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**City of Madera Police Department
Unveiling Truths of Local Law Enforcement**

**Madera County Grand Jury
Final Report 1920-05
December 21, 2020**

SUMMARY

The City of Madera Police Department (MPD) is facing challenges in a community that is growing economically and in racial diversity. The law enforcement officer's job is both physically and mentally challenging. In an instant, officers can be thrown into extremely stressful situations. The City of Madera Police Department is staffed by a pool of young, motivated officers and an experienced command structure. High-risk encounters coupled with a focus on community relationships in the efforts to serve and protect the City of Madera residents. How these officers cope with work related stress and maintain compassion as positive role models is what guided the MCGJ focus.

BACKGROUND

When the Madera County Grand Jury (MCGJ) started considering what areas within public safety to investigate, it was decided to review the City of Madera Police Department (MPD). There were several reasons for this choice, including police stress reduction programs, police in community outreach programs, crime statistics, police department staffing, and procedural deficiencies.

The City of Madera Police Department is made up of 70 sworn officers (able to carry a firearm on duty) and 35 non-sworn employees. The department is organized into 3 divisions:

Administration: Community outreach, including (97 Neighborhood Watch programs), dispatch, and non-sworn personnel.

Operations: The largest division of the department comprised of patrol personnel.

Investigations: Detective Unit, Special Investigations Unit, and Code Enforcement.

Code Enforcement and Animal Control are part of the police department.

The police department also has two K9 (canine) officer. One K9 is trained as a drug sniffing/identifying dog and the other one is a multi-purpose bite/attack dog. The K9 officers are issued bullet proof vests. Summertime temperatures make prolonged wearing of vests problematic for K9 officers.

The cost for each K9 officers to be service ready is \$10,000 with an additional \$10,000 for training. This one-time cost does not include the costs for veterinary care and food for these canine officers which can vary with each K9 officer. The K9 officers work vehicles are unique and specifically designed for K9 officers and their human partner.

METHODOLOGY

- Researched policy and procedures manuals for Madera Police Department.
- Reviewed Peace Officers' Standards and Training (POST) requirements.
- Interviewed city and county agency personnel.
- Examined related state adopted legislation related to officer's stress. (SB 542, AB1116).

- Participated in ride along sessions with Madera Police Department.

DISCUSSION

DEALING WITH STRESS

The City of Madera Police Department (MPD) officers are responsible to address a wide range of situations. At any time during the work shift, the officer may respond to a violent incident, a domestic dispute, or a natural disaster. These unpredictable events may require the officer to provide emergency first aid, or act as a social worker. The officer might have to be a grief counselor or remove a child from an abusive home environment. It must be noted that the officer is never truly off duty as they are expected to respond in emergency situations. New situations facing all police agencies raised the question of how MPD deals with increased stress.

Police officers across the United States are expected to adapt daily to new challenges. One officer related how he had to experience both a child's death and a double beheading. The MCGJ examined the recovery process in place to deal with the aftermath of such a traumatic event. Most local law enforcement agencies have chaplains who ride along with patrol officers to comfort and counsel the victims of violent crimes. While chaplains primary focus is on the victims of crime, their presence is also beneficial to the officers and deputies who are the First Responders to these traumatic events. The presence of a chaplain provides a resource that, if needed, can engage in a confidential manner with the officers. The chaplain keeps these conversations private. In Madera the departments supervising officers evaluate the individual incident and the responding officer. It is then determined how to best serve the recovery of the responding officer.

Madera Police Department has a psychologist available to engage with officers and evaluate their response to traumatic events and recommend further treatment or temporary changes in assignment if determined to be necessary.

The continual daily stress imposed on first responders can manifest itself in many ways. Marital issues, job burnout, isolation, and lack of empathy, even suicide are all responses to occupational stress. Nationwide, in 2017, 103 Firefighters committed suicide and 140 Police Officers took their own lives. In contrast, 93 Firefighters and 129 Police Officers died in the line of duty in the same year. These numbers are from a nationwide study.

Internal peer support groups have been established in the Madera Police Department to provide immediate and long-term support for first responders. The guidelines for peer support are currently informal and each officer may choose whether to participate or not. The participation can vary, as some officers prefer to work out issues at the gym. Each officer is unique and may not want to share personal issues with other officers. There is some reluctance to share as it could be viewed as a weakness. They rely on themselves to be fit mentally, physically, and emotionally. Lack of sleep and working excessive overtime can be impediments to their emotional and physical health.

State Legislative Action

It is noteworthy that the California Legislature has recently attempted to provide additional support for First Responders. SB542 entitles First Responders to Workmen's Compensation benefits for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. AB1116 "California Firefighter Peer Support and Crisis Referral Services Act" provides First Responders the opportunity to seek help when they feel overwhelmed by traumatic events encountered in the workplace. (ca.gov)

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

The police department is continually building relationships with the community as a daily practice. The approach of the Madera Police officers is to treat every person with respect without any favoritism. The practice of mutual respect between officers and the public has resulted in no complaints lodged against the department for rude behavior. "Coffee with a Cop" allows community members to interact with officers and see how much they care about the people of the community.

The department is involved with the hospital, community development, housing authority and the school district with programs such as Gang Resistance, Education, and Training, (GREAT). This program teaches life skills, violence prevention, conflict resolution techniques, and problem-solving skills. It allows for positive interaction and teaching opportunities between officers and the citizens of Madera.

The department is trying to address peer pressure at the junior high level with the GREAT Program, and officers are actively involved in this program. This entails officers involved in school campus activities, participating in community outreach events, and continuing to use any interaction with citizens as teachable opportunities to maintain positive relationships with the citizens of Madera. The department has a Gang Task Force as well as a Special Investigations Unit. The Special Investigations Unit consists of the Madera Police, Chowchilla Police, Madera County Sheriff, and Probation officers. The Special Investigations Unit meet formally for Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) meetings on a regular basis to collaborate.

Members of the MCGJ were able to experience a "ride along" with officers. The diversity in what the officers experienced was wide. It could be anything from a bicyclist riding at night without a light to a suspected burglary or a DUI (driving under influence), never knowing what was coming next. The MCGJ found the officers to be accommodating dealing with offenders yet following the law.

Key accomplishments from the 2019/2020 Fiscal Year:

According to the Madera Police Department the following Key Accomplishments were accomplished in 2019/2020.

Growing popularity of community outreach programs as applications for the Citizens' Academy, Parent Project, and Madkids Camp exceeded the number of spots available. As a result, an additional three Citizens' Academy classes, with one in Spanish, were added.

Every patrol officer is now equipped with a body-worn camera, which garners public trust and the ability to quickly resolve citizens' complaints, thereby helping protect the city against frivolous complaints.

The department has delivered, once again, on the promise of achieving faster response times with the passage of Measure K. For the last two years, officers have lowered their response time by 30 seconds.

Measure K enabled the department to hire 11 new officers beginning in 2017. This new staffing has significantly increased the capacity of the department. Officer-initiated field activity has increased by over 46 percent during this time, which is critical to the department's mission since this proactive component of policing has the greatest impact on property crimes and certain violent crimes, such as street robberies.

The department utilizes social media to spread and receive information. The department currently has more than 44,500 social media followers, creating a network to disseminate information and work collaboratively with the public to solve crimes that may have otherwise gone unsolved. The department's weekly feature titled "WhoIsThisWednesday" promotes posts with surveillance videos of crimes, allowing the public to help identify suspects. This program has a success rate of over 60 percent.

Members of the department participated in 15 Neighborhood Watch meetings, with over 97 Neighborhood Watch groups and five Business Watch groups, respectively.

The Communications Center received and processed over 122,400 emergency and non-emergency calls for 2019.

Department personnel handled 60,432 events, which included calls for service and officer-initiated activity, in 2019.

Responded to 2,187 welfare checks, 1,448 burglar alarms, 1,605 stray animal calls, and 3,646 request-for-assistance calls in 2019.

Successfully integrated the Code Enforcement tracking system.

Code Enforcement conducted 518 rental housing inspections; a 33 percent increase compared to 2018.

Code Enforcement personnel handled 308 public nuisance complaints, issuing 537 notice-of-violations and citations.

The Investigations Unit handled 1,177 cases in 2019, a 29 percent increase from 2018, and closed over 99 percent of the cases during the calendar year.

Officers arrested 338 persons for driving under the influence.

Personnel completed 38 homeless encampment/river cleanups in coordination with Public Works.

MPD partnered with Criscom Company to proactively seek out grant funding for public safety. Criscom Company is currently working on a multimillion-dollar SAFER grant to hire seven fire fighters and submitted for COVID-19 grant funding for the City.

\$130,000 added to Measure K Police Reserve Fund.

This is a snapshot of the work done by Madera Police Department taken from the 2020/2021 Madera City Budget.

CRIME STATISTICS IN THE CITY OF MADERA

	HOMICIDE	RAPE	ROBBERY	AGGRAVATED ASSAULT	VIOLENT CRIME	BURGLARY	LARCENY	MOTOR VEHICLE THEFT	PROPERTY CRIMES
2014	6	17	72	210	305	472	1007	207	1686
2015	3	16	94	334	447	462	1135	325	1922
2016	3	24	99	393	519	299	1266	301	1866
2017	4	26	106	233	369	296	981	349	1626
2018	6	37	92	260	395	241	898	207	1346
2019	3	32	77	223	335	235	824	242	1288
Percentage decrease from 2018					-15%	Percentage decrease from 2018			-3%

Taken from the City of Madera Police Department Annual Report 2019

<https://www.madera.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/PD-Annual-Report-Final.pdf>

POLICE DEPARTMENT STAFFING AND COMPENSATION:

The MCGJ discovered that currently there are 15 unfilled positions at Madera Police Department. A comparative search of average annual income for police officers revealed the difference between Fresno and Madera Police officers. Average annual income for Fresno officers is \$57,000. Average annual income for Madera officers is \$50,000. (Current city budget for both Fresno and Madera)

It follows that maintaining or increasing the funding for the Madera Police Department would better serve the community.

Expanded training and hiring more officers would be the recommended path forward. The current ratio is one sworn (able to carry firearm on duty) officer per 1000 citizens. At the time of this report the department has 105 employees. This number includes 70 sworn officers. The FBI recommends 1.5 officers per 1,000 residents. It also includes code enforcement, community redevelopment, and neighborhood watch.

PROCEDURAL DEFICIENCIES

The two most common deficiencies the MCGJ heard from department personal were:

1. With recent law changes, defendants do not stay in jail. This is called the “Zero Bail” policy for non-violent offenders. An officer referenced one incident where a defendant stole four vehicles in one night and was released from jail in between each incident.
2. The time utilized to deal with California Code 5150 or an involuntary commitment of individuals who present a danger to themselves or others due to signs of mental illness.

When a call to law enforcement comes in regarding an individual who appears to be a danger to themselves or others, an officer is dispatched to evaluate the situation. In most cases the individual is not violent. The officer must determine if the individual needs to be placed on a 5150 hold despite the officer having minimal if any formal medical training in this area. If it is determined to be necessary, an ambulance is called and an EMT transports the individual to a mental health facility with the officer following the ambulance. Madera lacks sufficient services to handle mental health crisis with Madera Community Hospital as the primary facility to receive and evaluate these patients. The police officer must remain at the hospital for extended periods of time while the individual is evaluated, resulting in the officer not being available for other duties. This has severely impacted the Madera Police Department and the unfilled positions in the department.

The cost to taxpayers for a 5150 24-hour hospital hold is \$1000 per patient. Some of the cost is carried by the county and some is shared by the state. This contrasts with the program available in Fresno county where the Exodus Psychiatric Health Facility operates. Exodus is a licensed facility with 16 beds within a locked and monitored environment. The Fresno Police that have a 5150 patient can transfer custody of the person to be evaluated at the facility and return to regular duty without unnecessary loss of time. The cost of this program to Fresno County is \$200 per patient. The difference in cost is due to patient care being billable to Medi-Cal or personal insurance. This reduces the cost directly absorbed by the County Of Madera. The lack of a local mental health facility or option for MPD in handling people in a mental health crisis is a problem that has no current solution. The County needs to take a closer look at this situation. One option can be a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Madera County and Fresno County to cooperate in transferring patients in crisis into the Exodus facility in Fresno.

FINDINGS

- F1.** The MCGJ finds that the Madera Police Department works on multiple levels to build and strengthen positive relationships with community members.
- F2.** The MCGJ finds there are 15 funded positions that currently are unfilled at the Madera Police Department.
- F3.** The MCGJ finds that Madera County is not effectively handling the individuals Madera Police Department identifies as having a mental health crisis (5150).

RECOMMENDATIONS

- R1.** MCGJ recommends that the Madera Police Department continue to foster the relationships within the community through the efforts already in place. and be open to the suggestions brought by community groups and individuals.
- R.2** MCGJ recommends that during Fiscal Year 21/22 currently open positions at the Madera Police Department be filled.

- R3.** MCGJ recommends that the Madera Police Department immediately work with the Madera County Board of Supervisors to provide adequate mental health services.

REQUIRED RESPONSES

Pursuant to Penal Code sections 933 and 933.05, the grand jury requests responses as follows:

From the following elected county officials within 60 days:

Madera County Board of Supervisors
200 West 4th Street
Madera, CA 93637

Mayor of the City of Madera
205 4th St, Madera, CA 93637

Madera City Council
205 W 4th St, Madera, CA 93637

Madera County District Attorney
209 W Yosemite Ave, Madera, CA 93637

Madera County Sheriff
2725 Falcon Drive, Madera, CA 93637

INVITED RESPONSES

Chief of Police, City of Madera Police Department
330 South C Street, Madera, CA 93637

Department Head, Madera County Department of Public Health
1604 Sunrise Avenue, Madera, CA 93637

Department Head, Madera County Department of Behavioral Health
209 East 7th Street, Madera, CA 93637

Reports issued by the Grand Jury do not identify individuals interviewed. Penal Code section 929 requires that reports of the Grand Jury not contain the name of any person or facts leading to the identity of any person who provides information to the Grand Jury.
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BIBLIOGRAPY:

“*Mental Health and Suicide of First Responders*. Ruderman Family Foundation White Paper Study. April 2018”

SB542 (Section 2. Section 3212.15 “Workers Compensation” California Labor Code) amended 11/18/2019.

AB1116 (Section 2. Article 21. Section 8669.5 “California Firefighter Peer Support and Crisis Referral Act” California Government Code) amended 11/18/2019.