



CITY OF WILLITS

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Willits, CA 95490

December 5, 2006

Mendocino County Grand Jury
P.O. Box 629
Ukiah, CA 95482

Re: Response to Grand Jury Report

Dear Chair of Grand Jury and Grand Jury Members:

Attached please find the Response to the Grand Jury Report of 2006 on behalf of the City of Willits, the City Manager and the Police Chief. Also attached is the Agenda Summary regarding this item dated 11/1/2006. The matter was considered and approved for execution at the meeting of the Willits City Council on November 8, 2006.

My sincere apologies for the late submittal of this document. The City of Willits is fully aware of the important work that the Grand Jury performs and of the responsibility which the City bears for providing timely responses. I will not list excuses for why this response is so untimely. However, I can assure you that it was not the intent of the City to delay the process and we will make every attempt to examine our internal processes such that an error of this type could not occur again.

Very truly yours,

Ross Walker
City Manager

RW:dmp

cc: Tami Jorgensen, Mayor
Gerry Gonzalez, Police Chief

Response to Grand Jury Reports

Report Title: Willits Police Department and Holding Cells
Report Date: June 20, 2006

Response by: Gerardo Gonzalez Title: Chief of Police, City of Willits

FINDINGS

- I (we) agree with findings numbered:
1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, 13, 14

- I (we) disagree wholly or partially with the findings numbered:
7, 9, 12

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Recommendations numbered _____ have been implemented.

- Recommendations numbered 1, 3 have not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future.

- Recommendations numbered 2 require further analysis.

- Recommendations numbered _____ will not be implemented because they are not warranted or are not reasonable.

Jemi Jorgensen, Mayor
Ross Walker - City Manager

Date: 12-5-06 Signed: _____

On Behalf: Willits City Council
Ross Walker, City Manager
Gerardo Gonzalez Police Chief

Number of pages attached: 3

FINDINGS

1. The budget of the Willits Police Department provides for a staff of one chief, three sergeants, ten patrol officers, one community services officer, five dispatchers and one administrative assistant [supervisor].

Agree.

2. At the time of the Grand Jury's visit, three patrol officer positions were vacant, two of them unfilled and one unfunded. One dispatcher position was unfilled.

Agree.

3. The Administrative Assistant [Supervisor] is in cross training for Dispatcher.

Agree.

4. There currently is neither a female nor a bi-lingual patrol officer.

Agree.

5. Housing and quality of life are important considerations when recruiting personnel for WPD.

Agree.

6. According to the California Board of Corrections Inspection Report of 2005, the Willits Police Department Holding Cells were out of compliance because not all required Policies and Procedures were included in the Jail Manual.

Agree.

7. On occasion there are not enough officers to adequately staff the holding cells and still respond to calls.

We partially agree, as this only occurs at times where staffing dips to the point on a given shift where all on-duty officers are involved in the booking process, and there is a short wait until a transport officer can be called out from home. Having officers involved in an arrest limits the availability of backup in cases where one officer must break free to handle an additional call for service. The recent hiring of a community services officer to help with prisoner transports and the filling of vacant patrol positions has greatly decreased those periods where staffing creates a conflict over response to calls for service versus prisoner handling.

8. General Orders (operating procedures) for the WPD are being revised with funding provided by Redwood Empire Municipal Insurance Fund [REMIF].

Agree.

9. Currently one staff person is qualified to be a custodian in the evidence room; other staff are undergoing training.

Agree. Currently our Community Services Officer (CSO) has begun training in this area, with the hope that she will eventually be the custodian of the evidence room with supervisor backup from a police sergeant serving as a "check and balance".

10. Transportation of prisoners to the County Jail or another facility is carried out within one hour.

Agree.

11. At the time of the Grand Jury's visit, all holding cells were clean and facilities were found to be in working order.

Agree.

12. WPD does not possess tasers.

Disagree. Willits Police Department did not possess tasers at the time of the Grand Jury visit; however, tasers were recently purchased. They have not yet been deployed, pending implementation of a training program and the publishing/implementation of the REMIF General Order Manual section relating to this tool.

13. The Emergency Plan for the City of Willits was last revised in 1998.

Agree.

14. Total drug arrests are up by approximately 300% over the last five years.

Agree.

RECOMMENDATIONS/SUMMARY ON ACTIONS:

The Grand Jury recommends that:

1. "the WPD comply with the regulations of the California Board of Corrections and update the Policy and Procedure Manual for the WPD Holding Cells. (Finding 6)

Response/Actions: The revision to the General Order Manual is currently underway. There was a delay due to the fact that LEXIPOL (administrator of this program for REMIF) was in the process of converting over from a Compact Disc (CD) format, with quarterly revisions, to an interactive web-based program. The City of Willits was delayed in implementing the General Order revision due to software roll out delays. This process will encompass the revision of the Jail Manual, and the eventual format will most likely be an electronic version.

2. "the WPD actively recruit for bi-lingual and female patrol officers. (Finding 4)"

Response/Action: The Grand Jury's recommendation to actively recruit for bilingual and female patrol officers is understood, but in practical application there are market forces, as well as a lack of available candidates in law enforcement, that have a significant impact on the hiring process. All candidates are encouraged to apply, but in the end many female or bilingual candidates who have inquired about employment have chosen to apply to agencies that can offer not only enhanced pay and benefits, but also special duties. These opportunities are limited in a small agency such as WPD. This is, therefore, not an easy recommendation to implement, given the reality of current recruitment and retention trends in law enforcement.

3. "the Willits City Council fund and fill vacant positions. (Findings 2, 7)"

Response/Action: All currently funded positions are now filled, and a 4th officer will most likely be hired as backfill for a School Resource Officer position which is currently 3/4 funded by a School Safety Grant. Since the visit from the Grand Jury, efforts have been made to fill vacant positions as quickly as the hiring process allows (recruitment, selection of qualified applicants, oral board interview, background investigation, psychological evaluation, medical evaluation).

**CITY OF WILLITS
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA SUMMARY**

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR & COUNCIL MEMBERS
FROM: ROSS WALKER, CITY MANAGER
GERARDO GONZALEZ, CHIEF OF POLICE

COUNCIL AGENDA #: 9-B

DATE SUBMITTED: 11/01/2006

- I. AGENDA DATE: 11/08/2006 TIME FRAME: URGENT X ROUTINE
- II. AGENDA TITLE: DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION APPROVING RESPONSE TO 2006 GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT TITLED WILLITS POLICE DEPARTMENT AND HOLDING CELLS.
- III. ESTIMATED TIME FOR PRESENTATION: 15 minutes.
- IV. BRIEF SUMMARY: The Mendocino County Grand Jury inspected the Willits Police Department and the holding cells at the facility, and issued a report of their findings in June, 2006. The inspection of the jail facility was in accordance with California Penal Code 919(b) which states, "The Grand Jury may inquire into the condition and management of the public prisons within the county." Additionally, the Grand Jury inspected/inquired about staffing, hiring practices, prisoner handling, equipment and other practices by the Willits Police Department during this inspection. The Grand Jury has requested a response from the City Council, City Manager and the Police Chief on all findings and recommendations. A response to the Grand Jury findings and recommendations has been prepared by the Chief of Police and City Manager for Council approval and/or comment.
- V. RECOMMENDED SOLUTION: By Minute Order, approve the attached response to the Mendocino County Grand Jury 2006 Final Report on behalf of the City Council, City Manager, and Police Chief, and approve for the Mayor to sign for all three.
- VI. ALTERNATIVE(S): Modify attached letter of response to the Mendocino County Grand Jury 2006 Final Report.
- VII. PERSONNEL IMPACT: None.
- VIII. FISCAL IMPACT: Possible approval of 10th Police Officer Position - salary and benefits for portion of fiscal year remaining upon hire date.
- IX. RECOMMENDED ACTION/MOTION: By Minute Order, approve the attached response to the Mendocino County Grand Jury 2006 Final Report, and direct the Mayor to transmit same.

RESOURCE PERSON(S): Ross Walker, Gerardo Gonzalez