



ERIK UPSON
City Manager

September 20, 2022

Sent via email

Honorable Judge Wendy Getty
Solano County Civil Grand Jury
Hall of Justice
600 Union Avenue
Fairfield, CA 94533

RE: City of Benicia Response to 2021-2022 Solano County Grand Jury Report, “Effective Emergency Response Needs City and County Support”

Dear Honorable Judge Getty:

This letter shall serve as the City of Benicia’s response in accordance with Penal Code section 933.05 to the Solano County Grand Jury report entitled “Effective Emergency Response Needs City and County Support” as approved by the Benicia City Council on September 20, 2022.

Finding 2

The lack of a consolidated digital communication system in Solano County hampers effective firefighting efforts.

Recommendation 2

The Board of Supervisors broaden efforts to fund and promote the establishment of a modern digital county-wide emergency communications system.

Response to Finding 2

The City of Benicia agrees with Finding 2. Communications in Solano County continues to be a challenge and a significant firefighter (and Law Enforcement) safety issue. The City of Benicia supports efforts to improve interoperable communications in Solano County and agrees with the recommendation that the Solano County Board of Supervisors broaden efforts to fund and promote the establishment of a modern digital county-wide emergency communications system.

Finding 3

Although law enforcement and fire departments throughout the county have been working to establish a JPA to develop a consolidated communications system, there is little support from the county to finalize the efforts.

Recommendation 3

Expedite JPA agreement within the county and develop a plan to move forward.

Response to Finding 3

The City of Benicia agrees with Finding 3. It had become clear that the Solano County representative sitting on the JPA workgroup did not feel that a county radio JPA is the correct solution and continued to be the primary roadblock in the successful formation of a JPA. Therefore, unless the county agrees to this as a solution, Recommendation #3, to expedite a JPA agreement within the county, is not realistic. Fortunately, recent leadership changes within the County team have led to improved communications with Solano County, and their staff has indicated a renewed willingness to complete this project.

Finding 4

A county fire department is needed to serve the unincorporated areas of Solano County.

Recommendation 4

Solano County establish a county-wide fire department to serve the unincorporated areas of Solano County.

Response to Finding 4

The City of Benicia agrees with Finding 4. The current model of rural fire districts protecting unincorporated Solano County has led to decreased fire service in rural Solano County. As cities have continued to improve and meet current standards, the lack of available funding and resources has left the districts at a disadvantage. Solano County is the obvious choice to take on the responsibility of providing rural protection under the direction of a single point of leadership. This would create consistency and greater cooperation between the cities and rural areas. Alternatively, funding from the county could be distributed to the city fire departments to absorb the districts under city leadership and direction.

Finding 5

Board of Supervisors and cities within the county reprioritize the distribution of funds garnered from Proposition 172 ensuring that it is distributed more equitably to include fire safety.

Recommendation 5

Board of Supervisors and cities within the county reprioritize the distribution of funds garnered from Proposition 172 ensuring that it is distributed more equitably to include fire safety.

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Response to Finding 5

The City of Benicia agrees with Finding 5 and recommendation 5.

Finding 6

Only two agencies involved in the LNU fire produced after-action reports.

Recommendation 6

Solano County and cities within the county require all responding emergency agencies using public funding to produce after-action reports.

Response to Finding 6

The City of Benicia disagrees with Finding 6 and Recommendation 6. As stated in the report, California Code of Regulations, Title 19, section 2450 (a) states "Any city, city and county, or county declaring a local emergency for which the governor proclaims a state of emergency, and any state agency responding to that emergency shall complete and transmit an after-action report to Cal OES within ninety (90) days of the close of the incident period." The Benicia Fire Department only served in the role of mutual aid partner during the LNU incident and while Benicia Fire Staff participated in the post-fire debriefing, it would be inappropriate to produce a written after-action report for this response.

Please contact me if you have any further questions.

Sincerely,



Erik Upson
City Manager
City of Benicia

cc: Carl DuBois, 2021-2022 Solano County Grand Jury Foreperson
City Council of the City of Benicia
Ben Stock, City Attorney of the City of Benicia