

CITIES AND JOINT POWERS COMMITTEE

MISSION STATEMENT

The Cities and Joint Powers Committee of the 2013-2014 Kern County Grand Jury has the responsibility of interviewing those in authority of, and writing reports on the eleven incorporated cities within the County of Kern pursuant to California Penal Code §925(a). The Committee's power to investigate and publicly report on City Governments and Joint Powers Agencies maintains transparency of these bodies. In addition, the Committee is responsible for investigating and responding to complaints from Kern County residents.

CITIES AND JOINT POWERS COMMITTEE MEMBERS:



Lois Miller, Chair
Jerald Palmateer
Janet Radcliff

CITIES AND JOINT POWERS COMMITTEE

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES

The Cities and Joint Powers Committee visited nine of the eleven incorporated Cities of Kern County. During the visits, the Committee looked into budgets, contracts, joint power agreements, police authority, adherence to I-9 regulations and employee performance.

The nine incorporated Cities visited were:

- Arvin
- California City
- Delano
- Maricopa
- McFarland
- Shafter
- Taft
- Tehachapi
- Wasco

The Committee:

- Traveled 620 miles
- Wrote seven reports
- Received and answered two complaints from private citizens
- Visited and reported on the Housing Authority of County of Kern

CITY OF DELANO

PURPOSE OF INQUIRY:

Pursuant to Penal Code §925a the Cities and Joint Powers Committee (Committee) visited the City of Delano (City) on October 3, 2013, to inquire into the operations and management of the City.

PROCESS:

The Committee met with the City Manager, Director of Finance, Human Resource Director, Recreation Manager, Police Chief and the Engineering/Public Works Director. The meeting was held in the City Hall located at 1015 Eleventh Avenue, Delano California. The Committee reviewed past reports and did online research to determine many of the facts and background prior to speaking with Staff.

BACKGROUND/FACTS:

Delano was established in 1873. The name was provided by the Southern Pacific Railroad to honor the Secretary of the Interior of the United States.

The City is located 30 miles northwest of Bakersfield and 73 miles southwest of Fresno. In 1965 the Delano Grape Strike was reported nationwide when farm workers stopped working to bring attention to the need for higher wages and improved working conditions. As a result the labor union known as United Farm Workers of America came into existence.

FINDINGS:

- F1. The City has a population of over 53,000. Delano is the second largest city in Kern County with an increase of 33% over the past 10 years.
- F2. The City Manager has been in office a little more than two years and has worked for the City for six years.
- F3. The City has a two year budget of \$60 million and is audited every year by an outside auditor. An audit was being performed at the time the Committee visited.
- F4. The primary source of revenue for the City is from property and sales tax.
- F5. A previous Grand Jury report stated a new Market Place was to open and would provide 3,600 new jobs. However, due to litigation the opening has been delayed.

F6. The City has five regulation soccer fields. The Recreation Department oversees the 20 acre soccer park and rents the fields to clubs and organizations.

F7. The City has three high schools, four middle schools and 11 elementary schools. Three Resource Officers rotate between the schools and a school safety committee meets every month. The City has a curfew policy for students being found walking the streets between the hours of 7:30 am and 2:30 pm. Students will be detained if found during those hours.

F8. A local casino provides \$170,000 in revenue per year to the City.

F9. The City contracts with the County of Kern for fire service and is extremely pleased with the performance, however, the City feels there is an overcharge for the service at three million dollars a year.

F10. The City employs 88 Police Officers. A new police station is under construction and will open in the near future.

F11. The Community Correctional Facility is due to re-open in December 2013 and will employ additional staff. The Facility will be owned and operated by the City under the direction of the Police Chief.

COMMENTS:

The City Manager stated the City has plans to continue to grow with new commercial, industrial and housing developments. There are good schools and a variety of activities for seniors and teens.

The Committee thanks the staff for the time and hospitality provided. The Committee came away with a lot of information and a feeling of accomplishment in knowing the City is well groomed and prepared for growth.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

None

NOTES:

The City of Delano should post a copy of this report where it will be available for public review.

Persons wishing to receive an email notification of newly released reports may sign up at: www.co.kern.ca.us/grandjury, and click on: Sign up for early releases.

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NO RESPONSE REQUIRED

CITY OF MARICOPA

PURPOSE OF INQUIRY:

Pursuant to Penal Code §925(a) the Cities and Joint Powers Committee (Committee) visited the City of Maricopa (City) on November 14, 2013, to inquire into the operation and management of the City.

PROCESS:

The Committee met with the City Administrator and Deputy City Clerk. The meeting was held in the City Hall located at 400 California Street, Maricopa, California. The Committee reviewed past reports and researched online to determine facts and background of the City prior to the visit.

BACKGROUND/FACTS:

The City is located 50 miles Southwest of Bakersfield at Highway 166 and Highway 33. Incorporated in 1911 the population grew to 30,000 between 1917 and 1920. Due to a reduction in oil production, the population slowly decreased and is now 1,245 and the City is less than two square miles in area.

- A. The City Administrator is employed part-time and has been in the position since June 2011. The Administrator does not live in the City.
- B. The City has four full-time employees. Only one employee lives in the City.
- C. The five Members of the City Council meet twice a month and are paid a \$50 monthly stipend.
- D. The City recently hired a part-time grant writer.
- E. The City Police Department was disbanded in January 2012. The City now contracts with the Kern County Sheriff's Office for law enforcement. The City of Taft and California Highway Patrol also provide backup.

FINDINGS:

- F1. The City had a total revenue of \$399,971 and expenditures of \$249,133 for the fiscal year ending June 2013.
- F2. A \$220,000 grant for park renovation has expired, however, it will be renewed. Work on two parks should be completed by the end of 2014.

- F3. Money is on deposit from the Kern Council of Governments for a safety crosswalk on Highway 166.
- F4. The City owes citizens \$24 per parcel for previous sewer overcharges. Citizens will be compensated by a reduction in property taxes when the sewer fund is solvent.
- F5. The City does not have an Animal Control Officer but contracts with the City of Taft. An individual is being trained for the position.
- F6. At the time of the visit the City did not have a Code Compliance Officer. The Municipal Code is out of date.

COMMENTS:

The Committee would like to thank the City Manager and City Clerk for the cooperation and courtesy during the visit. The highlight of the visit came at the conclusion when one of the Grand Jury members suggested eating at the Tea Room at Maricopa High School. The Tea Room is operated by high school students majoring in the culinary arts where students prepare and serve the meals. The facility is open to the general public and is an asset to the community.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- R1. The City should update the Municipal Code. (Finding 6)

NOTES:

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RESPONSE REQUIRED WITHIN 90 DAYS TO:

**PRESIDING JUDGE
KERN COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT
1415 TRUXTUN AVENUE, 2ND FLOOR
BAKERSFIELD, CA 93301**

**cc: FOREPERSON
KERN COUNTY GRAND JURY
1415 TRUXTUN AVENUE, SUITE 600
BAKERSFIELD, CA 93301**



City of Maricopa, California

400 California Street
PO Box 550
Maricopa, California 93252
Office(661) 769-8279
Fax(661)769-8130

City Administrator
Eric G. Ziegler

March 25, 2014

Presiding Judge
Kern County Superior Court
1415 Truxtun Avenue, 2nd Floor
Bakersfield, CA 93301

Foreman
Kern County Grand Jury
1415 Truxtun Avenue
Suite 360
Bakersfield, CA 93301

Pursuant to Section 933.05 CPC, the City of Maricopa hereby submits the following response to the 2013 – 2014 Grand Jury Report dated January 29, 2014 re City of Maricopa.

FINDING F-1

The City had total revenue of \$399,971 and expenditures of \$249,133 for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2013.

RESPONSE

Respondent city agrees with this finding.

Respondent city has no reason to disagree with the conclusions of its CPA auditors.

FINDING F-2

A \$220,000 grant for park renovation has expired however, it will be renewed. Work on two parks should be complete by the end of 2014.

RESPONSE

Respondent City agrees with the gist of this finding with the following clarification: the original Proposition 220 Per Capita grant of \$220,000 expired on June 30, 2011; however, the grant was subsequently extended and is now scheduled to expire on March 31, 2015

FINDING F-3

Money is on deposit from the Kern Council of Governments for a safety crosswalk on Highway 166

RESPONSE

Respondent City disagrees with this finding. The city filed a grant application with KernCOG to procure funding for construction of a safety crosswalk on California route 166. However, the grant was not funded during the current cycle. The city will reapply when additional funds are available.

FINDING F-4

City owes citizens \$24 per parcel for previous sewer overcharges. Citizens will be compensated by reduction in property taxes when the sewer fund is solvent.

RESPONSE

Respondent City partially agrees with this finding.

To the extent that respondent city owes refunds for sewer service overcharges, the city owes refund only to those citizens who are connected to the city's sanitary sewer system and who paid the charge. Any refunds to citizens overcharged for sewer services will be compensated by reduction in sewer service fee (collected with but separate from property tax) when the sewer fund is solvent. These are subtle, but nonetheless substantive, differences from the language of the Finding F-4.

FINDING F-5

The City does not have an Animal Control Officer but contracts with the City of Taft. An individual is being trained for the position.

RESPONSE

Respondent City partially agrees with this finding.

Respondent City indeed does not have an Animal Control Officer at present. City contracts with City of Taft only for animal shelter services (not for animal control services). City is in the process of employing the services of a part-time Animal Control Officer. The City of Taft has graciously agreed to provide training to city's newly hired Animal Control Officer when hiring is completed.

FINDING F-6

At the time of the visit, the City did not have a Code Compliance Officer. The Municipal Code is out of date.

RESPONSE

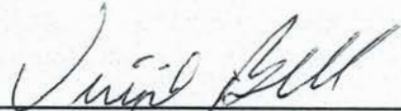
Respondent city agrees with this finding with the following observations: 1) Respondent city has a contract with Kern County for code compliance services. Thus, code compliance services are available for city residents; 2) respondent city is well aware that its municipal code is woefully out of date. Respondent city is working diligently through its city administrator and city attorney to update its municipal code as time and funds allow.

RECOMMENDATION R-1

The City should update the Municipal Code (Finding 6)

RESPONSE.

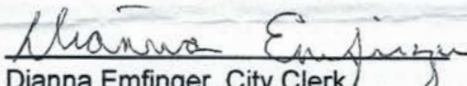
Respondent city concurs with recommendation is working diligently through its city administrator and city attorney to update its municipal code as time and funds allow. (See Response to finding F-6)



Virgil Bell, Mayor

3-25-2014
Date

ATTEST:



Dianna Emfinger, City Clerk

3-25-14
Date

CITY OF MARICOPA

CORRECTED REPORT

PURPOSE OF INQUIRY:

Pursuant to Penal Code §925(a) the Cities and Joint Powers Committee (Committee) visited the City of Maricopa (City) on November 14, 2013, to inquire into the operation and management of the City.

PROCESS:

The Committee met with the City Administrator and Deputy City Clerk. The meeting was held in the City Hall located at 400 California Street, Maricopa, California. The Committee reviewed past reports and researched online to determine facts and background of the City prior to the visit.

BACKGROUND/FACTS:

The City is located 50 miles Southwest of Bakersfield at Highway 166 and Highway 33. Incorporated in 1911 the population grew to 30,000 between 1917 and 1920. Due to a reduction in oil production, the population slowly decreased and is now 1,245 and the City is less than two square miles in area.

- A. The City Administrator is employed part-time and has been in the position since June 2011. The Administrator does not live in the City.
- B. The City has four full-time employees. Only one employee lives in the City.
- C. The five Members of the City Council meet twice a month and are paid a \$50 monthly stipend.
- D. The City recently hired a part-time grant writer.
- E. The City Police Department was disbanded in January 2012. The City now contracts with the Kern County Sheriff's Office for law enforcement. The City of Taft and California Highway Patrol also provide backup.

FINDINGS:

- F1. The City had a total revenue of \$399,971 and expenditures of \$249,133 for the fiscal year ending June 2013.

- F2. A \$220,000 grant for park renovation has expired, however, it will be renewed. Work on two parks should be completed by the end of 2014.
- F3. Money is on deposit from the Kern Council of Governments for a safety crosswalk on Highway 166.
- F4. The City owes citizens \$24 per parcel for previous REFUSE overcharges. Citizens will be compensated by a reduction in property taxes when the sewer fund is solvent.
- F5. The City does not have an Animal Control Officer but contracts with the City of Taft. An individual is being trained for the position.
- F6. At the time of the visit the City did not have a Code Compliance Officer. The Municipal Code is out of date.

COMMENTS:

The Committee would like to thank the City Manager and City Clerk for the cooperation and courtesy during the visit. The highlight of the visit came at the conclusion when one of the Grand Jury members suggested eating at the Tea Room at Maricopa High School. The Tea Room is operated by high school students majoring in the culinary arts where students prepare and serve the meals. The facility is open to the general public and is an asset to the community.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- R1. The City should update the Municipal Code. (Finding 6)
- R2. The City Council should notify residents as to when the \$24.00 per parcel refund for refuse fee will be refunded. (Finding 4)

NOTES:

The City of Maricopa should post a copy of this report where it will be available for public review.

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RESPONSE REQUIRED WITHIN 9 DAYS TO:

**KERN COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT
1415 TRUXTUN AVENUE, 2ND FLOOR
BAKERSFIELD, CA 93301**

**cc: FOREPERSON
KERN COUNTY GRAND JURY
1415 TRUXTUN AVENUE, SUITE 600
BAKERSFIELD, CA 93301**



City of Maricopa, California

400 California Street
PO Box 550
Maricopa, California 93252
Office(661) 769-8279
Fax(661)769-8130

City Administrator
Eric G. Ziegler

June 10, 2014

Presiding Judge
Kern County Superior Court
1415 Truxtun Avenue, 2nd Floor
Bakersfield, CA 93301

Foreman
Kern County Grand Jury
1415 Truxtun Avenue
Suite 360
Bakersfield, CA 93301

Pursuant to Section 933.05 CPC, the City of Maricopa hereby submits the following response to the 2013 – 2014 Grand Jury Report dated January 29, 2014 re City of Maricopa.

FINDING F-1

The City had total revenue of \$399,971 and expenditures of \$249,133 for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2013.

RESPONSE

Respondent city agrees with this finding.

Respondent city has no reason to disagree with the conclusions of its CPA auditors.

FINDING F-2

A \$220,000 grant for park renovation has expired however, it will be renewed. Work on two parks should be complete by the end of 2014.

RESPONSE

Respondent City agrees with the gist of this finding with the following clarification: the original Proposition 220 Per Capita grant of \$220,000 expired on June 30, 2011; however, the grant was subsequently extended and is now scheduled to expire on March 31, 2015

FINDING F-3

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RESPONSE

Respondent City disagrees with this finding. The city filed a grant application with KernCOG to procure funding for construction of a safety crosswalk on California route 166. However, the grant was not funded during the current cycle. The city will reapply when additional funds are available.

FINDING F-4

City owes citizens \$24 per parcel for previous refuse overcharges. Citizens will be compensated by reduction in property taxes when the refuse fund is solvent.

RESPONSE

Respondent City partially agrees with this finding.

To the extent that respondent city owes refunds for sewer service overcharges, the city owes refund only to those citizens who are connected to the city's sanitary sewer system and who paid the charge. Any refunds to citizens overcharged for sewer services will be compensated by reduction in sewer service fee (collected with but separate from property tax) when the sewer fund is solvent. These are subtle, but nonetheless substantive, differences from the language of the Finding F-4.

FINDING F-5

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RESPONSE

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FINDING F-6

At the time of the visit, the City did not have a Code Compliance Officer. The Municipal Code is out of date.

RESPONSE

Respondent city agrees with this finding with the following observations: 1) Respondent city has a contract with Kern County for code compliance services. Thus, code compliance services are available for city residents; 2) respondent city is well aware that its municipal code is woefully out of date. Respondent city is working diligently through its city administrator and city attorney to update its municipal code as time and funds allow.

RECOMMENDATION R-1

The City should update the Municipal Code (Finding 6)

RESPONSE.

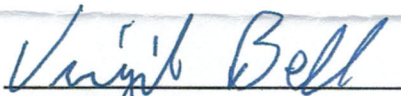
Respondent city concurs with recommendation is working diligently through its city administrator and city attorney to update its municipal code as time and funds allow. (See Response to finding F-6)

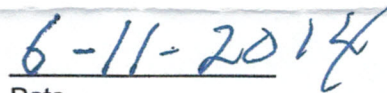
RECOMMENDATION R-2

The City Council should notify residents as to when the \$24,00 per parcel refund for refuse fee will be refunded. (finding 4).

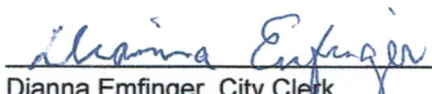
RESPONSE

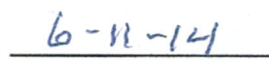
Respondent city declines to implement recommendation because it is not warranted in that the city has insufficient resources to estimate when such funds may be available and sees no reason to create a political issue where none currently exists.


Virgil Bell, Mayor


Date

ATTEST:


Dianna Emfinger, City Clerk


Date

CITY OF MCFARLAND

“THE LITTLE CITY THAT COULD”

PURPOSE OF INQUIRY:

The Cities and Joint Powers Committee (Committee) of the 2013-2014 Kern County Grand Jury visited the City of McFarland (City) on August 8, 2013, to inquire into the operation and management of the City pursuant to California Penal Code §925a.

PROCESS:

The visit was held at the City Hall located at 401 West Kern Avenue, McFarland, CA 93250. Present were the City Manager, Planning Director, Grants Director, Public Works Director and a Sergeant from the Police Department. The Committee was given a copy of the City's Annual Budget Report.

BACKGROUND:

The City was founded in 1908, incorporated in 1957 and is named after J. B. McFarland. The City is a growing community located in the Southern San Joaquin Valley of Kern County. The City is deeply rooted in agriculture.

FACTS:

- A. The City Manager has hired new department heads including a Finance Director, Planning Director, Grant Director, Police Chief and promoted the Public Works Director.
- B. The City has received grant monies from various agencies in excess of 10 million dollars. The grants included street repairs, monies to beautify the pedestrian bridge connecting the east side of town to the west side over Highway 99, new state of the art police vehicles, animal control vehicles, electric motorcycles, establishment of new parks and CalHomes grants for first time buyers.
- C. The City has contracted a former member of the Kern Council of Governments to assist in receiving a fair share of funds for road improvements.
- D. The City is working with a solar company to install panels over the Wastewater Facility to reduce energy costs by approximately 20%. Sewer rates for residents were reduced by a total of \$6.00 a month.

- E. The City Manager states the new administration has accomplished five years of work in the previous two years. The City is working to bring new businesses and industries to the City to provide more jobs and revenue.
- F. The City has a new logo depicting the accomplishments of the Cross Country Track Team under the leadership of the former Head Coach. The team won nine consecutive state championships. The logo has nine stars with a runner in the center highlighting the accomplishment. The story of the Coach and track team is to be depicted in an upcoming movie entitled “McFarland.”
- G. The City Police Department won the “Best Car of the West” award for state of the art equipment, weaponry and electronics by the California Peace Officers Association.
- H. The Grants Director, with the monies obtained by the grants awarded, has made a significant contribution to the City.
- I. The City has improved the quality of life for residents by better communication, i.e., holding meetings between residents and Police Department personnel, quarterly tri-agency meetings and monthly meetings with the County Supervisor.
- J. The Police Department presently has 14 Officers, 16 Reserve Officers, two K-9 units and two Animal Control Officers. The philosophy of the Department is community policing. Most of the Officers are bilingual. The City has formed a task force with the City of Delano to combat gang violence.
- K. Five Police Department Explorers recently graduated from the Riverside Training Facility. The City is proud of the efforts and accomplishments.

FINDINGS:

- F1. The information obtained from the official McFarland web site proved to be inaccurate and not up to date in reference to agricultural commodities.

COMMENTS:

The City has an impressive list of active projects with the intent of making the community a better place to live and conduct business. Many new single family homes are under construction. The City Manager stated the City is the fastest growing community in Kern County. A drive through the community was proof of the positive changes. The Committee thanks the City Manager and staff for the briefing and information provided.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

R1. The City should update the web site to reflect current agricultural commodities. (Finding 1).

NOTES:

The City of McFarland should post a copy of this report where it will be available for public review.

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RESPONSE REQUIRED WITHIN 90 DAYS TO:

**PRESIDING JUDGE
KERN COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT
1415 TRUXTUN AVENUE, 2ND FLOOR
BAKERSFIELD, CA 93301**

**cc: FOREPERSON
KERN COUNTY GRAND JURY
1415 TRUXTUN AVENUE, SUITE 600
BAKERSFIELD, CA 93301**

June 25, 2014

Presiding Judge
Kern County Superior Court
1415 Truxtun Avenue, 2nd Floor
Bakersfield, CA 93301

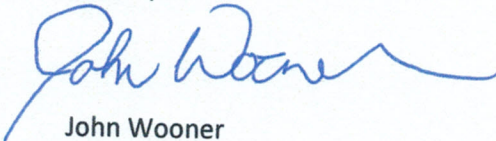
RE: Grand Jury Recommendation Response - City of McFarland.
R1. The City should update the web site to reflect current agricultural commodities.

Presiding Judge and Grand Jury Foreperson,

I would like to apologize for my late response. The recommendation is that the city should reflect current agricultural commodities. The city will be shutting down its old web-site and launching a new improved web-site. The new web-site will allow citizens to pay bills online; obtain forms and permits; have access to ordinances and agenda's; gives an over view of city council and staff. Information about agriculture and commodities will be done via links to agriculture reports.

The city is excited about the new web-site and the future of the City of McFarland. Again, I am extremely sorry about the late response.

Thank you



John Wooner
City Manager

cc: Foreperson
Kern County Grand Jury
1415 Truxtun Ave., Suite 600
Bakersfield, CA 93301

CITY OF SHAFTER

PURPOSE OF INQUIRY:

The Cities and Joint Powers Committee (Committee) of the Kern County Grand Jury visited the City of Shafter (City) April 7, 2014. The Committee inquired into the management and operation of the City pursuant to California Penal Code §925(a).

BACKGROUND/FACTS:

The City of Shafter was incorporated in 1938 and is located 18 miles northwest of Bakersfield. Current population is 17,000 with slow growth. Most of the citizens live in the metropolitan area with a few farms outside City limits. There are new housing developments in progress.

The City is a Charter City. A Charter City is not required to pay prevailing wages, has a greater degree of control over municipal affairs and may enact legislation as long as the legislation does not violate the State or Federal Constitution.

The recently retired City Manager held the position for 31 years while working with others in the City, leaving a record of many positive accomplishments in agriculture, industry and businesses.

FINDINGS:

- F1. The City owns a two-mile rail system. Trucks and trains come to Shafter from Los Angeles and other areas. Shafter employees then move the rail cars, filled with merchandise, to large distribution centers at the end of the rail line. Transportation grants provided funds for the rail lines and maintenance. The City looks forward to a temporary terminal in the future for the expected High Speed Rail System.
- F2. The primary source of revenue for the City is sales and tariff taxes from the distribution centers
- F3. The City budget for 2013-2014 is \$31 million. The General Fund is 52% of that total.
- F4. The City recently gave Police Officers a raise and the City Council approved two new positions and hired one Cadet. There is still one vacancy in an established position. There are a total of 23 sworn Officers. The Police Station is currently being remodeled.
- F5. The recently reopened California Correction Facility has 630 inmates and as a result has increased employment for local citizens. The City receives \$1 million a year from the Facility.

- F6. The Shafter School Project is a partnership with the City of Shafter, Richland School District and the Kern High School District which promotes early reading and has a successful high school tutoring program. According to the 2012-2013 Kern County Grand Jury Report, the purpose of the Shafter School Project was to develop a workforce of educated citizens living in Shafter and able to fill jobs being created in the City. As a result an accelerated learning center has a computer lab, an English Language Learners (ELL) class for parents desiring to learn how to read and write English and is open 70 hours a week. When asked for opinions of the program, many teachers, pastors and citizens felt the program is working well.
- F7. The City has an emergency plan; however, the City is behind on drills and is presently working to implement more training.
- F8. The City has drafted a proposal to present to the City Council regarding public education on water conservation. The City is also testing to drill a new water well.
- F9. The new City Manager recently purchased a home in Shafter and will be moving in the near future.

COMMENTS:

The Committee appreciates the time extended by the City Manager to answer questions and provide information about the City. The Manager stated the City does have challenges dealing with revenue, public safety and public education. Keeping the residents positive is the most important ingredient for good working conditions as a team.

The Committee was impressed that such a small town has accomplished so many projects.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

None

NOTES:

The City of Shafter should post a copy of this report where it will be available for public review.

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NO RESPONSE REQUIRED

CITY OF TAFT

PURPOSE OF INQUIRY:

The Cities and Joint Powers Committee (Committee) of the 2013-2014 Kern County Grand Jury visited the City of Taft (City) on September 26, 2013, to inquire into the operation and management of the City pursuant to California Penal Code §925a.

PROCESS:

The visit was held at City Hall, 209 East Kern Street, Taft, CA 93268. The Committee met with the City Manager, City Clerk, Finance Director, Human Resources Director and the Chief of Police.

BACKGROUND/FACTS:

Founded as an oil town in the early 1900s, the City was incorporated in 1910. After a fire burned much of the town the name was changed to Taft in honor of the 27th President of the United States. The City is located 30 miles southwest of Bakersfield with a population of 9,327 according to the 2010 census.

- A. The Police Department has 16 full-time Officers and three Reserve Officers. Four Officers are bilingual.
- B. Statistics show crime is up 26% to 30% with auto theft up 40%. There has not been a reported homicide since 1991.

FINDINGS:

- F1. The City currently has 53 employees.
- F2. City schools have full-time Police Officers assigned to patrol campuses. Three School Resource Officers are paid by the Superintendent of Schools. Due to pro-active efforts by Officers, attendance is up considerably at the Junior High School.
- F3. The City has recently hired a grant writer. Recent grants have been acquired to:
 - Revitalize the downtown area
 - Repair sidewalks, gutters and curbs
 - Resurface some streets
 - Purchase new police vehicles
 - Established a " Rails to Trails" bike path

- Update bus shelters and install security cameras on all City busses
- F4. The City has an urgent care center but does not have 24 hour medical services available.
- F5. In September the courthouse cut back to one day a week. As a result 20 employees were laid off. Citizens with court business must now go to Lamont. Due to lack of transportation from Taft to Lamont there are many “no shows.”
- F6. A new five million dollar complex services the needs of seniors in the City. Low cost meals, “Meals on Wheels,” computer classes and various other activities for seniors are provided by the Parks and Recreation Department.
- F7. The City Fire Department closed five years ago and now contracts with the County of Kern for fire protection saving the City \$900,000 a year. The Bureau of Land Management leases the old fire department building from the City.
- F8. The City is in need of new housing for growth in population.
- F9. The City boasts 12 new businesses which are oil field related.

COMMENTS:

At the time of the Committee’s visit the City was in contract negotiations with the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors (Supervisors) to house 500 low-level inmates from the Los Angeles County Jail. The City made preparations at Taft Community Correctional Facility and was expecting the arrival of inmates in November. As of this writing Supervisors voted to end contract negotiations. The City is currently reviewing a contract with the California Department of Corrections.

The City Staff was accommodating and informative. After the visit the Committee drove around the City and viewed the Oil Worker Monument, the Oil Museum and the historic Fox Theater. The City streets were clean and well maintained. The Staff is to be commended for vision and planning for future growth in the City.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

None

NOTES:

The City of Taft should post a copy of this report where it will be available for public review.

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NO RESPONSE REQUIRED

CITY OF TEHACHAPI

PURPOSE OF INQUIRY:

The Cities and Joint Powers Committee (Committee) of the 2013-2014 Kern County Grand Jury visited the City of Tehachapi on April 29, 2014, in accordance with California Penal Code §925a.

PROCESS:

The visit took place at City Hall located at 115 South Robinson, Tehachapi, California. The Committee was invited to meet with the City Manager, Planning Director, Police Chief, Finance Director, Airport Manager, City Engineer, Assistant City Manager and the Community Development Director.

BACKGROUND:

The City was previously known as Old Towne and is registered as California Historical Landmark #643 and is the oldest settlement in the Tehachapi Valley. In 1909 the Tehachapi settlement was incorporated and the City of Old Towne was legally established. An act of the State Legislature changed the City's official name to Tehachapi in 1946.

The population of the City is 14,000 including inmates at the California Correctional Institution. Without inmate population the City has approximately 9,000 citizens.

FINDINGS:

- F1. The City Manager has worked with the City for ten years and has been Manager for five years. The City is recovering from the dissolution of the Redevelopment Agency and has a general plan that is unique and proactive with the design to maintain a certain quality of life.
- F2. The Police Chief will retire in June 2014, just as the Police Department will move into the new and creatively designed headquarters. The new facility, made possible by enterprise funds, is 12,000 square feet. The old building was only 3,800 square feet. The new building has three holding cells and a large multi-purpose room designed to accommodate the Police Department Staff for years to come. The Department has 16 sworn officers and two resource officers for Tehachapi schools, the second one recently hired through a Federal hiring grant. As in many cities there is a problem with methamphetamine (meth) use, however, the Chief reported a Kern County Meth Reduction Task Force has recently been established to address the problem. The Department has one K-9 unit.

- F3. The Finance Director had the year end report and most recent audit available for the Committee. The City has two outstanding bonds left; one for the new sewer system and one for the wastewater treatment facility. The Redevelopment Agency was repaid \$1.3 million. The Finance Director stated there is \$1.5 million available in the general fund and is up to date with all records.
- F4. Funds were donated and supplemented with grants for "Freedom Plaza", to honor the five main branches of the United States Military. The Plaza will be built on the southwest corner at the intersection of Curry Street and Tehachapi Boulevard. Construction is due to begin soon.
- F5. The Airport Manager has been director for two years. The City owns the airport which has two employees. The airport was built in 1929; the tarmac needs to be resurfaced at a cost of half a million dollars for which a grant is being generated. The airport has a frequently used and fully automated fuel stop that is known for low cost fuel. The airport is uncontrolled (no control tower) so pilots fly in without clearance. Planes fly in, bringing people to use hotels, restaurants and tourist attractions. The helipad is used by the Kern County Sheriff, Kern County Fire Department, and the hospital and is highly maintained. Many community events use the grounds of the airport; one being the July 4th event for the City. The Airport partners with Air Fairs, War Birds, Antique Aircraft shows and FAA. The Airport has a campground used regularly by hikers from the Pacific Crest Trail.
- F6. The City Engineer has five employees working on capital projects, interfacing with private developments, issuing permits and ensuring Code compliance. The Department is proactive in attempting to connect all residential areas of the City. A new road, Challenger Drive, will take traffic to the north side of Highway 58 and around the area of the new hospital under construction. The Engineer is writing proposals for road improvement grants totaling \$8 million.
- F7. The City does not have a grant writer position; however, all departments are actively involved in writing grants. The City has received over \$12 million in grants in the last ten years.
- F8. The Assistant Manager is working on a classification study to ensure the City has the right people in the right places, is concerned with personnel policies, process and accountability and uses a performance management system. Safety is the KEY concern.
- F9. The Administrative Manager said the new City motto is: "A Place to Live UP" and it is obvious the City is proud of what is being done in every department. Some of the programs the City has implemented or is involved with include:
- Main Street Program (enhance the downtown area with street lighting and walkways)

- Outreach and Economic Council
- Bakersfield Women's Conference
- Kern County Business Conference

There is a feasibility study for a Mountain Park, and an Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) facility. A new Event Center was recently finished. The City is definitely interested in drawing tourists to the area.

- F10. The City is advertising the tourist aspect via commercial ads in Lancaster theaters.
- F11. The biggest employers in the City are the prison, the wind farms and schools.
- F12. The Environmental Impact Report is approved for a new Wal-Mart which is to be constructed in the northwest area of town.
- F13. The long awaited new hospital is under construction north of Highway 58 and will have 125 beds.

COMMENTS:

The Committee wishes to thank and commend all members of the Management Team for information and the obvious pride in the City. There are so many positive qualities and great developments going on that the Committee is at a loss to list all that were mentioned. The Committee could feel the excitement and motivation among the team and looks forward to visiting again.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

NONE

NOTES:

The City of Tehachapi should post a copy of this report where it will be available for public review.

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NO RESPONSE REQUIRED

CITY OF WASCO

PURPOSE OF INQUIRY:

On April 7, 2014, the Cities and Joint Powers Committee (Committee) of the 2013-2014 Kern County Grand Jury visited the City of Wasco (City) pursuant to California Penal Code §925a.

PROCESS:

The Committee met with the City Manager and several key employees and received information on changes and plans for the City's future.

BACKGROUND:

The City of Wasco was formerly known as the "Rose Capital of the Nation" with eight major commercial rose companies previously located in the area. There were over 50 million rose plants blooming between March and December. Every year visitors came to see the many plants in full bloom. The Committee was disappointed to learn that roses are no longer a major crop.

FINDINGS:

- F1. The City is below the State average for personal income and has a high rate of unemployment.
- F2. About 50 single family homes are being built every year.
- F3. There are several senior housing areas in the City.
- F4. Animal Control has a new shelter. The adoption rate is 60% due to active rescue groups in the area. Many animals are taken to other areas for adoption.
- F5. There is a plan to move farm labor camp housing from the present location on the east side of Highway 43 to the west side and closer to schools and commercial centers.
- F6. The City received a grant from Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) for 25,000 LED energy efficient street lights.
- F7. A Super Wal-Mart is under construction and due to open in late July or early August 2014.

- F8. The City has a water conservation program with an ordinance for a watering schedule with code enforcement monitoring adherence to the program.
- F9. The City has installed synthetic turf along medians to conserve water. The turf is expected to last up to 15 years.
- F10. Wasco is considering becoming a charter city. Public hearings are being held to inform citizens of the possibility and the effect the change would have on the City. There will be a vote on the subject in the November elections.
- F11. City Hall is closed every other Friday.
- F12. The City's main source of revenue is from sales and property taxes. There is also a transit tax from three hotels in the City.
- F13. City Hall is in a nicely renovated fire station.
- F14. The City is proactive in keeping crime down and managing gang activity. There are periodic probation sweeps.
- F15. The City receives monies from Kern Council of Governments (KCOG) for road maintenance.
- F16. There is no longer a golf course.

COMMENTS:

The Committee would like to thank the City Officials for the time extended and for answering questions. The Committee will look forward to seeing the upcoming changes as presented during the interview. The City is definitely working toward water conservation, positive ideas for growth and future revenue. The City is to be commended for changes that have already been put in place.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

NONE

NOTES:

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NO RESPONSE REQUIRED

HOUSING AUTHORITY OF THE COUNTY OF KERN

PURPOSE OF INQUIRY:

Pursuant to Penal Code §925 the Cities and Joint Powers Committee (Committee) of the 2013-2014 Kern County Grand Jury visited the Housing Authority of the County of Kern (HACK). The meeting was to inquire into the operations and to learn procedures used to provide housing for low income residents in Kern County.

PROCESS:

On November 4, 2013, the Committee visited HACK, located at 601 24th Street, Bakersfield, California and met with the Executive Director. The Committee was presented with a copy of the 2012-2013 Annual Report for HACK, a report of Kern County Affordable Housing Developments and a printout of pay schedules for employees of HACK.

BACKGROUND/FACTS:

HACK was created in 1939 by the Board of Supervisors to *“improve the quality of life for low income residents of Kern County by providing safe, affordable housing and assisting residents towards self-sufficiency and home ownership.”*

The Annual Report stated *“it has been a rough year due to financial cutbacks.”* The Report gave further information about employee pay cuts, vacant positions and having to close the office on Fridays due to a five percent reduction in funding. Much of the information for the Committee’s report came from printed information received from the Director.

- A. The Director is hired by a volunteer Commission made up of seven members; five are appointed by the Board of Supervisors; one from each Supervisorial District and two are tenant Commissioners. Tenant Commissioners live in one of the developments.
- B. Commissioners serve four year terms, meet monthly and are given a stipend of \$50.00 per meeting.
- C. Commissioners approve or disapprove policies and do an annual evaluation of the Director.
- D. The Director earns approximately \$128,000 per year.

E. The total budget for HACK is \$40 million a year.

F. There are over 100 affordable housing developments:

Arvin	eleven	Taft	two
Lost Hills	one	Tehachapi	two
McFarland	three	Wasco	eleven
Mojave	two	Bakersfield	forty
Oildale	two	California City	one
Ridgecrest	two	Delano	eleven
Rosamond	one	Lake Isabella	one
Shafter	six	Lamont	four

FINDINGS:

- F1. The Housing Choice Voucher Program, Section 8, had been closed for a long period of time before a waiting list was opened for new applicants in October 2012. The program received 13,000 applications in one month.
- F2. Sequestration, the 5% reduction in funding to nearly all federal non-entitlement programs effective March 1, 2013, had a significant impact on HACK and the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) programs. There is no funding available for the HUD funded program (other than special programs) so applicants will have to wait a minimum of five years for rental assistance. Also, to make reduced voucher funds stretch farther, payment standards were cut effective July 1, 2013, resulting in some families having to pay a larger share of rent.
- F3. There are special programs for certain categories such as Veterans' Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) which is open to homeless, qualified veterans. There are 115 vouchers available through the VASH program. Other housing categories are for Seniors, Families, Disabled Persons, Transition Age Youth (TAY), Farm Workers and Sober Living.
- F4. Homes First is a program for homeless people. The program provides 36 vouchers per year. A survey is taken of people living on the streets that are in poor health and in need of immediate assistance. The program provides a rental voucher to move an applicant into an apartment, then other agencies help with medical needs and further rental assistance. Donations also come from the community to help with necessary funding. There has been a great success rate with people approved for the program and a 20% plus drop in homeless people.

- F5. If a family or individual is displaced by a government action, e.g., the families moved from a motel because of unsanitary or inadequate living conditions, those families' names are moved to the top of a list and become eligible for immediate housing.
- F6. TAY clients are eligible for housing assistance but are difficult to house because many are not mature or disciplined enough to maintain apartments. *"Kern County Mental Health provides on-site services and case management with support from Covenant Community Services in serving the TAY residents."* Twenty vouchers have been made available for the TAY category.
- F7. In that same complex there are 35 other apartments with *"...rents affordable to families earning less than 50% of area median income."* The apartments are energy efficient one, two or three bedrooms with a community center, a computer lab and a "tot lot." HACK manages the property, provides rental assistance and offers on-site services for families.
- F8. *"HACK is committed to providing programs and activities to residents that help to improve the quality of life."* In senior housing there are new programs including brain games where puzzles and word searches are provided to help seniors keep active and to stimulate the mind. Seniors are also encouraged to attend nutrition classes and health workshops. Tai Chi classes teach low impact exercises focused on balance and stretching. Birthday parties, craft classes and a senior story time are also available for residents.
- F9. There is a non-smoking policy for all housing units effective as of July 2013 and has been well received. The emphasis is due to health hazards of smoking as well as being more cost effective because units that are smoke free are easier to clean and maintain.
- F10. One full time and three part time employees of HACK investigate fraud and do background screenings. The investigators are retired from law enforcement and are skilled in verifying an applicant's source of income and the number of people living in an apartment compared with the original contract.

- F11. Gardeners are contracted to maintain 2,100 units. On site managers deal with maintenance problems until five p.m. and after five a 24 hour answering service is available to tenants. Other site managers are available to collect rents and handle complaints but do not live on the premises.
- F12. A new complex for seniors is being built at California Avenue and Q Street and should be completed in 2014. Another complex is being built on Baker Street for low income families.

COMMENTS:

The Committee was impressed though somewhat overwhelmed by the many and varied programs available. The Housing Authority of the County of Kern works diligently to provide adequate housing to low income and impoverished people in spite of numerous financial cutbacks. The HACK agency is consistent with payments to landlords in 900 units of public housing. There is a difference between Public Housing and a pilot program titled Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD).

Selected Public Housing developments can leave the Public Housing program and convert to RAD. The RAD program is a federal government HUD pilot project that provides project rental assistance and makes loans for remodeling. The HACK agency applied to RAD for a 70 unit development and was chosen to participate. The development was constructed in the 1940's and was in desperate need of improvements. Through RAD the development will be sold to a limited partnership and the project will acquire tax credits and tax-exempt bond financing. Residents will benefit after \$40,000 worth of work in each unit is completed. The units will be preserved as affordable housing for many years to come.

The Committee wishes to thank the Director for time and information presented. The Committee attempted to create a report that will reflect some of the very positive programs of the Housing Authority of the County of Kern.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

None

NOTES:

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