

# **CITIES AND JOINT POWERS COMMITTEE**



**MICHAEL MCNATT  
CHAIRPERSON**



**PATRICIA BOYANCE**



**HOANG NGO**

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

Pursuant to California Penal Code §925(a), the Cities and Joint Powers Committee may examine the books and records of all incorporated cities and joint power authorities within the County of Kern.

The Committee may also investigate any department, and records of the officers, accounts and operations of the city or joint power agency. Recommendations may be made that are deemed proper and fit.

# **CITIES AND JOINT POWERS COMMITTEE**

## **ACTIVITIES**

### **REPORTS WRITTEN AND PUBLISHED:**

- City of Arvin
- City of California City
- City of Ridgecrest
- City of Shafter
- City of Taft
- City of Tehachapi
- City of Wasco

### **Additionally, members of the Committee also visited and attended:**

- Kern County Sheriff's Office Central Receiving Facility
- California Department of Correction Tehachapi Prison
- Larry J Rhoades Kern Crossroads Facility
- Camp Erwin Owen
- Kern County Sheriff's Office K-9 Unit
- Kern County Sheriff's Office Bomb Squad Unit
- Kern County Sheriff's Office Air Unit Helipad – Overflowing Levees in Lamont
- Kern County Animal Services
- Kern County Grand Jury Awareness Month participation
- Kern County Toys for Tots participation
- Kern County Home and Garden Show participation
- Bakersfield Police Department Canine Unit
- Ronald McDonald House
- Lamont Levees Inspection
- Quail Valley Water District
- Lebec Water District Meeting
- Kern County Auditor Meeting
- Kern County Auditor/Fraud Examiner Meeting
- North Kern Cemetery District Meeting
- Kern County Board of Supervisor Meetings
- Kern County Auditor Controller/County Clerk/Registrar of Voters
- Kern County District Attorney Department Indictment Hearing

# **CITY OF ARVIN**

## **The Garden in the Sun**

### **PURPOSE OF INQUIRY:**

The Cities and Joint Powers Committee (Committee) of the 2016-2017 Kern County Grand Jury (Grand Jury) inspected the City of Arvin (City) on November 15, 2016, to inquire into the operations and management of the City pursuant to California Penal Code §925a.

### **PROCESS:**

The Committee met with the City Manager. The meeting was held at City Hall located at 200 Campus Drive, Arvin, CA 93203. The Grand Jury reviewed Arvin's website and past Grand Jury Reports.

### **BACKGROUND AND FACTS:**

- A. The City of Arvin is a rural community nestled at the foot of Bear Mountain. It bills itself as "The Garden in the Sun" owing to the farming of carrots and cotton to grapes and grain, which has filled its fertile lands. The City was named after Arvin Richardson, son of one of the original settling families. The Post Office was established in 1914. A Kern County Library branch was established in 1927. The Mountain View Oil Field underlies the town and much of the surrounding area, and was discovered in 1933.
- B. The Arvin Migratory Labor Camp was created during the Presidency of Franklin D. Roosevelt in response to the "great depression". This was considered a model, built by the Resettlement Administration, and opened in 1937 by the Farm Security Administration.
- C. In 1960, the community was officially incorporated as the City of Arvin.
- D. The City is served by the Arvin Union School District, Kern High School District, and Grimmway Academy.
- E. Law enforcement is provided by the Arvin Police Department.
- F. Fire protection is provided through a contract with the Kern County Fire Department.

## **FINDINGS:**

- F1. Arvin's population of over 20,000, according to a 2015 Kosmont Company Report, consists of 93% Hispanic, with over 50% speaking Spanish only. In order to accommodate all citizens, City meetings provide a Spanish translator, and informational literature is printed in both English and Spanish.
- F2. City Council members are elected every 4 years. A new City Grant Writer has recently been hired. The City is considering hiring a City Engineer to save money in planning and engineering City projects, which otherwise would be spent for outside services.
- F3. The City is financially stable and has a 25% minimum reserve in operating accounts. There are over 4,000 homes subject to property tax collections. Other income is derived from sales tax. Economic development is high on the City's list of objectives.
- F4. A Retail Leakage report indicates 80% of expendable dollars are leaving Arvin. Residents who work outside of the City tend to spend their money outside the City limits.
- F5. The City Council approved infrastructure loans to attract new business. The City Manager is considering options to refinance the Waste Water Management loan to lower the interest rate from 5% to 3%. The City provides sewer service; trash collection is contracted with an outside vendor.
- F6. Arvin is looking forward to a satellite Bakersfield College campus which is anticipated to be built within 3 years.
- F7. Local schools provide instruction in English. Spanish-only speaking students are provided a bilingual teacher for two to three months, concentrating on English instruction. In grades 9 to 12, there are approximately 30 students dependent on this form of instruction.
- F8. Grimmway Farms has a large carrot processing plant employing many of the people of Arvin. Because of seasonal jobs, the unemployment rate is higher than other areas of Kern County (County).
- F9. The City has assumed responsibility for the County park. The County contributed approximately 15 acres of land, and will provide maintenance costs for a period of four years. The Arvin Public Financing Authority is considering other revenue streams to raise additional funds to operate parks and recreation. Action Park was financed by funds from:

- The State Community Development Block Grant: \$400,000
- The California Endowment: \$125,000
- The Tony Hawk Foundation: \$15,000
- The City of Arvin: \$100,000

F10. The Arvin Police Department has 21 sworn officers with a total of approximately 30 employees. A new Chief of Police has been hired from Tulare County. The Evidence Room was inspected and approved by the Kern County Sheriff's Office.

F11. Due to Proposition 64, the City plans to implement safeguards regarding marijuana production:

- Ban outdoor growth
- Up to six plants per household
- Must obtain the appropriate license
- After a 24 hour notice, home inspection may occur
- Must have homeowner's permission if occupant is renting

F12. The City owns a building to be used by the Arvin Historical Society for a future museum and tourist information center.

F13. The City is looking forward to the Police Activities League partnering with the Boys & Girls Club to develop plans for a future center.

## **COMMENTS:**

The Committee believes the City is making huge steps in meeting the needs of the large Hispanic population. The Committee commends the City of Arvin for the information and expertise provided.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- R1. The City needs to closely monitor marijuana issues. (Finding 11)
- R2. The City should consider hiring a full-time staff member to be responsible for community and economic development. (Finding 3)
- R3. The City should continue looking into hiring a Parks and Recreation Manager. (Finding 9)

## **NOTES:**

- The City of Arvin 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](http://www.co.kern.ca.us/grandjury).
- Present and past Kern County Grand Jury Final Reports and Responses can be accessed on the Kern County Grand Jury website: [www.co.kern.ca.us/grandjury](http://www.co.kern.ca.us/grandjury).

## **RESPONSE REQUIRED WITHIN 90 DAYS:**

**PRESIDING JUDGE  
KERN COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT  
1415 TRUXTUN AVENUE, SUITE 200  
BAKERSFIELD, CA 93301**

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



# CITY OF ARVIN

**MAYOR**

Jose Gurrola

**MAYOR PRO TEM**

Jazmin Robles

**COUNCIL MEMBERS**

Erika Madrigal

Gabriela Martinez

Jess Ortiz

**CITY MANAGER**

Alfonso Noyola, ICMA-CM

June 29, 2017

The Honorable Charles Brehmer, Presiding Judge  
Kern County Superior Court  
1415 Truxtun Avenue, Suite 212  
Bakersfield, CA 93301

Honorable Judge Brehmer,

The City is in receipt of the Kern County Grand Jury Report for 2016-2017. Below are the City's responses to the Grand Jury's findings and recommendations.

**FINDINGS:**

F1. Arvin's population of over 20,000, according to a 2015 Kosmont Company Report, consists of 93% Hispanic, with over 50% speaking Spanish only. In order to accommodate all citizens, City Meetings provide a Spanish translator, and informational literature is printed in both English and Spanish.

**City agrees with the findings.**

F2. City Council members are elected every 4 years. A new City Grant Writer has recently been hired. The City is considering hiring a City Engineer to save money in planning and engineering City projects, which otherwise would be spent for outside services.

**City agrees with the findings.**

F3. The City is financially stable and has a 25oh minimum reserve in operating accounts. There are over 4,000 homes subject to property tax collections. Other income is derived from sales tax. Economic development is high on the City's list of objectives.

**City agrees with the findings.**

Phone (661) 854-3134  
Fax (661) 854-0817

200 Campus Drive  
J. Box 548  
Arvin, California 93203



- F4. A Retail Leakage report indicates 80% of expendable dollars are leaving Arvin. Residents who work outside of the City tend to spend their money outside the City limits.

**City agrees with the findings.**

- F5. The City Council approved infrastructure loans to attract new business. The City Manager is considering options to refinance the Waste Water Management loan to lower the interest rate from 5% to 3%. The City provides sewer service; trash collection is contracted with an outside vendor.

**City agrees with the findings. The waste water loan refinancing has been completed.**

- F6. Arvin is looking forward to a satellite Bakersfield College campus which is anticipated to be built within 3 years.

**City agrees with the findings.**

- F7. Local schools provide instruction in English. Spanish-only speaking students are provided a bilingual teacher for two to three months, concentrating on English instruction. In grades 9 to 12, there are approximately 30 students dependent on this form of instruction.

**City agrees with the findings.**

- F8. Grimmway Farms has a large carrot processing plant employing many of the people of Arvin. Because of seasonal jobs, the unemployment rate is higher than other areas of Kern County (County).

**City agrees with the findings.**

- F9. The City has assumed responsibility for the County park. The County contributed approximately 15 acres of land, and will provide maintenance costs for a period of four years. The Arvin Public Financing Authority is considering other revenue streams to raise additional funds to operate parks and recreation. Action Park was financed by funds from:

- The State Community Development Block Grant: \$400,000. The California Endowment: \$125,000
- The Tony Hawk Foundation: \$15,000
- The City of Arvin: \$100,000

**City agrees with the findings.**



F10. The Arvin Police Department has 21 sworn officers with a total of approximately 30 employees. A new Chief of Police has been hired from Tulare County. The Evidence Room was inspected and approved by the Kern County Sheriff's Office.

**City partially agrees with the findings. There are 18 sworn positions. The Evidence Room was inspected and approved by 1413 Consulting, a consulting firm hired by the City.**

F11. Due to Proposition 64, the City plans to implement safeguards regarding marijuana production:

- Ban outdoor growth
- Up to six plants per household
- Must obtain the appropriate license
- After a 24 hour notice, home inspection may occur
- Must have homeowner's permission if occupant is renting

**City agrees with the findings. This item has been completed.**

F12. The City owns a building to be used by the Arvin Historical Society for a future museum and tourist information center.

**City agrees with the findings. This item has been completed.**

F13. The City is looking forward to the Police Activities League partnering with the Boys & Girls Club to develop plans for a future center.

**City agrees with the findings. This is an ongoing project for the City.**

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

R1. The City needs to closely monitor marijuana issues. (Finding 11)

**The City concurs with the recommendation. This is an ongoing project for the City.**

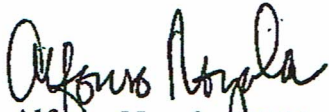
R2. The City should consider hiring a full-time staff member to be responsible for community and economic development. (Finding 3)

**The City concurs with the recommendation and this item has been completed. The City has hired a Community Development Director.**

R3. The City should continue looking into hiring a Parks and Recreation Manager. (Finding 9)

**The City concurs with the recommendation. However, hiring a Parks and Recreation Manager will depend on the availability of funds.**

Sincerely,

  
Alfonso Noyola, ICMA-CM  
City Manager

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

# **CITY OF CALIFORNIA CITY**

## **The Biggest Little City in the State**

### **PREFACE:**

The City of California City (City) is located in the Mojave Desert in eastern Kern County, one mile north of Edwards Air Force Base, and seven miles northeast of Mojave and the Mojave Airport/Spaceport.

### **PURPOSE OF INQUIRY:**

The Cities and Joint Powers Committee (Committee) of the 2016-2017 Kern County Grand Jury (Grand Jury) toured the City on January 26, 2017, and inquired into the operation and management of the City pursuant to California Penal Code §925(a).

### **PROCESS:**

The Committee met with the City Manager and personnel from the Departments of: Public Works, City Clerk, Parks, Finance, and Human Resources. The meeting was held at City Hall, located at 21000 Hacienda Boulevard, California City, California 92502. The Committee reviewed previous Grand Jury reports, local newspaper accounts, and conducted internet research.

### **BACKGROUND AND FACTS:**

In 1958, private land developers bought 80,000 acres of Mojave Desert land. The City is the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest in area in California, with a total of 204 square miles. The City was incorporated in 1965, with a City Council-Manager form of government.

The water and utility services are owned and operated by the City. The Community has an extensive aquifer that lies directly under the City. In the 1960s, the City's original developer, engineered and constructed much of the water transmission system. This system utilized 4" to 10" uncoated steel water pipe from World War II surplus material, which had an estimated life of 30 years. As reported by the 2014-2015 Grand Jury, the City was experiencing as many as 440 waterline breaks and leaks per year, due to deterioration of the pipes.

According to the 2016 Economic Round Table Report, the estimated population of the City was 14,694.

To the north of the City is the Desert Tortoise Reserve, consisting of thousands of acres, along with the Honda Test Track. The Hyundai Automobile Test Facility Center is located in the southern quadrant of the City.

## **FINDINGS:**

- F1. Rules and regulations restricting the cultivation of legal marijuana are being formulated by city officials. This industry could create 300 new jobs. Permit fees for growing marijuana will replace the current parcel tax that expires in 2018. The revenues will also be used to fund fire and police services.
- F2. The City maintains an Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) facility, headquartered at Borax Bill Park. The City provides full service; fire, paramedics, and police, including a Desert Incident Response Team (DIRT). The facility has a medical station and 20 campsites. The OHV permit sales are estimated to be 160,000, and can be purchased online or in town. This revenue is directed to the OHV program. Funds are collected by the Police Department and delivered to the Finance Department. The revenue from sales of OHV permits is counted three different times per deposit. This procedure has been in effect for the last two years.
- F3. Since 2006 the aquifer level has not changed. The City has eight water wells, six active, and one natural gas well.
- F4. Great emphasis is placed on protecting the water aquifer within the Fremont Basin.
- F5. The Public Works director discovered the original pipe installation map dating back a half-century, showing 313.48 miles of pipeline; 254.39 miles are located within the city's central core; 55.59 miles lie largely in the undeveloped northeast portion of the City. Public Works is contemplating shutting off the waterlines in the most distant portions of the City. The City needs funds for waterline replacement. Funds from United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) bonds replaced 8,000 feet of waterline. In 2015, roughly 700 to 800 lines were repaired. In 2016, seven miles of waterline were installed. In terms of cost and repair, this is a major project.
- F6. Commercial activity includes a newly built Dollar General Market, the first chain grocery store servicing the City. A Best Western Hotel provides 76 rooms. There is one bank and one credit union providing financial services. Spiritual needs are met by approximately 27 churches.
- F7. There are 96 Senior housing units, and 84 Section 8 housing units, providing for the needs of elderly and low income residents.
- F8. Kern Community College District acquired 27 acres for a future satellite campus.

- F9. The State of California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR), operates a privately owned prison under a four year lease. Correction Corporation of America (CCA), the owner of the facility, contemplates an expansion of the prison and the addition of a mental health facility. This may result in an additional 650 employees, making CDCR the largest employer in the City. The CCA is negotiating for another four year lease with CDCR. The CDCR is also a water and sewer customer of the City.
- F10. The City Park Manager oversees the baseball park in readiness for the arrival of a low-minor league baseball team in the Pecos League. This league is adding four new teams; one to be the Whiptails of California City.
- F11. City surveillance cameras record activity at two parks, the bus kiosk, and the City Hall complex.
- F12. Kern County Transit and Dial-A-Ride provide transportation services from 8am to 5pm, Monday thru Friday. There is one private taxi company providing 24-hour service.
- F13. A new fire station is set to open in February 2017. The Fire Chief has recently resigned. New candidate interviews are being held. Staffing consists of thirteen firefighters, which includes the Fire Chief position.
- F14. The Chief of Police is currently on administrative leave. The Department is authorized: 21 sworn Officers, two Animal Control personnel, six Dispatchers, and two Records Clerks. At this time, there are currently six Officer candidates in background checks. Arrestees are driven to the Kern County Sheriff's Office at Mojave or the Lerdo Facility.
- F15. The Animal Control facility boasts a "no euthanasia" policy. Animal adoptions and spay/neuter vouchers are available.
- F16. There was a noticeable lack of landscaping on both private and public areas.

### **COMMENTS:**

The Committee appreciates the information provided by members of the City government.

The Committee observed the general condition of the City. There was a noticeable lack of graffiti.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- R1. The City should closely monitor adherence to the regulation of the cultivation of legal marijuana. (Finding 1)
- R2. The Public Works Department should follow up on repairs to the deteriorating water lines as revenue becomes available. (Finding 5)
- R3. The City should consider a Beautification Contest where drought-tolerant plants, rocks, cactus, and sand based landscape items would be used on public and private property. This type of landscaping has been very successful in the states of Arizona, New Mexico and Nevada. These changes could enhance the attractiveness of the City. (Finding 16)

## **NOTES:**

- The City of California City 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](http://www.co.kern.ca.us/grandjury).
- Present and past Kern County Grand Jury Final Reports and Responses can be accessed on the Kern County Grand Jury website: [www.co.kern.ca.us/grandjury](http://www.co.kern.ca.us/grandjury).

## **RESPONSE REQUIRED WITHIN 90 DAYS:**

**PRESIDING JUDGE  
KERN COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT  
1415 TRUXTUN AVENUE, SUITE 212  
BAKERSFIELD, CA 93301**

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



Incorporated 1965

# City of California City

City Hall



PHONE (760) 373-8661

21000 HACIENDA BLVD. - CALIFORNIA CITY, CALIFORNIA 93505

April 10, 2017

Honorable Charles R. Brehmer  
Presiding Judge, Kern County Grand Jury  
Kern County Superior Court  
1415 Truxton Avenue, Suite 212  
Bakersfield, CA 93301

Dear Presiding Judge Brehmer,

California City always welcomes the Kern County Grand Jury visits with our community to learn first-hand who we are, where we are going, and how we plan to get there! Medical Marijuana Industry which is coming to our community is one of the paths to financial solvency that will aid our local parcel tax that funds our public safety to be eliminated. In order to do this we have been working diligently in developing our local ordinances that will ensure those business that do come into our community will be both be successful at both the City and State levels. We will continue to actively monitor the changes that regulate this new industry at the State level and adjust our operations as required. (R1)

The City and our Public Works Water Department are actively engaged in minimizing failures of our aging water infrastructure and looking for alternatives that will speed the replacement of the system. Currently we have two planning grant projects under the Disadvantaged Communities Grant from the Department of Water Resources Proposition 1 funding submitted that will provide shovel ready plans to be developed that would replace the water infrastructure in two large areas of our community. With these in hand, funding from the State Revolving Fund or another bond instrument would be sought to implement long term repairs to the water system. (R2)

Our community is blessed to have the Desert Rose Garden Club who actively promotes drought tolerant plants and landscape within our city. They have recently completed the eastern and



southern section of California City Blvd with a combination of drought tolerant plants, shrubs, trees, and rock landscaping within the median. This labor of love has been ongoing for many years with this effort just recently concluding that now provides for the beautification of California City entrance along the Blvd. They also provide an ongoing column within the Mojave Desert News on tips to maintain and sustain a desert landscaping at your home or business. The City is following suit as we move to develop the landscaping around our administrative building into one that is focused more on water conservation and will provide an example in the future for the community to follow. (R3)

Sincerely,



William T. Weil Jr  
City Manager

# CITY OF MARICOPA

## **PREFACE:**

On March 15, 1910, a blow-out “Gusher” of oil flowed at a rate of 18,000 barrels a day. Known as the “Lakeview #1,” nine days later the gusher reached an estimated 125,000 barrels a day. The uncontrolled flow reached an estimated 90,000 barrels a day for 544 days. An historical monument stands on the original site of the Lakeview Gusher, located north of the Maricopa City (City) limits.

## **PURPOSE OF INQUIRY:**

The City and Joint Powers Committee (Committee) of the 2016-2017 Kern County Grand Jury (Grand Jury) inspected the City on April 25, 2017, pursuant to California Penal Code §925a.

## **PROCESS:**

The Committee met with the City Administrator and Assistant City Administrator. The meeting was held at City Hall, located at 400 California Street, Maricopa, California 93252. The Committee reviewed past Grand Jury reports, researched the internet, and toured the City.

## **FACTS:**

- A. After the Lakeview Gusher came in, the City began to grow and became incorporated in 1911.
- B. The City has survived three disastrous fires.
- C. The City was the main stop for the local Sunset Railroad.
- D. Under the sidewalks of the City, the famed Chinatown was a complete city that housed the Chinese immigrants. A number of sub-structures can still be seen through original glass tiles.
- E. Through the years, the City is one of many oilfield towns that has fluctuated economically.

## **FINDINGS:**

- F1. The City is a General Law city. A General Law city is found in the State Government Code, which enumerates their powers and specifies their structure.

- F2. The City Council (Council) has five elected members which establishes municipal policies and enacts and implements local ordinances. They are elected to staggered four year terms and meet twice a month. The Mayor is chosen from the Council by majority vote.
- F3. The City population is 1,154, and has not varied significantly for at least 20 years. Most residents are from generational families and/or long term inhabitants.
- F4. A total of 466 houses are in the City; 414 occupied and 52 vacant structures.
- F5. Mobile homes must meet certain standards, such as having a garage and be on a permanent foundation.
- F6. The City has two municipal parks.
- F7. The Maricopa Unified School District has Kindergarten through the 12<sup>th</sup> grade.
- F8. Wastewater is disposed through an open pond system.
- F9. The City has four full-time employees, and a work study program with two student interns.
- F10. Law enforcement is provided by the Kern County Sheriff's Office through a \$100,000 per year contract. Fire suppression services are provided by the Kern County Fire Department at \$25,181 per year, with annual adjustments. Animal control services are contracted with the City of Taft.
- F11. The City is currently rewriting their Municipal Code.
- F12. The City has yet to refund a \$24.00 sewer overcharge to affected parcel holders as noted in previous Grand Jury reports.

## **COMMENTS:**

The Committee would like to thank the City Administrator and Assistant City Administrator for their cooperation and courtesy shown during the visit.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- R1. The City should notify parcel holders of a definitive plan regarding the refund of the \$24.00 overcharge. (Finding 12)

## **NOTES:**

- The City of Maricopa 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](http://www.co.kern.ca.us/grandjury).
- Present and past Kern County Grand Jury Final Reports and Responses can be accessed on the Kern County Grand Jury website: [www.co.kern.ca.us/grandjury](http://www.co.kern.ca.us/grandjury).

## **RESPONSE REQUIRED WITHIN 90 DAYS**

**PRESIDING JUDGE  
KERN COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT  
1415 TRUXTUN AVENUE, SUITE 212  
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

August 22, 2017

Presiding Judge  
Kern County Superior Court  
1415 Truxtun Avenue, 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 2016 – 2017 Grand Jury Report dated June 1, 2017 re City of Maricopa.

## **FINDINGS F-1 THROUGH F-11**

These are simply statements of undisputed fact as known to the city. Thus, respondent city has no reason to disagree with the facts as stated in the subject report.

## **FINDING F-12**

The city has yet to refund a \$24.00 sewer overcharge to affected parcel holders as noted in previous Grand Jury reports.

City accepts this statement as presented as factual.

**RECOMMENDATION R-1**

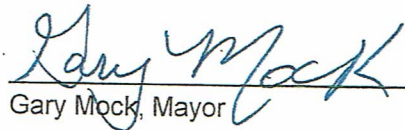
The alleged refuse/sewer rate overcharges apparently stems from the 2009-10 special assessment for those properties connected to the city's sanitary sewer system. To the best of the city's knowledge, it has not received any claims regarding the 2009-10 assessment or any other assessments the City levied the next year or the year after that.

If the City did inappropriately conduct an assessment for any of those years the applicable Statute of Limitations has run and the City would not have a legal obligation to reimburse same. Without a legal obligation, any reimbursement could be looked at as a gift of public funds.

In addition, because of the nature of the fund being an enterprise fund, as well as the limited amount of money in the fund, such a refund would require that the City seek immediate reimbursement from the customers they were providing the refund to in the form of a sewer service fee increase.

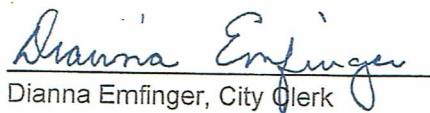
Thus, the city does not believe it is required refund any alleged overcharge related to its Sewer Funds nor does it believe it would be wise to do so.

Thus, city will take no action on this recommendation.

  
Gary Mock, Mayor

8/22/17  
Date

ATTEST:

  
Dianna Emfinger, City Clerk

8-22-17  
Date

# **CITY OF RIDGECREST**

## **PURPOSE OF INQUIRY:**

The 2016-2017 Kern County Grand Jury (Grand Jury) inquired into the operations and management of the City of Ridgecrest (City) pursuant to California Penal Code §925a.

## **PROCESS:**

The Cities and Joint Powers Committee (Committee) visited the City of Ridgecrest on October 4, 2016. The Committee met with several City officials at City Hall located at 100 West California Avenue, Ridgecrest, CA 93555.

## **BACKGROUND/FACTS:**

The City was incorporated in 1963, initially as a support community vital to the mission of the Navy. Convenient housing and other services within the City are made available to Federal employees and contractors.

The Naval Air Weapons Station (NAWS) China Lake is home to the Naval Air Warfare Center Weapons Division and continues to be the major source of employment for City residents.

The City is the only incorporated community in the Indian Wells Valley and provides a full range of municipal services. The latest population figure was given as 28,348.

- A. The Waste Water Treatment Plant was constructed by the Navy and is operated and maintained by the City. This facility serves not only the City residents but also provides service to NAWS.
- B. The City contributes 70% of the influent processed by the Waste Water Treatment Plant; NAWS contributes 30%. The current agreement ends in 2024 and a new agreement is being negotiated.
- C. The City Parks and Recreation Department is implementing a smart irrigation system to further reduce water usage.
- D. Ridgecrest Police Department (Department) has 32 full time police officers with a total of 51 staff members. The Department has a 24 hour dispatch center and also operates the animal control shelter.



- E. The Department has created and introduced “Teen Court” to prevent gang activities.
- F. On the date of the visit, the Committee was informed that the Kern County Sheriff’s Jail Facility had been closed.
- G. Murray Middle School, currently located on NAWS property, is scheduled to be moved into the City.

**FINDINGS:**

- F1. The Waste Water Fund consists of revenue from residential property taxes and an annual assessment on commercial users. With approval of the City Council, monies can be loaned from the Waste Water Fund to other City entities.
- F2. The Parks and Recreation computerized smart irrigation plan will determine the need to irrigate depending on soil needs. The plan is scheduled to begin in February or March of 2017.
- F3. With the closing of the Kern County Sheriff’s Jail in Ridgecrest, all felony arrestees are now transported to the Mojave Substation and/or the Central Receiving Facility in Bakersfield.
- F4. Teen Court is funded entirely by the City and staffed by both City staff and civilian volunteers. The focus is on youth in elementary and middle schools. Adolescents are held accountable for their misdemeanor offenses and prior to being formally charged must complete the following steps:
  - Paying a fine for any destruction
  - Performing community service
  - Sitting as a juror in a case similar to their ownIf they do not complete these steps, they are then charged for their offenses. Teen Court has proven to be extremely successful in addressing juvenile crime.
- F5. The City supported measure L, which provided an additional  $\frac{3}{4}$  percent sales tax increase lasting 4 years. The revenue helps to fund the Police and street maintenance. Measure V, which is on the November 2016 ballot, will replace Measure L and increase the sales tax by 1 percent, for a period of 8 years.
- F6. A review of the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report for the Fiscal Year ending June 30, 2015, which was audited by an independent accounting firm, confirmed the City followed generally accepted accounting principles.

## **COMMENTS:**

The City of Ridgecrest is a leader in efforts to combat youth criminal activity. Other cities should emulate their efforts by using a similar approach.

Due to their location in the extreme northeast corner of Kern County, the City feels somewhat neglected by County Government.

The Committee thanks those City Officials who were helpful in providing the information regarding the City of Ridgecrest.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS: None**

## **NOTES:**

- The City of Ridgecrest 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](http://www.co.kern.ca.us/grandjury).
- Present and past Kern County Grand Jury Final Reports and Responses can be accessed on the Kern County Grand Jury website: [www.co.kern.ca.us/grandjury](http://www.co.kern.ca.us/grandjury).

## **RESPONSE REQUIRED IN 90 DAYS**

**PRESIDING JUDGE  
KERN COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT  
1415 TRUXTUN AVENUE, SUITE 200  
BAKERSFIELD, CA 93301**

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



**CITY OF RIDGECREST**

Telephone 760 499-5004  
100 West California Avenue, Ridgecrest, California 93555-4054

June 20, 2017

Honorable Charles Brehmer  
Presiding Judge  
Kern County Superior Court  
1415 Truxtun Avenue, Suite 212  
Bakersfield, California 93301

**Subject: Response to the Findings and Recommendation of the City of Ridgecrest 2016-17 Grand Jury Report**

Honorable Charles Brehmer :

The purpose of this letter is to respond to the referenced sections of the subject report.

After reviewing the report, the City generally agrees with the all six findings (F1-F-6) and the recommendation.

The City thanks the Grand Jury for its efforts in preparing the subject report.

The City extends its appreciation to the Grand Jury for the opportunity to respond to the report.

Sincerely,

Dennis Speer  
City Manager

CC: Foreperson  
Kern County Grand Jury  
1415 Truxtun Avenue, Suite 600  
Bakersfield, California 93301

# CITY OF TAFT



## **PURPOSE OF INQUIRY:**

The Cities and Joint Powers Committee (Committee) of the 2016-2017 Kern County Grand Jury (Grand Jury) inspected the City of Taft (City) on November 17, 2016, to inquire into the operations and management of the City pursuant to California Penal Code §925a.

## **PROCESS:**

The Committee met with the City Manager, Director of Human Resources, Municipal Recorder and other City officials. The meeting was held at City Hall located at 209 East Kern Street, Taft, CA 93268. In addition, the Committee researched information on the internet and reviewed public documents.

## **BACKGROUND:**

The City of Taft is located approximately 30 miles southwest of Bakersfield, California. The name was in honor of the 27<sup>th</sup> President of the United States, William Howard Taft.

As noted on the plaque by Victor Killingsworth at the Oil Workers Monument:

*“When the news spread that oil had been discovered in the San Joaquin Valley of California, young men responded from all parts of our nation. They came from the farms of Missouri and Kansas, the ranches of Texas, the hills of West Virginia and the mines of Pennsylvania. They were strong and rugged men, unskilled in their new jobs, but from these men came new ideas and innovation. They toiled in dangerous and dirty conditions with temperatures sometimes reaching over 120 degrees in the summer. There were no hard hats or other safety equipment that we use today. From these oil fields men took the ideas and technology around the world.”*

As noted on the plaque by Pete Gianopulos at the Oil Workers Monument:

*“In 2010 Taft celebrated its 100 year anniversary. Taft got its start when the railroad laid tracks to Taft and beyond. Siding Number Two was where it all started along the tracks in the vicinity of 2<sup>nd</sup> and Supply Row. Railroad cars were being unloaded with supplies for the rapidly expanding oil production for miles along what was called the Midway-Sunset Oil Field. Buildings began springing up, followed by houses, businesses, schools, and everything needed for a progressive city to start itself. Electricity and a water supply were brought in. The voters approved incorporation and Taft became a city on November 7, 1910. The railroad began subdividing, installing streets, sidewalks, gutters, and curbs. The city of Taft was taking shape. The downtown area was flooded with workers at all hours of the day, working 12-hour shifts. It is said Taft resembled a mining town that never slept. Those were the good times and the good times have never stopped.”*

## **FACTS:**

- A. The population of the City is approximately 9,100, which includes 585 inmates at the Taft Modified Community Correctional Facility (MCCF). The City is composed of 60% White, 35% Hispanic and 5% other.
- B. There are two prisons in Taft: MCCF, owned and operated by the City, and Taft Federal Prison. The MCCF current contract with the California Department of Correction and Rehabilitation ends June 30, 2018.
- C. The MCCF has approximately 77 staff members, which includes Correctional Officers, Teachers, Nurses, and a contracted Doctor and Dentist. The MCCF is administered by the Taft Police Department.

- D. The Taft Police Department has 16 sworn officers, an Animal Control Technician, five dispatchers and a temporary janitor.
- E. The City's governing body is composed of five council members, elected by residents. The City Council meetings are held twice monthly. The agenda is posted on the City Hall bulletin board and on the City website. The City Manager is hired by the City Council. The City has 137 full time employees, including a Municipal Record/Grant Administrator.
- F. Fire protection services are contracted with the Kern County Fire Department. Trash disposal is contracted with a private company, Westside Waste Management.
- G. Parks and Recreation facilities are managed by the Westside Recreation and Park District.

## **FINDINGS:**

- F1. The City Budget is seven million dollars a year. Revenue from the MCCF contract is approximately two million dollars a year which represents the cost of Police and Fire services.
- F2. Future single-home development plans will include biking and walking paths.
- F3. A contract with Habitat for Humanity concerning two city-owned infill lots provides plans to construct homes for qualified low income families. To qualify, applicants must have a job, meet credit qualifications, and take a two hour education course. Part of the assistance is a "Silent Second" mortgage. If the homeowner defaults, the City will assume the second mortgage.
- F4. The City has a Community Development Block Grant, funding a housing rehabilitation program for low-income homeowners. This grant has committed over \$200,000 to housing rehabilitation since 2015. In 2014, a HOME Investment Partnerships grant for first-time homebuyers became available under the First Time Home Buyers Down Payment Assistance Program. This program allows the City to assist income qualified homebuyers to purchase their first home in Taft.
- F5. The City Manager stated that an analysis by ConsumerAffairs.com indicates Taft is among the safest cities in the United States. The Taft Police Department has a website containing patrol reporting statistics listing crime incidents. Security cameras have been installed on City busses, walking paths, monuments, skateboard park, and City Hall.

- F6. On May 23, 2016, Taft hosted the first “Coffee with a Cop” Training Workshop in Central California. The Police Department has hosted eight “Coffee with a Cop” events throughout the community. The City has launched the Citizen Volunteer Program to better serve the community, and to enhance crime prevention services and community awareness.
- F7. The City Code Enforcement has a concern regarding vacant buildings occupied by transients. The City anticipates budgeting \$50,000 to \$60,000 a year to tear down abandoned structures.
- F8. By advertising and promoting bus use, the City’s Transportation Department has increased the number of days Dial-A-Ride curb-to-curb service is offered to the community.
- F9. The City’s revenue is from property and sales taxes, primarily from oil industry and related employment.
- F10. West Kern Community College District operates Taft College, a public institution that provides educational and vocational training with a focus on engineering. Taft College also offers special courses for the handicapped, including a 2 year program for transitioning to independent living.
- F11. The Waste Water Plant treats influent from residential and commercial customers in the City, as well as some portions of unincorporated areas surrounding Taft.
- F12. A grant from the State of California Department of Housing and Community Development in the amount of \$948,167 will be used to install curbs, gutters and sidewalks in severely distressed neighborhoods. This will benefit approximately 2,400 residents.
- F13. In July of 2016, a 16 foot self-contained Command Post trailer was purchased using budgeted disaster funds. The trailer has since been upgraded with laptops, monitors and multi-band radios.

**COMMENTS:**

The City Staff was accommodating and informative. The Committee drove around the City and viewed the Oil Worker Monument. The streets were clean and well maintained. The Staff is to be commended for vision and planning for future growth.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

NONE



## **NOTES:**

- The City of Taft 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](http://www.co.kern.ca.us/grandjury).
- Present and past Kern County Grand Jury Final Reports and Responses can be accessed on the Kern County Grand Jury website: [www.co.kern.ca.us/grandjury](http://www.co.kern.ca.us/grandjury).

## **RESPONSE REQUIRED WITHIN 90 DAYS:**

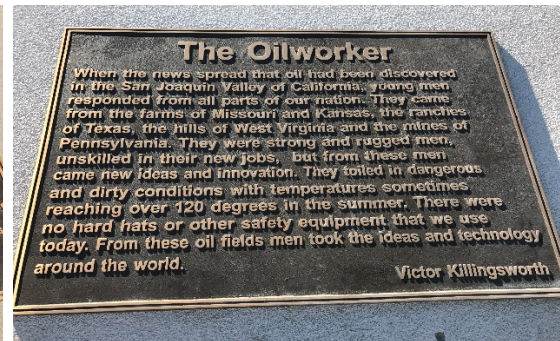
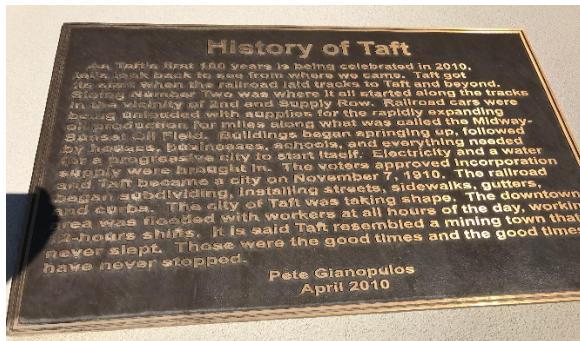
**PRESIDING JUDGE  
KERN COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT  
1415 TRUXTUN AVENUE, SUITE 200  
BAKERSFIELD, CA 93301**

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

## APPENDIX:

Appendix A: From the Plaque at the Oil Workers Monument  
“The Oilworker” by Victor Killingsworth.

Appendix B: From the Plaque at the Oil Workers Monument  
“History of Taft” by Pete Gianopulos dated April 2010





February 21, 2017

Weslie Brown  
Foreperson  
Kern County Grand Jury  
1415 Truxtun Avenue, Suite 600  
Bakersfield, CA 93301

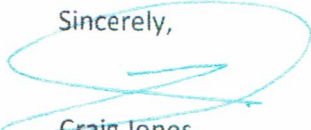
Re: Grand Jury Report Dated February 14, 2017

Dear Mr. Brown:

Please consider this the City of Taft's response to the Grand Jury Final Report which accompanied your correspondence dated February 14, 2017.

Thank you for providing the Grand Jury's report to the City of Taft for review. The City of Taft agrees with all findings and appreciates the opportunity to comment on the report.

Sincerely,



Craig Jones  
City Manager

cc: Presiding Judge, Kern County Superior Court

ADMINISTRATION • FINANCE • PLANNING • PUBLIC WORKS  
209 E. KERN STREET • TAFT, CA 93268  
661/763-1222 • 661/765-2480  
[www.cityoftaft.org](http://www.cityoftaft.org)

# CITY OF TEHACHAPI

## **PURPOSE OF INQUIRY:**

The Cities and Joint Powers Committee (Committee) of the 2016-2017 Kern County Grand Jury (Grand Jury) visited the City of Tehachapi (City) on February 28, 2017, to inquire into the operation and management of the City, pursuant to California Penal Code §925(a).

## **PROCESS:**

The Committee met with the City Manager and Assistant City Manager, as well as staff from the Departments of Administrative Manager/Deputy City Clerk, Economic Development Coordinator, Finance Director, Development Services Director, and the Chief of Police. The meeting was held at City Hall, located at 115 South Robinson Street, Tehachapi, California 93561. The Committee reviewed previous Grand Jury reports and local newspaper accounts, and conducted internet research.

## **BACKGROUND:**

The City of Tehachapi is a mountain-top community situated at 4,100 feet elevation and experiences four seasons. Located between the San Joaquin Valley and the Mojave Desert, the City is the oldest settlement in the Tehachapi Valley. The Tehachapi Loop is a long continuous curve, which allows trains to accomplish a 3,600 foot climb. The railroad needed a place to service trains before heading on to Los Angeles and beyond. Thus, the town of Tehachapi was born, and in 1909 was incorporated as a city.

The Kawaiisu are the Native American Tribe whose homeland was the Tehachapi Valley. The name was derived from their language, "hard climb" or Tihachipia.

The City and its surroundings has been host to both Hollywood and Independent films such as Star Trek Generations (1994), Batman Revenge (2003), The Gentleman Don La Mancha (2004) and The Grapes of Wrath (1940), which featured a scene at Keene Ranch.

The City's population is approximately 14,000, which includes inmates at the California Correctional Institution. The Tehachapi real estate market has enjoyed a housing boom recently. New construction houses have a starting price of \$220,000, but demand exceeds supply.

Each Department searches and obtains grants for the City.

Access to quality healthcare is provided by the Tehachapi Hospital District, which has a 30 year contract with Adventist Health Care to operate the hospital. Intensive care,

surgical, labor and delivery units, emergency, radiology, and laboratory services will be available. In-patient bed capacity will increase to 25. The complex is anticipated to add 40 new jobs. A Kaiser Permanente medical office opened in February 2016, and also provides medical support. While the City has no direct relationship with the hospital and medical offices, the agencies work together for the betterment of Tehachapi.

The good air quality is one of the reasons why more than 1,000 bicycling enthusiasts ride each year in Tehachapi's GranFondo cycling event. The course terrain offers mountains and hills. GranFondo is Italian for "big ride", a mass participant cycling event. Cyclists have come from across the country and outside the United States to participate. It is set up with rest and aid stations along the courses hosted by local civic groups. Public safety for the ride is provided by numerous local agencies with Tehachapi Police Department (TPD) as the lead agency.

Tehachapi and nearby points of interest:

- Tehachapi Loop – an outstanding engineering feat designed by William Hood
- Wind Farm Tehachapi Pass – first large scale wind farm installation in the United States, began in the early 1980s
- Alpaca Ranch – Alpaca wool is considered a luxury fiber known for its exceptional softness, durability, warmth and hypoallergenic properties. The Alpaca is native to South America and was imported to the United States in the 1980s
- Indian Point Ostrich Farm – Ostrich are the largest birds on earth and produce three pound edible eggs. They produce a low-fat red meat, which is also low in cholesterol
- Tomo-Kahni State Historic Park – Tomo-Kahni or "winter village" was the site of a Kawaiisu village. Guided tours on 1.5 miles of trails reveal native plants, bedrock mortar tools, ceremonial caves with well-preserved pictographs on the walls
- Tehachapi Sisters of the Norbertine Order – The monastery is a Roman Catholic community of cloistered religious nuns that live a life of work in silence, study and penance
- Tehachapi Apple Orchards – Orchards grow about 20 different apple varieties. They feature Jonathan, Jonagold, Golden Delicious, Red Delicious, Gala, McIntosh, Empire, Rome, Fuji and other varieties. From mid-October to early November "u-pick" signs are exhibited along the road for visitors and locals

Main Street Tehachapi, a civic group, hosts many events during the year:

- The Harvest Moon and Beer Walk
- Oktoberfest
- Super Stocking Give Away
- Trunk or Treat
- Valentine Wine and Chocolate Walk
- Chili Cook-off and Red Hot Classic Car show
- Farmers Market
- Mountain Festival and Rodeo, hosted by the Chamber of Commerce
- Arts and Crafts Fair & Park Festival, hosted by Tehachapi Valley Arts Association

## **FINDINGS:**

- F1. The City provided information on their financial status. This includes the following:
- The annual budget has always been in the black since 1999
  - Primary income is from sales taxes, property taxes, transient occupancy taxes (bed or hotel tax), state motor vehicle license fees, business license taxes and franchise fees on utility companies
  - The City has a 5 year budget plan, updated every year
  - According to the Chief Financial Officer, the City anticipates being debt free in three to four years
- F2. Water conservation is considered important to city planning. The City consumes approximately 1,800 acre-feet of water a year, over 570 million gallons.
- F3. Water is produced by 7 wells (6 potable and 1 non-potable).
- F4. Water is pumped, disinfected, and stored until it is distributed through 50 miles of water mains.
- F5. All water is pumped from the Tehachapi Basin aquifer; no surface or imported water is used for direct consumption.
- F6. The Indirect Potable Reuse program produces 900 acre-feet per year, eliminating the need for water from the California Aqueduct.
- F7. Plans are being developed to expand the Waste Water Treatment Facility.
- F8. Public Safety services are provided by the TPD, which consists of 23 full-time and one part-time personnel.
- F9. The City is divided into two patrol areas.
- F10. A new police communication center replaced the contract with Bear Valley Springs, which had cost the City approximately \$400,000 a year. The City's 911 Dispatch service, located in the Police Department, was in full operation beginning July 1, 2016.
- F11. To reduce blight associated with abandoned structures, TPD is now charged with enforcement of city building codes.
- F12. According to the Chief of Police, crime is down 16% citywide.
- F13. Animal control services are contracted with Kern County.

- F14. Fire protection services are contracted through the Kern County Fire Department.
- F15. The City owns and operates the Tehachapi Municipal Airport. Revenue is largely from fuel sales, commercial and private leases, aircraft parking fees, and lease of the Event Center and Rodeo Grounds. The airport is comprised of one 4,000 foot runway and two taxiways. On a yearly basis, there are over 10,000 take-offs and landings.
- F16. City Hall now processes 900 to 1,000 United States Passport applications from Bakersfield, Lancaster and the Los Angeles area. Applications are taken by appointment, allowing for convenience.
- F17. Public transit is provided by Tehachapi Dial-a-Ride, Monday through Saturday, and East Kern Express, which provides intra-city service Monday through Saturday. Passengers may transfer to the Express in Old Town.
- F18. The City sewer utility network is comprised of 40 miles of sewer line, sewer collections system and a wastewater treatment plant. Sewer rates for residents are a flat monthly fee. Commercial and industrial rates are based on water usage. The wastewater treatment plant is under the direction of the City's Public Works Department.
- F19. The Walmart Supercenter is expected to hire approximately 250 employees and is anticipated to open late 2017. This may eliminate a substantial portion of the \$160 million in retail sales leakage. The City hired a consulting firm which resulted in a dramatic savings during the permit process. Costs for necessary infrastructure improvement, traffic control, roads, gutters, and legal fees will be borne by Walmart.
- F20. The City will receive a regional award of merit from KernCOG, for a model water-efficient landscape ordinance.
- F21. A \$2 million grant, for downtown railroad safety improvements, will be used for pedestrian crossings, fencing, ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) compliance, gutters and sidewalks. A new bike path will also be added.

## **COMMENTS:**

The Committee would like to thank the City's officials for their presentation of information. The City of Tehachapi seems to be well positioned for future economic development and growth.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

None



## **NOTES:**

- The City of Tehachapi 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](http://www.co.kern.ca.us/grandjury).
- Present and past Kern County Grand Jury Final Reports and Responses can be accessed on the Kern County Grand Jury website: [www.co.kern.ca.us/grandjury](http://www.co.kern.ca.us/grandjury).

## **RESPONSE REQUIRED WITHIN 90 DAYS:**

**PRESIDING JUDGE  
KERN COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT  
1415 TRUXTUN AVENUE, SUITE 212  
BAKERSFIELD, CA 93301**

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

SEP 25 2017

Build Up. Play Up. Work Up. Explore Up. Live Up.



CITY OF  
**TEHACHAPI**  
CALIFORNIA

The Honorable Charles Brehmer  
Presiding Judge  
Kern County Superior Court  
1415 Truxtun Avenue, Suite 660  
Bakersfield, CA 93301

Cc: Kern County Grand Jury  
R. Renn Armstead, Foreperson  
1415 Truxtun Avenue, Suite 600  
Bakersfield, CA 93301

Dear Honorable Judge Brehmer,

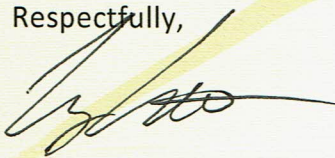
Please accept this letter as the City of Tehachapi's official response to the 2016-17 Kern County Grand Jury Final Report in compliance with Penal Code §933.

The City of Tehachapi wholly agrees with findings F1-F21 included in the report and is of the opinion no further action is required by either party.

The Kern County Grand Jury did not include any recommendations in the City of Tehachapi Final Report therefore a response per section §933.05 is not required.

We thank the Kern County Grand Jury for the time that went into this report and we look forward to our joint efforts to benefit the City of Tehachapi moving forward.

Respectfully,



Corey Costelloe  
Assistant to The City Manager  
City of Tehachapi

# **CITY OF WASCO**

## **PURPOSE OF INQUIRY:**

The Cities and Joint Powers Committee (Committee) of the 2016-2017 Kern County Grand Jury (Grand Jury) visited the City of Wasco (City) on March 30, 2017, to inquire into the operation and management of the City pursuant to California Penal Code §925a.

## **PROCESS:**

The Committee met with the City Manager, Public Works Director, and Planning Director. The meeting was held at City Hall, located at 746 8<sup>th</sup> Street, Wasco, California 93280. The Committee reviewed past Grand Jury reports and conducted internet research.

## **BACKGROUND:**

The City was originally named “Dewey”, then “Deweyville”, and finally Wasco, named after a tribe of Oregon Native Americans. William Bonheim, a settler from Wasco County in Oregon, renamed the City after it was determined there was another town named Deweyville. The name Wasco was recorded by the Post Office in 1900. The City was incorporated in 1945.

Agriculture has traditionally been Wasco’s primary economic base. In 1916, Long White Potatoes, destined to be the root of Wasco’s economy, were planted. Cotton was introduced to the area in 1918. Roses became a trademark of the City, as is evidenced by a prominent rose in the City’s logo.

Water from the Friant-Kern Canal is used to cultivate roses, alfalfa, cotton, potatoes, grapes, sweet potatoes, melons, almonds, pistachios, cherries, strawberries, and a variety of other fruits and vegetables.

Fire suppression services are contracted with the Kern County Fire Department for approximately \$500,000 per year. The Kern County Sheriff’s Office provides police protection at approximately \$3.2 million per year, consisting of 13 deputies, two senior patrol officers, one sergeant, and one COPS (Community Oriented Policing Services) officer, which handles noise complaints and patrols the streets on foot.

The City’s population is 26,500, which includes Wasco State Prison inmates. The population is 85% Hispanic, and is considered a very religious constituency.

The City has a Council-Manager form of government, where voters elect a five member City Council to four-year, staggered terms. The City Council selects one of the members to serve as Mayor, and employs a City Manager to conduct the day-to-day business.

The City of Wasco Public Works Department is responsible for refuse collection, street, alley, sidewalk maintenance, water, and operation of the City's wastewater treatment facility. In addition, the Public Works Department oversees the City's engineering functions, Animal Control, and the Graffiti Removal Program.

The Wasco Labor Camp provides living accommodations for low income families who are employed by growers or farmers in the area. The housing units contain one, two, or three bedrooms. Multiple generations have lived in the Camp for up to thirty years. There is a waiting list for prospective tenants. During World War II, the site was used as an internment camp.

The City is served by one high school, one middle school, four elementary schools, and one continuation school.

The City is a "model city" for the installation of artificial turf and solar power lighting in public areas.

## **FINDINGS:**

- F1. The importation of roses from South America at a much reduced price created a financial strain on the rose growers of Wasco. As a result, the Weeks Company is the only commercial rose firm remaining in operation.
- F2. In 2009, the City received a grant from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) to cover the cost of installing water meters for approximately 3,000 homes. Currently, there are approximately 4,700 water meters servicing homes and businesses in the City. Water consumption was monitored for a year to determine an equitable metered rate for the residents and commercial users. Rates are calculated differently for commercial customers.
- F3. The last Wasco Rose Festival was held in 2016. A group is proposing a new event to be named the "Harvest Festival in the Fall" or the "Nut Festival."
- F4. The Certis Company, a business that manufactures organic pesticides, is located within the City and has provided continued employment opportunities.

- F5. The Walmart Superstore has been in operation for over a year, resulting in a 75% decrease in local retail sales leakage. Panda Express and Starbucks are planning to open soon.
- F6. According to City Staff, the crime rate is up slightly possibly due to the increase in population.
- F7. Federal and State reimbursements for street maintenance costs are \$700,000. These funds will be received next year from the Active Transportation Plan (ATP) Grant.
- F8. The original Wasco Water Tower was painted at a cost of \$160,000. A colored light system was installed to enhance this historic icon.
- F9. The City employs a Grant Writer who collaborates with department heads regarding their needs.
- F10. The Public Works Department reuses asphalt and concrete to maintain streets, allowing grants from the ATP to be received expeditiously. Handicap curbs were installed to meet Federal and State requirements. A system known as the Pavement Condition Index (PCI) provides City staff with an annual analysis of which streets require repair. The ATP fund has over \$10 million allocated for road work.
- F11. There are six solar powered surveillance cameras throughout the City. They are removable and can be relocated to different areas. Images are reviewed regularly; if no cause for concern is found, the videos are deleted.
- F12. The City attempts to remove graffiti within 24-hours.
- F13. The Wasco Labor Camp is comprised of 226 housing units and is scheduled for relocation. This move is due to the proposed high speed railroad project and will take 14 months to complete. Some of the moving expenses will be paid by the High Speed Rail Authority along with an undercrossing and improvements to Highway 46. The terminus for the High Speed Rail will be temporarily located in Wasco.
- F14. The City has a healthy financial reserve:
- water fund \$10 million
  - solar panel project fund \$5.56 million
  - sanitation fund \$200,000
  - wastewater fund \$2 million

## **COMMENTS:**

The Committee wishes to thank the Staff of the City of Wasco for their information and expertise.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

None

## **NOTES:**

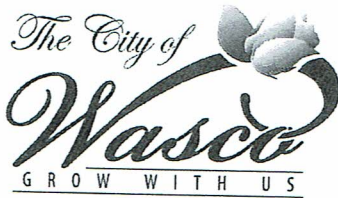
- The City of Wasco should post a copy of this report where it will be available for public review.
- Persons wishing to receive an email notification of newly released reports may sign up at: [www.co.kern.ca.us/grandjury](http://www.co.kern.ca.us/grandjury).
- Present and past Kern County Grand Jury Final Reports and Responses can be accessed on the Kern County Grand Jury website: [www.co.kern.ca.us/grandjury](http://www.co.kern.ca.us/grandjury).

## **RESPONSE REQUIRED WITHIN 90 DAYS**

**PRESIDING JUDGE  
KERN COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT  
1415 TRUXTUN AVENUE, SUITE 212  
BAKERSFIELD, CA 93301**

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





City Manager's Office (661) 758-7214 Fax (661) 758-5411  
746 8<sup>th</sup> Street, Wasco, CA 93280

6/22/2017

Honorable Charles R. Brehmer  
Presiding Judge  
Kern County Superior Court  
1415 Truxtun Avenue, Suite 212  
Bakersfield, CA 93301

Dear Judge Brehmer,


I am pleased to respond to the Grand Jury Final Report prepared by the Cities and Joint Powers Committee of the 2016-2017 Kern County Grand Jury. After receipt of the report, copies were forwarded to the City Council for discussion and review. The City Council has delegated to me the responsibility to respond to the report on their behalf.

I would like to indicate the Grand Jury members we met with were genuinely interested in the operations of the City. My staff and I were pleased to note they were aware of our progress in many areas. I would like to also advise you and the Grand Jury the City Council has carefully considered the comments and recommendations of the jurors and thanks you for your service.

As per Penal Code Section 933.05 (a), the City of Wasco agrees with the findings of the Grand Jury.

If you should have any questions regarding this response or any components of the Grand Jury Report, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,



J. Paul Paris  
City Manager

CC: Foreperson  
Kern County Grand Jury  
1415 Truxtun Avenue, Suite 600  
Bakersfield, CA 93301