

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

The Economic Development Committee had the responsibility to investigate the following County departments:

- Agriculture, Weights & Measures
- Airports
- Community Development and Housing
- County Library
- County Museums
- Redevelopment
- Regional Parks
- Workforce Development

Subcommittees were established to review the function and operation of each department. The committee carefully reviewed prior Grand Jury reports and Board of Supervisors' responses regarding the departments, back to 1995. Visitations were made to all departments.

Findings and recommendations from the investigations are detailed in this final report for the following departments:

- Community Development and Housing
- County Library
- County Museums
- Regional Parks

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING

**(Report jointly submitted by the Community Development & Housing
and Administrative and Audit's Audit/Fiscal Subcommittees)**

BACKGROUND

The Department of Community Development and Housing (CDH) is responsible for administering Federal, State and local grant funds allocated to the County of San Bernardino for housing and community development programs. CDH obtains grants from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to fund construction, housing rehabilitation, economic development, public service, and community revitalization projects throughout the County. Other sources that provide funds for CDH are Community Development Block Grants, Emergency Shelter Grants, Home Investment Partnership Act Grants, Neighborhood Initiative Grants, the Economic Development Initiative Program, and administrative fees written into State of California housing bond issues.

FINDINGS

The 2003-2004 Grand Jury became aware of the existence of the Housing Trust Fund administered by CDH at the end of its term. The 2005-2006 Grand Jury was alerted to this fund from reports of the previous Grand Jury and decided to reinvestigate this issue. The source of the funds in the Housing Trust Fund is an administrative fee written into each of the State of California housing bond issues.

During a visitation in September 2005 with the prior director of CDH, the existence of this fund was acknowledged. All the monies provided by Federal and State sources are audited annually. However, the Housing Trust Fund has never been audited. At the suggestion of the Audit/Fiscal Subcommittee, the director agreed that an audit of the fund was in order and asked his staff to implement such an audit with the office of the County Auditor/Controller-Recorder (ACR). To date, this request has not been received by the ACR. The amount of money in the fund varies, but at present is approximately \$1.2 million. The Grand Jury feels that, given the size of this fund, it should be audited. CDH and the Auditor/Controller would need to establish the basis and scope of the audit.

RECOMMENDATION

06-14 CONDUCT AN IMMEDIATE FINANCIAL AUDIT OF THE HOUSING TRUST
 FUND.

COUNTY LIBRARY

BACKGROUND

The County Library serves 30 branches in the unincorporated areas and 18 cities in the County of San Bernardino. In addition, there are two new joint-use branches, Carter High School, now open in Rialto, and Summit High School, opening in September 2006 in North Fontana.

The County Library is working with the City of Victorville in its efforts to establish a city library. Victorville is considering using Development Impact Fees to build a library. It is anticipated that they will build another library in the west end of the city in five to seven years, also using Development Impact funds. Victorville city officials believe by taking over the library, they could use Development Impact Fees to improve library services to the community. The County will turn over its operation to the city in July 2006.

Building a new County library in Hesperia will currently meet the needs of that city, but the County Librarian predicts another library will soon be needed in Hesperia to meet future needs.

The County Library has a budget of \$13 million, with 80 percent of that coming from special district taxes. The rest of the funds come from the County and fund raising efforts of the various Friends of the Library organizations.

The County Library has a total of 370 employees, which includes 215 part-time employees. Upgrading of their computer system and refurbishing of the main Library headquarters facility in San Bernardino are currently in progress.

The County Librarian is projecting a minimum space increase of 20 percent over the approximate 200,000 square feet currently available; a 15 percent increase over the 395 personal computers currently available; and a ten percent increase over the 175,000 current transactions through the next two years.

FINDINGS

The Library's biggest challenge is finding the funds to increase the \$1,390,000 book budget. Over the last 12 years, the County's book budget has decreased from \$1.98 per patron to \$1.00 per patron, while the State's budget has increased to \$2.81. The Friends

of the Library have raised over \$500,000 for books, but it still does not meet the book budget needs.

The County Library System does not have access to Development Impact Fees; San Bernardino County does not impose such fees. Victorville is an example of how Development Impact Fees are used to improve the library system in its city. Many libraries in the System are old and outdated and in need of enlargement or new construction. The County Library System needs to find new sources of revenue.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 06-15 ALLOCATE ADDITIONAL FUNDS TO THE LIBRARY TO BRING FUNDING IN LINE WITH THE \$2.81 PER PATRON STATE AVERAGE.

- 06-16 IMPOSE DEVELOPMENT IMPACT FEES TO ASSIST THE FUNDING OF THE COUNTY LIBRARY SYSTEM REGARDING CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS AND EXPANSION.

COUNTY MUSEUM

BACKGROUND

The San Bernardino County Museum maintains and develops cultural as well as natural science collections. The Museum hopes to inspire the public to learn more about the cultural and natural history of this region and the greater Southwest, attempting to accomplish this goal through responsible collection, preservation, exhibition and education.

The Museum provides educational and cultural programs at its main facility in Redlands and seven other regional sites: the Agua Mansa Cemetery in Colton, Casa de Rancho Cucamonga (Rains House) in Cucamonga, the Daggett Stone Hotel in Daggett, the Asistencia Mission in Redlands, the Mousley Museum in Yucaipa, the Yucaipa Adobe also in Yucaipa, and the Yorba-Slaughter Adobe in Chino.

FINDINGS

The Museum director addressed issues regarding inadequate fire protection in their document and artifacts storage areas, which was a concern of a previous Grand Jury. We observed that this fire protection upgrade was nearing completion. Our discussion and visual observations indicated that some of the storage and filing cabinets were obviously secured to prevent loss or damage in the event of an earthquake. Others appeared not to have any earthquake preventive aspects or precautions.

RECOMMENDATION

06-17 BRING MUSEUM FACILITIES UP TO CURRENT SAFETY STANDARDS.

REGIONAL PARKS DEPARTMENT

BACKGROUND

The San Bernardino County Regional Parks Department has responsibility for ten regional parks with a full range of activities, from camping with full hook-ups, to waterslides and picnic facilities. Grand Jurors visited the parks at Glen Helen, Cucamonga-Guasti, Prado, Lake Gregory, Calico and Mojave Narrows.

The director has an ambitious program for expansion of the parks' facilities and improvement of existing facilities. Much of the money for expansion comes from State Parks and other grants. New programs in partnership with the Wildlands Conservancy at Bluff Lake in Big Bear and Bear Paw in Forest Falls are primarily designed for youth education.

FINDINGS

Glen Helen Regional Park has two 300-foot waterslides and one half-acre swim lagoon. There is a need for lifeguards at all parks where swimming facilities are provided. The director indicated that they have difficulty in recruiting lifeguards because the pay scale is not adequate to attract qualified applicants. Lake Gregory Regional Park sponsored a Red Cross lifeguard training program recently to attract lifeguards. Although the training was successful, it was not enough to prevent the lifeguards from accepting positions where the pay scale exceeded the \$10 per hour paid by the County. Without adequate lifeguards, swimming facilities at the parks cannot be opened.

At Prado Regional Park, mud hens routinely cross the walkways and the children's playground, leaving mounds of slippery droppings. The children's playground is not fenced and the mud hen droppings present a hazard.

At Mojave Narrows Regional Park there was evidence of dry rot on the beams around one of the snack bar areas. Several of the park benches and picnic tables should be replaced or restored. The restrooms and other facilities are being rehabilitated, but these are done on a piecemeal basis whenever funds are available. The park offers fishing on Horseshoe Lake, with picnic facilities and barbecue grills.

Lake Gregory Regional Park was clean and well maintained. They are currently adding a skateboard park. The St. Mortiz clubhouse is under utilized for weekday

activities. It temporarily houses the senior center. The restroom facilities at the baseball fields are portable toilets, and are located close to an existing sewer line.

The use of Sheriff's Work Release personnel was seen in all the parks visited. Using these workers has helped keep costs from increasing. Funds for replacing barbecues, tables, trash cans and benches, etc., come from the operating budget. If there is not enough money, then the replacement is not done. The director estimated an additional \$153,000 annual budget allocation for a period of three years would be enough to catch up with needed replacement of barbecues, tables, benches and trash cans.

Most of the ten parks do not have an assigned permanent superintendent to oversee the day-to-day activities, supervise maintenance, and control vandalism. As an example, the superintendent at Lake Gregory divides his time between there and Mojave Narrows in Victorville.

San Bernardino County does not have development impact fees. Other counties have developer fees tied to their regional parks, which are then able to fund expansion and capital improvements. Many cities have developer fees to pay for parks and other public services.

Due to the variety and diversity of the Regional Parks system, the department needs more coordination of information between its facilities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 06-18 INCREASE THE HOURLY PAY RATE FOR LIFEGUARDS AT COUNTY REGIONAL PARKS TO A COMPETITIVE LEVEL.
- 06-19 FENCE THE CHILDREN'S PLAYGROUND AT PRADO REGIONAL PARK TO KEEP THE MUD HENS OUT OF THAT AREA.
- 06-20 CONSTRUCT PERMANENT RESTROOM FACILITIES AT THE BASEBALL PARK AT LAKE GREGORY REGIONAL PARK.
- 06-21 INCREASE THE BUDGET BY \$153,000 ANNUALLY TO PAY FOR REPLACEMENT OF EQUIPMENT AT REGIONAL PARKS FACILITIES.
- 06-22 IMPLEMENT DEVELOPMENT IMPACT FEES TO PROVIDE FOR A PORTION OF FUTURE FUNDING FOR THE EXPANSION AND CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS OF REGIONAL PARKS.

06-23 ESTABLISH A REGIONAL PARKS INTER-DEPARTMENTAL NEWSLETTER.

COMMENDATION

The committee was extremely impressed with the efforts by the Director of Regional Parks to establish working partnerships with outside agencies and businesses/corporations to enhance the opportunities for County residents to enjoy the benefits that the Regional Parks provide. This includes partnerships with the Wildlands Conservancy involving Bluff Lake, Bear Paw Camp and the Santa Ana River Trails; Turner's Sporting Goods, and their associated vendors, to promote the fishing derbies; and various County service districts to coordinate the use of the Regional Parks to support programs for the youth of the County. This vision toward the future, and the passion of the director and his staff, can be used as a model for other County departments.

THE GRAND JURY COMMENDS THE DIRECTOR OF REGIONAL PARKS AND HIS STAFF FOR THEIR VISION, DEDICATION AND CREATIVITY IN PROVIDING OUTSTANDING SERVICES TO THE RESIDENTS OF SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY.