NAPA COUNTY
RESPONSE TO THE GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT
FIRE ON THE MOUNTAIN
THE CLOSURE OF OLD HOWELL MOUNTIAN ROAD:
THE EFFECT ON ANGWIN RESIDENTS
MAY 31, 2022

Finding 1: Many Angwin residents interviewed stated they did not recall having received notice prior to the Napa County Board of Supervisors' 'yes vote' in favor of keeping Old Howell Mountain Road closed. The Grand Jury is aware that under the Brown Act, no more than 72 hours' notice of any agenda item is required. But depite repeated efforts, the Grand Jury was unable to confirm that even so minimal a notice occurred. Moreover, given the level of local concern about Old Howell Mountain Road, more prominent notice and even the opportunity for a public hearing would have been appropriate. Had this happened, years of concern and confusion could have been avoided.

The Acting County Executive Officer disagree with this finding. The item was discussed at two Board of Supervisors' meetings – November 17, 2020 and December 8, 2020. Both agendas were posted on Thursday before the Tuesday public meeting. Several other smaller meetings, both before and afterwards, were conducted with interested residents. While those residents may not have liked (and still in cases continue to not like) the decision, the rationale for the decision has been clearly communicated and the residents have had the opportunity to voice their concerns.

The Board of Supervisors agrees with the Acting County Executive Officer.

Finding 2: These resident believe that they did not receive an explanation of why Old Howell Mountain was not repaired and they were not adequately represented in the decision-making process.

The Acting County Executive Officer disagrees with this finding. Again, two public meetings were held to discuss the closure in addition to a number of meetings held in Angwin where there was an opportunity to discuss the status the Old Howell Mountain. Also see response to Finding 1 above.

The Board of Supervisors agrees with the Acting County Executive Officer.

Finding 3: The residents of Angwin have been impacted multiple times by evacuations due to wildfires and want to have as many evacuation routes as possible, to avoid a tragedy like Paradise, California scenario.

The Acting County Executive Officer agree with this finding. Attached is the current map identifying evacuation routes prepared by CalFire.

The Board of Supervisors agrees with the Acting County Executive Officer.

Finding 4: The Napa County board of Supervisors caused unnecessary mistrust in their local government by not sufficiently communicating with Angwin-area residents regarding the closure of Old Howell Mountain Road.

The Acting County Executive Officer disagree with this finding. Multiple meetings were held regarding the closure of Old Howell Mountain Road. Also see response to Finding 1 above.

The Board of Supervisors agrees with the Acting County Executive Officer.

Finding 5: Multiple agencies, including, Napa County Office of Emergency Services, Napa County Public Works, CalFire, Napa County Fire Department and local construction companies have deemed the road unrepairable, due to a nearly three-mile long section of unstable ground and other hazards; however the Napa County Office of Emergency Services and the Napa County Board of Supervisors did not effectively communicate to the public their reasons for their decision not to repair the road.

The Acting County Executive Officer disagree with this finding. Multiple meetings were held and the reasons for not doing the repair were discussed. The Grand Jury did not interview the Risk Manager/Emergency Services Officer.

The Board of Supervisors agrees with the Acting County Executive Officer.

Recommendations

Recommendation No. 1: The Napa County Office of Emergency Services should hold a public forum with Angwin residents and explain the reasons for the closure of Old Howell Mountain Road. Other relevant agencies should be invited to attend.

Response, Acting County Executive Office Response: The recommendation has been implemented. The Board has held two public meetings and multiple meetings have been held in Angwin regarding emergency preparedness over the past few years; at a minimum one event per year and many times more than one event. The only year a meeting was not held in Angwin was 2020 due to COVID.

Board of Supervisors' Response: The Board of Supervisors agrees with the response of the Acting County Executive Office.

Recommendation No. 2: During this forum, the Napa County Office of Emergency Services should explain feasibility and potential cost of repairing the road.

Acting County Executive Office Response: The Acting County Executive Office disagrees with the recommendation. The Office of Emergency Services is not the correct department to explain feasibility and potential cost of road repairs. The Director of Public Works did explain the cost and feasibility during the December 8, 2020 public meeting at the Board of Supervisors as well as in other forums with residents

Board of Supervisor's Response: The Board of Supervisors agrees with the Acting County Executive Office response.

Recommendation No. 3: The forum should provide residents an opportunity to have their questions answered and to express their opinion about the decision to close Old Howell Mountain Road. This forum should take place before September 1, 2022.

Acting County Executive Office Response: The Acting County Executive Office disagrees with this recommendation. The Board of Supervisors held several public meetings regarding the closure. In general, Supervisors will continue to hold fire preparedness discussions throughout each of their Districts where the public is welcome to attend and ask questions. The County would additionally like to note that there were community meetings held to hear resident's concerns with closing the road. The Board of Supervisors meets and conducts business at the Napa County Administration Building, 1195 3rd Street, Napa.

Board of Supervisor's Response: The Board of Supervisors agrees with the Acting County Executive Office response.