Edwin M. Lee, Mayor
Philip A. Ginsburg, General Manager

September 19, 2013

The Honorable Cynthia Ming-mei Lee
Presiding Judge
Superior Court of California, County of San Francisco
400 McAllister Street
San Francisco, CA 94012

Re: 2012-2013 Civil Grand Jury report: "Golden Gate Park's Homeless Population: Are San Francisco's Policies Serving Us Well?"

Dear Judge Lee:

On behalf of the Recreation and Parks Department ("the Department") and the Recreation and Park Commission of the City and County of San Francisco, please accept this consolidated response to the above-referenced Grand Jury report's findings and recommendations.

**FINDINGS**

**Finding 1.** City agencies lack specific data on the characteristics of GGP dwellers, which prevents accurate profiling of individual problems and needs.

> **Response:** *Agree in part, disagree in part.* The Recreation and Park Department is responsible for maintaining and stewarding public open spaces. The Department works with multiple city agencies to understand the general characteristics of GGP dwellers. On the whole, young, transient homeless are closer to the panhandle. Older, often military veteran, chronic homeless are on the west side of the park. Working cross-functionally with other City agencies, cross-departmental encounter data is available to the Department on many high-risk homeless individuals, including park dwellers, including park dwellers, though additional information would be useful in planning for outreach, programs, and services.

**Finding 2.** With better information about GGP dwellers, their histories, and their needs, the City would be better able to move these individuals out of the Park, into a more stable situation.

> **Response:** *Agree.*

**Finding 3.** Because the City does not track individual park dwellers and their interactions with social services, it is difficult to determine the efficiency and success of outreach efforts in reducing the park population.

**Response:** *Agree in part, disagree in part.* While individual park dwellers are not specifically tracked, to the extent they are high-utilizers of multiple City services, information on their service utilization is documented in CCMS. Golden Gate Park's homeless population has fallen over the last decade due to concerted outreach efforts. While there are still homeless encampments in the Park, this overall trend should be considered a success.

**Finding 4.** Outreach efforts to GGP encampments by EST are limited, which inhibits positive results.

**Response:** *Agree in part, disagree in part.* While EST outreach in GGP has occurred, it has not recently been routinely done or regularly scheduled. As the Grand Jury's report notes, EST assistance is available 24/7 if Department staff requests it. The Department will continue utilizing EST as a resource to connect the Park's homeless population to assistance and services.

**Finding 5.** The current system of issuing citations for nighttime sleeping and camping in the Park is not effective in reducing the current number of park dwellers.

**Response:** *Neither Agree nor Disagree.* As the Grand Jury's report notes, Golden Gate Park's homeless population has decreased significantly over the past decade. While their precise impact is unclear, some of this success may be attributable to the use of citations. It is imperative that the City provide the necessary resources to ensure that the citation process is effective.

**Finding 6.** Signs and information about the Park's closure time is inconsistent and confusing.

**Response:** *Agree.* Legislation currently pending before the Board of Supervisors will enable the Department to establish uniform hours of operation for Golden Gate Park and post clear information for the public. If the legislation passes the Department will work to quickly post signage.

**Finding 7.** Shopping carts facilitate moving personal items into the Park and setting up encampments.

**Response:** *Agree.*

**Recommendation 1:** The City should formalize a system to gather information on the characteristics of GGP dwellers and why they live in the Park.

**Response:** *Recommendation has already been implemented.* CCMS is a web-based database designed to function as an electronic charting, reporting, and communication tool for City teams working with homeless clients served across multiple systems of care. This system is used to

gather information on the homeless population as a whole and can be used to enter specific information on individuals in GGP.

**Recommendation 2:** Information about GGP dwellers should be used to tailor support services to specific populations, whose age and circumstances affect their needs and acceptance of services.

**Response:** *Recommendation will be implemented in the future.* With the additional information gleaned from dedicated EST outreach, support services could then be tailored to individual dwellers in the park.

**Recommendation 3:** The City should establish a system to track its outreach efforts among park dwellers and use the information to evaluate effectiveness in reducing the number of park dwellers.

**Response:** *Recommendation has been implemented.* Instead of establishing a new system to track outreach, CCMS will continue to be used to monitor service utilization by high-risk individuals accessing multiple City services. The information collected will be shared with the SFHOT, of which the Department is a partner, so that the individual's record is updated in CCMS and a support services response, including a further evaluation of the need for case management, can then be tailored to individual park dwellers and tracked over time.

**Recommendation 4:** The EST should conduct in-person, proactive outreach to park dwellers at different times of day and night in order to maximize their efforts.

**Response:** *Recommendation has been implemented.* EST policy has been changed to dedicate at least one outreach worker to conduct in-person, proactive outreach to GGP dwellers in tandem with SFPD and/or Rec & Park security. Additionally, the Mayor's HOPE Office will coordinate one SFHOT employee to attend the "Ops Park" monthly meeting with SFPD and Rec & Park staff to continually monitor the need for EST outreach at GGP.

**Recommendation 5.** The SFPD and Park Patrol should expand their outreach to GGP encampments to more areas of the Park and should vary the time.

**Response:** 1) SFPD and Park Patrol should expand their outreach to GGP encampments to more areas of the Park...: *This recommendation has been implemented.* The Department divides the park into six service areas and will continue to focus on all of these areas when conducting outreach and enforcement. 2) ...and should vary the time: *This recommendation requires further analysis.* As a matter of personal safety for park dwellers and Park Patrol staff alike, enforcement times should continue to be conducted when it can be done safely. The Department could provide outreach during the early evening hours in partnership with other City agencies.

**Recommendation 6.** References to the Park's closure time on all park signs, brochures and City websites should be made consistent with the Park Code and Rec & Park Commission resolutions.

**Response:** *This recommendation will be implemented in the future.* Legislation is currently pending before the Board of Supervisors. If it is passed, it will enable the Department to move

quickly to post standardized signage, brochures, and electronic content about Golden Gate Park's hours.

**Recommendation 7.** The San Francisco Park Code should ban shopping carts in GGP in order to discourage living in the Park and to reduce litter.

**Response:** *This recommendation has been implemented.* Current policy already does not allow shopping carts in the park. Amending the park code is unnecessary; SFPD has a standing order regarding shopping carts which is enforced in all City parks. In addition, Park Patrol removes all abandoned property, including shopping carts, from park premises.

Sincerely,

Philip A. Ginsburg, General Manager
San Francisco Recreation and Park Department

Margaret A. McArthur, Commission Liaison
San Francisco Recreation and Park Commission