

News from: **Office of the City Administrator**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Response to Alameda County Grand Jury Report**

Report Evaluated Oakland's Regional Emergency Communications System,  
Code Enforcement and Parking Citation System



City of  
**OAKLAND**  
California

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**Oakland, CA** – The City of Oakland appreciates the Alameda County Grand Jury's review of our emergency communications system, parking citation system and code enforcement process. We, too, want to ensure that the City is accountable for providing policies and services that are accessible, easy to understand, consistent, and fair.

Many of the Grand Jury's recommendations have already been implemented, and others are currently in the process of implementation. Although the City has 90 days to submit an official response, we will provide a detailed, point-by-point response to all of the recommendations within the next 30 days.

The following is a general summary of the City's response to the recommendations made in each of the three areas evaluated by the Grand Jury.

**Regional Emergency Communications System**

Grounded in the City's experience with earthquakes and wildfires, the City of Oakland has demonstrated leadership in and a long-standing commitment to advancing the goal of regional interoperable public safety radio communications. The City has received millions of dollars of federal grants and invested millions of dollars in local revenues to further this mission.

Due to the timing of the Grand Jury's report, many of its findings related to Oakland's public safety radio communications and interoperability are out of date and therefore inaccurate.

The report focuses on the persistent and well-publicized problems that we had late last year and earlier this year with our aging public safety radio system; these were indisputable and significant problems that required immediate attention. Unfortunately, the report does not address the fact that on June 5, the City replaced this aging analog system with a new, all-digital system that is fully compliant with the national P25 interoperability communications standard, as the Grand Jury recommends. Additionally, the new system reaches a broader area, expanding radio coverage across the city.

Due to the urgency of addressing the issues related to our aging radio system, waiting at least another year for the East Bay Regional Communications Systems Authority (EBRCSA) system to come on line was not an option.

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Still, the City is currently able to connect with any radio communications system in the region, whether P25 (digital) or analog. We remain committed to assuring seamless communication across the region through ongoing, regular communication with our regional partners, including continuing meetings with Alameda County and EBRCSA.

### **Parking Citation System**

We are pleased that the Grand Jury recognized the significant improvements that Oakland's Parking Division has made to address how we handle parking citations and appeals. The City has contracted with a new vendor and has implemented improved software systems. We will enhance our accountability by developing an annual report to the public which addresses: number of citations issued, average number and outcome of appeals, average length of time to resolve appeals, average length of phone call waiting time and average fine recovery and collection rates.

### **Code Enforcement**

We concur that the City's code enforcement system, specifically for blight removal, has been problematic for property owners and neighbors alike. The City is committed to evaluating the thoughtful recommendations made by the Grand Jury and others and will take appropriate corrective action.

The current system is complaint-driven, where the City functions as code police. We are in the process of transitioning to a more proactive approach focused on stabilizing community health and property values, which will be more constructive than punitive.

In recognition of the issues raised by and evaluated by the Grand Jury, for some time the City has been undertaking a major, systemic review of our building services and code enforcement processes. We are committed to providing staff with the tools and technology they need to be effective and efficient, and to changing the culture of the organization. Specifically:

- The City is developing staff training that emphasizes neighborhood preservation and property rehabilitation rather than enforcement.
- The City has installed a document management system and will be installing a new, electronic land use system. It will fully integrate permitting, code enforcement, accounting and records activities and will provide 24/7 on-line access to the public in multiple languages. Implementation will include training, a procedures manual and guidelines for service that are benchmarked to best-practice procedures of other jurisdictions.
- We agree that identifying true property owners is critical, but also challenging, given that County records are not always up to date, and the recent increase in foreclosures makes it difficult to identify the current owner. The Building Services Department has had a long-standing policy of waiving fees whenever owners have been improperly identified.
- The City is in the process of reviewing its appeal process to improve transparency and clarity. We concur that appeals should be independent.
- The City's fees are based upon City costs. City consultants will be reviewing best practices from other jurisdictions and the City will be making any appropriate adjustments.
- The City adjusted the use of prospective liens a year ago—prospective liens do not exceed \$1,000. Prospective liens provide notice to prospective buyers and

others reviewing title information that issues may exist with the property. We continue to evaluate the use of prospective liens.

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