

CITY OF SANTA ROSA
CITY COUNCIL

TO: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL
FROM: NEIL BREGMAN, EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS MANAGER
FIRE DEPARTMENT
SUBJECT: RESPONSE TO 2020-2021 GRAND JURY REPORT –
EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

AGENDA ACTION: MOTION

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended by the City Manager and the Fire Department that the Council, by motion, authorize the Mayor to provide formal response to Sonoma County 2020-2021 Grand Jury Report “Emergency Alerts and Communication Toward a Culture of Preparedness.”

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On June 20, 2021, the Sonoma County Civil Grand Jury issued its 2020-2021 Final Report, including reports on six separate Grand Jury investigations. Included is a report on the Grand Jury’s investigation into the role and effectiveness of emergency alerts and communications systems throughout the County.

On June 21, 2021, the City received a copy of that investigation report, entitled “Emergency Alerts and Communication – *Toward a Culture of Preparedness.*” The Grand Jury has requested that the City of Santa Rosa prepare a response to certain of the Findings and Recommendations contained in that report. Pursuant to state law, the City’s response is due on September 18, 2021.

The City’s Emergency Preparedness Manager has reviewed the Grand Jury report and has prepared a response for Council’s review and approval. The final response is to be signed by the Mayor and forwarded to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court.

BACKGROUND

Each year the Sonoma County Civil Grand Jury investigates local government institutions and issues reports containing the results of these investigations. Each of the reports include formal Findings as well as Recommendations for improvement. The Grand Jury may request that governing bodies and department officials respond to the Findings and Recommendations. Pursuant to state law, these responses must be filed

with the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court within ninety days of the issuance of the Grand Jury report.

On June 21, 2021, the City received a copy of the 2020-2021 Final Report Sonoma County Civil Grand Jury (Attachment 1) covering a number of issues outlined within the report. The Grand Jury has requested that the City of Santa Rosa prepare a response to certain of the Findings and Recommendations contained its report entitled “Emergency Alerts and Communication - *Toward a Culture of Preparedness.*”

The City’s Emergency Preparedness Manager has prepared a response to the report for Council’s view and approval. The final response is to be signed by the City Manager and forwarded to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court by September 18, 2021.

PRIOR CITY COUNCIL REVIEW

Not applicable.

ANALYSIS

The City has received and prepared a response to the 2020-2021 Final Report Sonoma County Civil Grand Jury related to the Grand Jury’s county-wide investigation into the role and effectiveness of the emergency alerts and communications.

The Grand Jury described the purpose of its investigation as follows:

The Grand Jury sought to understand where the gaps in the alerts and emergency communications occur and why. What has been done to reach the underserved populations of the county? The report focuses upon many areas within the County which have experienced the impact of recent wildfires. The questions that drove the investigation were:

- What improvements have been made by the County and cities to emergency communications since the 2017 Tubbs and Nuns Fires?
- Why were emergency communications unreliable in remote areas?
- Does everyone know how to sign up with SoCoAlerts and/or Nixle - what phones and technology work best?
- Do residents know their evacuation zones and why have the evacuation maps been unreliable or confusing?

The 36-page report includes twenty-five Findings and twenty Recommendations. The Grand Jury has asked the City of Santa Rosa to respond to eight of the Findings and four of the Recommendations.

The City’s draft response to the Grand Jury Report is attached as Attachment 2 to this staff report for Council review.

FISCAL IMPACT

Approval of this action does not have a fiscal impact on the General Fund.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

The proposed action is exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3) and 15378 in that there is no possibility that the implementation of this action may have significant effects on the environment, and that no further environmental review is required.

BOARD/COMMISSION/COMMITTEE REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Not applicable.

NOTIFICATION

Not applicable.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1 – 2020-2021 Final Report Sonoma County Civil Grand Jury
- Attachment 2 – City’s Response to Grand Jury Report
- Attachment 3 – Letter to Presiding Judge

CONTACT

Neil Bregman, Emergency Preparedness Manager, nbregman@srcity.org