

ERIN HANNIGAN
District 1, Vice-Chair (707) 553-5363
MONICA BROWN
District 2, (707) 784-3031
WANDA WILLIAMS
District 3, (707) 784-6136
JOHN M. VASQUEZ
District 4, (707) 784-6129
MITCH MASHBURN
District 5, Chair, (707) 784-6030

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS



SOLANO COUNTY

BILL EMLEN
County Administrator
(707) 784-6100

675 Texas Street, Suite 6500
Fairfield, CA 94533-6342
Fax (707) 784-6665

www.solanocounty.com

September 10, 2024

Honorable Alesia Jones
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court
Solano Superior Court
600 Union Ave
Fairfield CA 94533

REGARDING: County Board of Supervisors response to FY2023-2024 Civil Grand Jury Report, "Solano County Canine Officer Training, Handling and End of Career Policies"

Dear Honorable Judge Jones,

The Solano County Board of Supervisors, under Penal Code sections §933 and §933.05, is responding to the following findings and recommendations contained in the FY2023/24 Civil Grand Jury Report entitled "Solano County Canine Officer Training, Handling and End of Career Policies."

Civil Grand Jury Finding 1

On-going in-service training with canines and canine handlers is currently taking place, but not consistent across all agencies throughout the County. Canine pre-deployment training has generally been conducted through a third party outside of the law enforcement agency. In the past, pre-deployment training practices had been a harsh environment for the canine. Occasionally severe discipline was used to train the canine causing the canine a high level of stress during and after the training period.

Response to Finding 1

Solano County Sheriff: The Solano County Sheriff disagrees partially with the finding.

Board of Supervisors: The Board of Supervisors (Board) agrees with the Solano County Sheriff's response.

Civil Grand Jury Recommendation 1

Use an outside agency for pre-deployment training only if the training facility and trainers are adhering to Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) training FINAL 240621 Canine Training Handling and End of Career practices with positive reinforcement. For on-going in-service training, continue monthly training of the canine team through positive reinforcement. Train for a minimum of 16 hours a month, or 192 hours annually on current skills and new techniques. Elements of the training techniques should be made available to the public.

Response to Recommendation 1

Solano County Sheriff: The recommendation has been implemented. The Sheriff's Office has always used the best practices for the training of the K-9s and have always conducted our pre-deployment training, subsequent annual qualifications, and ongoing 18 hours of monthly training according to Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) training practices. Furthermore, the

Solano County Sheriff's Office utilizes public engagement at schools, fairs, and other community events to showcase the training and discipline and skills of the K-9s and their handlers. The Sheriff's K-9s are training utilizing two general methods; positive reinforcement and corrections, to create a balanced training technique specific to each dog. The correction method is not discipline nor is it severe; correction is administered not to punish the dog, rather, it is used to get the dog's attention and change their behavior. Any training tool used in this approach is carefully considered to serve its purpose while not harming the dog in the process.

Board of Supervisors: The Board agrees with the Solano County Sheriff's Office response.

Civil Grand Jury Finding 2

While there is a retirement plan for the Patrol Officers, there is no standard Canine Officer retirement plan available. This leaves the canine handler to cover all medical costs which may include injuries that occurred while in service.

Response to Finding 2

Solano County Sheriff: The Solano County Sheriff wholly disagrees with the finding.

Board of Supervisors: The Board agrees with the Solano County Sheriff's response.

Civil Grand Jury Recommendation 2

Provide all retired Canine Officers with medical insurance coverage at the time of retirement, like that of the Patrol Officers. Medical coverage must cover both the scheduled routine medical issues and emergency medical services if ever needed. A meal allowance must also be in place for all retired Canine Officers. Create a standardized procedure in place for handling of retired Canine Officers until end of life. In the placement of a retiring Canine Officer the current handler should be given first choice. If they cannot take on that role, there needs to be a process in place for continued care.

Response to Recommendation 2

Solano County Sheriff: The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable. Deputies purchase the retired canine from the County and assume all ownership and liability.

Board of Supervisors: The Board agrees with the Solano County Sheriff's Office response.

Civil Grand Jury Finding 3

Not all law enforcement agencies within the County have Canine Officers. The law enforcement agencies that do see multiple benefits of having Canine Officers on staff. In some cases, an increase in non-confrontational apprehensions is as much as ten times over those of a non-Canine Team.

Response to Finding 3

Solano County Sheriff: The Solano County Sheriff agrees with the finding.

Board of Supervisors: The Board agrees with the Solano County Sheriff's response.

Civil Grand Jury Recommendation 3

Increase Canine Officer staffing throughout the County. All law enforcement agencies should have at least one Canine Officer per shift. For the larger agencies, more Canine Officers may be needed to cover all needed situations and areas. The Canine Officer/population ratio should be at least one Canine Officer per 15,000 population.

Response to Recommendation 3

Solano County Sheriff: The recommendation has been implemented at the Solano County Sheriff's Office. The Sheriff's Office assigns canines on every patrol shift and an additional K-9 in the jails. The Sheriff's Office has no control over the other law enforcement agencies.

Board of Supervisors: The Board agrees with the Solano County Sheriff's Office response.

Civil Grand Jury Finding 4

There are only a few Peer Support Canines available to assist in emotional and behavioral support within a few agencies. Peer Support Canines play an important role in monitoring and recognizing the emotional and behavioral needs within high stress events and can soothe and support through their calming and caring personalities.

Response to Finding 4

Solano County Sheriff: The Solano County Sheriff disagrees partially with the finding.

Board of Supervisors: The Board agrees with the Solano County Sheriff's response.

Civil Grand Jury Recommendation 4

Increase Peer Support Canine staffing. All law enforcement agencies need to have at least one Peer Support Canine per shift.

Response to Recommendation 4

Solano County Sheriff: The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable. The Sheriff's Office agrees with the benefits of having Peer Support Canines and we are working toward implementing a program; however, it will not be as recommended. The staffing and resources required to implement as recommended would be resource challenging and not best practice. Solano County law enforcement agencies may discuss a regional approach and/or leverage outside volunteer groups to aid in our peer support initiatives.

Board of Supervisors: The Board agrees with the Solano County Sheriff's Office response.

Civil Grand Jury Finding 5

Canine activity and incident tracking throughout the County differs between agencies. Although being tracked, the agencies have adopted their own manner of tracking and documenting. This allows the media to exploit only the rate aggressive activities with little exposure to the positive side of the Canine Officer's contribution.

Response to Finding 5

Solano County Sheriff: The Solano County Sheriff agrees with the finding.

Board of Supervisors: The Board agrees with the Solano County Sheriff's response.

Civil Grand Jury Recommendation 5

Activity and incident tracking within the County of Canine Teams needs to be consistent. Have Canine Team activity reports readily available to the public.

Response to Recommendation 5

Solano County Sheriff: The recommendation has been implemented. The Sheriff's Office uses an activity and incident tracking system and reports its activities pursuant to current state law.

Board of Supervisors: The Board agrees with the Solano County Sheriff's Office response.

Civil Grand Jury Finding 6

Canine Officer no longer engage in crown control, as having canines in large crowds over stressed the Canine Officer, causing confusion.

Response to Finding 6

Solano County Sheriff: The Solano County Sheriff agrees with the finding.

Board of Supervisors: The Board agrees with the Solano County Sheriff's response.

Civil Grand Jury Recommendation 6

Continue using the Canine Officers only in patrol, detection and search and rescue.

Response to Recommendation 6

Solano County Sheriff: The recommendation has been implemented. Our canines are primarily used for patrol and detection, while our Office of Emergency Services (OES) partners maintain specialized canines for search and rescue. However, we also use our canines at public events to educate our community on what their capabilities are and to interact with them to establish and maintain community support.

Board of Supervisors: The Board agrees with the Solano County Sheriff's Office response.

On behalf of the Solano County Board of Supervisors, we would like to thank the Solano County Civil Grand Jury for their time and attention to County processes and operations. Thank you for the opportunity to address your findings and recommendations – and for your work and contributions to the overall success of Solano County in services to our residents.

Sincerely,



Mitch Mashburn
District 5 Supervisor
Chair, Solano County Board of Supervisors

cc: Cheryl Clower, Administrative Assistant, Solano County Civil Grand Jury
Tom Ferrara, Solano County Sheriff