

**From:** Grand Jury <grandjury@co.slo.ca.us>  
**Sent:** Friday, June 13, 2025 2:29:34 PM  
**To:** Stewart, Erica A <estewart@slocity.org>  
**Subject:** Grand Jury Report

Mayor Stewart.

Attached please find a letter from the Grand Jury, as well as attachments to the letter and the final report. Thank you,

Reggie, for  
Bonnie McKrill, Foreperson



# GRAND JURY

June 13, 2025

Via Email [estewart@slocity.org](mailto:estewart@slocity.org)

**Confidential**

Erica Stewart, Mayor  
City of San Luis Obispo  
990 Palm Street  
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401

Re: Grand Jury Report: "Round & Round with Town & Gown"

Dear Mayor Stewart:

The San Luis Obispo County Grand Jury has completed the attached report titled "Round & Round with Town & Gown" This copy of the report is being provided to you two days in advance of its public release, as required by California Penal Code §933.05 (f), which states:

*A grand jury shall provide to the affected agency a copy of the portion of the grand jury report relating to that person or entity two working days prior to its public release and after the approval of the presiding judge. No officer, agency, department, or governing body of a public agency shall disclose any contents of the report prior to the public release of the final report.*

Responses are due pursuant to California Penal Code section 933(c). Sections 933 through 933.05 of the Penal Code are attached for your reference. Also attached is a form for your responses to Grand Jury findings and recommendations.

Please keep in mind that this report must be kept confidential until its public release by the Grand Jury.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bonnie McKrill".

Bonnie McKrill, Foreperson  
2024-25 San Luis Obispo County Grand Jury

BM:rr

Attachments

## RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY REPORT

**Report Title:** "Round & Round with Town & Gown" \_\_\_\_\_

**Report Date:** June 18, 2025 \_\_\_\_\_

**Response by:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

### FINDINGS

1. I (we) agree with the findings numbered: \_\_\_\_\_
2. I (we) disagree wholly or partially with the findings numbered: \_\_\_\_\_  
*(Attach a statement specifying any portions of the findings that are disputed; include an explanation of the reasons.)*

### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Recommendations numbered \_\_\_\_\_ have been implemented.  
*(Attach a summary describing the implementation actions.)*
2. Recommendations numbered \_\_\_\_\_ have not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future.  
*(Attach a timeframe for the implementation.)*
3. Recommendations numbered \_\_\_\_\_ require further analysis.  
*(Attach an explanation and the scope and parameters of an analysis or study, and a timeframe for the matter to be prepared for discussion by the officer or director of the agency or department being investigated or reviewed, including the governing body of the public agency when applicable. This timeframe shall not exceed six months from the date of the publication of the Grand Jury report.)*
4. Recommendations numbered \_\_\_\_\_ will not be implemented because they are not warranted or are not reasonable.  
*(Attach an explanation.)*

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of pages attached: \_\_\_\_\_

## **California Penal Code Sections 933 through 933.05**

### **Section 933 – Final Reports**

- (a) Each grand jury shall submit to the presiding judge of the superior court a final report of its findings and recommendations that pertain to county government matters during the fiscal or calendar year. Final reports on any appropriate subject may be submitted to the presiding judge of the superior court at any time during the term of service of a grand jury. A final report may be submitted for comment to responsible officers, agencies, or departments, including the county board of supervisors, when applicable, upon finding of the presiding judge that the report is in compliance with this title. For 45 days after the end of the term, the foreperson and his or her designees shall, upon reasonable notice, be available to clarify the recommendations of the report.
- (b) One copy of each final report, together with the responses thereto, found to be in compliance with this title shall be placed on file with the clerk of the court and remain on file in the office of the clerk. The clerk shall immediately forward a true copy of the report and the responses to the State Archivist who shall retain that report and all responses in perpetuity.
- (c) No later than 90 days after the grand jury submits a final report on the operations of any public agency subject to its reviewing authority, the governing body of the public agency shall comment to the presiding judge of the superior court on the findings and recommendations pertaining to matters under the control of the governing body, and every elected county officer or agency head for which the grand jury has responsibility pursuant to Section 914.1 shall comment within 60 days to the presiding judge of the superior court, with an information copy sent to the board of supervisors, on the findings and recommendations pertaining to matters under the control of that county officer or agency head and any agency or agencies which that officer or agency head supervises or controls. In any city and county, the mayor shall also comment on the findings and recommendations. All of these comments and reports shall forthwith be submitted to the presiding judge of the superior court who impaneled the grand jury. A copy of all responses to grand jury reports shall be placed on file with the clerk of the public agency and the office of the county clerk, or the mayor when applicable, and shall remain on file in those offices. One copy shall be placed on file with the applicable grand jury final report by, and in the control of the currently impaneled grand jury, where it shall be maintained for a minimum of five years.
- (d) As used in this section "agency" includes a department.

### **933.05. Findings and Recommendations**

- (a) For purposes of subdivision (b) of Section 933, as to each grand jury finding, the responding person or entity shall indicate one of the following:
  - (1) The respondent agrees with the finding.
  - (2) The respondent disagrees wholly or partially with the finding, in which case the response shall specify the portion of the finding that is disputed and shall include an explanation of the reasons therefore.
- (b) For purposes of subdivision (b) of Section 933, as to each grand jury recommendation, the responding person or entity shall report one of the following actions:
  - (1) The recommendation has been implemented, with a summary regarding the implemented action.

- (2) The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future, with a timeframe for implementation.
- (3) The recommendation requires further analysis, with an explanation and the scope and parameters of an analysis or study, and a timeframe for the matter to be prepared for discussion by the officer or head of the agency or department being investigated or reviewed, including the governing body of the public agency when applicable. This timeframe shall not exceed six months from the date of publication of the grand jury report.
- (4) The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable, with an explanation therefor.
- (c) However, if a finding or recommendation of the grand jury addresses budgetary or personnel matters of a county agency or department headed by an elected officer, both the agency or department head and the board of supervisors shall respond if requested by the grand jury, but the response of the board of supervisors shall address only those budgetary or personnel matters over which it has some decision making authority. The response of the elected agency or department head shall address all aspects of the findings or recommendations affecting his or her agency or department.
- (d) A grand jury may request a subject person or entity to come before the grand jury for the purpose of reading and discussing the findings of the grand jury report that relates to that person or entity in order to verify the accuracy of the findings prior to their release.
- (e) During an investigation, the grand jury shall meet with the subject of that investigation regarding the investigation, unless the court, either on its own determination or upon request of the foreperson of the grand jury, determines that such a meeting would be detrimental.
- (f) A grand jury shall provide to the affected agency a copy of the portion of the grand jury report relating to that person or entity two working days prior to its public release and after the approval of the presiding judge. No officer, agency, department, or governing body of a public agency shall disclose any contents of the report prior to the public release of the final report.

## **ROUND & ROUND WITH TOWN & GOWN**

San Luis Obispo (SLO) is a quaint town with a rich history and is home to a rapidly growing university that has become a vital part of the community. However, the expansion of the university has led to significant challenges in housing availability, both on and off campus. Affordability issues have exacerbated these challenges, created a shortage of student housing, and have pushed students into neighborhoods traditionally occupied by families. Many students now reside in single-family homes, often exceeding their intended occupancy. This shift has brought new complexities, as noise and frequent partying have disrupted these once-quiet residential areas. The situation underscores the delicate balance needed to ensure that all residents—students, families, and long-time locals can coexist harmoniously and thrive.

### **INTRODUCTION/PURPOSE**

Over the past two decades, SLO has experienced significant growth, driven in part by the expansion of its university, California Polytechnic State University (Cal Poly), and the increasing student population. While this growth has contributed to the city's vibrancy and economic development, it has also introduced a range of challenges for the surrounding neighborhoods.

Residents have voiced concerns over noise disturbances, large unauthorized street parties, and fraternity and sorority (referred to as “fraternities” for this report) events being hosted in residential areas not zoned for such gatherings. These issues have led to tensions between some long-term residents and the student community.

SLO has experienced steady population growth, mirroring broader urban expansion trends across California. In 2005, the city’s population stood at approximately 44,380, and, by 2025, it had risen to 50,612, reflecting a 14% increase. During this same period, Cal Poly’s total enrollment grew from 18,278 to 23,016, marking a 26% increase. As a result, university students now comprise

nearly 46% of the city's total population, significantly influencing housing availability both on and off campus, infrastructure demands, and neighboring residential community dynamics.

Year	Cal Poly Total Enrollment	San Luis Obispo Population	Student % of Population
2005	18,278	44,380	41.2%
2015	20,944	46,906	44.7%
2025	23,016	50,612	45.5%

While Cal Poly’s expansion has bolstered the local economy and enriched San Luis Obispo’s cultural landscape, it has also reshaped the dynamics of some of the residential neighborhoods that border the campus. Many long-term residents, particularly families, cherish the stability and tranquility of their neighborhoods but now face the challenge of residing in an increasingly student-centered neighborhood. Striking a balance between fostering Cal Poly’s continued success and that of its students with neighborhood integrity is and will be an ongoing challenge for the city. This report explores these concerns focusing on four topics: large, unsanctioned street parties, ongoing noise from student parties, fraternity zoning issues, and fraternity permitting requirements.

**ORIGIN**

The investigation was initiated in response to multiple complaints filed by residents. These complaints cited disruptive activities associated with college students, including excessive noise during late hours, unauthorized fraternity houses operating in zoning-restricted residential areas, and large, unsanctioned street parties that escalate into public disturbances, injuries, and property damage. The complaints alleged that the City of SLO and Cal Poly officials were failing to enforce existing rules and municipal ordinances, that citizen complaints were ignored, and neither took sufficient action to restore order. The San Luis Obispo County Grand Jury (SLOCGJ) sought to objectively assess the extent of these issues and determine whether city officials were implementing timely and sufficient countermeasures to address them effectively.

It should be noted that the SLOCGJ does not hold jurisdiction over Cal Poly. However, SLOCGJ would like to express its appreciation to Cal Poly for its willingness to engage in discussions. Their cooperation was invaluable in providing insights allowing the SLOCGJ to better understand their perspective on the issues at hand as well as the actions they were undertaking to partner with the city and the community.

## **AUTHORITY**

California Penal Code section 933 requires that “Each grand jury shall submit to the presiding judge of the superior court a final report of its findings and recommendations that pertain to county government matters during the fiscal or calendar year.” Section 933.05 further prescribes responses to those findings and recommendations. Responding agencies are directed to report whether they agree or disagree (either partially or wholly) with a finding and whether a recommendation has been implemented, will be implemented, will not be implemented, or requires further analysis. An agency may reject a Grand Jury recommendation provided they include an explanation of why the recommendation is either unwarranted or unreasonable. If a recommendation requires further analysis, it must be conducted within six months from the date of publication of the Grand Jury report.

All Grand Jury reports and each agency’s responses are posted online each year at <https://www.slo.courts.ca.gov/gi/jury-grandjury.htm>

## **METHOD/PROCEDURE**

The SLOCGJ used the following methods for its investigation:

- conducted fifteen interviews with San Luis Obispo city residents, city leadership (including City Council members, Community Development and Police Department officials), city personnel (such as Code Enforcement), and leadership from Cal Poly,
- conducted site inspection of impacted neighborhoods,

- reviewed documents such as Conditional Use Permits (CUPs) issued to fraternities, municipal codes, City Council and Planning Commission meeting agendas and minutes, as well as outreach plans for previous St. Patrick’s Day events,
- conducted analyses of policies and laws, including The Campus-Recognized Sorority and Fraternity Transparency Act, Assembly Bill (AB524), SLO and Cal Poly party registration regulations, and Cal Poly’s General Plan,
- conducted comparative research, including an investigation of cities with overlay zones to understand their implementation and impact. Explored various policing models, such as the “Do No Harm” approach, examined strategies used by other cities addressing similar university-related challenges, and analyzed party ordinances from other municipalities.

## **NARRATIVE**

### **CHAPTER 1: UNSANCTIONED ILLEGAL STREET PARTIES**

The concept of St. Fratty’s Day began in 2009 originally as a fraternity party to celebrate St. Patrick’s Day and the end of the school term. After the initial party in 2009, the party grew and by 2015 the event drew over 1,000 attendees. During the 2015 event, the garage roof adjacent to 348 Hathway Street collapsed because 30 or more students were partying on the rooftop. Ten students were injured with one young woman narrowly escaping a potentially life-threatening injury. This incident made national news and sparked conversations between the City of SLO and Cal Poly regarding how to manage the event and encourage the students to party safely. From 2016 to 2019 the event was smaller and there were no rooftop activities or serious injuries. In 2020 and 2021, with pandemic laws limiting large social gatherings, the event was so small as to be negligible.

In 2022, with pandemic restrictions lifted, the event grew to 2,000 attendees. In 2023, through social media, and news coverage, the event doubled in size to approximately 4,000 attendees. In

2023, the SLO City Council expanded an existing Safety Enhancement Zone (SEZ) ordinance to cover a period of time before and after St. Patrick's Day. The SEZ allows authorities to double fines for noise, alcohol, and other unruly behavior.

In 2024, the crowd nearly doubled in size once again to an estimated 7,000 attendees. The SLO City Police Chief used a containment enforcement strategy that resulted in officers being staged along the outskirts of the crowd in the neighborhood adjoining the university. The "Do No Harm" approach was adopted not only due to concern for officer safety but because a more aggressive officer presence could incite a riot. This practice was in line with the department's enforcement policy of "Do No Harm" to keep violators, other participants and officers safe. They implemented a strike team strategy where a team of officers entered the crowd to address a violation, issued a citation, and returned to the perimeter to keep everyone safe and avoid an escalation.

In 2024 the SLO City Chief of Police deemed their efforts a success as no harm was done to officers or attendees. However, the residents in the area experienced property damage to their residences and personal property. Some intoxicated partiers trespassed onto their property, climbed up on rooftops and power poles, and vandalized cars.

The SLOCGJ wanted to determine the validity of the alleged citizen complaints against the SLOPD as well as verify statements received from others during our investigation. We also wanted to confirm the success of SLOPD's efforts, and possible changes in light of any perceived failings. We were blocked in this effort by two senior police official's unwillingness to grant an interview. This hampered our fact-finding efforts. The reason for these denials remains inadequate and may stem from a misunderstanding of the role of the SLOCGJ in improving governmental functions within this county.

It has become a tradition for the students to start partying at midnight the prior night in their Cal Poly dorms and nearby housing, with the party moving into the surrounding neighborhoods to kick off St. Fratty's Day at 3:17 a.m. (to acknowledge St. Patrick's Day, March 17th). In 2024

fireworks were set off in the Alta Vista neighborhood between 3:00 a.m. and 4:00 a.m., jolting some residents and their families awake. Thousands of students descended on Hathway and Bond Streets (in the Alta Vista neighborhood) fueled by alcohol, disturbing the peace by playing loud music, screaming and yelling. The heavy alcohol consumption resulted in dangerous activities such as climbing utility poles, partying on rooftops, urinating and vomiting in public, passing out in residents' yards and on rooftops, and leaving trash throughout the neighborhoods. In 2024, the Cal Poly dorms also experienced extensive damage as the students began partying at midnight and damaged the dorms on their way out to the street party. The damage was so extensive that Cal Poly had to close some dorms for two days to repair the damage.

After the 2024 St. Fratty's Day event, it became apparent to the City of SLO and the administration at Cal Poly that St. Fratty's Day in its current format could no longer be tolerated. Cal Poly administration, with concern for the safety of their students, property damage to the university, and surrounding neighborhoods, as well as the request of city officials, formed a task force to strategize how to deal with the unsanctioned event. The task force was made up of Cal Poly Administration, student advisory groups, students, members of the Greek Life Community, and SLO City representatives. No representatives from the surrounding neighborhoods were invited to participate in the task force.

One outcome of the task force was to provide the students with a safe alternative event. The event was scheduled for Saturday, March 15, 2025, and included a concert on campus starting at 4:00 a.m. The event was free and up to 5,000 students were able to secure tickets to the event. The event provided entertainment, beer vendors for those over 21, free food, security, and a sobering center. Cal Poly police, Cal Poly staff, SLO Emergency Medical Technicians and private security companies were on campus to ensure a safe and secure environment.

Cal Poly's messaging to the students prior to St. Patrick's Day was that past behaviors would no longer be tolerated. Due to the damage experienced in 2024, several security measures were

deployed, including no guests being allowed to stay on campus. Parking on campus was limited to Cal Poly students and staff starting Friday, March 14, 2025, through Monday, March 17, 2025.

The City of SLO, concerned about the safety of their neighborhoods, the disruptions to the residents, and the negative image of the City of SLO, developed their own task force headed up by the SLO City Police Department. The messaging developed by the City of SLO was “Do Not Come, the party is over.” In 2024 there were approximately 140 to 160 law enforcement personnel overseeing the event in the neighborhood. In 2025, the SLO Police Department activated the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and the SLO County District Attorney’s Office announced they would not offer pre-filing misdemeanor diversion (see Glossary) to any person charged with a misdemeanor stemming from criminal conduct during St. Patrick’s Day celebrations in San Luis Obispo. There were an estimated 300 law enforcement officers representing 25 different local, state and federal agencies. Officers patrolling the area stopped the students from entering the streets and kept their movement on the sidewalks. The students were encouraged to keep moving out of the neighborhood and to the event on campus. Due to the increased law enforcement presence, the neighborhood of Alta Vista did not experience damage to property and there was no unsanctioned street party. The SLO Chief of Police Department estimated costs to the city will be approximately \$125,000.

The concert at Cal Poly was deemed a success as over 6,000 students attended the event. The event was limited to 5,000 students; however, un-ticketed students pushed through the temporary fencing so they could get into the event. Though this is concerning, no one was seriously injured. Overall, the students remained on campus, attended the alternative event, and no damage was reported in the dorms or the nearby neighborhoods. The alternative activity on campus ended around 10:30 a.m.

It is the stated goal of Cal Poly and the City of SLO that the St. Patrick’s Day unsanctioned street parties come to an end. They have advised that it may take two to three years to completely end the unruly St. Patrick’s Day celebrations. The City of SLO and Cal Poly are no strangers to

controlling and ending large events. After a 1990 riot during Poly Royal, Cal Poly ended the event and created a new activity that is safe for students, their families, and the community to enjoy. After a popular Mardi Gras event (2004) was no longer controllable, the City of SLO was successful in bringing an end to that event.

The 2024-2025 collaboration between the City of SLO and Cal Poly proved successful in providing a safe alternative event for the students and residents of San Luis Obispo. A communication received from Cal Poly indicated that Cal Poly is currently evaluating what programming will look like in future years, especially given the transition from quarters to semesters; however, planning will begin for another event next academic year, 2025-26.

## **CHAPTER 2: NOISY NEIGHBORS**

SLO Municipal Code 9.12 (see Bibliography) provides that “...it shall be unlawful for any person to willfully or negligently make or continue to make or continue, or cause to be made or continued, or permit or allow to be made or continued any noise which disturbs the peace and quiet of any neighborhood or which causes any discomfort or annoyance to any reasonable person of normal sensitivity in the area.” Notwithstanding this ordinance, the citizens in the immediate vicinity of Cal Poly, have regularly complained of excessive noise coming from nearby houses that are occupied by students. It has therefore fallen to the SLO Police Department (SLOPD) and the SLO Noise Control Officer (Code Enforcement) to answer such complaints as may be made. The specific code violation encompassed in the above-mentioned Code states that the hours between 10 p.m. and 7 a.m. the following morning are to remain quiet. According to complaints received by the SLOCGJ, this has not been fully enforced. It should also be noted that the Noise Control Officer may grant exceptions to this restriction.

The SLOCGJ received complaints that loud parties, located directly adjacent to Cal Poly and in violation of the above code have forced citizens to file SLOPD noise complaints. The SLOCGJ reviewed copies of the noise citations issued by the SLOPD during the 2023-2024 school session (the most recent information available) and found that noise citations in neighborhoods near the

campus were issued an average of more than 3 times per week during the school session. This totaled 139 citations in the Alta Vista neighborhood, with one house alone receiving 17 citations. Unfortunately, there is reason to believe that this situation remains - to this date - unabated. Such is the irritation of area residents, that many have fled the area.

To aid in noise ordinance enforcement the SLOPD employs the assistance of Cal Poly students who are enrolled in a program called the Student Neighborhood Assistance Program (SNAP). These students interface with groups of partiers in residences in the affected area who are violating the noise ordinance. These unarmed SNAP students speak to the offending parties and attempt to get them to comply with the city's noise standards. There are, however, only a handful of SNAP students. They wear civilian uniforms and work in pairs. They also have radios so that they may contact the police when required. These students may, at their discretion, issue Disturbance Advisement Cards (DACs). Such issuance falls short of an actual fine or a conventional ticket and is meant to serve as a first warning, so that an additional violation may, at the officers' discretion, warrant a police citation. Complainants indicated that weekend parties can mean up to 100 or more students at one address and often continue after visits by police. SNAP students do not go to lettered fraternity houses; such visits are reserved for sworn officers.

Additionally, through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), Cal Poly Police have the authority to operate within one mile outside of campus grounds. This allows, at least theoretically, greater and more rapid enforcement of SLO city laws.

SLO Municipal Code 9.12.050 is specific about excessive noise. It provides a detailed list of prohibited acts between the hours of 10 p.m. and 7 a.m. While it does not specifically prohibit noise from parties, it does speak to the use of loudspeakers and other electronic devices, including: "radio, television set, phonograph, drum, musical instrument, or similar device which produces or reproduces sound..."

### **CHAPTER 3: ZONING VIOLATIONS / CONCERNS – IS SLO CITY IN THE TWILIGHT ZONE ABOUT ZONING ISSUES?**

As outlined previously, the SLOCGJ reviewed citizen complaints reporting “Illegal Fraternities” operating in residential zones (R-1/R-2). During interviews with City officials, five individuals confirmed their knowledge of the existence of illegal fraternities. City officials stated that identifying illegal fraternities is difficult but usually starts with a citizen complaint reported to law enforcement about a noisy event or party in an R-1/R-2 residential zone, which is the top citizen complaint happening most weekends while school is in session. Noise issues and complaints are usually handled by the police department. Municipal Code guidelines that address noise issues and enforcement are outlined in the “Exterior Noise Limits” section MC 9.12.060 and the “Enforcement” section MC 9.12.110. If found to be out of compliance, SLOPD may issue a warning or citation. Fines for cited noise violations escalate for each subsequent violation. Code enforcement gets involved if SLOPD or citizen complaints identify the location may be operating as a fraternity.

It is illegal per the Municipal Code for fraternities to operate in an R-1/R-2 neighborhood.

Due to the lack of on-campus student housing, some students must live off-campus. In some cases, fraternity members will rent houses in R-1/R-2 zones and may hold fraternity-sponsored events, which is not allowed by the Municipal Code. In 2023, using extensive citizen-generated data from a Cal Poly-generated report required by AB524, code enforcement started an investigation into the illegal fraternities. Based on the investigation, 30-40 Advisory Notices, and 22 Notice of Violations (NOVs) were sent to property owners. In response to the NOVs, the city advised that many of the property owners reported they were unaware of the fraternity events that were being held at their property.

At the time, Cal Poly and code enforcement were working together on the illegal fraternity issue. However, due to changes in policies, Cal Poly stopped assisting the city, stating privacy concerns, and revised their AB 524 report to remove some of the addresses that were previously provided in the document.

The current policies and enforcement approach is not conducive to a real time solution. Based on the SLOGJ investigation, the number of illegal fraternities may be more than 40 locations currently operating in the city. In addition, citizens have reported that several Cal Poly recognized fraternities listed in AB524 have multiple illegal fraternity locations operating within the city: some with as many as 7 separate locations.

In January 2025, due to detailed information received by code enforcement, from members of the public and several complaint calls, the code enforcement team was sent out on a Saturday night to the neighborhood adjacent to Cal Poly specifically looking for illegal fraternity activities. It is not the usual practice for code enforcement to be working on a weekend, at night, and on overtime, but due to the increasing attention to the problems, city officials believed it was appropriate. Results from the neighborhood review resulted in identifying and citing 12 locations that were found to be operating as fraternity houses in R-1/R-2 zones. The city is taking steps to address these violations. The city plans to continue working on the issues using the existing municipal codes and modifying them as needed. With the current fiscal situation and funding constraints, city officials plan to provide enforcement with current staff and resources and ensure they have a clear and concise process to use.

Based on comments from city officials, identifying illegal fraternity party houses is labor intensive since code enforcement has to prove that the party or activity is sponsored by a fraternity in an R-1/R-2 zone, which is a land use violation. Some indicators are Greek letters posted out front, social media posts advertising fraternity events, and citizen complaints. After investigating, if enough evidence exists, code enforcement will issue an NOV and if they are in an R-1/R-2 zone, tell them to cease all fraternity-related activities. Code enforcement will follow-up within 30 days to verify compliance.

Unfortunately, the city is regulated to reactive rather than proactive enforcement of municipal codes. Code enforcement complaints are often received after business hours or the following

day. The result is that they are limited in their ability to verify the code violation, as it is after the fact or violators are not easily identified.

#### **CHAPTER 4: FRATERNITY PERMIT REQUIREMENTS**

The City of SLO Municipal Code regulates land use, developments, and operations within the city. That Municipal Code restricts fraternities to zones R-3 and R-4 and requires a CUP (Municipal Code Section 17.10.020, Table 2-1) to operate. CUPs that allow fraternities are regulated by Municipal Code Section 17.86.130 which defines the standard conditions that shall apply to all:

1. "Occupancy" shall be limited to not more than one resident per sixty square feet of building area. The landlord shall allow the city to verify occupancy by allowing an inspection of the records or by a visual inspection of the premises. Any inspection shall be at a reasonable time and shall be preceded by a twenty-four-hour notice to the residents,
2. The maximum number of persons allowed on site for routine meetings and gatherings shall not exceed the limit established by the applicable conditional use permit,
3. The fraternity or sorority shall remain affiliated and in good standing with the Interfraternity Council of Student Life and Leadership at California Polytechnic University, San Luis Obispo. If the fraternity or sorority becomes unaffiliated or no longer held in good standing with California Polytechnic University, the conditional use permit shall be revoked,
4. The landlord shall provide names and telephone numbers of responsible persons to the community development department and SLOPD neighborhood services manager on an annual basis. Responsible persons shall be available during all events and at reasonable hours to receive and handle complaints

Additional conditions may be imposed by the planning commission when they approve the CUP. The permit stays with the parcel as long as the approved use continues, and the conditions are

adhered to. If the parcel is no longer used for the approved purpose, then the permit expires after one year. If the occupants of the parcel violate the conditions of the CUP, the planning commission may revoke the permit.

In January 2025, the SLOCGJ requested and received a copy of each CUP granted by the city to a fraternity or sorority; Appendix A is a summary of the 16 conditional use permits provided by the city. It should be noted that the Cal Poly website lists 36 recognized fraternities and sororities. The SLOCGJ double checked with the city, and it was confirmed that the 16 conditional use permits were all that are in place at this time.

AB524; Sections 66310-66312 of California Education Code requires each institution of higher education to include in the institution's requirements for campus recognition of a campus-recognized sorority or fraternity, a requirement that the sorority or fraternity submit to the institution on or before July 1, 2023, and annually thereafter, specified information concerning the sorority's or fraternity's members and their conduct. Cal Poly assembles this information and submits it in a public report to the State each year. The report also provides the address of each "affiliated chapter house" which AB 524 defines as those located on-campus or on land owned or leased by the fraternity or sorority. The list submitted in 2024 did have 16 fraternities and sororities the same as the number of CUPs in force. Evidently, this means that of the 36 recognized fraternities and sororities, 20 either do not have a chapter house or are in chapter houses that are off-campus and not owned or leased by the fraternity or sorority and therefore do not meet the definition of an affiliated chapter house.

Any of these chapter houses that hold fraternity activities such as meetings, rush events, or parties, are still required by the SLO municipal code to have a CUP. It is not clear why they have not applied for a permit. It could be the cost (In FY 2024-25, the application fee for a CUP is \$10,932.57) or effort required, or it may be that they are located in an R-1 or R-2 zone, in which case the fraternity activity would not be allowed. Since Cal Poly is not required to provide the addresses of these recognized fraternities, the city has no easy way to verify the location to

determine the reason that the fraternity does not have a CUP. This makes it difficult for the city to enforce the code.

As shown in Appendix A, not all required conditions are the same for each permit holder. In addition to the standard conditions required by code, some permit holders have other conditions such as:

- restrictions on the time of day that meetings and gatherings can be held without city approval,
- a neighborhood relations program with evidence of implementation to be submitted annually,
- a list of planned events for the year to be submitted annually,
- complaints received by the city are to be forwarded to the Cal Poly interfraternity council prior to being forwarded to the planning commission,
- notice must be provided to residents within 300 feet prior to special events, and
- a transportation and parking plan must be submitted prior to each event.

These CUPs were approved over an extended period of time by planning commissions with different members; the earliest is dated in 1971 and the latest in 2024. That may explain why additional conditions were imposed on some fraternities and sororities and not others. It may also have to do with specific characteristics of the individual parcel.

Interviews with City staff have revealed that many of the conditions, such as submittals of planned events and neighborhood relations programs have not been adhered to or enforced. The planning commission has the authority to enforce these conditions, add new conditions if the existing conditions are not met, and ultimately revoke a fraternity's CUP. Citizens can also appeal for a use permit to be revoked or request that a permit not be approved. The current cost to make such an appeal is \$2,583.46, (in 2017 the appeal fee was \$281.00). A complainant noted that the cost to appeal discourages this practice. While these appeal fees may be justifiable for major development projects that demand substantial city resources like legal reviews, public

hearings, or environmental impact assessments, they place an undue burden on ordinary citizens.

Residents raising concerns about local issues like noise or safety issues may find these costs prohibitively high, limiting their ability to participate in community decision-making.

## **FINDINGS**

- F1. Prior to 2025, the city failed to effectively provide a multi-pronged, cohesive approach to manage or shut down large unsanctioned, costly and unruly events such as St. Fratty's Day. This created an unsafe environment, with increasing size of unruly crowds, property damage, injuries and public disturbances.
  
- F2. The city has not effectively engaged in working together with community stakeholders to find solutions for ongoing off-campus issues that negatively impact neighborhoods such as code enforcement, noise issues, trespassing, property damage, and unruly events.
  
- F3. The city has failed to effectively enforce municipal codes that prohibit fraternity and sorority activity in R-1/R-2 zones in part due to the difficulty in identifying houses that are hosting fraternity-type events, such as rush events and repeated parties. This inaction has resulted in an increase of illegal fraternities holding events in residential neighborhoods making these areas almost unlivable for most residents.
  
- F4. The city has failed to consistently enforce CUPs such as the requirements for an annual list of parties and events, notification to neighbors, and parking plans. Strict enforcement of these conditions would contribute to a reduction of the disturbances in the neighborhoods.

F5. The current planning appeal fee structure in SLO disproportionately impacts ordinary citizens, as the high costs create barriers for those raising concerns about community issues such as noise or safety. While these fees may be justifiable for large-scale development appeals requiring additional city resources, they hinder equitable participation in local decision-making processes.

F6. The Grand Jury encountered a lack of cooperation from the San Luis Obispo City Police Department. While one sworn officer did participate in an interview, efforts to interview two additional sworn officers were unsuccessful. This unwillingness to engage hindered the Grand Jury's ability to corroborate statements, obtain essential information, and maintain transparency in its oversight role.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

R1. The SLO City Council should continue to work with Cal Poly to develop a multi-year plan to ensure that the illegal street parties known as St. Fratty's Day is completely eliminated.

R2. The SLO City Council, in collaboration with Cal Poly and other stakeholders, should implement proactive measures to address future unsanctioned illegal street parties as they arise. Taking immediate action can prevent these gatherings from escalating over time due to prolonged non-enforcement. This approach would foster a safer community while promoting shared accountability among all parties involved.

R3. The SLO City Manager should develop and implement an ongoing formal process to identify illegal fraternities to bring them into compliance.

R4. The SLO City Council should initiate a task force to explore the creation of a "Student Overlay Zone" near the campus that would allow for municipal code requirements to be introduced that would differentiate it from the rest of the city and recognize the needs of

a dynamic university environment. This could facilitate changes to such things as density, parking, noise and fraternity activities.

R5. The SLO City Council should consider adopting a tiered planning appeal fee structure to promote accessibility of community concerns by individual residents. Such a structure could ensure that financial burdens do not deter public involvement.

R6. The SLO City Manager and the Planning Commission should move toward adopting more uniform conditions for CUP's and enforcement of existing requirements. Due to the time span (1971-2024) in which these CUPs were approved, the requirements are inconsistent. The City should consider using future CUP violations to determine if it is appropriate to revise the conditions to make them more relevant for today's environment. This may require consideration of additional code enforcement staff or alternative work schedules.

R7. The SLOCGJ recommends that the SLO City Manager create formal guidelines and provide training outlining how the SLO City Police Department will respond to requests from the SLOCGJ and other oversight bodies.

## **COMMENDATIONS**

The SLOCGJ commends Cal Poly and the City of SLO for their efforts and collaboration in keeping the students and the community of SLO safe during the 2025 St. Patrick's Day weekend.

## **REQUIRED RESPONSES**

The San Luis Obispo City Council is required to respond to R1, R2, R4, and R5 within 90 days.

The San Luis Obispo City Manager is required to respond to R3, R6, and R7 within 90 days.

The San Luis Obispo City Planning Commission is required to respond to R6 within 90 days.

All responses shall be submitted to the Presiding Judge of the San Luis Obispo County Superior Court. A paper copy and an electronic version of all responses shall be provided to the Grand Jury.

### 933.05. Findings and Recommendations

- (a) For purposes of subdivision (b) of Section 933, as to each grand jury finding, the responding person or entity shall indicate one of the following:
  - (1) The respondent agrees with the finding.
  - (2) The respondent disagrees wholly or partially with the finding, in which case the response shall specify the portion of the finding that is disputed and shall include an explanation of the reasons therefor.
- (b) For purposes of subdivision (b) of Section 933, as to each grand jury recommendation, the responding person or entity shall report one of the following actions:
  - (1) The recommendation has been implemented, with a summary regarding the implemented action.
  - (2) The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future, with a timeframe for implementation.
  - (3) The recommendation requires further analysis, with an explanation and the scope and parameters of an analysis or study, and a timeframe for the matter to be prepared for discussion by the officer or head of the agency or department being investigated or reviewed, including the governing body of the public agency when applicable. This timeframe shall not exceed six months from the date of publication of the grand jury report.
  - (4) The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable, with an explanation, therefor.

Presiding Judge	Grand Jury
Presiding Judge Rita Federman Superior Court of California 1035 Palm Street Room 355 San Luis Obispo, CA 93408	San Luis Obispo County Grand Jury P.O. Box 4910 San Luis Obispo, CA 93403

## APPENDIX A

CONDITIONAL USE PERMITS HELD BY FRATERNITIES/SORORITIES AT CALIFORNIA POLYTECHNIC STATE UNIVERSITY, SAN LUIS OBISPO										
										Date:
										19-Mar-25
#	USE PERMIT #	ADDRESS	PERMIT HOLDER O - Original C - Current	DATE	ALLOWED NUMBER OF RESIDENTS	MAX ALLOWED FOR GATHERINGS	HOURS FOR GATHERINGS W/O APPROVAL	NEIGHBORHOOD RELATIONS PROGRAM	EVENTS LIMITED TO THOSE LISTED ON A MEETING AND ACTIVITIES SCHEDULE	OTHER CONDITIONS
1	U 1099	280 California Blvd	Alpha Epsilon Pi Fraternity	8/2/1983	19	Not specified	9 AM to 10 PM			All complaints received by the City shall be forwarded to the Interfraternity Council prior to hearing by the Planning Commission.
2	U1484-90	1304 Foothill Blvd.	Sigma Nu Fraternity	5/8/1991	19	19	9 AM TO 10 PM	Required. Evidence of implementation to be submitted to City by 6/25/1990.	House for fraternity use only. No gatherings exceeding 19 residents.	Any complaints received will be forwarded to the interfraternity council and the Planning Commission within one week. No amplified sound equipment allowed. No hosted Greek events allowed. One parents barbecue and one alumni barbecue with maximum of 38 people allowed per year.
3	U 36-09	720 Foothill Blvd.	Delta Upsilon Fraternity	6/24/2009	14	21	9 AM TO 10 PM		Required. To be submitted to the City each fall.	No activities allowed which violate City noise ordinance except as approved by City. Fraternity must remain affiliated and in good standing with the Interfraternity Council. Provide names and phone numbers of responsible parties annually.
4	U 47-10	1335 Foothill Blvd.	Phi Kappa Psi Fraternity	6/13/2013	8	17	7 AM to 10 PM			The fraternity shall remain affiliated and in good standing with the Interfraternity Council

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										19-Mar-25
5	USE 0331-2023	1264 E, 1264 1/2 E.Foothill Blvd and 1241, 1243, 1249 and 1251 Monte Vista Pl.	Lambda Chi Alpha Fraternity	6/3/2024	24	48	9 AM TO 10 PM, Noise table after hours			Fraternity must remain affiliated and in good standing. Must obey noise ordinance between 10 pm and 9 am. Approval of special events does not exempt from noise ordinance. Must provide written notice to occupants within 300 ft. prior to special events.
6	U 109-05	1290, 1292 Foothill Blvd. and 123, 135, 137, and 175 Crandall Ave	O - Lambda Chi Alpha Fraternity C - Alpha Phi Fraternity	3/17/1998 Modified 1/24/2003	10	20	9 AM to 10 PM	Required. Evidence of implementation to be submitted annually	To be submitted to City each fall.	
7	USE 9587-2024	1327 E Foothill Blvd	Beta Theta Pi Fraternity	Under Review. Not approved.						New CUP not received from City. Under review. Application received 9/20/2024 - Deemed incomplete & letter sent 10/18/2024
8	U 106-98	1236 Monte Vista Place	O - Kappa Sigma Housing Corp. Fraternity C - Delta Chi Fraternity	8/12/1998	35	53	9 AM TO 10 PM	Required	To be submitted to City each fall.	
9	U 314-71	244 California Blvd.	O - Delta Sigma Phi Fraternity C - Kappa Kappa Gamma Sorority	9/21/1971	36	Not specified	Not specified			
10	U 799-79	1326 Higuera St.	Gamma Phi Beta Sorority	11/14/1979	18	Not specified	Not specified			
11	U 1048	615 Grand Ave.	Sigma Kappa House Corp. Sorority	8/11/1982	10	Not specified	9 AM to 10 PM. Residents only outside of these hours			All complaints to be sent to the Interfraternity Council and Panhellenic Council before review by the Planning Commission.

CONDITIONAL USE PERMITS HELD BY FRATERNITIES/SORORITIES AT CALIFORNIA POLYTECHNIC STATE UNIVERSITY, SAN LUIS OBISPO										
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12	U1292-87	1464 Foothill Blvd.	Alpha Chi Omega Sorority	2/11/1987	8	100 or the maximum allowed by the building and fire code, whichever is less.	9 AM to 10 PM. All activities with more than 16 people between 8 PM and 8 AM must be entirely indoors.	Required. Evidence of implementation shall be submitted to the City each year.	Events limited to one per month and must be listed on a meeting and activities schedule. Schedule to be submitted to City each fall.	Occupancy limited to Alpha Chi Omega sorority unless approved by City. Any complaint shall be forwarded by the City to the Panhellenic Council within one week of receipt. A parking management plan for all large gatherings must be submitted to the City for approval.
13	U 1440-89	180 California Blvd.	Kappa Alpha Theta Sorority	5/24/1989	5	16	9 AM to 10 PM.	Required. Evidence of implementation shall be submitted to the City each year.	All events to be included on a meeting and activities schedule to be submitted to the City for approval each fall.	The residence shall contain no more than two bedrooms.
14	U 41-09	700 Grand Ave.	Chi Omega Sorority	5/27/2009	8	16	9 AM to 10 PM		All events to be included on a meeting and activities schedule to be submitted to the City for approval each fall.	Provide names of responsible persons each year. Responsible person shall be in attendance for all events and at reasonable hours to receive complaints. Transportation and parking plan shall be submitted for all events.
15	USE 3369-2016	190 Stenner St.	O - Alpha Gamma Delta Sorority C - Alpha Omicron Phi Sorority	9/28/2016	7	15	Not specified			Gatherings of more than 15 must be approved by the City and must have an approved transportation plan to reduce impacts to the neighborhood.
16	USE 0803-2019	1328 Foothill Blvd.	Delta Gamma Sorority	2/24/2021	6	17	Not specified			The sorority shall remain affiliated and in good standing with the Interfraternity Council.

## **GLOSSARY**

1. Fraternities and Sororities. Municipal Code (MC) 17.156.014 “F definitions.” - Residence for college or university students who are members of a social or educational association that is affiliated and in good standing with the California Polytechnic State University (Cal Poly) and where such an association also holds meetings or gatherings.
2. Illegal fraternities – Similar to the “Fraternities and Sororities” defined in the MC, except the residence is located in an R-1/R-2 residential zone instead of R-3/R-4 zones and hold fraternity sponsored activities and parties, which is not allowed by the MC. Sometimes referred to as a satellite Greek house.
3. Zoning Regulations - Zoning regulations are rules designed to help guide the growth of a city in an organized way. They are based on a general plan that aims to protect and improve the environment, both natural and man-made. Zoning regulations help keep communities safe, healthy, and well-organized by controlling how land and buildings are used, as well as where and how structures are built. Examples of different zones are: Residential Zones are where homes can be built, and Commercial Zones are where businesses or stores may be built.
4. Residential Zones definition R-1 through –R-4 (MC 17.16 – 17.22) - The city is divided into zones to allow for orderly, planned development and to implement the general plan.
  - a. The R-1 zone provides for low-density residential development and supporting compatible uses that have locations and development forms that provide a sense of both individual identity and neighborhood cohesion, and that provide private outdoor space for the households occupying individual units.
  - b. The R-2 zone is intended to provide housing opportunities that have locations and development forms that provide a sense of both individual identity and neighborhood

cohesion for the households occupying them, but in a more compact arrangement than in the R-1 zone, and near commercial and public services.

- c. The R-3 zone is intended primarily to provide housing opportunities for attached dwellings with common outdoor areas and compact private outdoor spaces. The R-3 zone is generally appropriate near employment centers and major public facilities, along transit corridors and nodes, and close to commercial and public facilities serving the whole community.
  - d. The R-4 zone is intended primarily to provide for attached dwellings with common outdoor areas and compact private outdoor spaces, and to accommodate various types of group housing. Further, the R-4 zone intended to allow for dense housing close to concentrations of employment and college enrollment, in the downtown core, along transit corridors and nodes, and in areas largely committed to high-density residential development.
5. Exterior Noise Limits [MC 9.12.060](#) - Defines the Maximum Permissible Sound Levels at Receiving Land Use for all zoning categories (see table 1 in MC for details.)
6. Overlay Zone MC 17.06.020.C - An overlay zone supplements the base zone for the purpose of establishing special use or development regulations for a particular area in addition to the provisions of the underlying base zone. In the event of conflict between the base zone regulations and the overlay zone regulations, the provisions of the overlay zone shall apply.

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