

Mr. Breitler provided background on his position and the state of the industry for journalism. He started in 2005 at the Record and now is the environmental reporter, looking at various issues including the delta tunnel project, the urban wildlife center, the levies and other relevant subjects. From there he has been reporting on violent crime in Stockton and that impact on families and the public, so he is not doing as much outdoors as covering other matters.

He outlined the problems of journalists today including stability, low pay, layoffs and repetition of work, where burn out is common. Also, social media puts pressure on journalists to respond to stories on social media 24/7. Professional journalism counters social media which is superficial and reporters respond to provide the facts. A problem with Facebook social media is it employs an algorithm that decides what the reader wants to know rather than what they need to know, making 1 billion editorial decisions a day rather than real editors doing so. Twitter is better, although limited by space. He noted journalism is the worst job in America, second only to lumberjacks! Another challenge is the diversity of subjects, people, and stories to report on in the county.

Another challenge and in response to why there is not more local stories is the sheer number of reporters, shrinking from 85 to 16 since he started in 2005, and only 7 or 8 of the 16 are reporters. Finally he reflected on the complexity of the San Joaquin County communities, as well as the difficulty to report on all the complex and diverse elements of the county.

On solutions, Alex suggested use of more user generated materials and freelance reporters. He notes the size of digital and paper readers is bigger than ever, and having a greater influence; i.e. moving the needle on impacting readers beyond social media.

The subject of how civil grand jury reports are reported was discussed and Alex noted that releasing grand jury reports on a staggered basis is highly effective. Also, while he has not seen social media coverage of grand jury reports, it is possible for the county to provide prompts and highlights on social media outlets, and then giving the link to the actual report itself, working within the boundaries of how grand jury report can be publicized. Providing different ways to get the report directly to the public is the way.

Regarding ideas for how to stimulate greater coverage of civil grand jury and its importance, Alex invited the Chapter to notify him ("ping him") when the new civil grand jurors are impaneled, as he will cover it. Also, he suggested an article during the recruitment time frame to speak to the need for citizens to apply and diversity to be achieved so the civil grand jury make up reflects that of the community. Also, an interview with Judge Abdullah could be done as well, likely best in February during the start of soliciting applicants.

In addition, greater coverage of follow up reports on the prior year cases would be of interest to the public regarding how the agencies that were cited in the reports are

responding meaningfully. Also, the timing of releasing reports was validated as Wednesday and is now the current practice. Also, Alex recommended that he be given a “heads up” as soon as the civil grand jury knows when its reports will be released, and stressed how effective that will be.

He was asked if we might give a presentation to the staff of The Record and he responded that he would welcome that and help arrange it.

Finally he offered to do a story on how hard it is to recruit grand jury applicants today, which will be followed up either through John Britto and Eric. The Chapter needs to give to Alex notice when the county sends out its invitations to solicit applicants for the civil grand jury, likely in February.

A final area of potential coverage includes elected and appointed officials and how they are trained in general, and whether they are complying with the training requirements in ethics and compliance, which must be reported to the California AG, and is not happening.