

2001-2002 SANTA CLARA COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY

INQUIRY INTO CITY SUPPORT OF A DAY WORKERS' CENTER IN THE CITY OF MOUNTAIN VIEW

INTRODUCTION

In July 2001, the Santa Clara County Civil Grand Jury received a citizen complaint regarding the establishment of a Day Workers' Center on Old Middlefield Way in the City of Mountain View. The complaint alleged the disregard of zoning regulations and illegal or improper use of city tax money. Pursuant to Penal Code Section 919c, the Grand Jury opened an inquiry into these issues.

BACKGROUND

Day Workers' Centers provide a gathering place for day laborers looking for work in positions such as gardeners, housekeepers or construction workers. Without these centers, day laborers could gather along major streets, blocking sidewalks and causing congestion.

The neighboring town of Los Altos has such a center, St. Joseph the Worker, operated by the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, a private nonprofit charitable organization as defined under the tax code 501 (c) (3). This Los Altos center is losing its lease and supporters have proposed establishing a new location in Mountain View.

OBSERVATIONS

During September and October 2001, the Grand Jury made visits to the City of Mountain View offices, the site mentioned by the complainant, and the offices of the St. Joseph the Worker Center in Los Altos. At that time, there

was no formal plan for a Day Workers' Center in Mountain View, although Old Middlefield Way had been suggested as a possible location by some supporters. The Old Middlefield Way site is currently zoned General Commercial. The city has indicated that it will require any applicant to conduct proper traffic and parking studies around the site. Finally, proposed funding for a new or relocated Day Workers' Center run by St. Vincent de Paul consists of private donations, federal grant money and a possible emergency loan from Santa Clara County. There is no anticipated use of City of Mountain View funds.

CONCLUSION

The Grand Jury concluded that this complaint was baseless for the following reasons:

- 1) The site mentioned in the complaint has not been selected for a Day Workers' Center. Should the site be selected for such a center, that use would comply with current zoning regulations.
- 2) There are no funding proposals currently under consideration requiring the use of City of Mountain View money. It is possible the city could become involved in distributing federal grant money to St. Vincent de Paul, an action that is legal and proper under current law.

PASSED and **ADOPTED** by the Santa Clara Civil Grand Jury this 3rd day of January, 2002.

Bruce E. Capron
Foreperson

Norman N. Abrahams, DDS
Foreperson Pro Tem

Joyce S. Byrne
Secretary