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RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AGENCY PART 5 HOUSING ELEMENT REVIEW

BACKGROUND

The State of California requires County and local governments to complete a General Plan that governs the projected needs of its residents. One of the components of a General Plan is the Housing Element. The Tulare County Resource Management Agency (RMA) is responsible for its preparation. The Housing Element governs such topics as land availability for housing, housing costs, housing for all income groups, renter and owner occupied housing, multi-family and single family housing, and housing for special needs populations. In order to provide an incentive for county and local governments to comply with the requirement to complete the Housing Element, the State awards points on grant applications to those jurisdictions that have an approved Housing Element. These points often determine which entities receive grant funding as the process for obtaining grants is highly competitive.

REASONS FOR INVESTIGATION

The 2010-2011 Tulare County Grand Jury investigated the status of the Housing Element for the following reasons:

1. The Housing Element for the County of Tulare was due in 2009 and still is not completed. Prior to 2009, the County was regularly awarded grant funds from the State Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), HOME Investment Partnership Program (HOME) and CalHOME Programs. Since 2009, the grants awarded have dropped substantially.
2. During the August 10, 2010 Board of Supervisors meeting, a law firm threatened litigation if the County of Tulare approved a development project, citing the fact that the County was not in compliance with its Housing Element. The law firm stated that compliance was required prior to action being taken by the Board of Supervisors on every development project.

PROCEDURES FOLLOWED

1. Interviewed relevant witnesses
2. Reviewed relevant documents
3. One Grand Juror was recused

FINDINGS

1. RMA is not in compliance with the State's requirements regarding the preparation of its Housing Element. The document was due in 2009 and has yet to be completed.

2. Completion of the Housing Element affects the "rating and ranking" of the County's application for State CDBG, HOME and CalHOME Program funds.
3. Each year, although the amount changes from year to year, the State has awarded the County: CDBG funds in an amount of approximately \$1-2 million; HOME funds in the approximate amount of \$800,000 to \$3 million (depending on the project or program); and CalHOME funds in the amount of \$600,000 to \$1 million. From 2000 to 2007, the County received an average of \$1 million per year from these sources. These grant funds are used primarily for housing and infrastructure improvements in lower income neighborhoods.
4. Because the County is not in compliance with the State's Housing Element requirements, the County has lost the opportunity to be competitive with these grant awards. The County was not granted a \$70,000 CDBG Technical Assistance grant, and a CalHOME grant of \$1 million. These funds could have been used to facilitate improvements in low income neighborhoods, such as water wells, community facilities (i.e., senior centers, daycare centers, etc.), sewer systems, and housing assistance to low income families.

CONCLUSION

RMA needs to complete its Housing Element in order to successfully compete for grants at the State level.

RECOMMENDATION

RMA assign staff or hire a consultant to complete the Housing Element.

REQUIRED RESPONSES

Tulare County Board of Supervisors
Tulare County Chief Administrative Officer
Director, Tulare County Resource Management Agency

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TULARE COUNTY VETERANS MEMORIAL DISTRICTS

BACKGROUND

Tulare County (County) Veterans Memorial Districts (Districts) were established between 1948 and 1954. The Districts are governed by the Military and Veterans Code §1170 - 1259.

A five person Board of Directors governs each District. Of the five Board Members, three must be veterans.

In addition to the general powers established by the Board of Directors, the Military and Veterans Codes have specific governing powers that may be followed. Some of those powers are as follows:

- § 1191(a)(1) Provide and maintain memorial halls, assembly halls, buildings, or meeting places...
- § 1191(a)(3) Purchase, construct, lease, build, furnish, or repair halls, buildings, meeting places, and facilities upon sites owned or leased by the district or made available to the district...
- § 1191(a)(6) Sell or lease any district property to the highest responsible bidder, as determined by the board, except as provided by § 1191.3...

There are currently fourteen Districts within the County of Tulare:

Dinuba	Porterville	Three Rivers
Exeter	Sequoia	Tulare
Ivanhoe	Springville	Visalia
Lindsay-Strathmore	South Tulare County	Woodlake
Orosi	Terra Bella	

South Tulare County Memorial District is comprised of the following towns, each of which has one Memorial facility: Alpaugh, Earlimart, Pixley, Richgrove and Tipton.

REASON FOR INVESTIGATION

The 2010-2011 Tulare County Grand Jury (Grand Jury) received a citizen complaint concerning the lack of concise rules and regulations for conducting District business. The Grand Jury discovered additional issues, some of which are serious and need to be addressed in this report.

PROCEDURES FOLLOWED

1. Interviewed relevant witnesses
2. Attended Memorial District Board meetings
3. Obtained and reviewed relevant documents