



NOVATO FIRE DISTRICT

95 Rowland Way, Novato, CA 94945

September 2, 2026
The Honorable Judge Stephen P. Freccero
Marin County Superior Court
P.O. Box 4988
San Rafael, CA 94913-4988

RE: Marin County Civil Grand Jury Report Responses:
June 11, 2026 Marin County Civil Grand Jury Report: *"Better Service at Lower Cost – Optimizing Essential Services for the Future of Marin"*

Dear Judge Freccero:

Attached is the official response of the Novato Fire Protection District to the findings and recommendations of the Marin County Civil Grand Jury's report titled, *Better Service at Lower Cost – Optimizing Essential Services for the Future of Marin*. The Novato Fire Protection District is required to respond to Findings F1 through F8; and to Recommendations R1 through R9. Our required responses to the report's findings and recommendations were approved by the Novato Fire Protection District Board of Directors at their regular meeting on September 2, 2026.

The Novato Fire Protection District's responses to the Grand Jury Report are listed with detailed explanations in Exhibit 1.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Hadfield

President, Novato Fire Protection District Board of Directors

CC: Fire Chief Dan Peters
Marin County Grand Jury Foreperson Massey Bambara

Response to Grand Jury Report

Report Title: Better Service at Lower Cost - Optimizing Essential Services for the Future of Marin
Respondent/Agency Name: Novato Fire Protection District

Your Name: Jennifer Crayne Title: Asm/Board Clerk

FINDINGS

- I (we) agree with the findings numbered: _____
- I (we) disagree *partially* with the findings numbered: F1, F2, F3, F5, F7
- I (we) disagree *wholly* with the findings numbered: F4, F6

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

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Recommendations numbered _____ have been implemented.
(Attach a summary describing the implemented actions.)
- Recommendations numbered R7, R9 have not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future.
(Attach a timeframe for the implementation.)
- Recommendations numbered _____ require further analysis.
(Attach 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 publication of the grand jury report.)
- Recommendations numbered R1, R2, R3, R4, R5 ^{R6, R8} will not be implemented because they are not warranted or are not reasonable.

(Attach an explanation.)

Date: 9/2/20

Signed: _____

Number of pages attached: 1

Novato Fire Protection District Responses to the June 11, 2026 Marin County Civil Grand Jury Report: *"Better Service at Lower Cost- Optimizing Essential Services for the Future of Marin"*.

RESPONSE TO MARIN CIVIL GRAND JURY FINDINGS:

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

The Novato Fire District partially disagrees with this finding. The geographical area of the Novato Fire District does not offer meaningful consolidation opportunities or result in unnecessary duplication of administrative services and operational inefficiencies. The Grand Jury's report addresses numerous different types of special districts all throughout Marin and the Novato Fire District cannot opine as to the efficiencies of these other districts.

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

The Novato Fire District partially disagrees with this finding. The Novato Fire District is the second largest fire district in Marin and operates at a scale that supports robust long-term strategic investment in infrastructure, technology, staffing, and resilience. The Grand Jury's report addresses numerous different types of special districts all throughout Marin and the Novato Fire District cannot opine as to the appropriateness of the scale of these other districts.

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

The Novato Fire District partially disagrees with this finding. The Novato Fire District has not analyzed the service delivery of the numerous small Marin County special districts.

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.

The Novato Fire District disagrees with this finding. The geographical area of the Novato Fire District, not politics, limits meaningful consolidation opportunities.

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

The Novato Fire District partially disagrees with this finding. The Novato Fire District does not anticipate an increase in service and pricing inequities within the district. The Novato Fire District cannot opine on service and pricing inequities within various other types of districts in other parts of the County.

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.

The Novato Fire District disagrees with this finding. The fire service, including the Novato Fire District, carefully tracks performance metrics for essential, mission-specific services, such as response times.

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

The Novato Fire District partially disagrees with this finding. The geographical area of the Novato Fire District does not offer meaningful consolidation opportunities.

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.

The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable. The geographical area of the Novato Fire District does not offer meaningful consolidation opportunities.

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.

The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable. The Novato Fire District cannot implement a recommendation for the Board of Supervisors.

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.

The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable. The subject matter of the various districts throughout Marin are so varied that comparable KPIs are not a reality.

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.

The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable.

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

The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable. The geographical area of the Novato Fire District does not offer meaningful consolidation opportunities.

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.

The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable. The geographical area of the Novato Fire District does not offer meaningful consolidation opportunities.

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.

The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future, the expected timeframe for completion is December 31, 2027.

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.

The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable. Novato Fire District is split into separate Board member Districts and often has only a single candidate in a District. Term limits could result in the Board not being able to constitute a quorum.

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).

The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future; the expected timeframe for completion is December 31, 2027.