

Marin's Local Governments & Our Civil Grand Jury



A Brief History of Marin

- One of California's 27 original counties, established in 1850.
- Grew from four original townships: San Rafael, Novato, Sausalito, and Bolinas.
- Population expanded from just 323 residents in 1850 to over 262,000 today.
- Industries evolved from cattle, dairy and forestry to a diverse mix of government, healthcare, retail, and technology.
- Many local governments have been established to support population.

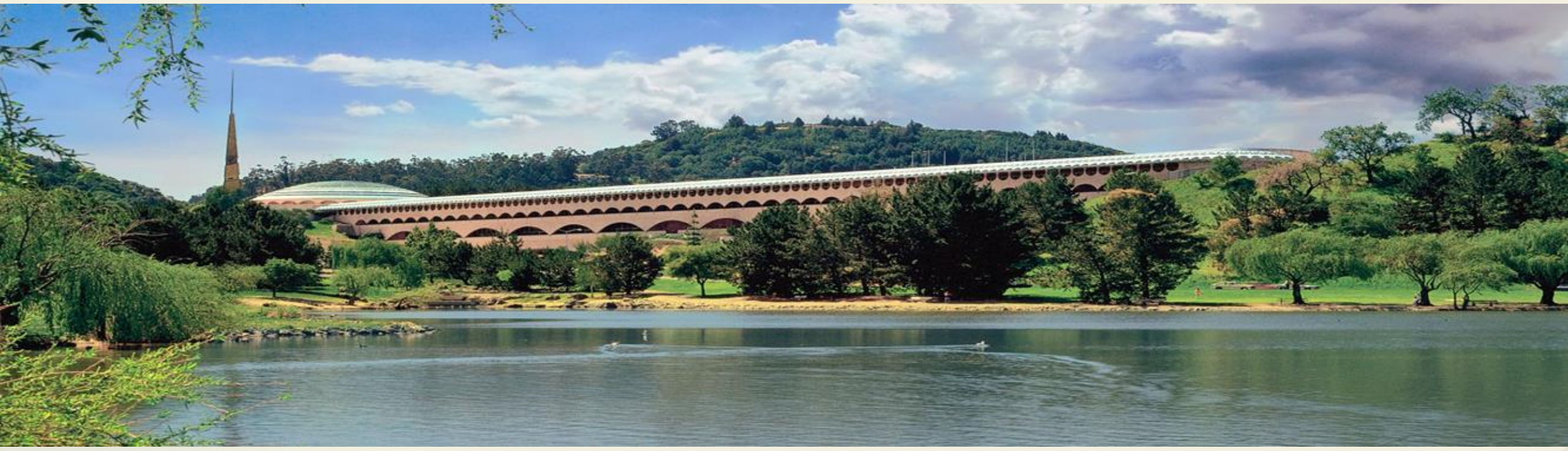


Some Fun Facts

Marin's total number of elected officials – 300+

Total number of local government employees – 11,500+

Marin spending on local governments – Billions \$



Marin's 127 Local Governments

The county is served by a complex web of agencies, including cities, special districts, school districts, and more.

Local Governments



1 County

Provides county-wide services (Health, Justice) and governs unincorporated areas.



11 Cities & Towns

Provide municipal services like police, fire, libraries, and parks.



62 Special Districts

Provide services, such as sanitation, fire protection, and water, to distinct communities.



53 Other Agencies

Includes 34 JPAs, 17 School Districts, LAFCO, and the Housing Authority.

County vs. City Governance

Marin County

Established by the state legislature in 1850. Its 23 departments provide countywide services like public health and criminal justice, and it acts as the main local government for unincorporated areas, serving 26% of Marin's population.

11 Towns & Cities

Created by a vote of their residents and governed by a City Council. They provide municipal services such as police, fire, parks, and planning & building.

San Rafael	San Anselmo
Fairfax	Larkspur
Corte Madera	Belvedere
Tiburon	Mill Valley
Sausalito	Novato
Ross	

Deep Dive: 62 Special Districts

Independent Districts (30)

These districts are established by a vote of the residents and are governed by their own publicly elected boards. They are directly accountable to the voters. Examples include:

Sanitation (9)

Fire (7)

Community Service Districts (6)

Water Districts (3)

Healthcare (1)

Dependent Districts (32)

These districts are established by the County or a City to provide a specific service to designated area. They are governed by the Board of Supervisors or the local City Council, who act as the district's board. Examples include:

County Service Areas (16)

Road Divisions (7)

Flood Control (1)

Marin's School Districts

- 17 School Districts

- Bolinas- Stinson
- Laguna
- Larkspur/Corte Madera
- Miller Creek
- Novato Unified
- Ross Valley
- San Rafael (2)
- Shoreline Unified
- Kentfield
- Lagunitas
- Mill Valley
- Nicasio
- Reed
- Ross
- Sausalito
- Tamalpais HS

- Marin Community College District
- Marin County Office of Education
 - Elected county superintendent

All Governed by Elected Boards

Other Key Agencies

LAFCO

The Local Agency Formation Commission reviews boundaries to streamline government and prevent urban sprawl.



Housing Authority

A county-wide agency that helps low- and moderate-income residents obtain affordable housing



Joint Powers Agencies

Contracts between governments to provide a shared service. Contracts establish funding and governing board with representatives from participating government boards/councils..

Marin's 34 Joint Powers Agencies




Notable examples include:

- Marin Wildfire Prevention Authority
- Transportation Authority of Marin
- Ross Valley Fire
- Central Marin Police
- Sewerage Agency of Southern Marin

Who's Watching?

How Do We Keep Tabs on all of Our Governments?

Avenues of Accountability

-  **The Media:** Though shrinking, papers like the Marin IJ, Point Reyes Light, and Pacific Sun investigate public issues and report on government actions.
-  **Citizens' Groups:** Organizations like the League of Women Voters (LWV) and CO\$T actively monitor government meetings and budgets.
-  **Marin Civil Grand Jury:** A formal, court-appointed body with the unique power to investigate local government operations.

Questions?

About Marin's Local Governments

Marin Civil Grand Jury

Topics to be Covered

- What is the Civil Grand Jury
- What is the Job of the Civil Grand Jury
- How Does the Civil Grand Jury Work
- How Can You Participate in this Important Work

What is the Civil Grand Jury?

- Composed of 19 U.S. citizens who are 18+ and have been a Marin resident for at least one year.
- It is **NOT** a criminal grand jury; its focus is on local government operations.
- Jurors are appointed by the Superior Court for a one-year term (July 1 – June 30).
- It operates independently and confidentially to conduct its investigations.



The Role of the Civil Grand Jury

- The Civil Grand Jury was established in the California Constitution
- In its role of a watchdog representing Marin County residents, the Civil Grand Jury strives to:
 - Improve government efficiency and effectiveness
 - Promote accountability and transparency
- The Civil Grand Jury investigates civil matters (not criminal) relating to local government entities through the
 - Identification of issues
 - Investigation and research of topics
 - Reporting of findings and recommendations
- Elected county officials and local governing boards are required to respond to grand jury reports

How Does the Civil Grand Jury Work?

- The Civil Grand Jury selects the topics that it will investigate, drawing upon input from:
 - Requests for Investigations submitted from the public
 - Current jurors
 - Previous Grand Jury reports
 - News Media articles
- In addition, the Civil Grand Jury conducts site visits to inquire about the condition and management of all public detention facilities in the county (San Quentin, Marin County Jail, and Marin County Juvenile Hall)

How the Civil Grand Jury May be Organized

Each grand jury independently organizes itself into committees

Members choose the investigative committees that they want to join based on the topics that interest them.

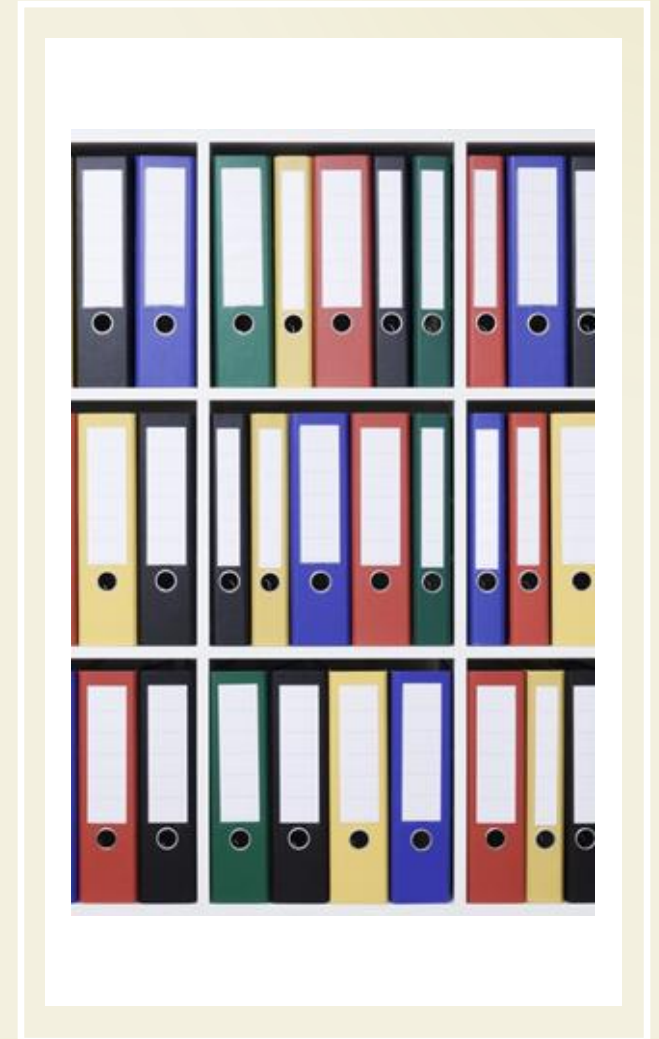
They also serve on an administrative committee

Investigative

Administrative

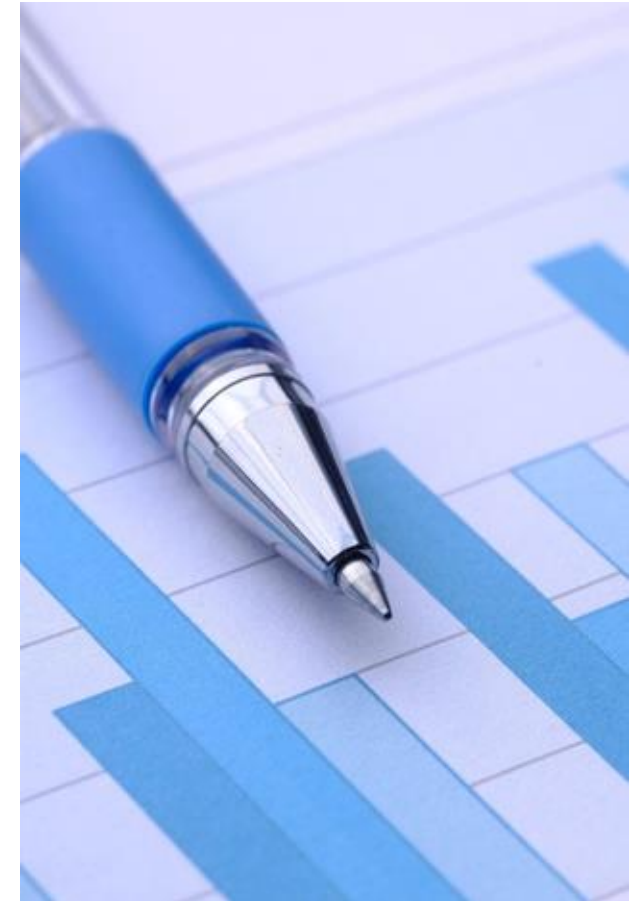
Grand Jury Investigations

- Steps in the investigative process include:
 - Primary research into the issue
 - Review of public documents online, such as:
 - Board agendas, minutes, staff reports, budgets
 - News articles
 - Websites of pertinent entities
 - Previous grand jury reports
 - Confidential interviews of selected individuals
 - Site visits
 - Attendance at public meetings and events
- Interviewees and records can be subpoenaed if necessary
- All investigations are confidential, forever



Civil Grand Jury Reports - The Jury's Only Voice

- Reports are drafted as the investigation ends; followed by many reviews, revisions and multiple drafts
- Reports are highly detailed, and include
 - A summary of the investigation
 - Findings based on verified facts
 - Recommendations that are specific, measurable and attainable
- Each investigative topic and report must be approved by a super majority of the jurors (12 of 19 members)
- Approved reports are sent to elected officials and boards for required responses and to relevant officials for invited responses
- Reports are posted online and distributed to media outlets for publication



The Jury's Power: Reports With Teeth

“State law requires elected boards and county-wide elected officers to respond publicly and in writing to the jury's findings and recommendations.”

This legal requirement ensures that government officials must address the public's concerns, promoting accountability and transparency.

Prior Grand Jury Reports are Available Online

Civil Grand Jury Reports

View investigative reports issued by the Civil Grand Jury, including responses from government agencies.

Reports and Responses

2024-2025 Civil Grand Jury Reports

Topics: school safety, climate, incarcerated re-employment, first responders, housing, and more.

2023-2024 Civil Grand Jury Reports

Report topics include public education, Marin's sea level rise, Measure A funds and more.

2022-2023 Civil Grand Jury Reports

Report topics include Marin housing, older adults, SMART, and more.

2021-2022 Civil Grand Jury Reports

Report topics include affordable housing, COVID-19 response, Sheriff oversight, and more.

2019-2020 Civil Grand Jury Reports

Report topics include opioid misuse, firearm safety, climate change, and more.

2018-2019 Civil Grand Jury Reports

Report topics include vaping, telecommunications, wildfires, and more.

2017-2018 Civil Grand Jury Reports

Report topics include detention centers, homelessness, law enforcement, and more.

2016-2017 Civil Grand Jury Reports

Report topics include housing, pensions, health care, and more.

Jury Reports Get Frontpage Headlines



Jury Reports Stay in the News

Marin County Civil Grand Jury in the News

Marin Independent Journal

Stronger youth e-bike rules urged

Safety concerns prompt call for class 2 ban for under-16 riders

George Bonnell: Marin grand jury calls for cybersecurity authority



DO THE REAL MEDIA CRITICISMS ALREADY!

WOW! YOU PRODUCE!

1.2.3.4

County buying system faulted

Report cites risks for misuse of credit cards

Update of jail in Marin needs to be examined

Thirty years ago, Marin County opened its new jail at the site, located in a state-of-the-art Adventure facility.

Report rebukes county offices

Watchdog panel criticizes agency flaws

Watchdogs seek scrutiny of agricultural easements



County agencies in charge of agricultural easements. They will need to take better steps to ensure the easements are properly maintained and that the agricultural use is protected.

Report: System failing seniors

Watchdog urges action to help address issues

New Marin agency urged to manage sea-level rise

Report says coordinator could aid local planning



Concern about tax revenues used to help make purchases



Marin residents have seen significant increases in bond rates and related taxes. Bonding in Corte Madera, Marin City Mill Valley and Sausalito, among other towns.



EdSource should stop asking parents to provide supplies, Marin grand jury says

MARIN COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY 2023-2024 • OCTOBER 2024

Grand Jury's Impact - Making a Difference in Marin

2019 Wildfire Preparedness

Wildfire Preparedness: A New Approach caused the County and 9 municipalities to create the Marin Wildfire Prevention Agency (MWPA) with a taxpayer-approved \$20 million annual budget to cut fire risk

2022 Sheriff Oversight

Sheriff Oversight: The Time is Now resulted in the Board of Supervisors unanimously establish independent oversight of the Sheriff's Department

2023 Justice Delayed

Justice Delayed is Justice Denied led to the County budgeting \$500,000 to address an unacceptably large backlog in the District Attorney's office

2024 A Free Public Education

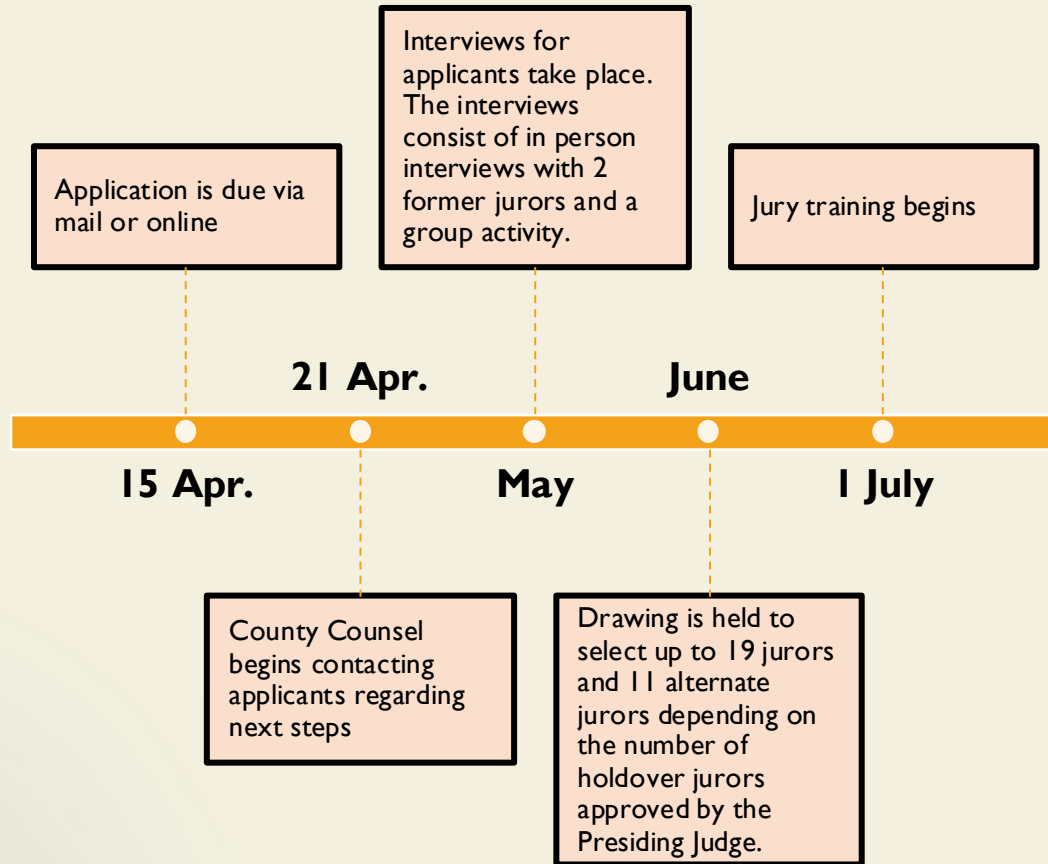
A Free Public Education includes School Supplies concluded the Marin Superintendent of Schools who issued a policy that Marin's public schools should provide everything needed for students to participate fully at school, at no cost to the student or their families

Consider Serving:

The Civil Grand Jury Needs Good People

- Working on the Marin Civil Grand Jury is an opportunity to contribute to the betterment of the community
- Jurors benefit personally by
 - Gaining a deeper understanding of local government
 - Learning what's going on behind the scenes
 - Developing valuable skills
 - Serving as an agent for change
 - Meeting amazing people; making new friends
 - Experiencing personal fulfillment

Civil Grand Jury Selection Process



Marin County Civil Grand Jury



Civil Grand Jury Reports

View investigative reports issued by the Grand Jury, including responses from government agencies.

About the Civil Grand Jury

Learn about what the Civil Grand Jury is and what we do.

Apply to Serve on the Civil Grand Jury

Share your knowledge and improve our community by volunteering on the Marin County Civil Grand Jury.

Civil Grand Jury Member Guide

Learn what's expected of you and what it's like to serve on the Grand Jury.

Request a Civil Grand Jury Investigation

Ask the Grand Jury to look into an issue that affects Marin County.

<https://www.marincounty.gov/departments/grand-jury/apply-serve-civil-grand-jury>

Questions?

About the Civil Grand Jury

Thank You

