation and consolidation of Vehicle Services to further improve efficiency and ultimately reduce out-of-service time for fire apparatus.

FINDING F-2

SBCFPD has introduced drones and robotics into its firefighting arsenal but has insufficient resources and qualified personnel to take advantage of this new technology. As a result, the district cannot fully implement its Drone First Response program.

SBCFPD agrees with this finding. SBCFPD's drone program, while technologically advanced, has not completed its full program roll-out. The program is designed to be implemented in phases that are restricted by FAA rules and regulations, pending grants and the availability of other SBCFPD revenues.

In 2025 (Phase 1), SBCFPD initiated a "robotic section" designed to complete several program charters including SASA (Sustained Aerial Situational Awareness), EASA (Early Aerial Situational Awareness), and a "robotics unit" (a firefighter/certified drone pilot staffed vehicle with aerial, ground, and robotics drones).

In 2026 (Phase 2), SBCFPD will expand its certified operators with several “certifying classes,” with classes identified and funds being allocated to travel and attend these classes. In addition, SBCFPD intends to create new civilian robotic operator positions and is working with San Bernardino County Human Resources on this new classification. This classification, when created, will allow SBCFPD to hire certified civilian operators to augment its drone and robotic operations. SBCFPD intends to fund three of these positions in the Fiscal Year 2026-27 budget.

RECOMMENDATION R-2

That the SBC Board of Supervisors provide funding for resources and personnel so that the SBCFPD can fully implement their DFR program.

This recommendation is being implemented. The Board of Supervisors, acting as the governing Board of SBCFPD, works closely with SBCFPD to prioritize and meet SBCFPD’s needs.

FINDING F-3

SBCFPD trains new recruits through its fire academy to meet the qualifications necessary for firefighting certification. The district, though, does not provide competitive incentives to retain many of these recruits. As a result, after completing their academy training, many recruits leave SBCFPD to seek employment with other fire agencies, leaving the district with insufficient certified firefighters.

SBCFPD disagrees with this finding. Through collective bargaining with the International Association of Firefighters (IAFF) Local 935, SBCFPD increased wages, incentive pay and other benefits for its firefighters in 2025. The agreement included approximately \$4 million to establish a Healthcare Trust for the group, four- 3% across-the-board wage increases effective January 10, 2026, January 9, 2027, January 8, 2028, and January 6, 2029, a 4% equity (increase) for all salary ranges, roll-in stipend for Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) and Paramedic certifications to base salary, increased Company Officer certification from \$150 per month to \$210 per month, roll-in stipend for Company Officer Certification, added a new 2.5% top step for Engineers and Captains, established Truck Operations Specialty Pay, increased the Medical Premium Subsidy for all coverage levels, increased Bilingual Pay for eligible employees to \$50 per pay period, and increased Long Term Disability by \$5 per month.

Although some new recruits chose to leave SBCFPD for other employment, the specific number was only 33 of 266 (15%) new employees left for other employment. This trend has continued to improve over the last three years.

Additionally, SBCFPD’s vacancy rate continues to decrease. In February of 2021, there were 86 vacancies out of 583 (15%) certified firefighter positions. As of January 2026, there are only 31 vacancies out of 613 (5%). As a result, the vacancy rate improved from 15% to 5%.

RECOMMENDATION R-3

That SBCFPD increase the incentives to retain firefighters.

This recommendation has been implemented as outlined in the response to Finding F-3.

FINDING F-4

OSHA requires compliance with its "2-in/2-out" rule of four firefighters for each deployed fire engine, but SBCFPD does not comply, instead deploying only three per engine. As a result, this lack of a fourth (and required) firefighter creates delay when that fourth is needed and reduces the district's capacity to fight fires and rescue victims.

SBCFPD disagrees with this finding. OSHA 29 CFR 1910.134(g)(4), California Code of Regulations 8 CCR § 5144(g)(4), and NFPA 1500 establish the 2-in/2-out rule as a tactical deployment standard, not a minimum staffing requirement per apparatus. The regulation requires:

- A minimum of two firefighters working as a team inside an IDLH atmosphere
- A minimum of two firefighters remaining outside for accountability and emergency rescue

These four firefighters must be **on scene** before interior operations commence. They are not required to arrive on a single apparatus.

SBCFPD has developed Operations Directive 3011, "Firefighter Safety and Accountability in Hazardous Environments," which comprehensively outlines procedures for firefighters operating in Immediately Dangerous to Life or Health (IDLH) environments. This directive ensures full compliance with federal and state occupational safety regulations. Operations Directive 3011 provides clear guidance that first-arriving apparatus with fewer than four personnel must remain outside the structure fire and conduct critical exterior operations until additional resources arrive on scene. Once the 2-in/2-out requirement has been established (minimum four firefighters on scene), the on-scene officer establishes their tactical mode, such as "Attack Mode," and interior operations may commence.

Exterior operations conducted while awaiting additional resources include:

- 360-degree situational survey
- Structure "softening" (forcing entry points, removing security bars)
- Utility control and isolation
- Ladder placement for secondary egress
- Hose line deployment
- Exterior fire attack to reduce fire load

REGULATORY EXCEPTIONS TO 2-IN/2-OUT REQUIREMENT

OSHA and Cal-OSHA regulations recognize specific circumstances where the 2-in/2-out rule does not apply or may be temporarily suspended. These exceptions are clearly defined in 29 CFR 1910.134(g)(Note 2), 8 CCR § 5144(g)(Note 2), and NFPA 1500 Sections 8.5.17 and 8.5.17.1:

1. Incipient Stage Fires

OSHA defines an incipient stage fire as one "which is in the initial or beginning stage and which can be controlled or extinguished by portable fire extinguishers, Class II standpipe, or small hose systems without the need for protective clothing or breathing apparatus." Firefighters may attack incipient stage fires without establishing 2-in/2-out, as these do not constitute IDLH environments. Once a fire progresses beyond the incipient stage, it is considered IDLH and the 2-in/2-out rule applies.

2. Imminent Life-Threatening Rescue Situations

The only exception to the 2-in/2-out rule for structural fires beyond the incipient stage occurs when:

- There is an imminent life-threatening situation where immediate action could prevent the loss of life or serious injury
- Immediate rescue action is necessary, and delay would likely result in death or serious harm
- The situation presents a clear opportunity to save a known victim

This exception is narrowly construed. SBCFPD Operations Directive 3011 Section VI.A.4 explicitly states: "No exception shall be permitted when there is no possibility to save lives."

3. Documentation Requirements for Exception Use

When personnel enter a hazard area for a known rescue prior to four members being on scene, SBCFPD requires:

- Immediate notification to the Incident Commander or Communications Center of the impending entry (OD 3011, Section VI.A.6)
- Comprehensive incident documentation including the situation and conditions that led to deviation from 2-in/2-out (OD 3011, Section VI.A.7)
- Investigation by the Incident Battalion Chief or Duty Battalion Chief (OD 3011, Section VI.A.8)
- Written report to the Department Safety Officer and Fire Chief as required by NFPA 1500 Section 8.5.17.2

4. Non-IDLH Operations

The 2-in/2-out rule applies specifically to IDLH environments. Firefighters may operate without establishing 2-in/2-out for non-IDLH operations, including:

- Exterior fire attack operations
- Wildland firefighting operations in open terrain

- Vehicle fires with adequate ventilation
- Medical emergency responses
- Hazardous materials operations in non-IDLH atmospheres with appropriate PPE
- Technical rescue operations outside IDLH environments

SBCFPD personnel are trained to assess whether an environment constitutes IDLH conditions and to apply the appropriate safety protocols based on that assessment.

STRATEGIC STAFFING IMPROVEMENTS

Over the past several years, SBCFPD has made significant investments to increase apparatus staffing from three-person (3-0) to four-person (4-0) configurations. While much of our apparatus currently operate with 3-0 staffing, we have systematically increased 4-0 staffing across SBCFPD.

Most recently, the SBCFPD was awarded a SAFER (Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response) grant for 21 firefighters. The deployment of these positions has been strategically planned across the fire district to increase 3-0 staffing to 4-0 staffing at key locations. This enhancement allows SBCFPD to minimize the time required to transition from exterior defensive operations to offensive/attack mode upon arrival at emergency incidents.

SBCFPD will continue to seek opportunities to enhance staffing levels to improve on-scene operational capabilities and reduce transition time to offensive mode operations.

OPERATIONAL REALITY

Any perceived "delay" in transitioning to interior operations is not the result of non-compliance but rather represents required compliance with federal and state occupational safety regulations. This operational model:

- Protects firefighters' safety by ensuring adequate personnel are on scene before entering IDLH environments
- Is consistent with fire service best practices nationwide
- Is utilized by the vast majority of fire departments in California and across the United States
- Allows critical life-safety and fire control operations to begin immediately through exterior tactics

Research, including studies by the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), demonstrates that four-person engine companies are more effective and safer. However, the legal requirement (2-in/2-out tactical deployment) differs from the operational ideal (4-0 apparatus staffing). SBCFPD acknowledges this distinction and continues working toward optimal staffing levels while maintaining strict regulatory compliance.

RECOMMENDATION R-4

That the SBC Board of Supervisors increase the number of firefighters per engine available to SBCFPD.

This recommendation is being implemented as appropriate as outlined in the response to Finding F-4. SBCFPD operates in full compliance with OSHA, Cal-OSHA, and NFPA regulations governing firefighter safety in IDLH environments. Operations Directive 3011 establishes clear, enforceable procedures that meet or exceed all regulatory requirements. SBCFPD's ongoing efforts to increase apparatus staffing through the SAFER grant and other initiatives demonstrate our commitment to enhancing operational effectiveness and firefighter safety.

SBCFPD personnel are thoroughly trained on both the requirements and the narrowly defined exceptions to the 2-in/2-out rule, ensuring that operational decisions prioritize firefighter safety while maintaining our ability to respond effectively to life-threatening emergencies.

FINDING F-5

There is no official routine documentation provided by independent water districts to SBCFPD about the readiness of public water hydrants to deliver sufficient water to combat fires. As a result, SBCFPD is unaware of the readiness status of these hydrants and is unsure of the district's capacity to hook up and extinguish the fires.

SBCFPD partially agrees with this finding. There is currently no uniform, routine documentation provided by independent water districts to SBCFPD regarding the operational readiness of public fire hydrants or the ability to deliver sufficient water for fire suppression purposes. As a result, SBCFPD's awareness of hydrant operational status and available water supply varies by jurisdiction and is dependent on individual coordination efforts.

RECOMMENDATION R-5

That the SBC Board of Supervisors provide any current agreements with SBCFPD and create a procedure to obtain regular reports from all SBC water districts providing SBCFPD with reports indicating compliance with all guidelines and standards.

This recommendation will be implemented. SBCFPD will compile and provide any current agreements that relate to coordination, service delivery, or compliance responsibilities involving water districts, as SBCFPD has been working with more than 80 independent water districts throughout San Bernardino County to develop a comprehensive inventory of water supply systems and available fire flow rates for each community served. This ongoing effort is intended to improve situational awareness, planning, and coordination related to fire protection and emergency response capabilities across diverse service areas.

Additionally, the Chief Executive Officer, in coordination with County Counsel, SBCFPD, and the appropriate County departments, will evaluate the feasibility of establishing a standardized procedure for obtaining periodic compliance reports from water districts that interface with SBCFPD. This evaluation will consider existing statutory authority, governance structures of independent water districts, administrative impacts, and alignment with applicable state and local regulations. The goal is to ensure SBCFPD receives timely and accurate information necessary to confirm compliance with applicable fire protection guidelines and standards while respecting the legal and operational frameworks under which water districts operate. SBCFPD staff will return to the Board with findings and recommendations, including potential reporting mechanisms, frequency, and scope for further consideration.

SECTION 3

TOWN OF APPLE VALLEY

APR 15 2026

This letter provides responses to the San Bernardino County Grand Jury Report, dated December 12, 2025, entitled "The Apple Valley Animal Shelter—A Road to Improvement" in accordance with California Penal Code Section 933 and 933.05.

By Debra Zuniga
DEBRA ZUNIGA, DEPUTY

RESPONSES TO GRAND JURY FINDINGS

Note: The original Grand Jury findings are repeated below in italics. AVAS's responses are in bold, with additional explanation and commentary in regular typeface. References to the "Town" refer to the Town of Apple Valley and "AVAS" refer to the Animal Valley Animal Shelter.

F1 AVAS's lack of providing posted lists of all housed animals and euthanasia lists leads to higher euthanasia rates and lower adoption rates..

The respondent disagrees wholly with the finding above.

AVAS posts an "Urgent List" and this list includes both adoptable and unadoptable animals, along with the animals' pictures, vastly improving outcomes and increasing the odds of saving the lives of our animal friends. Moreover, The "Urgent List" list is very easy to understand and AVAS has not received any negative feedback from purchasers, potential purchasers, volunteers, or other organizations that would lead the Town to believe it is confusing.

F2 AVAS's Rescue Shelter Liason's inability to send/receive texts hinder timely and effective interacting with rescue agencies and networkers..

The respondent disagrees partially with the finding above.

The AVAS team currently has an effective method of communication that serves the needs of the Liaison and Rescue and Rescues Team. Having multiple methods of communication only duplicates efforts, demanding additional time and effort that could otherwise be spent saving the lives of our animal friends.

F3 Because AVAS does not vaccinate all animals immediately upon intake, the spread of disease in the shelter contributes to more euthanasia of sick animals, and the shelter being closed for periods of time.

The respondent disagrees wholly with the finding above.

In May 2025, AVAS purchased a shield to use when vaccinating cats. Thus, the premise that the Town is not vaccinating animals that are "too difficult to handle" is not true because efforts, like the shield, have been made to provide vaccination. Additionally, and despite rare instances where infection spreads due to extenuating and unforeseen circumstances, AVAS has a track record of successful illness prevention and a vaccination process in place that provides the necessary protections against regular outbreaks.

F4 AVAS' failure to have the cats' areas "out of earshot of the barking dogs has caused the cats to exhibit some of the characteristics of feral cats and has resulted in increased euthanasia rates.

The respondent disagrees wholly with the finding above.

First, Food and Agricultural Code Section 31752.5(a) discusses cat temperaments. Next, Section 31752.5(b) defines a “feral cat.” A feral cat is “... is defined as a cat without owner identification of any kind whose usual and consistent temperament is extreme fear and resistance to contact with people. A feral cat is totally unsocialized to people.” Lastly, Section 31752.5(c) discusses that “Notwithstanding Section 31752, if a feral cat has not been reclaimed by its owner or caretaker within the first three days of the required holding period, animal shelter personnel qualified to verify the temperament of the animal shall verify whether it is feral or tame by using a standardized protocol. If the cat is determined to be docile or a frightened or difficult tame cat, the cat shall be held for the entire required holding period specified in Section 31752. If the cat is determined to be truly feral, the cat may be euthanized or relinquished to a nonprofit, as defined in Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, animal adoption organization that agrees to the spaying or neutering of the cat if it has not already been spayed or neutered. In addition to any required spay or neuter deposit, the animal shelter, at its discretion, may assess a fee, not to exceed the standard adoption fee, for the animal released.”

Thus, if a feral cat has not been reclaimed by its owner or caretaker and has been determined to be a “feral cat” by a standardized protocol, the cat may be euthanized without waiting the entire six (6) days required by Section 31752(a). Please note, Section 31752 also has exceptions to the general rule of a six (6) day holding period.

Moreover, AVAS requires specific case numbers to review and reply to this finding. Any animal that was euthanized prior to the mandated holding period of four (4) days (ninety-six (96) hours) was either irremediably suffering, requested by the animal’s owner, or had behavioral issues. Once again, AVAS cannot respond unless a specific case number is presented to review and reply.

The “standardized protocol” serves to deter and limit discretionary evaluations of whether a cat is “feral” or not.

Second, soundproofing is cost prohibitive and infeasible. However, AVAS will look into feasible noise reduction efforts.

F5 AVAS’s lack of the use of color-coded kennel cards has resulted in delays in employees and adopters knowing which animals are immediately adoptable.

The respondent disagrees wholly with the finding above.

This finding is unsubstantiated. No comparison metrics have been presented. AVAS strives to do the best it can with the resources it has under the circumstances that arise. AVAS acknowledges there are methods, such as color-coded kennels, that may speed up certain processes. However, such methods do not guarantee an improved experience and animal outcomes and require funds that make it prohibitively costly. Specifically, color-coded kennels requires a software database that is operationally unnecessary and too costly to implement.

F6 *AVAS does not employ a Certified Applied Animal Behaviorist, which causes a lack of proper assessment of the animals for adoption and euthanasia possibilities.*

The respondent disagrees partially with the finding above.

At this time, AVAS does not have a position titled Certified Applied Animal Behaviorist but does employ an Animal Behaviorist who possesses a certificate under another job description.

F7 *AVAS has minimally worked with other animal entities and businesses in the local area to plan for community adoption events and as a result fewer animals have been adopted.*

The respondent disagrees wholly with the finding above.

AVAS has and continues to do off-site adoption events as resources permit. AVAS will continue to seek opportunities to increase the number of events as time, personnel, partnerships, and financial resources permit

F8 *AVAS's failure to use squeeze cages for vaccinating or euthanizing animals, such as feral cats, causes a higher probability of injury and disease spread.*

The respondent disagrees wholly with the finding above.

The product is called Cat/Small Animal Shield.

F9 *AVAS's failure to update their Policies and Procedures Manual (2014), in a more timely manner causes the current manual to be outdated, incorrect, and incomplete.*

The respondent disagrees partially with the finding above.

AVAS is currently in the process of updating its *Policies and Procedures Manual*. While the *Policies and Procedures Manual* may be slightly outdated, it is substantially adequate and staff may always request clarification when needed.

F10 *Opening AVAS for a sixth day of the week for rescue groups only, will give more time for rescue of the animals, thereby decreasing euthanasia.*

The respondent disagrees wholly with the finding above.

The finding incorrectly assumes that rescues are consistent and that there is sufficient funding to open. Both underlying assumptions are wrong. Lastly and more importantly, the Town's priority continues to be the adoption of pets to loving forever homes.

F11 *AVAS's practice of using one or two employees in deciding the fate of an animal causes higher employee stress, greater euthanasia rates and a narrowed view of the animal's behavior.*

The respondent disagrees wholly with the finding above.

Euthanasia rates were historically much higher previously due to high intake numbers and relatively low corresponding adoption numbers resulting from a contract with San Bernardino County. Inadequate funding and an unsustainable contract resulted in the Town having one of the largest and worst funded shelters in the region. The unfortunate consequence was that AVAS was then tagged with a high euthanasia rate. Subsequently, euthanasia rates have dropped significantly since AVAS terminated its contract with the County.

Furthermore, the grand jury has not provided any substantiating data, documents, or evidence that employees suffered higher levels of stress, euthanasia rates have increased, or that the employees developed or had a narrowed view of the animals' behavior.

For instance, as mentioned in *F4*, there is a standardized procedure for determining whether a cat is feral or not. Such standardized procedures alleviate employee stress and lead to more uniform decisions on whether an animal will be euthanized.

However, AVAS recognizes the toll of compassion fatigue in employees and is ever vigilant in its efforts to protect its employees. AVAS is agreeable to using more employees should euthanasia rates increase and if economically feasible.

F12 AVAS' lack of a strong volunteer program managed by a full-time employee and with many adult/student volunteers, causes less hands-on care and socialization for the animals.

The respondent disagrees wholly with the finding above.

First, the grand jury has no data or substantiating evidence to support this claim. Second, AVAS does not believe that the current volunteer programs, community events, or off-site events lack hands-on care and socialization for the animals. Third, AVAS does not believe that a full-time employee that manages a volunteer program will aid in the increase of hands-on care and socialization for the animals. Lastly, AVAS wishes to clarify and emphasize that the current volunteer programs, community events, or off-site events are successful and have led to an increase in adoption rates.

F13 AVAS's lack of ongoing access to a professional grant writer causes less monetary support for the shelter.

The respondent disagrees wholly with the finding above.

AVAS management applies for grants and has access to Town grant writers.

F14 Lack of offering discounted rates for certain adopters causes a decrease in adoptions.

The respondent disagrees partially with the finding above.

While AVAS can empathize that, for some individuals, money is an obstacle to adopting an animal from the shelter, the adoption fees are set to a reasonable price that aids in keeping AVAS sustainable. Moreover, AVAS strives to help the animals find safe homes and an adoption fee serves as a step in ensuring that the purchaser can provide a safe, stable

home and will be able to pay for appropriate food, shelter, and medical care on an ongoing basis.

- F15 The lack of an in-house veterinarian dedicated to AVAS, and an in-shelter medical/surgery center in AVAS has caused a decrease in neutering surgeries and other medical procedures.*

The respondent disagrees partially with the finding above.

While there is no doubt that animal care will be improved with the hiring of a veterinarian, recruiting and employing a veterinarian is extremely cost prohibitive and not contemplated in previous years' or this year's budget.

RESPONSES TO RECOMMENDATIONS

- R1 AVAS posts lists of all housed animals and the euthanasia list on the AVAS website, as well as social media platforms, such as Facebook and Instagram. To be implemented by June 1, 2026. (F1)*

The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted nor is it reasonable.

AVAS already posts all of this information on its website. The law does not require the Town to post all animals on social media platforms, and the Town does not have sufficient resources to perform this task. Nevertheless, when resources permit, AVAS utilizes social media to highlight particular animals to encourage adoption.

- R2 AVTC provides AVAS's Rescue-Liaison employee(s) a shelter-owned cell phone on which the RSL may communicate with rescue groups by text. To be implemented by June 1, 2026. (F2)*

The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted nor is it reasonable.

AVAS management does not recommend this action because the existing system works in facilitating communication between rescue teams and there is no hindrance that necessitates shelter-owned cell phones. Refer also to response given in F2.

- R3 AVAS fully vaccinate all incoming animals within twenty-four hours of intake. To be implemented by June 1, 2026. (F3)*

Implemented.

Cats and dogs are already vaccinated upon arrival, however, if there is an animal health and safety or staff safety concern, vaccinations are generally not administered right away. Additionally, and based on medical personnel staffing levels and schedules, a twenty-four hour timeframe may not be possible. It is agreed that vaccinating within twenty-four hours is ideal, however, there may be instances where that time is extended to forty-eight hours.

R4 *Apple Valley Town Council sound-proof the AVAS cat intake area and/or move the cat areas to reduce the amount of barking the cats can hear. To be implemented by June 1, 2026. (F4)*

The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable.

Soundproofing the cat intake area is not feasible because AVAS lacks the resources for this type of capital improvement. Nevertheless, AVAS is looking at other, more cost-effective noise reduction strategies. Refer also to response given in F4.

R5 *AVAS initiates the use of color-coded kennel cards to easily distinguish between the different classifications of its kenneled animals. To be implemented by May 1, 2026. (F5)*

The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable.

AVAS currently uses Shelter Pro data management software. Refer also to response given in F5.

R6 *The Apple Valley Town Council hire and/or provide training for an employee to become a Certified Applied Animal Behaviorist to work at AVAS. To be implemented by October 1, 2026. (F6)*

The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable.

The necessary employee positions for the kennels have been filled. The specific position that the grand jury report mentions, Certified Applied Animal Behaviorist, is similar to a position that has already been filled. The position, currently, is called Animal Behaviorist, and the current employee holds a certificate.

R7 *AVAS improves communication with animal rescue organizations and other shelters, nearby human societies and Apple Valley businesses to plan more community adoption events. To be implemented by May 1, 2026. (F7)*

Implemented.

AVAS and its rescue partners have been and continue to organize and partake in off-site adoptions. Refer also to response given in F7.

R8 *AVAS purchase varied-sized squeeze cages and begin training and usage. To be implemented by May 1, 2026. (F8)*

Implemented.

AVAS has already purchased and uses another similar product that is more humane. The shelter currently uses the Cat/Small Animal Shield is a lighter transparent material with

evenly spaced holes, allowing for less stressful and cost-effective vaccination efforts. Refer also to response given in F8.

- R9 *AVAS revise and update the shelter's "Policy and Procedures Manual" and add employee and volunteer sections that describe the respective procedures and training programs. Training for all employees on new "Policy and Procedures" is to be completed. To be implemented by June 1, 2026. (F9)*

Not yet implemented, but will be implemented in the future.

The *Policy and Procedures Manual* is currently in the process of being updated. AVAS expects the *Policy and Procedures Manual* to be updated by July 1, 2026.

- R10 *The AVTC authorizes and fund an extra position for one more day per week so that AVAS may open for rescue organizations only to pull animals. To be implemented by June 1, 2026. (F10)*

The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted and is not reasonable.

Rescues are inconsistent. It would be unreasonable to fund an extra position for AVAS to open one more day a week without adequate data substantiating the need. AVAS's primary focus remains adopting our animal friends to their forever homes.

- R11 *AVAS establish a Population Management Board that meets weekly, made up of qualified employees, to manage the shelter's population size and decrease euthanasia rates. To be implemented by June 1, 2026. (F11)*

The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted and is not reasonable.

Following the termination of the contract with San Bernardino County, euthanasia rates have dropped. AVAS will continue to monitor the situation and will do what is necessary if euthanasia rates increase.

- R12 *The AVTC to provide a paid full-time employee to manage and coordinate the shelter's program of adult/student volunteers. To be implemented by June 1, 2026. (F12)*

The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted and is not reasonable.

AVAS currently runs volunteer programs, community events, and off-site events. AVAS does not believe that a paid full-time employee is necessary at this time.

- R13 *The AVTC to provide ongoing access to a professional or city grant writer so the shelter can apply for more grants per fiscal year. To be implemented by June 1, 2026. (F13)*

Implemented.

Currently, the AVAS management applies for grants and has access to the Town's Special Projects Manager who specializes in applying for grants. Thus, there is no need to hire a professional grant writer.

- R14 The AVTC, along with AVAS, develop programs that allow for a permanent reduction in adoption and alteration fees for certain residents, for example; seniors, first responders and disabled citizens. To be implemented by June 1, 2026. (F14)*

The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted and is not reasonable.

AVAS's primary goal is to work with the community, partner rescue groups, and others to facilitate finding homes for our animal friends. AVAS will continue to look into and provide for innovative ways to find forever homes for our animal friends.

- R15 The AVTC to provide an in-house veterinarian for AVAS and add a medical/surgical center inside the shelter, where neutering and other medical procedures may take place. To be implemented by November 1, 2026. (F15)*

The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted and is not reasonable.

Recruiting a veterinarian has proven difficult due to a nationally recognized dearth of qualified and experienced persons and/or affordable options. AVAS acknowledges the benefits that could be realized. However, it is cost-prohibitive and not feasible at this time. AVAS will continue to explore options and work toward having an in-house veterinarian in the future.