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OAKLAND POLICE STAFFING

The grand jury investigated the issue of Oakland police officer staffing and whether there are sufficient numbers of police to protect and serve the citizens of Oakland. The grand jury interviewed the chief of the Oakland Police Department (OPD), the president of the Oakland Police Officers Association (OPOA), the city administrator, and the mayor of Oakland.

INVESTIGATION

The current debate focuses on whether or not the Oakland Police Department will reach its authorized staffing level of 803 officers by the end of the year as mandated by Measure Y. The grand jury believes that 803 officers are inadequate to address the high crime rate in Oakland. According to FBI statistics for 2005, Oakland has the second highest crime rate in the State of California; Morgan Quitno 2006 crime ranking statistics show Oakland as the eighth most dangerous city in the nation. Given the crime rate in Oakland, the grand jury believes the city needs more than 803 officers, and most of those officers must patrol the streets.

Staffing for the police department is challenging, and recruiting officers admittedly is a difficult problem. With the rising crime rate, officers are unable to meet all of their challenges.

Arbitrator Charles A. Askin stated his opinion in "In the Matter of a Controversy Between the City of Oakland and the Oakland Police Officers Association" that the city of Oakland has a serious crime problem. Two other experts cited in the opinion also found the OPD grossly understaffed. One Oakland neighborhood organization calls for 1,100 officers. This number may not be adequate but one

thing is clear: increasing the number of sworn officers that patrol the streets can only help reduce Oakland's serious crime problem.

CONCLUSION

Although the grand jury realizes that having more uniformed officers on the street reduces crime, it is not the sole solution. Many socioeconomic issues also need to be addressed. The city of Oakland must immediately find the money to increase uniformed police patrols. Adequate policing of city streets is an absolute necessity for the safety of Oakland's residents.

RECOMMENDATION

Recommendation 08-16:

The city of Oakland increase its number of sworn officers with the Oakland Police Department to a minimum of 1,200.

RESPONSES REQUIRED

Oakland City Administrator	Recommendation 08-16
Mayor, City of Oakland	Recommendation 08-16
Oakland City Council	Recommendation 08-16

OAKLAND FIRE DEPARTMENT
APPLICATION ACCEPTANCE MISMANAGEMENT

The grand jury investigated complaints concerning the selection process for candidates for 24 firefighter positions in the Oakland Fire Department that took place in December 2007. In the course of the investigation, the grand jury interviewed the Oakland fire chief, the Oakland mayor, and the Oakland city administrator. The grand jury learned that the city was to accept a total of 1,000 applications for the 24 vacant firefighter positions. Since the early 1990's there has been a requirement that applicants already possess Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) certification. For the November 2007 hiring cycle, that requirement was eliminated as a way to attract Oakland residents who may not have the EMT certification or who cannot easily afford the time and cost of the training. The fire department planned to provide the new fire academy class with EMT training and certification during the academy at an additional cost of \$25,000 per trainee.

Required to submit applications only in person, thousands of applicants assembled at City Hall, some as early as two days before applications were to be accepted. The fire department did not have a procedure in place to handle the large number of applicants. The original plan was to accept applications at a single door at City Hall Plaza. The large number of applicants and the misbehavior of a significant number of 'line crashers' led the fire chief and other senior fire department officials to accept applications at several additional doors. Those who had been first in line lost their 'priority of place' in the process, and in the ensuing scramble the orderly collection of applications dissolved, resulting in many applicants being turned away. In the confusion that followed, one of the fire chief's two sons was selected as were two relatives of the city administrator. Whether this selection was intentional or not, it gives the appearance of favoritism. The grand jury also learned that some applicants were provided with

confidential information in advance as to where to line up, enabling them to pre-stage themselves.

At the mayor's request, in an attempt to rectify this problem, there was a second round of applications accepted at a later date, and the applicant pool ultimately totaled over 2,600 for 24 firefighter positions.

CONCLUSION

It is clear that the application process was seriously flawed. The fire department mismanaged the process for receiving applications. The city of Oakland had no contingency plan to avoid the firefighter application chaos.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 08-17:

In future Oakland Fire Department hiring, the process for issuing and receiving the applications be managed by the Human Resources Department.

Recommendation 08-18:

The city of Oakland ensure that the fire department not participate in the distribution or acceptance of applications.

Recommendation 08-19:

The city of Oakland develop a plan that ensures an orderly process for accepting applications that includes security and the ability to accommodate large numbers of applicants.

RESPONSES REQUIRED

Oakland City Administrator

Recommendation 08-17 through 08-19

Mayor, City of Oakland

Recommendation 08-17 through 08-19

Oakland City Council

Recommendation 08-17 through 08-19