



Southern Marin
EMERGENCY MEDICAL PARAMEDIC SYSTEM
P.O. Box 1214, Tiburon, CA 94920
415-432-8832

August 20, 2026

Hon. Stephen P. Freccero
Marin County Superior Court
P.O. Box 4988
San Rafael, CA 94913-4988

Massey Bambara, Foreperson
Marin County Civil Grand Jury
3501 Civic Center Dr., Rm. 275
San Rafael, CA 94903

Subject: 2025–2026 Marin County Civil Grand Jury Report: ***Better Service at a Lower Cost: Optimizing Essential Services for the Future of Marin***

Dear Judge Freccero and Foreperson Bambara,

I have been directed by the Board of Directors of the Southern Marin Emergency Medical Paramedic System to respond to the Marin Civil Grand Jury Report titled, ***Better Service at a Lower Cost: Optimizing Essential Services for the Future of Marin*** dated June 11, 2026. Attached please find our response.

Southern Marin Emergency Medical Paramedic System conducted this response in accordance with Penal Code section 933 (c) and was subjected to the notice, agenda, and open meeting requirements of the Ralph M. Brown Act.

Should you have any questions or require additional information, please contact me at your convenience.

Sincerely,


Thomas Hellyer
Executive Officer

RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY REPORT

Report Title: 2025–2026 Better Service at a Lower Cost: Optimizing Essential Services for the Future of Marin

Respondent/Agency Name: Southern Marin Emergency Medical Paramedic System (SMEMPS)

Your Name: Thomas Hellyer

Title: Executive Officer

FINDINGS:

I (we) agree with the findings numbered: _____

I (we) disagree *partially* with the findings numbered: _____

I (we) disagree *wholly* with the findings numbered: **F1-F7**

(Attach a statement specifying any portions of the findings that are disputed; include an explanation of the reasons therefor.)

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Recommendations numbered **R4 & R6** have been implemented.
(Attach a summary describing the implemented actions.)

Recommendations numbered _____ have not yet been implemented but will be implemented in the future.
(Attach a timeframe for the implementation.)

Recommendations numbered _____ require further analysis.
(Attached an explanation and the scope and parameters of an analysis or study, and a timeframe for the matter to be prepared for discussion by the officer or director of the agency or department being investigated or reviewed, including the governing body of the public agency when applicable. This timeframe shall not exceed six months from the date of the publication of the grand jury report.)

Recommendations numbered **R1-R3, R5, & R7-R9** will not be implemented because they are not warranted or are not reasonable.
(Attach an explanation.)

Date: 8/20/26 Signed: Thomas Hellyer
Thomas Hellyer, Executive Officer

Number of pages attached: **4**

FINDINGS –

- F1.** The current fragmented structure of special districts results in unnecessary duplication of administrative services and operational inefficiencies.

F1. Disagree Wholly. SMEMPS is not a district/special district and cannot provide speculative responses for districts. SMEMPS is a Joint Powers Authority formed to reduce duplication of services and provide EMS Paramedic Services under a single unified umbrella currently consisting of three member agencies.

- F2.** Some districts perform competently but lack sufficient scale to support long-term strategic investment in infrastructure, technology, staffing, and resilience.

F2. Disagree Wholly. SMEMPS is not a district/special district and cannot provide speculative responses for districts. SMEMPS has and continues to maintain funding, strategic investments, and reserves, to include a capital replacement plan

- F3.** Smaller districts are disproportionately vulnerable to staffing disruptions and catastrophic events that could rapidly impair service delivery.

F3. Disagree Wholly. SMEMPS is not a district/special district and cannot provide speculative responses for districts. SMEMPS' member agencies are well-positioned to maintain staffing levels to provide EMS Paramedic Services.

- F4.** Although consolidation is a popular idea among many elected board members, current governance structures, absence of board member term limits, and fear of loss of political influence discourage boards and administrators from initiating consolidation even when they recognize its benefits.

F4. Disagree Wholly. SMEMPS is a Joint Powers Authority formed to provide a single functional service, creating cost and operational efficiencies among three member agencies.

- F5.** Service and pricing inequities currently exist across Marin and may increase if consolidation and functional collaboration do not accelerate.

F5. Disagree Wholly. SMEMPS is not a district/special district and cannot provide speculative responses for districts. SMEMPS, formed in 1981, has been, and remains, a cost effective and efficient method to provide equitable services across member agencies.

- F6.** Performance metrics for essential, mission-specific services exist but they are not readily available and standardized, which prevents meaningful public comparison of district effectiveness and undermines accountability.

F6. Disagree Wholly. SMEMPS is not a district/special district and cannot provide speculative responses for districts. For accountability, the SMEMPS JPA performs annual audits and, recently, worked with Citygate Assoc. on a mission-specific services study in 2025-26 to better inform policies and to update the JPA agreement and bylaws.

- F7.** Without proactive reform, future consolidations are more likely to occur through crisis-driven intervention, resulting in greater disruption and higher costs.

F7. Disagree Wholly. SMEMPS is not a district/special district and cannot provide speculative responses for districts nor can the JPA provide conjecture on future consolidations.

RECOMMENDATIONS –

- R1.** By January 1, 2027, all special district boards should have conducted their first semi-annual consolidation exploration meeting with similar districts and will have established a regular meeting schedule moving forward.

R1. This recommendation has not been implemented and will not be implemented in the future. SMEMPS is a JPA consisting of 3 member agencies already unified to provide efficient services.

- R2.** By October 1, 2026, the Board of Supervisors should direct the development of comprehensive, cost-efficient shared services (such as IT, legal, finance, HR/payroll, harmonized compensation/benefits package, insurance) for special districts to optimize expenses and secure a Marin-wide acceptable quality standard. First limited-service offerings

are encouraged to be made available by January 1, 2027.

R2. This recommendation has not been implemented and will not be implemented in the future. SMEMPS is a JPA, not a district/special district. The SMEMPS Board of Directors will consider its options to participate and cooperate in any efforts related to efficient services.

- R3.** By January 31, 2027, with the assistance of the County, all districts should develop and publish on their website standardized, comparable Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) with regard to service pricing, finance, staffing, operations, and customer satisfaction.

R3. This recommendation has not been implemented and will not be implemented in the future. SMEMPS is a JPA, not a district/special district.

- R4.** By January 31, 2027, each district should publicly update findings and progress regarding consolidation opportunities, and share those findings with the Board of Supervisors and the public on a semi-annual basis.

R4. This recommendation has been implemented. SMEMPS is a JPA, not a district/special district and, as such, already creates efficiencies through the current consolidated delivery model.

- R5.** By January 31, 2027, the Board of Supervisors should oversee compliance with R1–R4 and update the public on the districts’ performance.

R5. This recommendation has not been implemented and will not be implemented in the future. SMEMPS is a JPA, not a district/special district. Please review responses to R1–R4.

- R6.** By October 1, 2026, in the process of implementing R1 and R2, districts should prioritize functional consolidation in operations, procurement, training, and administration as a precursor to formal consolidation.

R6. This recommendation has been implemented. SMEMPS is a JPA, not a district/special district and, as such, already creates efficiencies through the current consolidated delivery model.

- R7.** By October 1, 2026, the district’s board compensation, benefits, length of service, date of term end, and expenses related to board work should be clearly and prominently posted on each district’s website and updated

annually.

R7. This recommendation has not been implemented and will not be implemented in the future. SMEMPS is a JPA, not a district/special district. Please see R8 and R9 responses.

- R8.** By June 1, 2027, special districts should adopt term limits of two consecutive four-year terms for all board members. Staggered implementation of term limits to avoid disruptions is encouraged.

R8. This recommendation has not been implemented and will not be implemented in the future. Appointments to the SMEMPS Board are made by the member agencies and fall under their individual, District and County policies.

- R9.** By June 1, 2027, board compensation structures should be reviewed across districts, and considered for adjustment. All components of board compensation should be posted on their website (see best practice example in Appendix B).

R9. This recommendation has not been implemented and will not be implemented in the future. SMEMPS JPA Board members are not provided with compensation, benefits or paid expenses related to board work.