



CITY OF STOCKTON

OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER

City Hall • 425 N. El Dorado Street • Stockton, CA 95202-1997 • 209 / 937-8212 • Fax 209 / 937-7149
www.stocktongov.com

September 18, 2018

Presiding Judge
San Joaquin Superior Court
222 East Weber Avenue
Stockton, CA 95202

**CITY OF STOCKTON RESPONSE 2017-18 CASE NO. 0117 – CODE
ENFORCEMENT AND CASE NO. 0917 – MUNICIPALITY ETHICS POLICIES**

The City of Stockton received two reports issued on June 21, 2018 regarding findings related to Code Enforcement and Municipality Ethics Policies. In general, the City agrees with the findings and has provided additional information in the responses to the findings and recommendation.

Code Enforcement

The Neighborhood Services Section (NSS) of the Stockton Police Department is responsible for code enforcement. The goal of code enforcement is to detect and prevent the violation of laws regulating public nuisance, public health, and safety. As noted in the Grand Jury Report, the NSS responds to a variety of code enforcement violations including unsafe, unhealthy, or unsightly conditions in homes or neighborhoods, and takes a proactive approach to code enforcement issues.

The Grand Jury Report issued two positive findings regarding the City's code enforcement division. The City agrees with these findings. Responses and additional information regarding the Neighborhood Blitz Team are included in the Findings and Recommendation section below.

Municipality Ethics Policies

The City makes efforts to ensure all employees and elected officials are aware of the City's policies regarding Code of Ethics and Conflicts of Interest. The City periodically reviews and updates these policies to ensure compliance with the City's Charter and State and Federal regulations.

The Grand Jury report issued one finding and one recommendation related to Code of Ethics policies. In general, the City agrees with the finding, and accepts the recommendation to provide a copy of the policies to City Council members and conduct a briefing of its contents. While the City takes steps to make the policies available to all

individuals, it is possible that some may not be aware of or recall all of the details of each of the City's policies.

FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATION

In accordance with Sections 933 and 933.05 of the California Penal Code, the City Council of the City of Stockton offers responses to the Grand Jury Report on the above-referenced case as follows:

CASE NO. 0117 – CODE ENFORCEMENT DEPARTMENTS OF SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY

9.0 City of Stockton

F9.1 Stockton has moved the code enforcement department into a section of the Stockton Police Department. This enables a response team to quickly address areas riddled with crime and blight.

Response: *The respondent agrees with this finding. The Neighborhood Blitz Team (NBT) formed in 2014 as an innovative, proactive approach to “cleaning up” defined geographic areas in Stockton that struggle with blight and violent crime. This approach formally coupled uniformed police officers with code enforcement staff to address overall health and safety issues of these valued yet underserved neighborhoods. The new NBT strategy relied upon neighborhood services/code enforcement efforts, contemporary community policing practices, and active citizen engagement to collaboratively develop and implement comprehensive area improvement plans.*

The NBT’s mission is to improve “quality-of-life” issues within specified neighborhoods through the realization of the following primary goals:

- *Reducing crime and blight*
- *Strengthening economic viability*
- *Building trust with communities through partnerships*
- *Fostering community pride and participation*
- *Improving the physical characteristics of each focus area*
- *Decreasing the incidence of vacant homes*
- *Building the sustainable resources that are needed and desired by the community*

The first phase of the NBT strategy was completed by late 2017. Phase I involved an initial 90-day intensive, community-driven police and code enforcement effort in each of six focus areas throughout the City. Partnerships with other City departments and outside agencies were

leveraged to expand resources. Meetings were held, at neighborhood venues, to give a voice to residents and neighborhood leaders and to formulate plans to reduce crime/blight, strengthen economic viability, and foster neighborhood pride. As the NBT completed those plans and transitioned out of each area and into the next, some level of resources remained behind, to encourage and empower area residents to maintain and increase the positive outcomes achieved within their neighborhoods.

During NBT Phase I, the City of Stockton Neighborhood Services Section (NSS) inspected 1,858 parcels, including 2,470 residential units. NSS staff identified violations at 1,226 locations and worked with occupants and/or owners to bring them into compliance. Each area was provided a Clean-up Day, and approximately 40 tons of unwanted items were removed. Conservation Corps staff assisted many elderly and disabled individuals who were unable to remove their own debris. These combined efforts greatly reduced blight in all six focus areas. Each focus area also experienced a significant decrease in violent crime and has since sustained a level of reduced overall crime.

In 2018, the NBT evolved into the Neighborhood Betterment Team and began Phase II. Phase II provides a longer-term approach to sustain the progress achieved in these focus areas and continues to improve the quality of life for these residents and business owners. Phase II extends the program's emphasis to include the leveraging of partnerships for areas outside of our direct control such as employment, education, and health care.

F9.2 Stockton has implemented a number of proactive code enforcement programs that respond to code violations with a neighborhood focus.

Response: *The respondent agrees with this finding. The Police Department's NSS, Code Enforcement has taken a proactive approach in addressing those neighborhoods that are in the most need of attention and services by conducting five proactive large-scale sweeps annually. Each sweep consists of an average of 1,100 property inspections and a Saturday cleanup. Saturday cleanups allow residents in the designated area a place to dump trash and debris, free of charge. The NSS can assist those that are in need, such as the elderly and disadvantaged, in removing items from their property for disposal. The NSS is currently working on two separate grants to assist in debris disposal, education, and enforcement. In 2017, the NSS resolved 7,923 cases.*

In addition, the City has taken a proactive approach to address those properties that are at risk to cause or have a catastrophic event. The purpose of the Stockton's Top Offending Properties (STOP) is to address

the top ten properties within the city of Stockton. These have been identified as having a combination of excessive calls for service, crime, blight, and dangerous conditions. The team consists of the Police Department, Community Development Department, Fire Department, and City Attorney's Office. The STOP team uses numerous tools and resources to obtain compliance.

CASE NO. 0917 – SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY MUNICIPALITY ETHICS POLICIES

8.0 City of Stockton

F8.1 Not all individuals are aware of the ethics policy. Lack of awareness of the city ethics policy could lead to misunderstandings that violate the policy.

Response: *The respondent agrees with this finding. The City agrees that a lack of awareness could lead to violations of policies. The City is in the process of reviewing and updating its policies. As part of these efforts, the Council Policy Manual was revised into a more organized, streamlined and efficient policy framework. Council policies 2.02 – City Council Conflict of Interest Code and 2.03 – Code of Ethics for Elected Officials and Commissioners were included in the revised manual and approved by City Council Resolution 2016-01-26-1203. In addition, the City included an update of the Code of Ethics section of the City Charter in the 2014 Charter amendments that were approved by vote of the public. This update included streamlined and better organized language to give the Code of Ethics greater clarity. Furthermore, as noted in the Grand Jury Report, "Stockton's code of ethics for employees and city officials was last updated November 2, 2017. The policy is written to include elected officials, appointed staff, appointed board and commission members, and employees."*

City directives and policies are reviewed by the City's executive team, including department heads, to disseminate information and provide updates as needed. A goal of the policy review and update project is to make policies and directives more easily accessible and have the ability to better communicate changes and share documents. Policies that are subject to review and approval at the City Council level are reviewed by the City Council at public Council meetings and posted on the City's website.

R8.1 By October 31, 2018, city council members receive a copy of the ethics policy and attend a briefing about its contents.

Response: *The respondent agrees with this recommendation. A copy of the ethics policy has been provided to the City Council members and Council members will be briefed on its contents by October 31, 2018.*

KURT O. WILSON
CITY MANAGER

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