



PLACER COUNTY GRAND JURY

Incorporated Cities Code Enforcement Policies

A Review of Policies and Procedures

June 23, 2016

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Summary

The 2015-2016 Placer County Grand Jury reviewed the policies and procedures regarding Code Enforcement for the six incorporated cities within Placer County. These include Auburn, Colfax, Lincoln, Loomis, Rocklin and Roseville. The Grand Jury met with various managers, clerks and Code Enforcement Officers from these cities to ascertain their local policies and procedures. The intent of the investigation was to determine if the cities had policies and procedures in place to respond to the complaints of their citizens. Additionally, the Grand Jury wanted to determine if these cities had systems in place to track the status of complaints from initiation to resolution. Furthermore, the Grand Jury decided to ascertain if complainants were kept informed of the status and resolution of their complaint.

The Grand Jury found there were some common attributes shared by the best managed programs, including defined policies, written procedures and a tracking system. Most cities had code enforcement policies defined in their Municipal Code. However, four cities lacked written documentation of their procedures to deal with citizens' complaints. Also the ability to track complaints from initiation through resolution was deficient for four of the six cities investigated.

This report contains specific recommendations that the Grand Jury believes will help the cities address the deficiencies in their code enforcement practices and improve communication with their citizens.

Background

The incorporated cities in Placer County have enacted a variety of municipal and zoning codes to promote the health and safety of their citizens. In addition, the codes strive to improve or maintain property aesthetics and values within the cities. These codes cover a variety of nuisance issues such as, but not limited to:

- Improperly maintained private property
- Graffiti on private property
- Illegal dumping of garbage
- Illegal signs
- Excessive noise

The Grand Jury undertook this investigation to determine if each of the cities has appropriate policies and procedures in place and to determine if these policies address the needs of their citizens.

Investigation Methods

In preparing this report, the Grand Jury utilized a variety of investigation methods for each of the cities. These included:

- Interviews of city employees.
- Review of code enforcement documentation available on each of the city's web pages.
- Review of each city's Municipal Code.
- Review of written policies and procedures, including tracking logs, where available.

Two members of the Grand Jury were recused to avoid any conflict of interest and the appearance of bias.

General Findings

During the course of this investigation the Grand Jury found that cities where the code enforcement process was running efficiently shared some common attributes. Based on the Grand Jury's investigation, a well-developed code enforcement program should include the following program elements:

- A defined process codified in the city's Municipal Code.
- A written procedural document that describes the life cycle of a code enforcement complaint from initiation through resolution.
- A tracking system that allows personnel to track the status of any complaint.
- Code enforcement personnel keep the complainant informed of the receipt, referral to other agencies and final resolution to their complaint.
- Have multiple ways to register a complaint (i.e. through website, by phone or by written complaint).

The Grand Jury also recognized that the size of the city may affect the resources available for the code enforcement program. However, based on a city's available resources, there is a range of options for implementing these elements.

General Conclusion

To ensure that enforcement and resolution actions are applied equitably, each city should have policies and procedures that guide the code enforcement personnel in administering their enforcement program. The Grand Jury believes that a method of tracking complaints from beginning to resolution should be included in the procedures.

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City of Auburn

Facts

- The City of Auburn's Municipal Code is available on the city's website. It contains a detailed definition and process for abatement of nuisances.
- Auburn has written guidelines (procedures) for their code enforcement.
- Auburn has a detailed tracking log of complaints and their resolution.
- Code enforcement is handled by one certified Code Enforcement Officer for a population of approximately 14,000 citizens.
- Complaints can be initiated by e-mail, phone or through the City's website.
- Complaint form is available on the City's website.
- Complainant is not notified of the complaint resolution unless they request to be informed.

Findings

The Grand Jury found that:

- F1. Auburn has a defined process in the Municipal Code for handling code enforcement complaints.
- F2. Auburn has a written document defining their code enforcement procedures, which includes a method for tracking complaints through resolution.
- F3. Auburn has multiple methods for a citizen to lodge a complaint.
- F4. Auburn's procedure does not include following up with the complainant regarding the resolution.

Conclusion

With the exception of the recommendation noted below, the Grand Jury's review of Auburn's code enforcement policy and procedures found that they are adequate.

Recommendations

The Grand Jury recommends that:

- R1. Auburn revise their code enforcement procedures to include measures to keep complainants informed about the resolution to their complaint.

Request for Responses

	<u>Recommendations Requiring Response</u>	<u>Response Due Date</u>
Mr. Tim Rundel Auburn City Manager 1225 Lincoln Way Auburn, CA 95603	R1	August 31, 2016

Copies sent to:

Dr. William Kirby
Mayor, City of Auburn
1225 Lincoln Way
Auburn, CA 95603

Ms. Bernie Schroeder
Director, Planning & Public Works
1225 Lincoln Way
Auburn, CA 95603

Ms. Jennifer Solomon
Code Enforcement Officer
1225 Lincoln Way
Auburn, CA 95603

City of Colfax

Facts

- The City of Colfax's Municipal Code is available on the city's website. It contains a detailed definition and process for abatement of nuisances.
- Colfax has no internal written code enforcement procedures.
- The person who takes complaints at City Hall is knowledgeable about the process for filing a complaint.
- Colfax has one part-time contracted code enforcement inspector for a population of approximately 2,000 citizens.
- Complaints can be filed in person at City Hall or if that is inconvenient, they will take the complaint over the phone.
- Currently, Colfax utilizes a manual system to track code enforcement complaints.
- Colfax is in the first stage of implementing Mobil311, a new web-based citizen reporting and record keeping system. Once fully implemented, citizens will receive a status update if they enter their contact information.
- Currently, citizens are only notified of the resolution of the issue if they request a response.

Findings

- F5. Colfax has a defined process in the Municipal Code for handling code enforcement complaints.
- F6. Colfax has informal procedures for tracking and dealing with code enforcement complaints. These procedures are not detailed in a written document.
- F7. Colfax has multiple methods for a citizen to lodge a complaint.
- F8. Colfax does not have a formal procedure to notify complainant of resolution.
- F9. At the time of this report, Colfax is implementing a web-based citizen reporting system.

Conclusion

The Grand Jury's investigation found that the City of Colfax's code enforcement process is defined in the Municipal Code. However, the lack of a written document defining their procedures for managing complaints needs to be addressed. Additionally, their method of communication with the complainant needs to be improved.

Recommendations

The Grand Jury recommends that:

- R2. Colfax define their code enforcement procedures, including their tracking system, in a formal written document.
- R3. The written procedures, in R2, include measures to keep complainants informed about the resolution to their complaint.

Request for Responses

	<u>Recommendations Requiring Response</u>	<u>Response Due Date</u>
Mr. Mark Miller Colfax City Manager PO Box 702 Colfax, CA 95713	R2, R3	August 31, 2016

Copies sent to:

Mr. Tom Parnham
Mayor, City of Colfax
PO Box 702
Colfax, CA 95713

Mr. Wes Heathcock
Director, Community Services
PO Box 702
Colfax, CA 95713

City of Lincoln

Facts

- The City of Lincoln's Municipal Code is available on the city's website. It contains a detailed definition and process for abatement of nuisances.
- Lincoln has no formal written code enforcement procedures. There is an informal bullet list of procedural steps for the code enforcement officer to follow.
- The staff demonstrated knowledge about procedures to follow. However, those procedures are not well documented.
- Code enforcement is handled by one full-time code enforcement officer for a population of approximately 45,000 citizens. A second part-time, temporary position was in place to handle sign complaints related to a new ordinance, but the position was eliminated in January 2016.
- Lincoln has a tracking log that tracks the type of nuisance and status of abatement.
- Code violations can be reported on-line. System generates an e-mail to the appropriate department.
- Most complaints are lodged through a phone call.
- A complaint form is available at the City Hall front desk, but the clerk will also take complaints by phone or e-mail.
- Complainant is not notified of resolution unless they request it or call to inquire about the disposition.

Findings

The Grand Jury found that:

- F10. Lincoln has a defined process in the Municipal Code for handling code enforcement complaints.
- F11. Lincoln utilizes an informal bullet list as their guidelines for dealing with code enforcement complaints.
- F12. Lincoln tracks complaints and actions in a spreadsheet, however it was not being kept current.
- F13. Lincoln has multiple methods for a citizen to lodge a complaint.
- F14. Lincoln does not have a formal procedure to notify complainant of resolution.

Conclusion

The Grand Jury's investigation found that the City of Lincoln's code enforcement process is defined in the Municipal Code. However, the lack of a formal written document defining their procedures for managing complaints needs to be addressed. Additionally, their method of communication with the complainant needs to be improved.

Recommendations

The Grand Jury recommends that:

- R4. Lincoln expand their informal bullet list to a formal written document that defines their code enforcement and their tracking log procedures.
- R5. Lincoln ensure that their written procedures address a process to keep the tracking log current.
- R6. The written code enforcement procedures include measures to keep complainant informed about the resolution to their complaint.

Request for Responses

	<u>Recommendations Requiring Response</u>	<u>Response Due Date</u>
Mr. Matthew Brower Lincoln City Manager 600 Sixth Street Lincoln, CA 95648	R4, R5, R6	August 31, 2016

Copies sent to:

Mr. Spencer Short
Mayor, City of Lincoln
600 Sixth Street
Lincoln, CA 95648

Mr. Mathew Wheeler
Director, Community Development
600 Sixth Street
Lincoln, CA 95648

Ms. Mary Bushnell
Code Enforcement Officer 2
600 Sixth Street
Lincoln, CA 95648

Town of Loomis

Facts

- The Municipal Code for the Town of Loomis is available on the city's website. It contains a detailed definition and process for abatement of nuisances.
- Loomis has no internal written code enforcement procedures.
- Code enforcement is handled as one part of the Town Clerk's duties for a population of approximately 6,700 citizens.
- The staff demonstrated knowledge about procedures to follow, but the procedures are not documented.
- A tracking log is manually kept in a binder.
- Currently, there are no on-line directions on how to file a complaint.
- On-line reporting of nuisances is under development on the Town's website.
- Complaints are received by phone or in person.
- Complainants will receive a status update if they call in to request one.

Findings

The Grand Jury found that:

- F15. Loomis has a defined process in the Municipal Code for handling code enforcement complaints.
- F16. Loomis has informal procedures for dealing with code enforcement complaints, but they are not detailed in a written document.
- F17. At this time residents of Loomis are limited to filing their complaint over the phone or in person at City Hall.
- F18. The Town of Loomis website does not explain how to file a complaint while the new system is under development.
- F19. Loomis does not have a formal procedure to notify complainant of resolution.

Conclusion

The Grand Jury's investigation found that the Town of Loomis's code enforcement process is defined in the Municipal Code. However, at the time of the investigation, there were some deficiencies in their procedures and complaint process. The deficiencies are the lack of a written procedure for managing complaints and for keeping complainants apprised of the resolution. Also, information on the website does not explain to a citizen how to file a complaint.

Recommendations

The Grand Jury recommends that:

- R6. Loomis define their code enforcement procedures, including their tracking system, in a formal written document.
- R7. The written code enforcement procedures include measures to keep complainant informed about the resolution to their complaint.
- R8. Loomis include information on the website regarding how a citizen can file a complaint to report code violations.

Request for Responses	<u>Recommendations Requiring Response</u>	<u>Response Due Date</u>
Mr. Rick Angelocci Loomis Town Manager 3665 Taylor Road Loomis, CA 95650	R6, R7, R8	August 31, 2016

Copies sent to:

Mr. Brian Baker
Mayor, Town of Loomis
3665 Taylor Road
Loomis, CA 95650

Ms. Crickett Stroock
Loomis Town Clerk
3665 Taylor Road
Loomis, CA 95650

Ms. Carol Parker
Loomis Administrative Clerk
3665 Taylor Road
Loomis, CA 95650

City of Rocklin

Facts

- The City of Rocklin's Municipal Code is available on the city's website. It contains a detailed definition and process for abatement of nuisances.
- Rocklin has one certified code enforcement officer and a part-time administrative assistant for a population of approximately 60,000 citizens.
- Rocklin has no internal written code enforcement procedures.
- Rocklin has a computer-based tracking log.
- Complaints can be filed on a pre-printed form, by phone, by e-mail or through an on-line application.
- Rocklin does not follow-up with complainant unless requested. However, if the complaint is submitted through the website, the complainant can log in to see the resolution.

Findings

The Grand Jury found that:

- F20. Rocklin has a defined process and tracking system for handling code enforcement complaints.
- F21. Rocklin has informal procedures for dealing with code enforcement complaints, but they are not detailed in a written document.
- F22. Rocklin has multiple methods for a citizen to lodge a complaint.
- F23. Rocklin does not have a procedure to notify complainant of the resolution to their complaint.

Conclusion

The Grand Jury's investigation found that the City of Rocklin's code enforcement process is defined in the Municipal Code. However, the lack of a written document defining their procedures for managing complaints needs to be addressed. Additionally, their method of communication with the complainant needs to be improved for consistency.

Recommendations

The Grand Jury recommends:

- R9. Rocklin define their code enforcement procedures, including their tracking system, in a formal written document.
- R10. The written code enforcement procedures, in R9, include measures to keep complainant informed on the resolution to their complaint.

Request for Responses

	<u>Recommendations Requiring Response</u>	<u>Response Due Date</u>
Mr. Ricky A. Horst Rocklin City Manager 3970 Rocklin Road Rocklin, CA, 95677	R9, R10	August 31, 2016

Copies sent to:

Mr. Greg Janda
Mayor, City of Rocklin
3970 Rocklin Road
Rocklin, CA, 95677

Mr. Mark Mondell
Director, Economic & Community
Development
3970 Rocklin Road
Rocklin, CA, 95677

Ms. Sarah Novo
Code Enforcement Officer
3970 Rocklin Road
Rocklin, CA, 95677

City of Roseville

Facts

- The City of Roseville's Municipal Code is available on the city's website. It contains a detailed definition and process for abatement of nuisances.
- Code Enforcement policies and procedures are documented in writing.
- Roseville has a Senior Code Enforcement Inspector with a staff of four people for a population of 128,000 citizens: one full-time Code Enforcement Inspector, two building code inspectors who work approximately 50% of the time on code enforcement, and one part-time inspector who works weekends on sign enforcement.
- Roseville is using Accela,¹ an internal computer-based program, to track the status of complaints from initial contact to resolution.
- This system tracks which agency (police, fire, building, etc.) the complaint was delegated to and also tracks that agency's status on the complaint.
- This system tracks all follow-up contacts with the complainants.

Findings

The Grand Jury found that:

- F24. Roseville has a very good process in place to manage code enforcement complaints, including a tracking system.
- F25. Roseville has an exceptional computer-based system to support code enforcement activities and accountability.
- F26. Roseville keeps complainant informed regarding the status of their complaint.

¹ Accela is an enterprise software solution with numerous preconfigured packages for private business and government organizations to manage core applications such as land management, licensing, asset management, and public health and safety data. Accela can be modified and tailored for the specific requirements of the agency and allows for public access to some functions. Other county governments utilize the Accela platform to track and resolve code enforcement complaints.

Conclusion

The Grand Jury found that the City of Roseville has well-defined and documented code enforcement procedures. Their computer-based program tracks complaints from initiation through resolution and assures each department is accountable for resolving the complaint and closing out the issue. Procedures require follow-up contact with the complainants regarding on-going status and final resolution.

Recommendations

The Grand Jury has no recommendations for City of Roseville.

Request for Responses

	<u>Recommendations</u> <u>Requiring Response</u>	<u>Response Due Date</u>
Mr. Ray Kerridge Roseville City Manager 311 Vernon St. Roseville, CA 95678	No response is required.	

Copies sent to:

Ms. Carol Garcia
Mayor, City of Roseville
311 Vernon St.
Roseville, CA 9567

Mr. Kevin Payne
Director of Development Services
311 Vernon St.
Roseville, CA 9567

Mr. Paul Camilleri
Sr. Code Enforcement Inspector
311 Vernon St.
Roseville, CA 9567