

# Santa Cruz County Civil Grand Jury

# What is the Civil Grand Jury?

- ▶ The Civil Grand Jury is an independent investigative body for local government.
- ▶ A grand jury is a group of 19 citizens appointed each year by the Santa Cruz County Superior Court. Jurors serve from July 1 to June 30. Grand jurors may serve no more than two consecutive terms.
- ▶ All grand jury activities are confidential.
- ▶ Only California has independent civil grand juries established in its constitution.

# Functions of the Grand Jury

- ▶ To act as a “watchdog” to help local government be more more transparent, efficient, and accountable.
- ▶ To investigate, prepare, and issue reports on local government.
- ▶ To investigate citizen complaints concerning local agencies.
- ▶ To inquire into the conditions at the jails.

# How does the Grand Jury decide on topics to investigate?

- ▶ Topics are chosen from:
  - ▶ Complaints from citizens
  - ▶ Follow-up to a previous grand jury report
  - ▶ Topics suggested by current grand jurors
  - ▶ Current local issues
- ▶ All investigations and final reports must be approved by a vote of the grand jurors.

# What does the Grand Jury investigate?

- ▶ County government
- ▶ City governments
- ▶ Special districts such as local water districts, fire districts, and school districts
- ▶ Condition and management of jails within the county

# The Grand Jury cannot investigate

- ▶ Federal agencies
- ▶ State agencies
- ▶ Superior court system
- ▶ School district curriculum, policy, and personnel records
- ▶ Private individuals or companies

# Grand Jury Reports

- ▶ The Grand Jury may produce several reports.
- ▶ Each report has Findings and Recommendations.
- ▶ Relevant parties must respond within 90 days, but are not legally required to implement Recommendations.
- ▶ News coverage, citizen attention, and grand jury follow-up help ensure that agreed-upon changes are implemented.

# Examples of Grand Jury Reports

- ▶ Santa Cruz County Pension Disclosures (2015, 2016)
- ▶ Santa Cruz County Domestic Violence Commission (2016)
- ▶ Deaths in the County Jail (2014)
- ▶ Medical Services at the Jails (2015)
- ▶ Desalination and Alternatives (2014) (won a state-wide award)
- ▶ Santa Cruz County Fire Protection Districts (2015)
  
- ▶ Grand Jury reports can be found at the Santa Cruz County Grand Jury website, <http://www.co.santa-cruz.ca.us/Departments/GrandJury.aspx>



# Important Operating Concepts of the Grand Jury

- ▶ Jurors must maintain confidentiality.
- ▶ Jurors must be responsible and respectful, and actively listen to all points of view.
- ▶ Jurors must keep an open mind.
- ▶ The Grand Jury is responsible for the factual accuracy of its reports.

# Grand Jury Time Commitment

- ▶ The time commitment for a civil grand juror is approximately 20 hours per week for a year.
- ▶ The full grand jury usually meets once a week.
- ▶ Jurors serve on smaller committees which also meet weekly.
- ▶ There are additional meetings for interviews and investigations.
- ▶ Each new grand jury determines meeting dates and times according to juror availabilities.
- ▶ Each juror receives \$15 per meeting (up to two per week) as well as mileage reimbursement for travel related to grand jury activities.

# Applying for Civil Grand Jury Service

- ▶ There are two ways to be selected to the Santa Cruz County Civil Grand Jury:
  - ▶ Receive and respond to a summons in the mail
  - ▶ Submit an application directly to the Santa Cruz County Superior Court
- ▶ Applications may be found at:
  - ▶ Santa Cruz

# Grand Juror Requirements

- ▶ At least 18 years old and a citizen of the United States
- ▶ A resident of Santa Cruz County for at least one year
- ▶ Intelligent, of sound judgment, and good character
- ▶ Has sufficient knowledge of English to communicate orally and in writing
- ▶ Must not be an elected public official, or convicted of any felony or other high crime

# What makes a good Grand Juror?

- ▶ Interest in local government and community issues
- ▶ Likes learning new things
- ▶ Has computer and writing skills
- ▶ Works well in a team
- ▶ Is able to maintain strict confidentiality
- ▶ Wants to have an impact on our local community

# Additional Information

- ▶ Santa Cruz County Superior Court- <http://www.santacruzcourt.org>
- ▶ Santa Cruz County Civil Grand Jury- <http://www.co.santa-cruz.ca.us/default.aspx?tabid=895>
- ▶ The California Grand Jurors' Association- <http://cgja.org>

# Thoughts to Consider

- ▶ The Civil Grand Jury is an arm of the court, the voice of the people, and the conscience of the community.
- ▶ “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”

Margaret Mead