

San Mateo County Civil Grand Jury Recruitment Effort

BARBARA ARIETTA, PRESIDENT

SAN MATEO CHAPTER, CGJA

MAY 07, 2016

FORWARD

As you may or may not be aware, there are several approaches to recruiting for the Civil Grand Jury. Some may be more successful than others. It may depend upon a number of factors in any particular year's efforts. For instance, it may depend upon the newly developed technology at hand and/or the number of volunteers available to carry out your recruitment plans.

In San Mateo County, during the past few years, we have tried a multiplicity of various recruitment outreach methods. This report is an outline of those public outreach attempts that have worked for us. Although, it must be noted that not all sources were successful in all years, however, all have been successful at one time or the other.

The first thing that we recommend is to meet with your Superior Court liaison and closely work together in developing a joint effort plan for recruitment. If you do not have too many people in your chapter that can devote a good amount of time to the recruitment effort, which our chapter has experienced from time to time, we have found that the Superior Court liaison can augment the manpower to get the word out. For, in the final analysis, you are actually helping the Superior Court to do its recruitment work.

In addition to helping out with what the Superior Court has done with contacting various elected officials, distributing press releases and placing legal ads in local newspapers, our San Mateo County Chapter of the CGJA has arranged and participated in local television interviews, which have conveyed information about the vital "citizen watchdog" role of the standing Civil Grand Jury, how it works, its impact on the community, an applicant's potential qualifications, as well as the significant personal benefits that can be derived from Grand Jury service.

We have also written the script for the television interview, focusing on questions and answers that would be comprehensive in telling the story of what the Civil Grand Jury does. A copy of those questions and answers is included with this packet. It is to be noted that, in adding to the recruitment effort, the Superior Court of San Mateo has linked our TV interview to its website for all to see when visiting its Grand Jury section. Since the information is standard, it can be used from one year to the next without the need for changes being made.

The San Mateo Chapter has also conducted a series of Public Information Sessions wherein we have identified cities that would be excellent focal points to reach citizens from the north county to the south county and from our coastside to our bayside. Our county is quite large so we identified six different areas to conduct sessions that would be best to reach the county as a whole. Each meeting was publicized by press releases and copies of flyers that we prepared and were sent to various newspapers, libraries and local organizations. We

prepared a very comprehensive power point presentation for these meetings and distributed Grand Jury applications to the attendees after our presentations. A copy of the power point presentation is also being included in this packet.

The San Mateo County Board of Supervisors, upon request from our chapter's president, also prepared Proclamations announcing that a particular month is Grand Jury month and has invited our chapter president to give a recruitment speech at its monthly meeting. This speech is heard, not only by the audience in attendance, but also by the television audience which is comprised of a quarter of a million of the county's residents.

The San Mateo Chapter, in co-ordination with the Public Information Sessions, created a network of former and current Grand Juror volunteers to answer the public's inquiries after the sessions concluded. We established a special phone number and email address in conjunction with the Superior Court to co-ordinate this recruitment effort.

And lastly, announcements and speeches were made by chapter members at various local organization meetings such as the Rotary and Lions Clubs, political groups, ethnic associations, and faith based groups etc.

In executing our plan, we achieved our goal of recruiting a geographically and demographically diverse qualified pool of applicants for the Grand Jury. It is hoped that some of our outreach attempts will prove useful to your own recruitment efforts in your county.

If you have any questions in reference to this material, please feel free to contact me at barietta@hotmail.com or call me at 415-246-0775.

Sincerely,

BARBARA ARIETTA, President

San Mateo Chapter, CGJA

May 7, 2016

2016-2017 SAN MATEO COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY
RECRUITMENT (February 1, 2016 – April 22, 2016)

Letters requesting nominations sent to:

Board of Supervisors

San Mateo County Elected Officials

Assessor-County Clerk Recorder

Controller

District Attorney

Coroner

Sheriff

Tax Collector-Treasurer

Assemblyperson, 12th District

Assemblyperson, 19th District

Assemblyperson, 21st District

Senator 8th District

Senator 11th District

Congressperson, 12th District

Congressperson 14th District

City Council Members

School District Governing Board Members

San Mateo County Superintendent of Schools

Superior Court Judicial Officers

Current grand jurors

Last term alternates that did not serve

Social Media:

Next Door

RSVP – Retired Volunteers – project manager sent posting to over 300 recipients

Flyers Posted:

County Senior Centers

County/Cities Libraries

Jury Assembly Room with brochures

Press Releases – 4 throughout application period

Sent to all on attached list

Placed Legal Ad in seven county newspapers

Contacted Last three years of sworn grand jurors requesting assistance to let their family and friends know of application period



SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA, COUNTY OF SAN MATEO
400 COUNTY CENTER
REDWOOD CITY, CA 94063

LELAND DAVIS, III
JUDGE

March 21, 2016

NEWS RELEASE

The Honorable Leland Davis, III of the San Mateo County Superior Court announced today that applications for service on the 2016-2017 Civil Grand Jury has been extended to April 22, 2016. Judge Davis made the announcement as the appointed Civil Grand Jury Advisor for the next grand jury term, which commences July 1, 2016 and ends June 30, 2017.

Any resident of San Mateo County for more than one year who is a citizen of the United States, 18 years of age or older, of ordinary intelligence, sound judgment and good character, with sufficient knowledge of the English language is eligible for selection by Judge Davis. Elected public officials are not eligible.

The Court encourages all interested individuals to apply. The Court strives to obtain a cross section of the county population. After the completion of an interview process by Judge Davis, jurors will be selected through a random draw.

Application forms can be obtained by writing Grand Jury Clerk, Court Executive Office, 400 County Center, Redwood City, CA 94063 or telephoning (650) 261-5066 or on-line at: http://www.sanmateocourt.org/documents/grand_jury/application_form.pdf

###

MAKE A DIFFERENCE

APPLY TO SERVE ON THE 2016-2017 SAN MATEO COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY

Deadline to Submit an Application - Extended to April 22, 2016

Applications and Information available at

www.sanmateocourt.org/grandjury

or by calling 650-261-5066 or emailing grandjury@sanmateocourt.org

Term of Service: July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2017

Grand Jurors:

- ❖ Choose their own investigation topics
- ❖ Investigate the performance of county, city and other local agencies
- ❖ Analyze data and write reports with recommendations for improvement
- ❖ Examine conditions at local jails
- ❖ Look into citizen complaints about local government agencies
- ❖ Develop skills and expertise
- ❖ Earn jury duty pay for meetings

Qualifications:

- ❖ Citizen of the United States
- ❖ At Least 18 years of age
- ❖ Reside in San Mateo County for at least one year before being selected
- ❖ Ordinary intelligence and good character
- ❖ Knowledge of the English language



A GOOD GRAND JUROR IS SOMEONE WHO:

Is a good listener.

Can cooperate with 18 others toward
a common goal.

Can keep a confidence, as all work
is confidential.

Is capable of asking thought-provoking
questions.

Can review documents and assist in
writing lucid reports.

Is interested in trying to increase the
efficiency of local government.

Wants to save taxpayers' dollars
and improve services.

Can contribute a minimum half-day twice
a month to public service.

Interested citizens who wish to serve on
the San Mateo County Civil Grand Jury
should direct correspondence to:

Grand Jury Judge
c/o Court Executive Officer
400 County Center
Redwood City, CA 94063-1655

Phone (650) 261-5066
Fax (650) 261-5147

For additional grand jury information
visit our web page

www.sanmatocourt.org/grandjury



Civil Grand Jury

SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA
FOR THE COUNTY OF SAN MATEO



HISTORY OF THE GRAND JURY

A grand jury derives its name from the fact that it has a greater number of jurors than a trial (petit) jury. The history of the grand jury traces back to the founding of the common law under the English system in the 11th and 12th centuries. The first grand jury in the United States was impaneled by the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1635 to consider such crimes as murder, robbery, and wife beating. Early California grand juries investigated prisons, conducted audits of county books and looked into matters of community interest.

The function of the grand jury expanded over time from the role of indictment to that of a citizens' body with governmental watchdog functions. Today in California criminal and civil grand juries are separate. California's constitution mandates a civil grand jury be chosen each year in each county.

OVERVIEW OF THE CIVIL GRAND JURY

The San Mateo Civil Grand Jury is a volunteer, fact-finding body that has the potential to make constructive changes and suggest meaningful solutions to a wide range of local government problems.

A judicial body authorized by the constitution of the State of California, it is composed of 19 members selected by ballot from a pool of volunteers and nominees of the court. An attempt is made to impanel a jury that represents a diversity of men and women from socioeconomic, ethnic, age, educational background and geographical areas of the county. The jury monitors the performance of local government and makes recommendations that may improve services and save taxpayers' dollars.

HOW THE CIVIL GRAND JURY WORKS

Jurors are sworn in and begin their 12-month service commencing the first day of July. The Grand Jury Judge may reappoint jurors to a second term. The Grand Jury Judge appoints a foreperson to preside at the meetings. The jury then organizes itself into committees and examines selected aspects of county and city government, including special districts. Most of the functions involve investigation, analysis, reporting and recommendation.

The civil grand jury has the authority to subpoena evidence as needed. If the civil grand

jury were to conclude there is an indictable offense, the District Attorney would determine how to proceed.

As an independent body the civil grand jury alone determines its agenda. The subjects to be investigated are generated by present or past grand jury panels or initiated by citizen concerns. All letters of complaint are kept confidential. The primary function of the civil grand jury is to make recommendations to improve local government. The County Counsel and the presiding Grand Jury Judge are available for advice.

CIVIL GRAND JURY REPORTS

Civil grand jury reports are the results of investigations and contain findings, recommendations and, if merited, commendations. Responses are required from those agencies and officials to whom the recommendations are addressed.

Copies of the final San Mateo County Civil Grand Jury Report are available on the San Mateo County web site and at all county libraries and are issued to print, broadcast, cable and internet media.

Prompting Questions for *Pen Voice* Interview

- 1. What exactly is the San Mateo County Civil Grand Jury?**
- 2. How does a standing Civil Grand Jury operate to get its work done?**
- 3. How do the Committees decide what they will investigate?**
- 4. Can you provide some examples of recent investigations that had significant impact?**
- 5. How do the grand jurors get selected for this important function?**
- 6. From what you described, it sounds like a lot of work for those selected. What kind of time commitment is involved?**
- 7. Given that level of commitment, what do the Grand Jurors get out of the experience?**
- 8. Finally, to wrap this up, what is the role of your organization in this process and where should people interested go for more information or to apply for Civil Grand Jury service?**

For more information:

San Mateo County Association of Grand Jurors (SMCAGJ)

Barbara Arietta, President

<http://www.co.sanmateo.ca.us/smcagj>

SMCAGJ Volunteer Network: grandjury@sanmateocourt.org

650-262-5066

Prompts with Response Points

1. What exactly is the San Mateo County Civil Grand Jury?

- It is a group of 19 citizens who serve a 12-month term.
- It is a citizen watchdog function mandated by the State Constitution.
- It investigates local government – County, cities, special districts, and some aspects of school districts.
- Every California County has one. Standing civil grand jury systems in this form exist today only in California and Nevada.

2. How does a standing Civil Grand Jury operate to get its work done?

- First, it is not at all like regular jury duty service.
- The members themselves decide the best way to organize to get the job done. Best practices usually carry over from year to year.
- Typically in SMC, the Civil Grand Jury has approximately six Committees with specific focus areas, such as Health and Human Services, Finance and Administration, Law, etc.
- Committees independently research and propose investigation targets to the full Grand Jury and perform only investigations approved by the full Grand Jury.
- They then write and submit reports with their Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations for full Grand Jury approval. This process can take many months.
- Approved reports are issued to the agencies involved and typically get strong local media coverage.
- Agencies must respond to all Findings and Recommendations but are not legally required to implement recommended changes.

3. How do the Committees decide what they will investigate?

There are many ways including:

- Brainstorming sessions to generate ideas
- Meeting discussions of what has been in the news
- Individual knowledge of or interest in a subject of broad public interest
- Requests from the general public (required to consider, but not act)
- Follow-up on past topics or investigations done by other Counties
- Changes in direction based on background research
- Mandatory annual investigation - jail inspection

4. Can you provide some examples of recent investigations that had significant impact?

The fact is that most of the average 12 investigation reports issued per year have some impact. For example, 682 recommendations made by the 2010 –

2012 Grand Juries were implemented or committed to be implemented, a success rate of over 60% in a time period where local government was under significant financial and resource pressures.

It is easy to highlight some with major impact and media and public attention

- There have been several major investigations into County financing, including pension funding, structural deficits and uses of reserves. They have been controversial and have driven positive changes
- The conclusions of the investigation of Cal Fire service on the Coastsides played a major factor in the successful recall of three Coastsides Fire Protection District Board members who tried to throw out Cal Fire and restart a local fire company.
- The investigation report looking at the lack of bullying policies in some County school districts led to the County Superintendent initiating an effort that resulted in the April, 2012 launch of **RESPECT! 24/7** a two year County-wide anti-bullying and civility initiative.
- Further back, Grand Jury reports played a key role in making the case for the County Board of Supervisors to adopt district rather than county-wide elections, a change finally occurring this year.

5. How do the grand jurors get selected for this important function?

- Jurors are recruited by public notice from the presiding judge.
- Press releases go out to local media. Service organizations and other community groups encourage nominations.
- The only qualifications are that the applicant must be a citizen of the US, a resident of San Mateo County for at least one year, be 18 years of age or older, have sufficient command of English to perform the duties, and be "of ordinary intelligence, sound judgment, and good character".
- The ideal Grand Juror also has a strong interest in how government works and a desire to improve it.
- Information sessions are being held around the County during February so those wanting to learn more about service should attend and talk directly with former grand jurors to get their questions answered.
- Finally, interested citizens complete an application available on the County's and the San Mateo County Association of Grand Jurors' websites. The judge interviews applicants, and those that pass the screening are entered into a lottery that determines the jurors and alternates.

6. From what you described, it sounds like a lot of work for those selected. What kind of time commitment is involved?

- It is a lot of work, but it is interesting, fulfilling work.
- There is an all day meeting once every two weeks. All of the Committees meet that same day, and a member is typically on two Committees. The full Grand Jury meets for an hour or two after those sessions.

- Committees set their own schedules for work in between the all day sessions. This is when planning takes place, interviews are conducted, reports are drafted, and adjustments made.
- On average, an engaged grand juror will invest an average of about 15 hours/week, less in the beginning and more at crunch time near the end of the term when many reports are being finished.

7. Given that level of commitment, what do the Grand Jurors get out of the experience?

Almost all Grand Jurors view their total experience serving as very positive and some volunteer for second terms immediately or after a break of a few years. They typically cite as positives:

- Learning how their government really works by visiting sites and interviewing department heads and officials.
- Developing new skills and maintaining existing ones, such as organization and planning, technology, leadership.
- Working closely for a year with other bright, interested citizens.
- Gaining personal satisfaction from having a visible, lasting impact.
- Earning some modest income for service

8. Finally, to wrap this up, what is the role of your organization in this process and where should people interested go for more information or to apply for Civil Grand Jury service?

- The SMCAGJ is a non-profit group with a membership of former grand jurors who recognize the importance of the system and want to help ensure it remains effective and thrives. We support the County Civil Grand Jury by training new Grand Jurors, and by helping recruit diverse, qualified applicant pools. Statewide, our Association lobbies to protect the independence of the system, which is always under threat.
- Our website <http://www.co.sanmateo.ca.us/smcagj/> is a great resource for potential applicants to learn more about the system and service and to download an application. For any viewer who wants to talk directly with a recent former Grand Juror we have set up a network of such people who have volunteered to do just that. They can Email grandjury@sanmateocourt.org or call (650) 261-5066 to be matched with a contact in their local area.

Reasons to Apply/Serve

- **Learn how Government works (or doesn't)**
 - Research policies and practices on line and in-person.
 - Interview department heads and key staffs.
 - Study areas outside your normal experience.
- **Develop new skills, maintain existing ones**
 - Technology (Word, Excel, web search)
 - Organization and planning
 - Interviewing, documentation standards, fact-checking
 - Leadership opportunities (Committees, Investigations)
- **Work closely with other bright, interested citizens**
 - Form tight teams to complete work on schedule.
 - Learn from each other, challenge thinking.
 - Build relationships that last beyond jury service.
- **Gain personal satisfaction from having an impact**
 - Work is publicized in media and discussed in Board of Supervisors and City Council public meetings
 - More than half of all recommendations made implemented
 - Knowledge that you made a difference
- **Earn some income for service**
 - Stipend for Grand Jury, Committee meetings and interviews
 - Mileage expenses for covered travel
 - Estimated \$1,000 earned/term

Qualifications and Fit Self-Assessment

- **OFFICIAL**

- ☐ Citizen of the United States
- ☐ Resident of San Mateo County for at least one year
- ☐ 18 years of age or older
- ☐ Sufficient knowledge of English to perform duties
- ☐ "Ordinary intelligence, sound judgment and good character"

- **Practical/Ideal**

- ☐ Interested in local government and community issues
- ☐ Enjoys learning new things, personal development
- ☐ Able to commit an average of 15 hrs. /week with a somewhat flexible schedule
- ☐ Has basic computer skills (email, Word, web search, etc.) or is willing to learn and use them
- ☐ Decent writing skills – e.g. for interview notes, report drafts
- ☐ Good time management skills – meets commitments
- ☐ Comfortable expressing/defending positions, but open to change based on data
- ☐ Able to maintain strict confidentiality at all times

Note: The Court seeks a geographically and demographically diverse candidate pool that is representative of the County's population.

For more information about Grand Jury service or to meet with a recent San Mateo County Grand Juror to discuss this opportunity in more detail, email grandjury@sanmateocourt.org or call 650-261-5066 to be connected with a volunteer in your local area.