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Received
and Reviewed
7-16-14
Judge Begen



Turlock Police Department

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June 30, 2014

The Honorable Loretta Murphy Begen
Family Law Department
Stanislaus County
800 11th Street
Modesto, CA 95354

Dear Judge Begen:

This letter is in response to a report completed by the Stanislaus County Civil Grand Jury identified as case #14-25GJ. The cover letter to the report addressed to me was from Judy Navarro, Foreperson Pro Tempore with the 2013-2014 Civil Grand Jury, dated June 23, 2014. First, I would like to start by thanking the Civil Grand Jury for the time and effort they put forth in visiting our department and spending time with our officers while participating in "ride-a-longs."

I have had a chance to review their report and findings on the topics they outlined in this report and have found them to be accurate, however, I feel more details are necessary to create a clearer picture of our status here at the department. I am pleased to report that some of the recommendations the jury have made in their report have already taken place.

Findings F1 and Recommendation R1

F1 states, "The TPD is understaffed with sworn officers causing overtime and longer shifts for current sworn officers." I agree with this statement.

R1 states, "The SCCGH realizes that the shortage of sworn officers is due to budget cuts, but recommends stronger recruitment campaigns and better benefits to attract qualified candidates."

Our department is currently understaffed due to five vacant police officer positions as well as four long term injuries. In addition to these vacancies over the last two years, we have cut seven additional vacant police officer positions due to budget constraints. Those cuts were necessary due to declining revenues into the City's general fund budget which was compounded by a loss of federal funding for four officers due to the expiration of a grant.

Over the last six months, we have been actively recruiting police officers. We have also reinstated the practice of hiring recruits and sending them to the police academy as employees of the department. Although this process adds as much as six months to the training process for new officers we feel it is a good practice for the future of the department. Just last month we received over 450 applications for these positions and are currently in the testing process to identify the best candidates. Our plans are to send two to four recruits to a police academy in September. Projections are that these recruits will finish their training in the academy in March of next year.

We are also actively recruiting for those that have already obtained their police academy training as well as lateral officers that are already working as an officer or deputy sheriff for a law enforcement agency somewhere else in the State of California. I am happy to say that we are making progress on all three recruitment strategies.

I do not agree with the entirety of the comments in recommendation R1. The way this short comment reads, it would appear that the jury believes our benefits are lacking. I understand it is a very easy assumption that just by offering increased benefits more people will be interested in a position. If a little more vetting was done, it would have been realized that our health care program for our employees is better than any comparison cities in our area. To say we need better benefits alludes to the idea that our benefits package is lacking. We must remember that benefits include much more than just an employee's salary. I anticipate in the future as our local economy improves, our employees will realize increases in their benefit packages.

Findings F2 and Recommendation R2

F2 states, "Sworn officers work well with the community and are very proactive to help the community."

R2 states, "None. The SCCGJ was very impressed with the TPD officers' community involvement."

I concur with the jury's findings. The comments by the jury are specific to our sworn staff. I would also add that in addition to our police officer efforts, our non-sworn staff also works very closely with our community. We take a great deal of pride in our commitment to the citizens of Turlock.

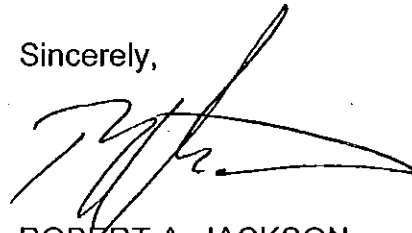
Although I am happy with the Jury not having a recommendation on our community involvement, we will continue to strive to bolster and improve upon our relationship with the community. With the impacts of prison realignment over the last several years, we have had to rely heavily on our partnerships with the community. Through these partnerships, it is our goal to lessen the chance of citizens falling victim to all crime and to also help enhance their quality of life in Turlock.

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Our commitment to increase communications with the public can be seen with our expanded use of social media and the implementation of several conduits of communication. We are embracing the advancements in technology and are incorporating it into our department. We are also continuing with the efforts of enhanced crime prevention in Turlock.

Thank you for taking the time to review my response to the findings and recommendation report completed by the Stanislaus County Civil Grand Jury. Please contact me if you have any further questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Jackson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

ROBERT A. JACKSON
Chief of Police

RAJ:mrs