

Volume 1 | Issue 2
January 20, 2021

San Bernardino County Grand Jurors Association Newsletter

President's Letter



Greetings from your President, Happy Thanksgiving, Happy Hanukkah, Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to you all. Hoping that you are safe and well. Boy what an interesting time we are living in now. I want to encourage everyone that this is going to be a great New Year 2021. There will be some rough patches like right now, but we will make America Great Again! We want to congratulate a few of our chapter members, Jean Biordi, Bruce Hollenbeck, Dave Hutson, Edward Jabo, and Lino Martinez, for making it back onto this year's sitting Grand Jury. We also want to congratulate the new Grand Jury Assistant Valerie Silvas. Valerie began her court career in 2004. She has worked with several courts in the county. Valerie has held several administrative positions as well. She holds a B.A. in Criminal Justice from Cal State University in San Bernardino. Valerie is still being trained in her new duties with the court and will formally start February 15, 2021. I also want to give a big shout out to Ron Zurek, who is the editor of our newsletter. Thank you Ron. The board members are in agreement that due to us not being able to yet meet together that any normal officer and director position changes in our board will remain frozen until we can meet in person. We have a projected date of returning to meet as a group again on June 7th. I want to mention that our yearly \$10 dues are payable again for 2021. Even though we have not been able to meet, we still have our website hosting cost to pay. You can make those checks out to PAST GRAND JURORS ASSN. and mail them to JoAnn Miller, P.O. Box 25094, San Bernardino, CA 92406. If you have any questions, please contact JoAnn at joannelaure.miller@gmail.com or call me at (909) 536-9212. Thank you for your continued support of this worthy Association. We look forward to seeing you in person on June 7, 2021. May the good Lord bless you and protect you and keep you safe. Sincerely, Your President, Ellen Miller.

Financials

Our annual reporting to the Internal Revenue Service, Franchise Tax Board, and State of California Registry of Charitable Trusts is current through June 30, 2020:

Checking Account Balance

Balance as of December 31, 2020: \$983.24

Income Statement - July 1, 2020 – Dec 31, 2020

INCOME	
Membership Dues	
Meals	
Opportunity Drawing	
Overage	
TOTAL INCOME	\$-0-
EXPENSES	
Meals Expense	
Office Expenses	
Website	
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$-0-
NET INCOME (LOSS)	\$-0-

Meetings

The San Bernardino County Grand Jurors' Association is composed of former and current Grand Jurors in San Bernardino County, California. The Association was established to promote awareness of and participation in the Grand Jury system in San Bernardino County, to educate the public on the role and function of the grand jury system in California, and to attract future grand jury applicants.

The general membership meets the fourth Monday of January, March, and October at Shandin Hills Country Club in San Bernardino. Cost is \$16 and includes a buffet lunch and beverage. The June meeting shall be the first Monday in June. The meetings include lunch and a speaker or panel on subjects pertinent to county government activities.

Next Membership Meeting

The January and March meetings have been cancelled. Future meetings will be determined based on the status of the COVID-19 recovery. June 7, 2021 is the next scheduled meeting.

Our Officers (2019-2021)

President and Board Member - Ellen Miller
 1st Vice President and Board Member - Darrell Freeland
 2nd Vice President and Board Member - Ruth Hankins
 Secretary and Board Member - Susan Brewster
 Treasurer and Board Member - JoAnn Miller
 Assistant Treasurer – Jody Scott
 Speaker Coordinator and Board Member - Bruce Hollenbeck
 Board Member At-Large - Jean Biordi
 Board Member At-Large - Pat Hagler
 Board Member At-Large - Kim Chitwood
 Board Member At-Large - Ron Zurek

Membership

All current and former grand jurors in San Bernardino County and throughout the state of California are eligible for membership. The Association also offers a forum to former grand jurors who wish to continue their activities in county government and an ability to renew friendships..

Annual Dues are \$10.00 and payable PAST GRAND JURORS ASSN. and mailed to our Treasurer JoAnn Miller, P.O. Box 25094, San Bernardino, CA 92406.

CGJA Membership Meeting Fall 2020

The California Grand Juror's Association Zoom Meeting

At one point there were 93 people online and in attendance. They ranged from the far north, Humboldt and Trinity, to San Bernardino in the southeast. Dick Spotswood gave the keynote address entitled "Credibility: Every grand jury's most valuable asset." Dick Spotswood is a politics and government columnist for the *Marin Independent Journal*. He currently chairs **The Sacramento Seminar**, a San Francisco bipartisan political and civic discussion group. He is a retired trial attorney, former council member and three-term mayor

of the City of Hill Valley. He was a director of the Golden Gate Bridge, Highway & Transportation District, representing Marin's eleven cities and towns.

Spotswood offered a set of maxims for creating and retaining the credibility of the grand jury. Rule #1 is to stay out of partisan politics. America is divided into tribes (he is a centrist) who trust only their own totems. Commonality is a necessary component of trust and commonality is supported by neutrality. The grand jury must maintain a distance from tribal politics. Rule #2 is to stay out of local politics. County residents need to understand you don't have an ax to grind.

To increase credibility, the grand jury needs to expand its membership beyond the recently retired. Service clubs are a great place for recruitment. And recruitment provides an opportunity for mentoring as increasing credibility.

It is important to talk to individuals and to listen to them. The grand jury's attention to an issue increases the matter's credibility for the press which can lead to authorities taking action. Listen to the public. Ask friends, colleagues, church members about their take on county matters.

Credibility can be hampered by one-year term limits on grand jury members. Therefore, it is critical to follow up on past reports. County chapters are in a position to do that.

He recommended increasing impact by spending time with the local media. As soon as a report is released, get an executive summary out. The media wants a scoop. Get to the people most likely to cover the issue.

Communicate who you are and what you do. Media people often do not understand the civil grand jury, particularly if they are from out of state. Explain its function and that it is comprised of unpaid volunteers

who are there because they care, not as a step to higher officer or with a preordained agenda.

A grand jury needs to have a foundation, a structure upon which to base investigations. The foundation is created through the training process and by learning as much as possible about local government. He suggests meeting with department heads and county officials. Get to know them and learn what they do.

Listen, communicate. Don't play politics.

He offered tips for improving the process. Create a subcommittee to follow up on prior reports. Ask officials about their responses. Quiz candidates for office as to their opinions about past grand jury reports. What will they do, if elected?

Pick the most important issues. Look at both elected and appointed officials. The latter follow the media and they don't want to be criticized.

Credibility provides the opportunity to get one's message across as credibility leads to trust.

Reprinted from the CGJA Journal, December 2020.

The Best Grand Jury Report was awarded to the Marin County's 2018-2019 report, **Wildfire Preparedness: A New Approach**. It had an immediate impact in this county.

The Best News Media Reporting went to reporter Alex MacLean for his multiple articles in the *Union Democrat* concerning the report by the 2017-2018 Tuolumne Grand Jury entitled **Tuolumne County Economic Development Authority (TCEDA)**.

Dianne Hoffman from Orange County earned the **2020 Rolando Award (ARSA)** which recognizes outstanding, long-term service to the association in support of its goals and objectives at both the state and local level. Many of you remember her as a CGJA trainer for seventeen years.

San Bernardino County Grand Jurors Association

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Recipient
Street Address
City, ST ZIP Code