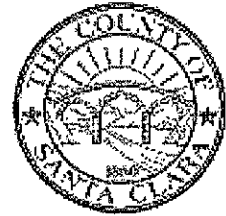


County of Santa Clara

Office of the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
County Government Center, East Wing
70 West Hedding Street
San Jose, California 95110-1770
(408) 299-5001 FAX 298-8460 TDD 993-8272



Megan Doyle
Clerk of the Board

August 23, 2016

FILED

SEP 20 2016

DAVID H. YAMASAKI
Chief Executive Officer/Clerk
Superior Court of CA County of Santa Clara
DEPUTY

Janice Jones

The Honorable Rise Jones Pichon
Presiding Judge
Santa Clara County Superior Court
191 North First Street
San Jose, CA 95113

RE: Grand Jury Report: Department of Revenue: The County's Collection Agency

Dear Judge Pichon:

At the August 16, 2016 meeting of the County of Santa Clara Board of Supervisors (Item No. 64), the Board adopted the response from the County Administration to the Final Grand Jury Report and recommendations relating to Department of Revenue: The County's Collection Agency.

As directed by the Board of Supervisors and on behalf of the Board President, our office is forwarding to you the enclosed certified copy of the response to the Final Grand Jury Report. This response constitutes the response of the Board of Supervisors, consistent with provisions of California Penal Section 933(c).

If there are any questions concerning this issue, please contact our office at 299-5001 or by email at boardoperations@cob.sccgov.org.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Michele Neighbors".

Michele Neighbors
Deputy Clerk, Board of Supervisors
County of Santa Clara

Enclosures

DOR RESPONSE TO JUNE 2016 CIVIL GRAND JURY REPORT

On June 14, 2016, the Santa Clara County Civil Grand Jury released its final report titled: "Department of Revenue, the County's Collection Agency." There are three findings and recommendations in the report.

The Department of Revenue (DOR) would like to thank the Civil Grand Jury for their review of this subject and welcomes their interest and thoughtful recommendations. The three findings and associated recommendations, and DOR's response and/or additional information relating to the recommendations are presented below:

Finding 1: The Department of Revenue's account statements have been sent to debtors with the leading digit of the month missing.

This resulted in statements listing incorrect dates, which could leave debtors confused as to how their payments were being applied. Department of Revenue inspections were not shown to be effective in catching anomalies such as those seen in misprinted statements.

Recommendation 1: The County should improve the account statement printing process at the Department of Revenue to ensure that the type of error discussed in this report is avoided.

DOR Response to Recommendation 1: AGREE.

The Department of Revenue is completing a comprehensive revision of its printed statement which will address the error encountered (one which is very rare in occurrence). DOR's new statement forms have been re-designed to a larger and more readable format, using color and font differentiation to provide clearer and more information to the recipient. All information fields are larger and easier to read. The statement size has been enlarged from the former postcard size format to standard 8 ½ x 11. The Statement revision will include the conversion to updated printing technology and equipment. These enhancements will improve the statement printing process. The expected completed date for this project is October 2016.

Finding 2: The current Department of Revenue complaint system lacks online accessibility for debtors and does not include an internal complaint tracking function.

Recommendation 2a: The County should implement an online complaint system accessible through the Department of Revenue's website.

DOR Response to Recommendation 2a: AGREE.

DOR does have online accessibility for submitting complaints; however, it may not be particularly user friendly. DOR will add a section to its website that offers to the public clear and easy access to the Department for communicating complaints, questions and comments.

Recommendation 2b: The County should implement a system for the Department of Revenue to track questions, complaints, and follow-ups.

DOR Response to Recommendation 2b: AGREE.

At DOR, there already exists a tracking system that is working well on a practical level considering the volume of the universe of people we serve. To improve our current system, DOR will investigate how to develop a selective tracking model that facilitates analysis and improved quick search for critical cases.

Recommendation 2c: The County should require the Department of Revenue to monitor and report complaint response times to ensure the goal of two business days is met.

DOR Response to Recommendation 2c: .AGREE.

Our current system assures that all call messages are cleared from queue timely. However, our high call volume requires that the follow-up check for action taken, date/time and documentation is done on a spot-check basis. To improve our current system, DOR will investigate creating a structured and reportable method for increasing the frequency and consistency of this spot monitoring.

Finding 3: Online access provided by the Department of Revenue to debtors is limited to viewing current account balance and making a payment.

Recommendation 3: The County should improve online access through the Department of Revenue's website to include the ability for debtors to view and download account transactions and past statements.

DOR Response to Recommendation 3: DISAGREE.

DOR would have difficulty with this recommendation due to the varying types of privacy confidentiality requirements associated with different types of debt, and the potential for multiple passwords for the same debtor, depending on the nature of the debt. Also, DOR favors personal contact between collector and debtor whenever possible to obtain explanation and information regarding the details of an account. In the past, the system could not generate a past statement facsimile copy. However, upon completion of the statement printing project described above under Response to Recommendation 1, facsimiles will be available by contacting the account representative.

It should be noted that online information related to a debtor's account provides not only their current balance, as referenced in the Grand Jury's report, but also the last payment amount made (if any) and the last payment date.

DOR receives approximately 100,000 accounts per year, so the aggregated volume of accounts that we handle is very large. The compounded requirement to associate individuals to multiple accounts across our several business lines (e.g., hospital, traffic, justice, etc.), with different levels of permission depending on the legal basis for the debt (e.g., victim restitution, hospital, etc.), would make any password management unfeasible at this time.

Further, unlike banks and other financial institutions, DOR operates under the premise that DOR debtors will be in our data base for only the time required to pay the debt. Because DOR is not looking to have a long-term customer relationship with the debtors in its database, the transiency of the relationship between DOR and its debtor population works against establishing long-term password management arrangements.

In addition, in terms of DOR's collections responsibilities, we believe it is advantageous for individuals to speak with us regarding any questions they may have. This is so we can 1) talk to them about paying, 2) update our debtor demographics, and 3) provide correct and clear interpretation of information on their account – often cases can be quite complicated around issues such as victim restitution, joint/several liability status, amnesty, bench warrants, insurance implications, etc. We therefore wish to encourage debtors with questions to call us at every opportunity.