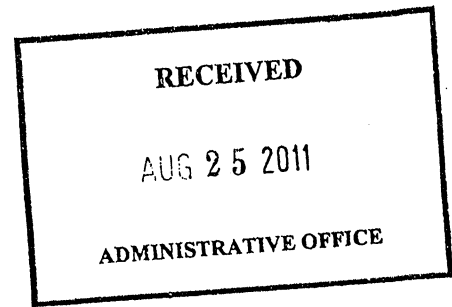




COUNTY OF LAKE
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
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MEMO

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: Richard Coel, Community Development Director *RC*

SUBJECT: Response to Grand Jury Final Report; Community Development Department Recommendations, Pages 12, 77, 88 and 91

DATE: August 25, 2011

The following responses are in the numbered order of the recommendations provided in the 2010/11 Lake County Civil Grand Jury Final Report. The Community Development Department appreciates these constructive recommendations made by the Planning and Public Works Committee of the Grand Jury, and the time the Grand Jurors spent with staff reviewing these issues.

1. The first request for response is found on page 12 of the Final Report. It requests that the Community Development Department better address issues related to household mold, and recommends that the on-line agency contact list be amended to reflect that the Community Development Department does not investigate mold complaints. The Department's website will be updated by October 1, 2011 to remove the reference to contact the Building and Safety Division. Staff will work with the Environment Health Department to develop an informational pamphlet that we can make available on-line and at out public counters to provide the public with additional information and appropriate contacts.
2. The second request for response is found on Page 77 of the Final Report. It recommends that the Community Development Department re-establish the policy of sending two employees out on site visits for code enforcement cases, particularly in remote and potentially dangerous areas. The Department does not send staff out to investigate known, potentially dangerous sites without back-up from law enforcement. Also, staff are regularly reminded that if they ever feel uncomfortable with a particularly area or specific site, that they need to pair up with another staff member, or coordinate with the Sheriff's Office for assistance from a Deputy. Due to staffing reductions including the elimination of the Code Enforcement Officer positions on July 30th, it is not possible to pair up staff for all site visits.
3. The third request for response is found on Page 88 of the Final Report. It recommends that the Community Development Department establish at least five measurable non-financial goals to improve the operation of the Code Enforcement Division during the next budget cycle, track the progress of those goals and report annually to the Board of Supervisors. Since the Code Enforcement Division has been eliminated due to budget constraints, this

recommendation will be difficult to implement. This being said, the Department asks that the following be considered:

- Prior to the staff build-up in 2003, the case load per officer was extremely high. Adding officers allowed the Department to reduce the case load per officer to a more manageable number. Opening of new cases has never been a problem, that problem has been in getting those cases processed and closed. So adding staff was not expected to increase the amount of new cases opened.
- Up until 2010, processing of code enforcement cases was more onerous due to an antiquated nuisance abatement ordinance that was written in the 1960's. With the adoption of new nuisance abatement regulations by the Board of Supervisors last year, several steps have been combined saving several months on the average case processing time, thereby increasing efficiency.
- The charts provided in the Final Report do not reflect the fact that between 2003 and the present, more than 2,100 abandoned vehicles were abated by the Code Enforcement Division within County jurisdiction.
- The Monthly records were maintained by the Code Enforcement Division Manager beginning in late 2006, as part of a new management structure within the Department.
- Productivity (cases closed per officer) began to increase significantly in 2007 at the same time staffing began to be drawn down, as illustrated in Chart 3. This was a direct result of the new management's efforts and the monthly task sheets that were implemented.
- Regular reports and updates were provided to the Board of Supervisors between 2006 and 2010 by the Code Enforcement Manager.

As the Department moves forward during this budget cycle to restructure the code enforcement program, we will set measurable performance goals for the two Certified Building Inspectors that will be tasked with zoning enforcement. We have already reorganized the Abandoned Vehicle Abatement program which is now spearheaded by a Community Development Department Technician who is already familiar with the administration and state procedures relative to the Program.

4. The fourth request for response is found on Page 91 of the Final Report. It provides 5 different recommendations.

R 1. The Department agrees that whenever possible, formal training should be made available to Department staff. As the budget permits, we will seek out training opportunities for any of our field staff that lack such safety training or experience. Verbal skills are

always going to be the first line of defense, and this is something that the Department consistently seeks out through the interview process for new hiring.

R 2. As the Department restructures the code enforcement program, we will reevaluate our past approaches to ensure safety of the staff conducting inspections. We will establish a clear written policy for all field staff to follow.

R 3. The Department agrees that the task force should be re-formed, to address various the more egregious violations that are occurring through out the County. Efforts are currently underway to restart the Environmental Crimes Task force.

R 4. The Department will continue to participate in discussions with other departments concerning possible use of cameras and increased surveillance in areas prone to repeat dumping. However, we believe that an additional possible solution would be for the County to consider requiring mandatory refuse services within areas that have service available, since we have found that the majority of the occupants of sites with excessive open and outdoor storage and trash problems do not have the waste and recycling cans on site.

R 5. The Department has submitted to the District Attorney in the past what we feel is clear evidence of perpetrators of illegal dumping. This includes personal mail found in trash duped in creek beds, with photos of the site and evidence bags used, and chain of custody of the evidence known. Unfortunately, no action was taken by the District Attorney's office in the past. It is unclear at this time to the Community Development Department staff how we can help assure that investigation and possible prosecution of these individuals can be commenced.