

CITY OF MARICOPA

PREFACE:

Maricopa is the name applied by a Pima Indian Tribe to a neighboring tribe of Uymas inhabiting the Gila River Valley in Southern Arizona. How the name reached California is unknown, but it was given to the oil-booming community when a station on the Sunset Western Railroad was established there in 1903. Real growth occurred in Maricopa with the Lakeview Gusher in 1910, the first oil discovered in Kern County and in the nation. The City of Maricopa was incorporated in 1911. During its heyday there were as many as 30,000 residents. The current population of Maricopa is less than 1,200 residents.

PURPOSE OF INQUIRY:

The Cities and Joint Powers Committee (Committee) of the 2011-2012 Kern County Grand Jury visited the City of Maricopa (City) on May 1, 2012 pursuant to California Penal Code §925a. City Hall is located at 400 California Street, Maricopa, CA 93252.

PROCESS:

The Committee met with the Interim City Manager and the City's consultant. The consultant is a retired City Manager that has been assisting the City since July 2011. In preparation for the meeting the Committee reviewed past Kern County Grand Jury final reports, gathered information from the internet, and read newspaper articles relating to the City.

FACTS:

- A. The City has two paid employees.
- B. The City has entered into a contract with the Kern County Sheriff's Department for law enforcement.
- C. The City no longer handles trash collection/disposal for its residents. It has entered into a contract that is more cost effective and efficient with an outside vendor. The City collects a franchise fee from the vendor.
- D. Animal Control is handled by Kern County Animal Control.
- E. By "geographic happenstance" the City is not near any major highways. Most of its residents are retired or involved in the nearby oil industry. Many of the people that work in the oil fields commute from Taft or Bakersfield.
- F. There are no medical services in the City.

FINDINGS:

- F1. Recent Grand Jury reports indicated that the City was generating funds for its Police Department with traffic enforcement. The City no longer has a Police Department and has no need for contracted towing services.
- F2. The City now operates on a fund accounting system. Past practices of the City resulted in a large deficit. The new City Council is educating itself on proper management of the City. There is a 60% reduction to the deficit.
- F3. The City has a \$125,000 deficit in the sewer fund. The sewer system in the City is inadequate and needs upgrading.
- F4. The sewer rates in the City have remained the same for many years. Upgrading the system will require an increase in rates.
- F5. The City has paid \$55,000 to the Kern County Fire Department in overdue fees.
- F6. The City has paid its debt, (\$117,000) to the Local Agency Investment Fund – Proposition B.
- F7. The City is a “work import community” with many of the oil field employees commuting from Taft, Bakersfield or other communities. These larger communities can offer better services and shopping opportunities.

COMMENTS:

Past Grand Jury final reports were instrumental in showing that many of the problems in the City of Maricopa were self generated by inadequate and inconsistent management. The Committee hopes that the City will strive to reverse its reputation with positive fiscal responsibility.

RECOMMENDATIONS: NONE**NOTES:**

- The City of Maricopa should post a copy of this report where it will be available for public review.
- Persons wishing to receive an email notification of newly released reports may sign up at www.co.kern.ca.us/grandjury, and click on: Sign up for early releases.
- Present and past Kern County Grand Jury Final Reports and Responses can be accessed on the Kern County Grand Jury website: www.co.kern.ca.us/grandjury.

NO RESPONSE REQUIRED