

**SUBMITTAL TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE, STATE OF CALIFORNIA**



ITEM
3.12
(ID # 7862)

MEETING DATE:

Tuesday, August 28, 2018

FROM : EXECUTIVE OFFICE:

SUBJECT: EXECUTIVE OFFICE: Response to the 2017-2018 Grand Jury Report Regarding Veterans' Services Accessibility, Districts: All. [Total Cost \$0]

RECOMMENDED MOTION: That the Board of Supervisors:

1. Approve, with or without modification, the attached response to the 2017-2018 Grand Jury report regarding the Riverside County Veterans' Services Department accessibility;
2. Direct the Clerk of the Board to immediately forward the Board' finalized responses to the Grand Jury, the Presiding Judge and to the County Clerk-Recorder (for mandatory filing with the state).

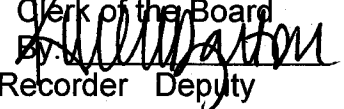
ACTION: Policy


Jennifer Sargent, Principal Management Analyst 8/21/2018

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

On motion of Supervisor Perez, seconded by Supervisor Ashley and duly carried by unanimous vote, IT WAS ORDERED that the above matter is approved as recommended.

Ayes: Jeffries, Tavaglione, Washington, Perez and Ashley
Nays: None
Absent: None
Date: August 28, 2018
xc: EO, Grand Jury, Presiding Judge, Veterans' Services, Recorder Deputy

Kecia Harper-Ihem
Clerk of the Board


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FINANCIAL DATA	Current Fiscal Year:	Next Fiscal Year:	Total Cost:	Ongoing Cost
COST	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
NET COUNTY COST	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
SOURCE OF FUNDS: N/A			Budget Adjustment: No	
			For Fiscal Year: 2018/19	

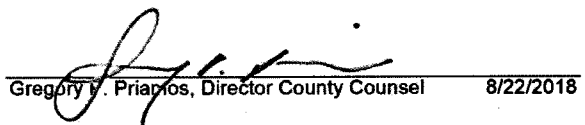
C.E.O. RECOMMENDATION: Approve.

BACKGROUND:

Summary

Penal Code Section 933(c) requires Board of Supervisors comment on the Grand Jury's recommendations pertaining to matters under the Board's control. In addition, responses must be provided to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court within 90 days of receipt of the report.


 Alex Gann 8/22/2018


 Gregory V. Priamos, Director County Counsel 8/22/2018

RIVERSIDE COUNTY VETERANS' SERVICES
FY 2017/18 Grand Jury Report
Findings and Recommendations

FINDINGS:

Number 1:

A ramp leading to the main Veterans' Services facility in Riverside is not in compliance with the American's with Disability Act (ADA) standards because there are no handrails (Attachment 1). The Auditor-Controller's Report (Internal Audit Report 2018-005, dated December 28, 2017) states:

...The 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design, Section 405, identifies a ramp as having a slope of greater than 1:20 and requires handrails for ramp runs with a rise greater than six inches. The facility entrance has two elevated runs heading toward the entrance on each side. When facing the entrance, the run on the left has a slope of less than 1:20, as such it does not meet the definition of a ramp. However, the run on the right has a slope greater than 1:20, qualifying it as a ramp, per ADA standards. This same ramp has a run rise greater than six inches and is required to have handrails. With the rise of the ramp over six inches, the lack of handrails can cause injury to individuals who have difficulty walking. This increases the risk of litigation against the County of Riverside.

The same Auditor-Controller's Report had an estimated correction date of March 1, 2018. Veterans' Services requested an evaluation for design plans and an estimate of costs to install the handrails through the Riverside County Economic Development Agency (EDA). EDA referred the issue to the Riverside County Engineering Division. As of May 7, 2018, the Veterans' Services Director was still awaiting the requested estimate.

Recommendation:

The Board of Supervisors consider installing proper handrails for the front ramp of the main Veterans' Services building in Riverside. This will help prevent injuries, possible litigation and conform to ADA standards.

Response:

Respondent agrees with the finding.

The recommendation has been implemented and the hand rails were installed per ADA Standards on July 20, 2018.

Number 2:

Based on Riverside County Grand Jury (Grand Jury) research and interviews, Veterans' Services is understaffed. Staffing consists of one Director, one Assistant Director, three Senior Veterans Service Officers, five Veterans Representatives, one Executive Assistant and five Office Assistants serving at seven locations throughout Riverside County. According to the Veterans' Services website, the veteran population is 129,364, which is 5.6 percent of the Riverside County total population. Countywide, beginning fiscal year July 2016 through February 2018, Veterans' Services served and assisted 36,966 in-house clients, handled 60,511 phone calls and responded to 23,803 emails. The phone call and email statistics are incoming and outgoing combined.

Recommendation:

The Board of Supervisors consider approving an increase to the Veterans' Services budget for hiring additional staff. This will help alleviate long wait times and limited days of operation at field offices.

Response:

Respondent agrees with the finding.

The recommendation has been implemented. In May 2018, Veterans' Services received authorization to open recruitment on an additional Veterans Representative position. In addition, the Board of Supervisors authorized seven Veterans Representatives in the FY 18/19 Recommended Budget. According to Human Resources, the recruitment process has been initiated and will be increased from one Veterans Representative recruitment to two.

Number 3:

Riverside County Veterans' Services offices are closed to the public on Fridays. The Veterans' Services Director explained to the Grand Jury that Friday closures allow representatives to process caseloads steadily and uninterrupted. In-house clients are seen on a first-come, first-served basis. Representatives are rarely able to schedule appointments because they spend whatever amount of time necessary to address the needs of each client. The field offices are open at limited times throughout the week. Schedules are subject to change without notice, if Representatives are unavailable. According to several interviewed veterans, walk-in wait times can be as much as three hours (Attachment 2).

Recommendation:

Veterans' Services consider changing Riverside, Hemet and Indio office client walk-in hours to Monday through Friday, from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00

p.m. This will allow an extra day to serve clients. The 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. time period should be used as uninterrupted time to process caseloads. Staggered employee working hours would enable the office to remain open during lunch, thereby minimizing delayed service to our veterans.

Response:

Respondent disagrees with the finding.

At this time, the recommendation will not be implemented because it is not reasonable under the current conditions.

According to the department head, adjusting client walk-in hours to Monday through Friday, 10am to 4pm, would reduce the number of veterans served by dividing up the day. In addition, the 8am to 10am uninterrupted time would likely only accommodate completion of claims work and returning phone calls/emails, leaving limited time for case management, which is a very time consuming process.

Through prior analysis of four and five day work weeks, it was determined that being open to the public four days a week, from 8am to 4pm, is the most efficient use of staff time. The current schedule enables proper interviewing of clients, while efficiently maintaining heavy caseloads and case management, thus providing the best customer service. In FY 17/18, under the current office hours, the department realized approximately \$50,000 in additional state funding.

Due to limited staffing, the department head determined that maintaining current hours, Monday through Thursday, 8am to noon and 1 pm to 4 pm, in the Hemet and Indio offices was the most efficient and effective use of staff time. Once the department is fully staffed and all newly hired Veterans' Representatives are trained and working independently, the Riverside office will increase client hours for appointments on Fridays, from 8am to noon. It is anticipated the expanded hours could be implemented in August of 2019.