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DEPARTMENT OF  
PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES  
DIVISION

CITY OF SACRAMENTO  
CALIFORNIA

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June 19, 1991

City Council  
Sacramento, California

Honorable Members in Session

SUBJECT: REPORT BACK FROM THE NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES DIVISION

SUMMARY

This report is submitted at the request of the City Council. It responds to the questions of work backlog, ability to meet demands for service, revenues, and the issue of the Neighborhood Challenge program in the Neighborhood Services Division, Planning and Development Department.

BACKGROUND

The Neighborhood Services Division, one of five Divisions within the Planning and Development Department, has had the responsibility for enforcement of the City's Nuisance Code, Zoning Ordinance, Sign Ordinance, Weed Abatement, Litter, and Abandoned Vehicle laws. This service program was first authorized by the City Council in 1985 and continues to be a service much in demand by the citizens of Sacramento.

The 17-20,000 complaints received per year by this office have dictated a "reactive" type service with little time left for proactive code enforcement. The majority of citizens calls are requests to help rid the neighborhood of accumulations of junk and debris, and junk or inoperable vehicles from both public and private property. Illegal businesses in the neighborhoods are also very much an issue.

Although there are sixteen field staff positions to investigate and enforce the above listed codes, the Division has been basically operating with the equivalent of three fewer positions for the past three years due to unusual vacancies or absences. These have been due to heart attacks, a maternity leave, military leaves for war, forest fires, and extended officer training, disciplinary actions, and the hiring "chill" of 1989. Code enforcement staff has performed admirably under these circumstances.

#### Effects of the 1991-92, 1992-93 Budget

The City Manager's proposed budget recommends the elimination of two Neighborhood services staff positions, one Nuisance Abatement Officer (NAO), and one Vehicle Abatement Officer (VAO), plus \$70,000 from the Division's operating budget. This reduction totals approximately \$140,000.

The effect of this reduction as to the level of "existing" service would be negligible, since the Division has been operating short staffed for the past three years.

Even with the lack of full staffing, the response time to citizen's complaints have generally improved due to operational adjustments, particularly in the on-street vehicle abatement program. For example, vehicle abatement staff are all fully trained, procedures clearly established, and the contract tow companies have been very prompt in responding to requests for tows. The response time is approximately one week for the investigation of abandoned vehicles on the street. There is basically no backlog of these complaints.

There are approximately 300 backlogged cases for general nuisance and zoning complaints. For these complaints, there is an average response time of 45 days before the initial inspection is made. However, the complaints are prioritized, and all health and safety complaints or requests from the Council offices are responded to as soon as possible.

#### Development of Fees

The City Council has asked staff to provide recommendations for ways and means of becoming more financially self supporting in order to increase the level of staffing and thus improve the Division's ability to deliver services.

Special emphasis will be placed on the development of an array of new fees in addition those already obtained from the vehicle abatement (private property) and weed abatement programs, to help support the Neighborhood Services Division operation. This will be completed as part of an overall Department review, but will be developed as a separate item.

Examples of potential revenues include:

- . Hearing Fees, for all cases taken to public hearing
- . Reinspection Fees
- . Extension Fees, if more time is requested for compliance
- . After the Fact Fees, like a penalty added to a permit fee
- . Share of other related city fees for enforcement services
- . Citations and civil penalties

#### Response to Questions on the "Neighborhood Challenge" Program

During the May 15, 1991, Department Budget Hearings, a Neighborhood Organization representative, expressed his dilemma over the proposed reduction of two code enforcement staff positions while the City added in the past year, two staff members to initiate the Neighborhood Challenge program, an effective, but non-code enforcement program.

This person stated the new "Challenge" program helped his own neighborhood in organizing and conducting a block clean-up, and provided important referral information. He also felt this new program was an important philosophical breakthrough for a new attitude in city services. However, he expressed, "if push came to shove", more code enforcement officers on the street were more important. He also questioned whether this service was not being duplicated by the Council Administrative Assistants and the Police Department.

The purpose of the Challenge program has been one primarily of education and assistance. The goals and objectives were developed for this program as the result of continued questions and requests for assistance from our general citizens. These were not so much the citizens who had access to or were a part of an already organized neighborhood group, but rather, those individuals who wanted to do something, but didn't know how to start or what to do.

Meetings were held with the Council Administrative Assistants and representatives of the Police Department in the formative stages of the Challenge program. The sole purpose was to prevent overlap and to ensure that all programs were complimentary to one another.

There are services provided by the Challenge program that are not readily duplicated by any other agency, i.e., the Neighborhood Association Directory, that is in high demand by many citizens and agencies. There are in the planning, workshops at the request of citizens, on how to organize a neighborhood group, establish a newsletter, and how to organize an old fashioned block clean-up (residents only, not staffed by Public Works), etc.

The Challenge program is important as an adjunct to the code enforcement process as the catalyst encouraging citizens to educate their own neighbors, help their neighbors, and as a final resort, "refer" their neighbors to the correct agency for corrective actions.

The Challenge program relies on approximately \$95,000, of the general fund for two FTE, Neighborhood Improvement Coordinator positions and program supplies.

#### FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Staff will be developing a Neighborhood Services Division cost recovery plan for submittal to Council in September, 1991.

#### POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

In order to achieve the service levels desired by the Council, the Neighborhood Services Division must operate at full staffing capacity and to provide those financial resources necessary to restore those positions lost in the 1991-93 Budget.

The Council needs to adopt a policy that would direct the first new revenues produced by the Division's cost recovery plan, toward the filling of those positions, and any subsequent revenues until both positions are fully restored.

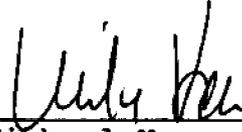
#### MBE/WBE

None

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

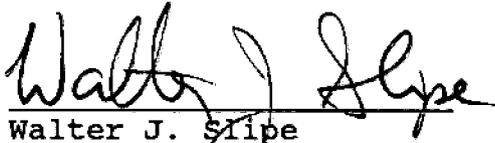
This report is submitted for information only and requires no action.

Respectfully submitted,

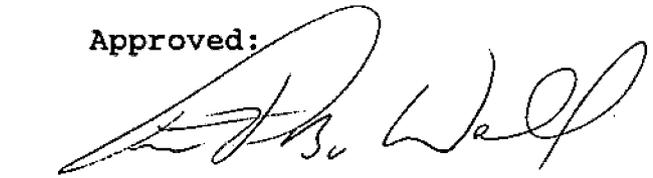


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June 19, 1991  
All Districts