

Approved as to form:

By:  for
Veronica Nebb, City Attorney



City Attorney's Office · 555 Santa Clara Street · Vallejo · CA · 94590 · 707.648.4545

September 11, 2024

Honorable Judge Alesia Jones
Presiding Judge
Solano County Superior Court
600 Union Avenue
Fairfield, CA 94533

Wayne B. Goodman
Foreperson, 2023-2024 Grand Jury
Hall of Justice
600 Union Ave
Fairfield, CA 94533

Sent Via Email: cdclower@solano.courts.ca.gov

Re: 2023-2024 Grand Jury Report Entitled: Solano County Canine Officer Training, Handling & End of Career Policies

Dear Judge Jones:

The following is the City of Vallejo's response to the above-mentioned Grand Jury Report on behalf of the Chief of Police and the City Council, which was approved by the City Council on September 10, 2024.

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 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.*

Honorable Alesia Jones

Re: 2023-2024 Grand Jury Report Entitled: *Solano County
Canine Officer Training, Handling & End of Career Policies*

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Response: Agree.

Recommendation: *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 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: The recommendation has been implemented. The Vallejo Police Department follows POST's training guidelines that were established in 2014, which are available to the public at https://post.ca.gov/Portals/0/post_docs/publications/K-9.pdf. Canine teams train monthly for at least 16 hours using only positive reinforcement-based discipline to reduce canine stress levels and maintain a high level of obedience.

Finding 2: *While there is a retirement plan for the Patrol Officers, there is no standard Canine Officers retirement plan available. This leaves the canine handler to cover all medical costs which may include injuries that occurred while in service.*

Response: Agree.

Recommendation: *Provide all retired Canine Officers with medical insurance coverage at time of retirement, similar to 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. In the event that they cannot take on that role, there needs to be a process in place for continued care.*

Response: This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted. Handlers are given an option to purchase their Canine Officer from the City for a symbolic fee of \$1.00, once the canine is retired. Ownership of the canine is then officially transferred to the Handler, allowing the canine to live out the rest of their life in a family environment. Providing medical insurance coverage at retirement for retired Canine Officers would not be cost effective and may deter the agency from continuing its canine program.

Finding 3: *Not all law enforcement agencies within the county have Canine Officers. The law enforcement agencies that do, see multiple benefits of having the 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.*

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Response: Agree.

Recommendation: *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. Canine Officer/population ratio should be at least one Canine Officer per 15,000 population.*

Response: This recommendation has been implemented in that all but one shift is staffed with a Canine Officer. The Vallejo Police Department supports this recommendation on this finding and are constantly seeking alternative funding sources to assist with the costs of its canine program.

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 are able to soothe and support through their calming and caring personalities.*

Response: Agree.

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

Response: This recommendation will not be implemented due to budget restraints. The Vallejo Police Department is, however, constantly seeking alternative funding sources to add additional support to our canine program.

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 rare aggressive activities with little exposure to the positive side of the Canine Officer's contribution.*

Response: Agree.

Recommendation: *Activity and incident tracking within the county for Canine Teams need to be consistent. Have Canine Team activity reports readily available to the public.*

Response: This recommendation has been implemented. The Vallejo Police Department uses "Pack Track" software to track canine activity, such as bite ratio, types of deployments, and offenders' race and age. This type of software has become an industry standard and provides transparency to the community. Canine activity is released monthly along with other use of force reports.

Finding 6: *Canine Officers no longer engage in crowd control, as having canines in large crowds over stressed the Canine Officer, causing confusion.*

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Response: Agree.

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

Response: This recommendation has been implemented. The Vallejo Police Department agrees that Canine Officers should only be used in patrol, detection, search, and rescue along with any additional uses that may promote public safety and community relations. The Vallejo Police Department does not use Canine Officers for crowd control.

Comments: *Solano County's Civil Grand Jury investigation on canine activity and duties contradicted much of what the media is presenting. Canine training has been updated from past years to a positive reinforcement training curriculum with improved results. Apprehensions are much higher with a canine team than without. Data shows as much as ten times more apprehensions with a Canine Team than without. In many cases, the Canine Officer was never deployed, but being on site deterred the suspect through intimidation.*

We applaud the use of Brady's K-9 Fund or similar agencies and grants to support Canine Officers' needs, both while in-service and retired.

Response: The Vallejo Police Department does not disagree with any of the Grand Jury's comments in this section. The department applauds the efforts of the Grand Jury in this report.

Please do not hesitate to advise if we can be of further assistance.

Regards,

Signed by:

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ANDREW MURRAY
City Manager

RESOLUTION NO. 24-134 N.C.

RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF VALLEJO APPROVING AND AUTHORIZING THE CITY'S RESPONSE TO THE 2023-24 GRAND JURY REPORT ENTITLED "SOLANO COUNTY CANINE OFFICER TRAINING, HANDLING & END OF CAREER POLICIES" AND AUTHORIZING THE CITY CLERK TO FORWARD THE RESPONSE TO THE PRESIDING JUDGE OF THE SOLANO COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT AND THE FOREPERSON OF THE SOLANO COUNTY GRAND JURY

WHEREAS, pursuant to Penal Code section 933, a public agency that receives a Grand Jury Report addressing aspects of the public agency's operations must comment on the report's findings and recommendations within 90 days and send such response to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court with a copy to the Foreperson of the Grand Jury; and

WHEREAS, the City Council of the City of Vallejo has received and reviewed the 2023-2024 Solano County Civil Grand Jury Report dated June 21, 2024, entitled "Solano County Canine Officer Training, Handling & End of Career Policies" and the Vallejo Police Department has prepared a response to the Report.

NOW, THEREFORE, THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF VALLEJO DOES HEREBY RESOLVE AS FOLLOWS:

Section 1. The City Council of the City of Vallejo approves and authorizes the response to the 2021-2022 Solano County Grand Jury Report entitled "Solano County Canine Officer Training, Handling & End of Career Policies" and authorizes the City Manager to execute the same. A copy of the response is attached hereto as **Exhibit A** and incorporated herein.

Section 2. The City Council of the City of Vallejo directs the City Clerk to forward the City Council's Grand Jury Report response to the Presiding Judge of the Solano County Superior Court and to the Foreperson of the Solano County Grand Jury.

Adopted by the City Council of the City of Vallejo at a regular meeting held on September 10, 2024, with the following vote:

AYES: Vice Mayor Loera-Diaz, Councilmembers Arriola, Matulac Palmares, and Verder-Aliga
NOES: None
ABSENT: Mayor McConnell and Councilmember Bregenzer
ABSTAIN: None

DocuSigned by:

ROBERT H. MCCONNELL

FD035AF23444F
ROBERT H. MCCONNELL, MAYOR

DocuSigned by:

Dawn G. Abrahamson

1489DDA6695D425
DAWN G. ABRAHAMSON, CITY CLERK

ATTEST:

Approved as to form:

By:  for
Veronica Nebb, City Attorney



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ANDREW MURRAY
City Manager