



COUNTY OF SAN MATEO
Inter-Departmental Correspondence
County Manager



Date: May 20, 2014

Board Meeting Date: August 5, 2014

Special Notice / Hearing: None

Vote Required: Majority

To: Honorable Board of Supervisors

From: John L. Maltbie, County Manager

Subject: 2013-14 Grand Jury Response- Food Safety: Increasingly in the News

RECOMMENDATION:

Approve the Board of Supervisor's response to the 2013-14 Grand Jury report titled: Food Safety: Increasingly in the News.

BACKGROUND:

On May 20, 2014, the Grand Jury filed a report titled: Food Safety: Increasingly in the News. The Board of Supervisors is required to submit comments on the findings and recommendations pertaining to the matters under control of the County of San Mateo within ninety days. The County's response to the report is due to the Honorable Dave Pine no later than August 18, 2014.

Acceptance of this report contributes to the Shared Vision 2025 outcome of a Collaborative Community by ensuring that all Grand Jury findings and recommendations are thoroughly reviewed by the appropriate County departments and that, when appropriate, process refinements are made to improve the quality and efficiency of services provided to the public and other agencies.

DISCUSSION:

Food Safety: Increasingly in the News.

Findings:

Grand Jury Finding Number 1. All food establishments are required by county ordinance to clearly post the most current inspection report.

Response: Agree. This is required pursuant to San Mateo County Ordinance Chapter 4.56.070 "Posting of inspection reports."

Grand Jury Finding Number 2. The adoption of the Federal Drug Administration National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards by the Environmental Health Department is leading to a more comprehensive program of food safety management.

Response: Agree. The Federal Drug Administration (FDA) National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards is composed of nine standards, including implementation of a HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points) Based Inspection Program. This type of inspection program prioritizes the elimination of critical hazards, which can lead to foodborne illness, over more minor or technical violations.

Grand Jury Finding Number 3. Participation in the “Campylobacter Project” is increasing the knowledge base of restaurant food handlers in how to safely handle and prepare raw chicken.

Response: Agree.

Grand Jury Finding Number 4. The Environmental Health Department maintains a website that allows the public to view the inspection status of food establishments.

Response: Agree.

Grand Jury Finding Number 5. The use of window placards to display inspection status has been adopted in an increasing number of cities and counties.

Response: Agree.

Recommendations:

The Grand Jury recommends to the County Board of Supervisors that:

- 1. When a food establishment has not clearly posted its most current inspection report, as noted by an inspector entering the premises, assess fees upon the first inspection instead of on the third, as is the current practice.**

Response: Per San Mateo County Ordinance Chapter 5.64.06, EHD can only assess re-inspection fees after the second inspection. As part of enforcement of violations, EHD uses re-inspection fees as a deterrent by charging for any re-inspections (as allowed by Ordinance) required to gain compliance.

- 2. Continue progress toward achieving full implementation of the Federal Health Association National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards.**

Response: EHD initiated the process outlined by Federal Drug Administration (FDA) to evaluate and modify the inspection program in 2008, and includes training staff on different inspection strategies. We anticipate that we will complete this by June 2015.

3. Continue participation in the Centers of Disease Control grant (Campylobacter project) and evaluate the results with the intent of implementing any “best practices” that result from the study.

Response: EHD currently holds seminars for new restaurant owners which focus on reducing critical risk factor violations identified by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). EHD has incorporated material from the Campylobacter project into these seminars.

In addition, EHD is currently examining results from the CDC’s research pertaining to Campylobacter bacteria from chicken. The County of San Mateo will use this information to develop a more robust and targeted outreach program with the goal of reducing the risk of foodborne illness from Campylobacter.

4. Improve by December 31, 2014 the usefulness of the Environmental Health Department website by ensuring that each facility entry contains a synopsis of any violations, the latest inspection date and type, and the facility’s food safety rating.

Response: EHD is in the process of designing and implementing a program to provide handheld computers for our field inspectors. By giving inspectors mobile devices, inspectors can input data immediately during an inspection. This should reduce the lag time between an inspection and the posting of the inspection data on the EHD website. Once we implement a restaurant placarding system (expected in 2015), that information will also be posted on the EHD website.

5. Develop and implement by December 31, 2014 a quality assurance process to audit the content of the Restaurant and Food Inspection Results section on the website.

Response: Please see response to Recommendation 4. Also, as part of implementing the National Retail Food Regulatory Standards, EHD will modify our quality assurance program to ensure the accuracy of the information collected by the inspectors.

6. Develop and implement by June 30, 2015 a program which requires food establishments to prominently display their inspection status via the use of window placards.

Response: Please see response to Recommendation 4. EHD will be developing a placarding program for San Mateo County food establishments that will include a

requirement that food establishments post a placard with the results of the most recent inspection in a prominent location such as a window so that the public can easily see the results.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no Net County Cost associated with accepting this report.