

Lassen County Grand Jury 2017-2018



FINAL REPORT

Table of Contents

Page 1.....Grand Jury Foreperson’s Letter

Page 2.....Members of the 2017 – 2018 Lassen County Grand Jury

Page 3.....Lassen County Grand Jury Members’ Disclaimer and Signatures

Page 4.....California Grand Juries

Page 5.....Distribution List

Page 6.....Responses to the Grand Jury Reports

Page 7.....Response Procedure to Grand Jury Reports

Page 8.....Introduction

Page 9..... Lassen County Child and Family Services

Page 11..... Honey Lake Valley Recreation Authority

Page 19..... Lassen County Veterans Service Office

Page 22..... Employment Practices by the City of Susanville

Page 25.....Detention Facilities: Intermountain Conservation Camp

Page 27.....Detention Facilities: California Correctional Center

Page 29.....Detention Facilities: High Desert State Prison

Page 31.....Detention Facilities: Lassen County Adult Detention Facility

Page 33.....Detention Facilities: Lassen County Juvenile Detention Facility

Page 35.....Detention Facilities: Federal Correctional Institution at Herlong

Page 36.....Appendix: Responses to Prior Year’s Report



LASSEN COUNTY GRAND JURY

Hall of Justice
2610 Riverside Drive
Susanville, CA 96130

June 28, 2018

The Honorable Tony Mallery
Presiding Judge
Lassen County Superior Court
2610 Riverside Drive
Susanville, CA 96139

2017-2018 GRAND JURY REPORT

Dear Judge Mallery,

The members of the 2017-2018 Lassen County Grand Jury are pleased to submit our final report to you and the citizens of Lassen County pursuant to California Penal Code Section 933(a). The report is a product of the hard work and civic dedication exhibited by the individual Grand Jury members who have devoted much time and effort in their commitment to this critical function of government oversight by its citizens. It has been our primary goal to be fair, accurate, and thorough in our investigations and hope that our recommendations are received in the manner in which they are presented.

The Lassen County Grand Jury would like to acknowledge the many challenges that our city, county, and special districts face in these difficult times and express our appreciation for their dedication to public service.

As this year's Foreperson, it has been indeed a privilege to serve alongside such a wonderful group of dedicated citizens of Lassen County. I would like to express my appreciation to all the members and give special thanks to our Secretary Cody Waltman and our Foreperson pro tem Jeremy Couso.

Respectfully,



Steve Cagle
Foreperson

MEMBERS OF THE 2017 - 2018 LASSEN COUNTY GRAND JURY

Steve Cagle, Foreperson*

Jeremy Couso, Foreperson Pro-Tem

Wilma Kominek, Alternate Foreperson Pro-Tem*

Cody Waltman, Secretary

Kurt Bonham, Financial Officer

James Bridges

Christi Choo

Joseph Comino

Michael DeForest

Amber Klinetobe

Anthony Lares

Mary Loflin

Jennifer Petersen

Greg Sella

Beverly Smith*

David Solari

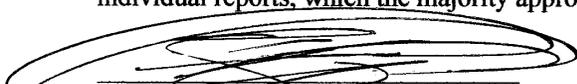
David Stillwagon

**Returning member from 2016-2017 Lassen County Grand Jury*

**LASSEN COUNTY GRAND JURY MEMBERS'
DISCLAIMER AND SIGNATURES**

The Grand Jury recognizes that a conflict of interest may arise in the course of its investigations. In such instances the juror may ask to be recused from all aspects of an investigation. Those members may choose not to investigate, attend interviews and deliberations, or assist in the making and acceptance of a final report that may result from an investigation.

Therefore, whenever the perception of a conflict of interest existed on the part of a member of the 2017-2018 Lassen County Grand Jury, that member abstained from any investigation involving such a conflict and from voting on the acceptance or rejection of any related subject. By signing this final report, I approve it even though I may have recused myself from, or voted against, certain individual reports, which the majority approved.



STEVE CAGLE, Foreperson



JEREMY COUSO, Foreperson Pro-Tem



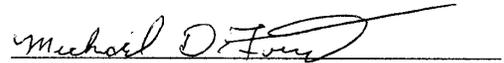
JAMES BRIDGES



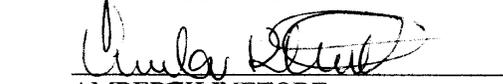
CHRISTI CHOO



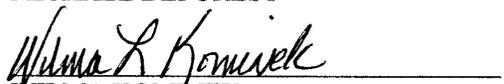
JOSEPH COMINO



MICHAEL DEFOREST



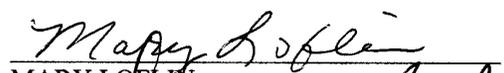
AMBER KLINETOBE



WILMA KOMINEK



ANTHONY LARES



MARY LOFLIN



JENNIFER PETERSEN



GREG SELLA



DAVID SOLARI



DAVID STILLWAGON



CODY WALTMAN

CALIFORNIA GRAND JURIES

The California Penal Code describes the organization, powers, duties, and general structure of the Grand Jury. All of California's 58 counties are required to have Grand Juries.

The major function of a Civil Grand Jury is to oversee all aspects of the legislative and administrative departments that make up county, city, and special district governments. It has the power to examine and guarantee that those who are given the responsibility of managing these offices are: truthful, dedicated, and sincere in their efforts to serve the public. There are 42 states that have some form of Grand Jury, but California and Nevada mandate the impaneling of a Grand Jury each year. The Lassen County Grand Jury is a judicial body of 19 citizens impaneled to watch over the citizens of Lassen County.

Grand Jurors are forbidden by law to disclose any evidence acquired during investigations or disclose the names of complainants or witnesses.

After investigations are completed, it is the responsibility of the Grand Jury to recommend changes that should be made in order to increase efficiency and improve services to the general public. Special commendations may also be made to departments or agencies for excellence in management. The reports that are released have been collected, voted on by at least 12 members, and the results carefully edited by the editing committee for a Final Report to be released to the public.

The Final Lassen County Grand Jury Report is distributed as the Distribution List indicates on the following page. Both reports and responses are available on the Superior Court website at www.lassencourt.ca.gov and in the Jury Commissioner's office at Lassen Superior Court, 2610 Riverside Drive, Susanville, California 96130. The telephone number is (530) 251-8205. Lassen County website, www.co.lassen.ca.us also contains a link to the Superior Court and Grand Jury reports.

DISTRIBUTION LIST

Lassen County:

Superior Court Judge Tony Mallery

Board of Supervisors (5)

Treasurer/Tax Collector

District Attorney

Chief Executive Officer

County Counsel

Personnel and Risk Management

Lassen County Child and Family
Services

Lassen County CA Department of
Veteran Service office

City of Susanville:

City Council (5)

City Administrative Officer

Corrections Facilities:

California Correctional Center

High Desert State Prison

FCI Herlong

Others:

State of California Attorney General's
Office

California Grand Jurors' Association

Susanville District Library

Lassen County Times Newspaper

Sierra Radio Network

XX Country Radio Station

SusanvilleStuff.com

2015-2016 Grand Jurors

2016-2017 Grand Jurors

RESPONSES TO GRAND JURY REPORTS

SUMMARY OF PC §933.05

A compendium of all codes pertaining to Grand Jury was produced by the Governor's Office of Planning and Research. This document is available to Grand Juries through the Superior Court in respective counties. Since the compendium was assembled the following has become law.

Penal Code §933.05 provides for only two acceptable responses with which agencies and/or departments (respondents) may respond with respect to the findings of a Grand Jury report:

1. The respondent agrees with the finding.
2. The respondent disagrees wholly or partially with the findings, ***in which case the respondent shall specify the portion of the finding that is disputed and shall include an explanation of the reasons therefore.***

Penal Code §933.05 provides for only four acceptable responses with which agencies and/or departments (respondents) may respond in respect to the ***recommendations*** of the Grand Jury.

1. The recommendation has been implemented, with a summary regarding the implemented action.
2. The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be 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, with a timeframe for the matter to be prepared for discussion by the officer or head of the agency/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 a detailed explanation therefore.

RESPONSE PROCEDURE TO GRAND JURY REPORTS

SUMMARY OF PC §933.05

The governance of responses to Grand Jury Final Report is contained in Penal Code §933 and §933.05. Responses must be submitted within 60 or 90 days. Elected officials must respond within 60 days, governing bodies (for example: the Board of Supervisors) must respond within 90 days. Please submit all responses in writing and digital format to the Presiding Judge, the Grand Jury Foreperson, and the CEO's office.

Report Title: _____ **Report Date** _____

Response by: _____ Title: _____

Findings

I (we) agree with the findings numbered:

I (we) disagree wholly or partially with the findings numbered:

Recommendations

Recommendations numbered: _____ have been implemented.
(Attach a summary describing the implemented actions.)

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 and/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 publication of the Grand Jury Report).

Recommendations numbered: _____ will not be implemented because they are not warranted and/or are not reasonable. (Attach an explanation.)

Date: _____ Signed: _____

Total number of pages attached: _____

INTRODUCTION

The Grand Jury is a constitutionally mandated judicial body charged to investigate civil matters but not criminal matters. The Grand Jury's responsibilities include investigating issues regarding city and county government as well as public agencies funded by the government and issuing reports and recommendations when appropriate.

All communications with the Grand Jury are confidential. Information provided to the Grand Jury to support a complaint is carefully reviewed to determine what further action, if any, is required. If it is determined that the matter is not within the investigative authority of the Grand Jury, no further action is taken. If the matter is within the legal scope of the Grand Jury's investigative powers and warrants further inquiry, the Grand Jury will contact and interview those individuals who may be able to provide additional information. During an investigation, all information and evidence will be considered, however, a review may not result in any action or report by the Grand Jury.

Each year the Grand Jury must inquire into the condition and management of all public prisons within the county. As required by law, the 2017-2018 Grand Jury toured the California Correctional Center, High Desert State Prison, Lassen County Adult Detention Facility, and Lassen County Juvenile Detention Facility. The Grand Jury also toured Intermountain Conservation Camp in Bieber and the Federal Correctional Facility in Herlong. After comprehensive tours and discussion, the Grand Jury found that no recommendations were necessary. As a commendation, the tours were valuable and informative. The Grand Jury enjoyed meeting, questioning, and watching presentations from institution leadership and staff that were so very knowledgeable and proud to share their procedures, facility improvements, and new and successful programs.

The Lassen County Grand Jury received six written complaints during the 2017-2018 fiscal year. As the letters and formal complaints were received and presented to the full Grand Jury, careful consideration was given to the validity and content of each complaint. Each grievance was inspected and acted upon in a professional and conscientious manner.

The following Grand Jury Reports are based on interviews and information which was brought to the attention of, and investigated by, the Lassen County Grand Jury.

Lassen County Child and Family Services

Reason for Inquiry:

Citizens Complaint

Background Information:

The Lassen County Grand Jury received a citizen's complaint regarding Lassen County Child and Family Services. The complaint alleged that Lassen County Child Family Services was not following proper procedures set forth in their operational manual and that case workers had a personal relationship with clients which could have resulted in a conflict of interest.

Henceforward, the Lassen County Child and Family Services will be known as "CFS" in this report.

Inquiry Procedures:

A committee of the Lassen County Grand Jury:

- a. Interviewed several individuals associated with CFS.
- b. Conducted in depth interviews with numerous CFS employees.
- c. Reviewed and evaluated the Policies and Procedures used by CFS regarding the Case that brought this complaint.

Discussion:

During this investigation, it became apparent that the specific citizen's complaint was out of the Grand Jury's Scope of influence; however, during the investigation some items were discovered resulting in the following Findings and Recommendations.

Findings:

The Grand Jury concluded:

F1. Since the 2016 Grand Jury Report it appears that the CFS has made improvements in following procedures and implemented the recommendations made.

F2. Based on information gathered, CFS could become more efficient with the acquisition and implementation of mobile electronic equipment.

F3. Through interviews it is our understanding that CFS has funds that could be used to upgrade and incorporate mobile technology.

F4. At times employees struggle with inputting documents and field notes into the CSF Data Storage System in a timely manner. This is due to an overwhelming number of caseloads per Case worker, the distant case workers must travel to perform the required client visits and with the historical staff turnover the insufficient staff to handle the case loads.

F5. Information gathered identified that employee performance evaluations are not being completed on an annual basis.

Recommendations:

R1. CFS continue to follow the guidelines set forth in the County and State Policy and Procedures Manuals.

R2. CFS acquire some type of mobile technology, such as; but not limited to, voice recording devices, laptops, IPADs, or Tablets. It is anticipated that this type of mobile technology will streamline field investigation operations and data input.

R3. Non-restrictive funds could be made available for purchasing the mobile technology identified in R2.

R4. CFS should hire additional clerical employees to input data and assist with the creation of documents, which would allow more time for the other required duties performed by social workers.

R5. Employee performance evaluations must be completed in a timely manner as identified in the Lassen County Employee Handbook.

Required Response:

It is the Grand Jury's decision that we are requiring a response from the County of Lassen Board of Supervisors. In it, covering the solutions given for the concerns outlined above.

Honey Lake Valley Recreation Authority

The people of Lassen County have invested significant time and money to create a community pool. Therefore, the Grand Jury has chosen to have the Finance/Audit Committee inquire about the long-term financial stability of the Honey Lake Valley Recreation Authority (Authority).

Reason for Inquiry

The Grand Jury is seeking to ensure that all goals stated in the Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) are being accomplished. The Grand Jury wanted to see what measures are being taken, to assure the pool's longevity for the public. In doing so, this will increase confidence that the Authority has planned sufficiently, and can provide for the pool to operate beyond the life of the JPA.

Background

On November 18, 2013, the Lassen County (County) Board of Supervisors and the Susanville City Council (City) created a Joint Powers Agreement (JPA). In turn, that created The Honey Lake Valley Recreation Authority (Authority).

Article 2.1 of the JPA indicates that the stated purpose of the Authority *“is to establish a public entity separate from the County, Special Districts and City.”*

Article 2.1 also states *“The Authority will plan, finance, implement, manage, own and operate a multi-jurisdictional recreation system and swimming pool.”*

Article 4.1 of the JPA states *“The Authority Board of Directors is comprised of two representatives from each Member. A Member may designate one alternative representative to act for that Agency in the absence of the appointed representatives. The representative from the County and City shall appoint a fifth member who is independent of both the City and the County, who will serve a four-(4) year term, appointed by differing election cycles.”*

The JPA's term is 15 years, with a termination date of November 17, 2028. The original JPA was amended on October 20, 2015. This amendment addressed a change in annual payment amounts from the County and City along with other ministerial changes.

On February 18, 2014, the Authority appointed the County Treasurer to perform treasury operations, and the County Auditor to perform controller functions for the Authority. These two positions are independent elected officials. The pool opened on or about June 27, 2017 at 1:00p.m.

Inquiry Procedure

The Grand Jury interviewed numerous people with knowledge of the Authority's operations and finances. They were questioned regarding the operations, financial impact and other government agencies including the Susanville Sanitation District. We interviewed people with knowledge of government financial operations, and the standards required for documentation.

We also reviewed a number of financial documents, correspondence and Board of Directors minutes and agendas. The Inquiry intent was to document the actions taken by the Authority with its ultimate goal of being an independent entity, and allowing the JPA to continue with its own sources of revenue.

Discussion

The Authority is a relatively new government entity. In order for the Authority to create a pool, it required the resources of both Lassen County and the City of Susanville. These resources were not just financial, but also included personnel.

In an era where some public pools in California are being closed, the County and City took on the task to replace the long-closed city pool. The concept, in part, was to provide a safe area for children to learn to swim without exposing them to the potential hazards of our local rivers and lakes.

The five-member Board of Directors spent time and resources in an effort to find the best location for the new pool. They had a significant list of potential sites for the Authority to consider.

Once the site was selected, the discussion was focused on the pool infrastructure. Again, the Authority took time to consider all of its options and eventually settled on the current design.

The Grand Jury recognizes that the initial planning of the grand-opening stage consumed the majority of the Authority's resources. The success of the pool is

not, however, determined by the grand opening, but by its ongoing operations and its ability to sustain itself beyond the life of the JPA.

Some of our findings clearly illustrated our concerns that pool operations and longevity of the Authority were not a major focus of the Authority Board. This occurred after the building phase began and before the Grand Opening.

A critical issue relates to the Authority's safeguarding of its assets and resources. We have found that in doing so, the Authority has established plans and policies that benefit the public, but have failed to ensure the best future use of its financial assets.

An additional important issue is how the Authority established their hiring practices. Doing so has led to its independence, and the hiring of a Pool Manager who needs to be qualified.

We are also concerned that the Executive Officer is also the City Administrator.

The City Administrator has supervision of the City's Finance Department and other City employees, all of which provide services to the Authority. It is our opinion that this situation creates one person with significant unchecked powers, and also creates the appearance of the Authority not operating as an independent entity as required by the JPA.

In the February 6, 2018 Lassen County Times newspaper, the new Pool Manager stated, "...there is no current and active social media that truly belongs to the *city's pool...*" An indicator that the Pool Manager is unaware of who is inherently in charge of the pool.

Findings

F1. Article 2.1 of the JPA states, *"The Authority will plan, finance, implement, manage, own and operate a multi-jurisdictional recreation system and swimming pool."* Based upon our interviews and review of materials obtained during our investigation, we were unable to obtain a written plan that addresses the future viability of the Authority or to determine that such a plan exists. Based upon our interviews we have determined that such a plan does not currently exist.

F2. The Authority is responsible for the preparing, planning and all the operational documents. We determined based upon our interviews that a plan for day-to-day operations of the pool was not prepared prior to the opening day of the pool. And we further determined that such a plan might not be completed prior to start of operations in 2018. One stated reason for the lack of a plan is that a qualified Pool Manager has not been hired.

F3. Per the minutes of the August 15, 2017 meeting, the Authority Board addressed concerns of County staff. This related to cash handling procedures, petty cash guidelines, and credit card policies. Based upon our interviews, we determined that there was a concern that the City deposited \$24,000 of credit card revenue from the pool, into the City's credit card account.

We were informed that those funds were later transferred to the Authority's Lassen County trust account with the Lassen County Auditor.

Regardless of whether the funds were transferred to an Authority account or not, it appears that the Authority did not authorize the use of credit card revenue. Nor did they approve the City Chief Fiscal Officer to authorize such actions. This action represents a significant breach of Internal Controls and an unauthorized violation of power from the County Treasurer and County Auditor by the City.

F4. We determined through our interviews and reviewing requested documentation, that the Authority has not prepared long-term budgets that plan for future operations and the viability of the Authority subsequent to the JPA termination in 2028

F5. The JPA clearly states that the Authority is an entity that is separate from its financing partners (County/City). How the Authority is currently operating provides the appearance of substantial control by the City. We have noted that the County provides Treasury and Accounting services via the County Treasurer and County Auditor offices. Although the *actual* operations of the Authority are run by the Executive Officer, Administration and Project Manager (all city employees) and employees are hired through the City to staff the pool operations.

We also noted that the City bills the Authority for other expenses incurred by the City. These actions provide the appearance that the City is the entity that

operates the pool facility. We are additionally concerned with the fact that the Authority has both the City and the County performing accounting and purchases for the pool.

The County Auditor is the Controller for the Authority. This would mean that the purchase of items for the pool would be made through the policy and practices of the County Auditor. When, in actuality, the City is pre-incurring costs that are significantly larger than petty cash.

For example, the October 18, 2017 Invoice from the City to the Authority has the following requested reimbursements: Equipment, \$2,032.93; Publications, \$786.90; Pool Maintenance, \$8.68; Office Supplies, \$448.00; and Landscaping Costs, \$307.03.

This dual fiscal operation has the potential for a breach of budget caps, because such reimbursements are initially paid by the City without the County Auditor's approval. Incurring expenditures without the County Auditor's knowledge could result in excess spending of the approved budget.

With only one finance department, the County Auditor could better assure the outside auditor (CPA) that the financial statements of the Authority represent all of the transactions of the Authority resulting in financial statements that are complete and free from omissions. Using two finance departments could result in the outside auditor having to expand the scope of testing resulting in unnecessarily increased costs to the County and City.

The Authority's audit for 2015 and 2016 indicate that the City was paid \$28,874 in 2015 and \$40,102 in 2016. Additionally, the accounts payable to the City in 2015 were \$0 and \$31,227 in 2016. WE DO NOT BELIEVE that the City should be using the City's municipal funds to purchase items for the Authority. The City has discussed asking the voters to raise the sales tax to bolster its General Fund revenues.

F6. The Authority entered into an Agreement for Administrative and Operational Services contract with the City. Our reading of the contract indicates that there were no guidelines as to how many hours the Executive Officer and Secretary were to work.

F7. Susanville Sanitary District (SSD) provides waste disposal services to the Authority. There appears to be a disagreement that dates back to last summer, between SSD and the Authority. The disagreement is about how often the pool is being back-washed. The back-washing amounts to about 3,000 gallons of water. SSD has the requirement to monitor flows through its system to avoid reaching a state mandated maximum. Once SSD reaches this mandated maximum, then they would incur financial obligation that will impact all users. SSD installed an Effluent Discharge Meter at the pool sewer site.

Recommendations

R1. The Authority should prepare a comprehensive, long-range plan to become financially and operationally independent of any other government entity. We recognize that such a plan will take time to be prepared, and will likely have constant revisions based upon the changing economic climate and the level of use of the pool.

The Authority should also address in their long-range planning document, how they will accomplish the second requirement of operating a multi-jurisdictional recreation system. The Grand Jury believes that such an operational plan will accomplish the goal of an independent and financially viable government entity as outlined in the JPA. We suggest that the Authority meet one day per month to address these concerns.

R2. The pool is an important asset to the residents of the County. The planning and budgeting of future years should take into account the financial resources required to maintain the pool as a functional entity. Whether the pool is to operate at a loss, break-even or at a profit, the Authority must establish a reasonable plan of action. In this plan it must address the financial resource requirements of the Authority and prepare long-term budgets that reflect the policies contained in the plan.

The Authority should, as soon as practicable, determine stable funding sources that will replace the County/City's current subsidy for the pool. The Authority should have created a pool operations and maintenance manual prior to its grand opening. This manual would be comprehensive in establishing policy and procedures, and would address the requirements of the Treasurer and Controller as well as the daily operations and maintenance of the pool.

R3. Fiscal transactions of the Authority should be performed by the County Auditor and County Treasurer. The City should not incur obligations against the Authority without prior approval of the County Auditor, with the exception of pool employees.

The Authority should hire a QUALIFIED Executive Officer/Pool Manager to carry out the operations of the Authority. By taking this action, the Authority would eliminate one City overhead position and take a step towards independence. This Executive Officer/Pool Manager would then have the ability to control costs, and work directly with the County Treasurer and County Auditor. In turn, this will enhance fiscal Internal Controls.

It is our opinion, based upon our interviews, that *only* the County Auditor should be performing these duties based upon the appointment of that person by the Board of Directors. The County Auditor has the systems and staff in place to handle this function.

R4. We understand that budgeting beyond the current fiscal year is difficult, especially when operations data is minimal. However, when the Authority complies with our recommendation, the Executive Officer can develop a budget that complies with the long-range plan. This budget would then alert the Authority Board of Directors to any potential long-term issues. This would alert them if there were significantly increased costs or if revenues are not meeting established income generation requirements.

R5. The Authority should allow the County Treasurer and County Auditor to perform their duties. The City finance department should have a minimal operational footprint with regards to the pool. Continuing what appear to be the split duties of the County and City, could eventually create a problem for the Authority. It should be a stand-alone entity.

We also believe that the independent County Treasurer is best suited to performing the treasury duties as the Authority's Treasurer. Without day-to-day control over the respective functions, future obligations may not be reasonably discerned. Thus, resulting in the budget not being complied with.

If the City is in need of additional funds to perform City operations then it should avoid using City funds to pay for Authority expenses.

R6. Based upon our interviews, we suggest that the Agreement for Administrative and Operational Services state maximum hours during a billing period for the Executive Officer and Secretary. The expected number of work hours should be included in the agreement, so it can provide the Authority with control over budgeted line items for these City employees.

An open-ended contract could lead the Authority to a budget surprise.

It is important that the Authority, not the City, have operational control over these City employees when they are performing Authority Business. We also recommend that time sheets from these employees be more specific to the tasks completed. Admin and project oversight for every hour of work does not provide the Authority, the City, or the public with enough information to determine the validity of claimed hours and reimbursement.

R7. We do not take a position regarding who is right or wrong in this matter. However we are of the strong opinion that an operations manual must be created to give management guidelines and standards for pool operations along with following and monitoring the established agreement with Susanville Sanitary District.

Commendation

The Lassen County Board of Supervisors and The Susanville City Council are commended for working together to bring a pool facility back to the Susanville area. Also, The Pennies for Pool program is appreciated for bringing in thousands of dollars to help support the pool initiative.

The Authority has recognized the value of the Pennies for the Pool program by continuously inquiring about the status of the money. For all of this, as a community, we are grateful.

Required Response

It is the Grand Jury's decision that we are requiring a response from the Honey Lake Valley Recreation Authority Board of Directors. In it, covering the solutions given for the concerns outlined above.

Lassen County Veteran's Service Office

Introduction

The Lassen County Veteran's Service Office (LCVSO) is not the Federal Veterans Administration; it is a county-based organization, funded by both Lassen County and the State of California, serving veterans and their families by helping them obtain Federal and State of California Veteran's benefits.

Discussion

Current office staffing includes one Veterans Service Officer (full time) and one Veterans Service Representative (part time). The LCVSO can potentially serve more than 3,500 veterans, which equates to approximately 15% of our county population. In addition, the LCVSO receives one to two calls a month from veterans residing in other counties, asking for veteran service advice. These veterans contact the LCVSO due to slow responses from their own county's Veterans Service Office.

The LCVSO:

Provides information and referral for Agent Orange Exposure, Alcoholism and Drug Treatment Programs, State of California Veterans benefits, Veteran Home Loans, Hospital Care, Outpatient Medical and Dental Care, Small Business Administration Programs, Employment and Job search resources.

Assists with Monetary Benefit Programs such as Compensation for Service Connected Disabilities, Re-Evaluation of Service Connected Disabilities, Non-Service Connected Pension Program, Dependency Indemnity Compensation, Surviving Spouses Pension Program and Restored Entitlement Program for Survivors.

Has available information on Medical Benefits for VA Medical Facilities, Military Medical Facilities, Prosthetics and Specialty Adapted Homes/Equipment.

Provides information on Educational Programs to include Post 9/11 Educational Bill, Montgomery GI Bill/VEAP, Vocational Rehabilitation, Dependents Educational Assistance and the California Fee Waiver Program.

LCVSO provides veterans with information on VA/Cal-Vet Home Loan Programs, requests for Military Records/Awards, Discharge Review Information, VA Life

Insurance Programs, California Veterans Homes, Veteran Property Tax Exemptions, Burial Benefits, VA National Cemeteries and State Cemeteries.

Findings

Statistics gathered from the California Association of County Veterans Service Officers, Inc. state that Lassen County during Fiscal Year 2016-17 served a Veteran population of 3,578. The total Compensation and Pension cases listed were 562. This equates to a utilization rate of 15.7% which in turn brings into Lassen County \$10,014,000 equaling \$17,819 per Compensation and Pension claimant.

A recent survey of California Veterans Service Officers' (CVSOs) activity shows that VSO average daily time utilization is as follows: Claims 48%, Case Management 25%, Information & Referrals 20%, Outreach and Advocacy 7%.

During the interview it was brought to our attention that Lassen County is considering budget cuts to the LCVSO.

As the more than 3,500 veterans residing in Lassen County grow older the need for service may increase, putting more workload on the current staff of the LCVSO.

The Veteran Service Officer and the Veteran Service Representative are continually required to take classes toward needed annual certifications for CalVet and National accreditation. The LCVSO indicated that preparation for such accreditations are time consuming and ever changing.

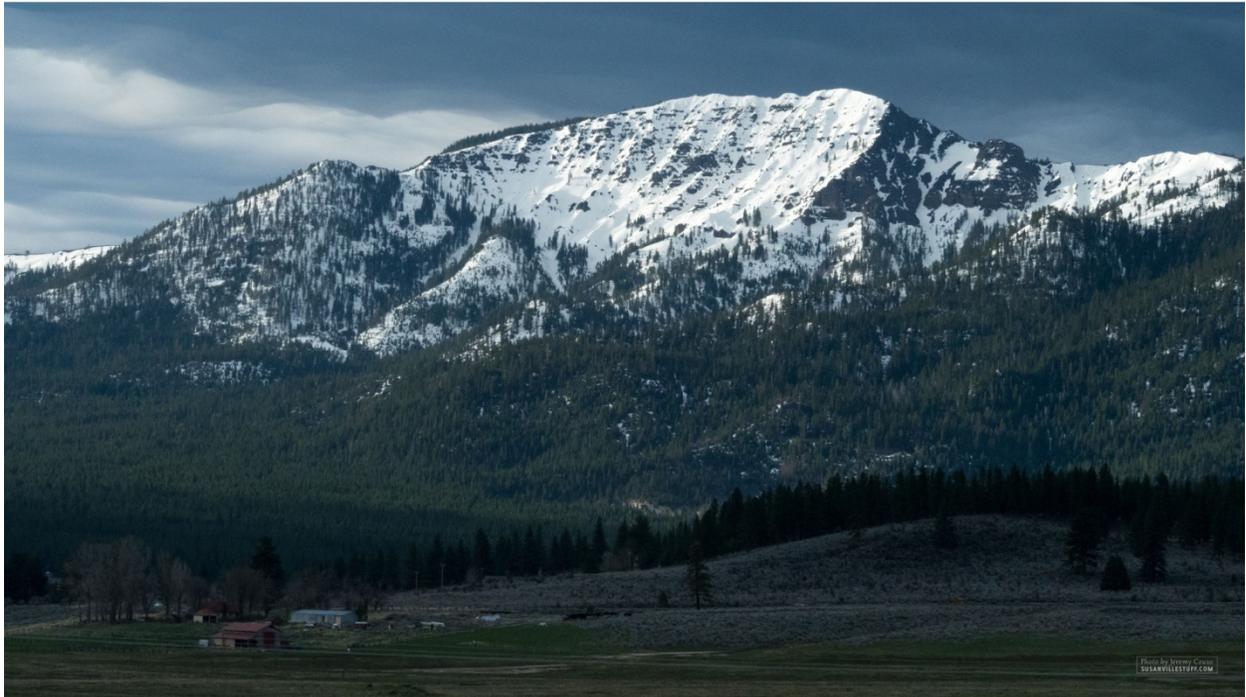
Recommendations

The Grand Jury recommends that the Board of Supervisors fund the Veterans Service Representative position from part time to full time. This action would better enable the LCVSO to be responsive to the needs of Lassen County veterans.

The Board of Supervisors may also consider an increase in salary for both positions at the LCVSO to help reduce turnover. Keeping trained personnel will help stabilize the services that LCVSO provides.

Commendation

The Veterans Service Office is commended for providing within its resources professional and quality services to Lassen County veterans and their families, in an efficient compassionate manner.



Employment Practices By The City of Susanville

Reason for Inquiry:

Citizen Complaint

Background Information:

The Lassen County Grand Jury received a citizen's complaint regarding the employment practices conducted by the City of Susanville. The belief was there were several potential discrepancies with these employment practices.

This would include both the hiring and termination procedures used for individuals who were previously or are current employees by the City of Susanville.

Henceforward, the City of Susanville will be known as "City" in this report.

Inquiry Procedures:

A committee of the Lassen County Grand Jury:

- a. Interviewed several individuals who possessed intimate knowledge of the employment practices utilized by the City.
- b. Reviewed documents associated with the hiring practices of the City, including those connected with the hiring of the Chief of Police in 2016.
- c. Investigated past practices utilized by the City for hiring employees. It was discovered there was a lack of consistency with using these procedures. These inconsistencies appeared to develop around 2014 and had continued up to the time this complaint was received.

Discussion:

During this investigation, it became quite apparent there were a myriad of discrepancies with the hiring and firing process used by the City Administrator. In turn, these were supported by the Susanville City Council during the 2016 hiring process of the police chief. This evidence was supported by several issues, including:

The lack of transparency of the Susanville City Council's vote to approve the hiring of the new police chief. This should have occurred either in an open city council meeting or reported after adjournment from a closed session.

The obvious absence of a public “swearing in” ceremony. These events have been conducted for previous Susanville chief’s in recent history.

The termination of City employees who had voiced displeasure with the process.

Potential Peace Officer Bill of Rights (POBR) violations were noted.

Findings:

The Grand Jury concluded:

F1. The Susanville City Council failed to assure a fair hiring practice for the police chief. This occurred by allowing the City Administrator sole power to conduct the entire hiring process.

F2. The Susanville City Council failed to cross reference the changes to the job announcement bulletin during the process of hiring a police chief. The changes to the job announcement reduced the qualifications necessary to be hired. This should have been a red flag warning, but instead appeared to be ignored.

F3. Current and former City employees and members of the public had expressed concerns regarding the City Administrator’s management style and hiring practices. While this information was presented to the City Council, it appeared warranted yet went unheeded. This responsibility falls directly upon the shoulders of the Susanville City Council.

F4. When it came to the hiring of City employees, we found that the Susanville City Council allowed the City Administrator far too much latitude. This was inappropriate and there was an extreme lack of checks and balances.

F5. During this investigation, it was discovered there were many circumstances wherein the Susanville City Council appeared to use a closed session for business which should have been conducted in an open session. This eliminated any possibilities for public input and media coverage. It also served as a lack of transparency with possible civil code or Brown Act violations.

F6. The Lassen County Grand Jury requested certain documentation from the City but it was never provided. When additional information was made available, it

was stalled and did not arrive in a timely fashion; in the end, inhibiting this investigation.

Recommendations:

R1. Update City policy and procedures for the hiring and termination of City employees. Upon completion, assure the Susanville City Council and all department heads are knowledgeable in these policies and they are not deviated from.

R2. The Susanville City Council should take a more active role in the hiring of City employees, specifically the department heads.

R3. All of the Susanville City Council members should consider making recurring visits to City departments. These visits should include speaking with rank and file personnel as well as supervisors. In doing so, this may garner potential detrimental information which may not be readily provided by managers or department heads.

R4. The Susanville City Council is the chief operating authority for the City. Complete accountability ultimately stops with the five elected council members. Should this authority be relinquished to any one individual, it is fundamentally necessary for the Susanville City Council to validate all information received prior to the making of major decisions which could financially damage the City.

R5. The Susanville City Council should take steps to provide more transparency when it comes to the hiring or termination of key City employees.

R6. When the Lassen County Grand Jury conducts an information request from the City, it is essential this be provided in the timeframe given without excuses or justifications. Time is always critical for a Grand Jury as interviews, collection of documents and evidence, and final reports must be completed within a limited timeframe. Future delays and/or obstructions will not be tolerated.

Required Response:

It is the Grand Jury's decision that we are requiring a response from the Susanville City Council. In it, covering the solutions given for the concerns outlined above.

DETENTION FACILITIES

California Penal Code 919(b) mandates the Grand Jury “inquire into the conditions and management of all detention facilities within their county.” The following is a summary of those inquiries.

INTERMOUNTAIN CONSERVATION CAMP

On April 10, 2018, the Lassen County Grand Jury toured Intermountain Conservation Camp located four miles north of Bieber on 80 acres of land in the pines at the base of Big Valley Mountain.

The Grand Jury was greeted by the camp lieutenant and sergeant, two Cal Fire captains, the Warden of California Correction Center, the Correctional Administrator for camps, and some of the California Correction Center Camp Office staff.

The primary mission of the camp is to provide inmate fire crews for fire suppression. In addition to fire suppression, inmate fire crews provide a work force for floods, conservation projects, and community services. On an average, conservation crews dedicate over eight million hours of project work each year to federal, state, and local government agencies. They save the California taxpayers millions of dollars annually.

Intermountain Camp performs work projects including fire hazard reduction, forest, range, and watershed enhancement, and other conservation work for many stakeholders. The camp’s sphere of influence for community work projects extends north to the Oregon border, encompassing both the Klamath and Tulelake National Wildlife Refuges and Lava Beds National Monument.

To the west are Burney Falls State Park, Lassen National Forest, Hat Creek, the Pit River, and the mountain communities of McArthur, Fall River Mills, and Burney. To the south, the camp works in the Lassen Volcanic National Park and to the north side of Eagle Lake. The eastern boundary extends into Modoc National Forest and includes the communities of Adin, Bieber, Nubieber, and Lookout.

Intermountain crews are also a valuable resource to the state in fire suppression, flood control, and other emergency responses.

During 2017, Intermountain Conservation Camp provided the local communities with 8,800 hours of project and conservation work. State agencies benefited from 16,114 hours and federal agencies—3,680. In addition, crews dedicated 9,896 hours of work to the Burney Fuel Break, a project funded by Shasta-Trinity Unit SRA dollars. The fire season of 2017 saw Intermountain Crews dispatched to 73 incidents and logging over 100,200 hours of fire suppression.

An inmate fire crew provided the LCGJ with a demonstration of one of the timed exercises they will be performing as part of the process to qualify to fight fires. After the demonstration the Grand Jury toured the camp and saw the different shops and machinery used to maintain the vehicles and the camp itself, warehouses, laundry facility, the leisure time areas, sleeping quarters, chapel, and dining room. The camp was clean and well maintained despite its being 56 years old.

The Grand Jury would like to thank the staff for such an informative tour and for the snacks and wonderful lunch provided. The information received during this tour fortifies the importance of the camp program and the services the camps provide to the taxpayers of California.



CALIFORNIA CORRECTIONAL CENTER

On Tuesday, October 31, 2017, the 2017-2018 Lassen County Grand Jury (LCGJ) toured the California Correctional Center (CCC) located near Susanville. After an initial briefing by the warden and management staff of CCC's mission, there was a question and answer session.

The warden and the management team strongly emphasized the importance of rehabilitation and re-entry programs for inmates housed in the facility. Though restricted by budget, they are trying to improve the areas that house these programs.

The warden remained with the Grand Jury throughout an extensive tour through Facilities A, B, C housing, education, vocation, medical, camp, kitchen, Investigative Service Unit and Outpatient Housing Unit. CCC management and staff were present to inform the Grand Jury of the mission of each facility in great detail.

Included on the tour was the "Pups on Parole" program which is celebrating eleven years of success and over 500 dogs adopted.

Summary:

CCC was constructed in 1963 as a minimum-security prison, which included Facilities A, B and M. In 1987 the prison was expanded to include Facility C, which houses level III inmates.

The primary mission of CCC is to receive, house, and train minimum custody inmates for placement into the 18 conservation camps located throughout Northern California. Working collaboratively with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Cal Fire), these camps are strategically located throughout the north state to provide fire suppression hand crews as well as an organized labor force for public conservation projects and other emergency response needs of the state.

Services provided through the conservation camp program saves taxpayers an average of over 80 million dollars per year. Work projects associated with conservation camps support municipal, county, state, and federal government agencies, including schools, parks, cemeteries, and public recreation areas.

Additionally, CCC provides meaningful work, training, educational, and substance abuse treatment programs for inmates who do not meet the criteria for assignment to a conservation camp. These alternative assignments include academic and vocational trade programs, facility maintenance jobs, food service positions, and other facility support assignments. CCC offers a wide assortment of positive leisure time activities, including numerous self-help improvement programs such as literacy, alternatives to violence, addiction recovery, veterans' affairs, religious services, and athletic programs.

The Grand Jury observed many of the daily operations of education, which range from remedial education to Bachelor Degrees and several in-depth vocational programs. The Grand Jury took special note of the enthusiastic and positive approach displayed by education and vocational staff.

The Grand Jury toured Antelope Camp and the Fire Department. These facilities provide many valuable services to the institution and to the county. The camp provides inmate hand crews for fire suppression, emergency services, and community projects.

The Fire Department is one of two paid fire departments in Lassen County. They provide mutual aid to 17 volunteer fire districts covering approximately 4,750 square miles.

Antelope Camp and the Fire Department have a long history of providing mutual aid to the residences of Lassen County and is relied on to respond promptly and provide additional staffing when needed.

Of particular note, CCC is involved with many beneficial community events. These include numerous fund-raising activities and donations, as well as blood drives in which CCC staff donated 93 pints of blood for the year 2017.

Each facility visited by the Grand Jury was clean and well run. No discrepancies were noted. The Grand Jury gratefully acknowledges the hospitality, patience and professionalism of the warden and staff during our visit.

HIGH DESERT STATE PRISON

The 2017-2018 Lassen County GJ toured High Desert State Prison (HDSP) on October 20, 2017. Members of LCGJ were greeted by the Chief Deputy Warden and department managers for a briefing and question and answer session.

HDSP's mission is to protect the public by providing humane and safe supervision of offenders and to provide offenders with quality health care through meaningful encounters with licensed medical, dental, and mental health professionals and inspire to improve patient satisfaction.

HDSP offers tools to effect change of culture, and inspire offenders to self-rehabilitate by facilitating educational opportunities, re-entry services, recreational activities, and leisure time activity group programs to reduce recidivism. The Grand Jury was escorted on an extensive tour of the facility.

Summary

HDSP currently houses general population and sensitive needs high security (Level IV), medium security (Level III), and minimum security (Level I) inmates. The Level I inmates are housed in the minimum-security facility located outside of the main institution.

HDSP is now testing inmates in the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) in earnest and has had many students show gains. Students taking part have passed the GED at a rate doubling that of the previous year. CASAS is the most widely used competency-based assessment system in the United States.

HDSP has been involved with the Department's Re-entry Hub program. Re-entry Hub programming is geared to ensure that, upon release, offenders are ready for the transition back into society. The core of Re-entry Hub programming is Cognitive Behavior Treatment (CBT) programming. It is an evidence-based program designed for inmates who have a moderate to high risk to re-offend, assessed by the California Static Risk Assessment, and who have assessed criminogenic need, as identified by the Correctional Offender Management Profiling for Alternative Sanctions and/or other assessment(s) identified by California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR).

CBT programs address the following major areas: Substance Abuse, Criminal Thinking, Anger Management, and California ID process. Beginning soon, every facility will have a Re-entry Program for all eligible inmates. This will enable CDCR to bring the program to the inmates rather than moving inmates around the state to go to the program.

The isolated and rural setting of HDSP has resulted in fewer staff available than in more populated areas. When staffing levels are too low to be filled with volunteer overtime, holdover overtime is required. This situation is slightly alleviated with the arrival of newly graduated officers. However, staff shortage remains a concern.

HDSP has mutual aid agreement with the Sheriff's Office, the California Highway Patrol, and the Susanville Police Department. The "School Crisis Program" is a very successful result of this program.

The LCGJ was very impressed with the overall cleanliness and organization of the prison. Both custody and support staff provided open and candid responses to our inquiries and are to be acknowledged for the job they do in a highly stressful and confined setting with many high security and sensitive needs inmates.

The Grand Jury is most appreciative for the hospitality extended by the Chief Deputy Warden and staff.



LASSEN COUNTY ADULT DETENTION FACILITY

On February 1, 2018, the Lassen County Grand Jury toured the Lassen County Adult Detention Facility (LCADF) located in Susanville.

The sheriff briefed the Grand Jury on the accomplishments and challenges faced by the department by both officers patrolling the streets and officers working in the detention facility. Following the briefing the Grand Jury was guided throughout the facility.

Summary

Constructed in 1991, the building remains in good condition. There are some areas within the building that are not currently being utilized as they do not apply to current needs and the kitchen is scheduled for remodeling. The facility can house as many as 156 inmates. Housing for female inmates is very limited. Health care services for the LCADF are provided by the California Forensic Medical Group.

The LCADF offers numerous educational and participatory programs including, but not limited to, Business Career Network, Resume` and Interview Training, GED Training (1/3 of current inmates need their GED), college classes, Drug and Alcohol Abuse classes, and Mental and Behavioral Health classes.

Computers and tablets are used as an incentive for participation in some programs. Minutes are credited by participation. The time earned is utilized for designated leisure activities. Culinary training is in the planning stages, as well as HVAC and auto mechanics. Instructors are volunteers from throughout the community and from local businesses.

The LCADF currently houses 90 inmates with an average stay of 7 to 8 months. Implementation of AB 109 has increased the length of stay. Sentenced and non-sentenced inmates are housed together. The open dorm housing is not ideal and security issues are a continued concern. Inmates that demonstrate an inability to participate in the general population or are disruptive are housed in the Special Housing/Security Housing Unit.

There is a need for more space for special needs inmates, however, no counselors or mental health support are available or on staff. Upon arrival to the LCADF, inmates are issued an orientation manual which includes the grievance

procedure. All complaints are handled within the facility. Serious or severe allegations receive independent review by a third party.

The jailers do not have to attend an academy, which is required for deputies. It has been a difficult task to retain officers due to relatively low salaries and the high cost of health care coverage.

At the request of the sheriff, the Lassen County Board of Supervisors granted a Deputy 2 level to be added to the pay scale. This offers the deputies an opportunity for advancement and a pay increase. It is hoped that this may help to retain trained and qualified personnel. The sheriff emphasized the importance of hiring from within the community and is working on offering qualified applicants and jailers the opportunity to receive paid training at the academy.

The sheriff believes that local hiring and advancement from within the department could be a reasonable solution to the high turnover rate that the department is currently experiencing.

The facility is clean and well organized but is an older building and could use some repairs. There are improvements currently underway and future upgrades are under consideration pending funding. No discrepancies were noted during the tour.

The Grand Jury wishes to express appreciation to the sheriff and staff for their time and hospitality.



LASSEN COUNTY JUVENILE DETENTION FACILITY

On February 1, 2018 the Lassen County Grand Jury toured the Lassen County Juvenile Detention Facility (LCJDF).

The LCJDF is approximately 25 years old and appears to be in good condition, was very clean, and is currently undergoing renovation. The facility includes a classroom, kitchenette, courtroom and visitation area, large outdoor recreation area which includes a vegetable garden, and sleeping quarters. Court is conducted within the premises, reducing the need to transport juveniles to the courthouse. Visitation is scheduled for one hour four days a week.

Summary

The positions include administrative, teacher, and counselors. All LCJDF employees, with the exception of the teacher, receive correctional officer training. The primary duty of the Correctional Counselor is the supervision, treatment, and rehabilitation of juveniles accused of or adjudged responsible for criminal or delinquent conduct.

The facility is designed to hold a maximum of 40 juvenile offenders. Juveniles can be housed at the LCJDF until the age of 21. At the time of the Grand Jury's visit, the number of juvenile detainees was three. LCJDF also contracts with Modoc and Plumas counties for use of the facility and staff. The counselor to youth ratio during the waking hours must not exceed one counselor for every ten detainees.

During sleeping hours, the ratio changes to one counselor to 30 detainees. Meals are prepared and delivered by the LCADF. Health care is provided by the California Forensic Medical Group via contract with the LCADF.

All detained youths must participate in school. Juvenile detainees are evaluated during the intake process through a series of questions, both verbal and written, and documentation. Programs provided for detainees include, but are not limited to, counseling for substance abuse, pregnancy, anger management, life skills, and parenting. Gardening, nutrition skills, and cooking skills are also offered. The Lassen Career Network assists with resume' writing, job applications, and interviewing skills. Staff teaches a communication and awareness program that includes group discussion and journaling.

Religious services are provided by a volunteer, non-denominational pastor. LCJDF appears to be clean and well organized. No discrepancies were noted during the visit.

The Grand Jury acknowledges the job counselors and support staff do in support of the youth detained at the facility. The Grand Jury thanks the administration and staff for their time and hospitality throughout the tour.



FEDERAL CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTION AT HERLONG

The 2017-2018 Lassen County Grand Jury toured the Federal Correctional Institution at Herlong on March 22, 2018.

While the Grand Jury is required to visit all jails and prisons in the County, it does not have jurisdiction over the Federal Institutions. Nonetheless, interested members of Lassen County Grand Jury were invited to visit the facility.

Summary

The Herlong facility is one of the 118 Federal Correctional Facilities across the United States. It is a medium security facility which houses approximately 1400 prisoners and employs just under 300 staff. The facility is clean and in good repair.

There are several educational and trade programs offered to the prisoners including drug rehabilitation and pre-release planning. Most are released into their community at the end of their confinement through a halfway house program and remain on probation for 3 to 5 years. Exercise opportunities are scheduled, and most religious affiliations are accommodated.

The Grand Jury expresses gratitude for the hospitality extended to those members who attended the tour.



APPENDIX

Responses to Prior Year's Report

Included in this appendix are the responses to the **2016-2017** (previous year's) Grand Jury Report, submitted exactly as they were received. It is important that citizens are aware of the reactions to the recommendations, and any positive changes implemented as a result of the Grand Jury's efforts.

LASSEN SUPERIOR COURT

**Tony Mallery
Presiding
Superior Court Judge**



2610 Riverside Drive
Susanville, CA 96130
(530) 251-8205 Ext. 103

November 1, 2017

Julie Bustamante
County Clerk
220 S. Lassen St.
Susanville, CA 96130

Dear Ms. Bustamante:

Pursuant to 933(c) of the California Penal Code, I am sending you a copy of the Response to the 2016-2017 Grand Jury Report to place on file with the County Clerk.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lori Barron".

Lori Barron
Jury Commissioner

Cc: Lassen County Grand Jury
Lassen County Board of Supervisors

County of Lassen
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS



CHRIS GALLAGHER
District 1
DAVID TEETER
District 2
JEFF HEMPHILL
District 3
AARON ALBAUGH
District 4
TOM HAMMOND
District 5

RECEIVED

OCT 27 2017

Clerk of the Superior Court
County of Lassen

By _____, Deputy Clerk

County Administration Office
221 S. Roop Street, Suite 4
Susanville, CA 96130
Phone: 530-251-8333
Fax: 530-251-2663

October 24, 2017

The Honorable Tony Mallery
Presiding Judge, Lassen Superior Court
Hall of Justice
2610 Riverside Drive
Susanville, CA 96130

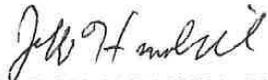
Dear Judge Mallery,

Pursuant to Penal Code section 933(c), please accept the Lassen County Board of Supervisors response to the 2016-2017 Lassen County Grand Jury report. Our response is attached.

While we may or may not be able to implement every recommendation as a result of other limitations, the Board of Supervisors welcomes the constructive criticism offered by the Grand Jury, considers it seriously, and takes to heart the recommendations brought forth. The Board of Supervisors joins the Grand Jury in trying to make local government as efficient and effective as possible.

We would like to take this opportunity to recognize the Court and the 2016-2017 Lassen County Grand Jury for a job well done.

Respectfully,


for **AARON ALBAUGH**, Chairman
Lassen County Board of Supervisors

Introduction

The California Grand Jurors Association states that the mission of a civil Grand Jury is to “help local government be more accountable and efficient.” They also state that their mission is to “facilitate positive change...”. The Lassen County Board of Supervisors applauds this goal and would like to thank the citizens who have given of themselves to serve as Lassen County Grand Jurors. The Lassen County Board of Supervisors recognizes the considerable contribution of time and energy by private citizens for the benefit of Lassen County as a whole.

The Board of Supervisors welcomes the constructive criticism offered by the Grand Jury, considers it seriously, and takes to heart the recommendations brought forth by the Grand Jury. The Board of Supervisors joins the Grand Jury in trying to make local government as efficient and effective as possible.

Over the next pages the Lassen County Board of Supervisors will be presenting its response to this year’s Grand Jury report.

There is one note to be made with this year’s report regarding Child and Family Services. The Grand Jury attempted to compel responses from individuals they are not empowered to. Specifically, the Grand Jury attempted to compel responses from the Lassen County Director of Health and Social Services and the Lassen County Director of Child and Family Services. Pursuant to Penal Code section 933(c), and consistent with the opinion of the California Grand Jurors Association, no such responses will be offered or authorized. We are responding on their behalf, as required by the Jury, and as it should be.

Grand Jury Report: Child and Family Services

Finding Number 1: “The current facility is not ideal as the cubicles are not conducive in affording any privacy or confidentiality.”

Response/Comment: The Board of Supervisors agrees in part and disagrees in part. The current facility is not ideal, however, there are adequate facilities to conduct confidential and private meetings, if needed.

Finding Number 2: “The current salary does not take into account the education requirements and the stress that is involved with the positions.”

Response/Comment: The Board of Supervisors disagrees. The current salaries for Social Workers reflect the education and experience required as well as the responsibilities of the job in the context of the County’s classification and salary structure.

Finding Number 3: “The vacant positions need to be filled and the number of positions needs to be increased to accommodate the workload. The agency is operating at 70% to 80% of budgeted staffing allotment.”

Response/Comment: The Board of Supervisors agrees in part and disagrees in part. The Board agrees that vacancies need to be filled as they occur and have recruited to do so, but the Board disagrees with

the finding that the number of positions needs to be increased as the allocation of full time positions is sufficient for the workload.

Finding Number 4: "There are no local policies or procedures. State and county policies and procedures are available online and in hard copy, but no policies and procedures specific to the local CFS are available to assure staff's procedural accountability."

Response/Comment: The Board of Supervisors agrees in part and disagrees in part. CFS staff are subject to the policies and procedures established for all employees of Lassen County. CFS staff are subject to the policies and procedures established specifically for all Health and Social Services department employees as well. Lastly, CFS staff are subject to the State Manual of Policy and Procedures (MPP) which are applicable in child welfare cases. The Board agrees that a local policy adopting the State MPP as the local standard would make this clearer.

Finding Number 5: "This agency is responsible for servicing at-risk children in Lassen County and the ability of the Grand Jury to thoroughly investigate how well this service is being provided is very limited due to confidentiality involving minors. The number and seriousness of complaints received is of great concern."

Response/Comment: The Board of Supervisors agrees with this finding. The ability of any Grand Jury to thoroughly investigate these kinds of complaints is limited by the confidentiality restrictions imposed by state law. Until state law is changed, or the Grand Jury successfully acquires from the Juvenile Court an order allowing access, the department of Child and Family Services is forbidden by law to discuss specific cases, even with a Grand Jury. Nevertheless, the department of Child and Family Services and the Board of Supervisors are very concerned about any complaints regarding our services for at-risk children in Lassen County.

Finding Number 6: "New state mandated programs, as valuable as they are, are stretching current staff abilities to accomplish their mission."

Response/Comment: The Board of Supervisors agrees with this finding. New state mandates do place a great burden on the department.

Finding Number 7: "Required data needing input into the appropriate computer programs require more time and is often not getting done according to state time limits."

Response/Comment: The Board of Supervisors agrees in part and disagrees in part. The Board agrees that the timely input of data is critical; however, the board disagrees that this requires giving staff more time to do it.

Recommendation Number 1: "A more appropriate facility available to the County should be considered for this agency."

Response/Comment: While a new facility for the department is not reasonable in the current budget planning cycle, the Board is addressing this recommendation by providing additional confidential meeting space for CFS staff by this November.

Recommendation Number 2: "The salaries for this agency need to be reassessed to ensure they are equivalent with those of other agencies in the county with similar education requirements."

Response/Comment: This recommendation is not warranted as the salaries for Social Workers are already equivalent with similar positions in the County classification structure.

Recommendation Number 3: "The vacant position needs to be filled. Better salary would help to fill this position. The 20% to 30% of unused funds should be used to increase salaries or obtain more line staff."

Response/Comment: The Department is recruiting for vacant Social Worker positions as recommended. However, the recommendation to increase salaries or positions is not warranted or reasonable as addressed in our response to Findings 2 and 3.

Recommendation Number 4: "Local policies and procedures need to be written to ensure consistency of practice and customer service."

Response/Comment: This recommendation has not yet been implemented; however, the department is working on preparing local policy adopting the State Manual of Policy and Procedure (MPP) by February 2018.

Recommendation Number 5: "Anyone having problems with CFS should contact the Office of the California Foster Care Ombudsman, 744 P Street, MS8-13-25, Sacramento, CA 95814, or phone 877-846-1602, or email fosteryouthhelp@dss.ca.gov to request assistance to assure the children of Lassen County are being served adequately. Due to the number of complaints received and the limitations of what the Grand Jury can accomplish, it is recommended that this report be forwarded to the Ombudsman for consideration of additional investigation or oversight to assure the children of Lassen County are protected."

Response/Comment: This recommendation is not warranted nor is it reasonable. While we would not want to discourage those that have concerns appropriate to the Foster Care Ombudsman from reporting them, the Grand Jury report is a public document and is addressed to those that have responsibility for the operations of Lassen County CFS. We encourage individuals that have concerns to bring them to us.

Recommendation Number 6: "Staff should be made up of more out of the area personnel to avoid conflict of interest issues. If the caseworker has or had a relationship with the client or their family members and another caseworker who is not acquainted with the family is not available, Child and Family Services in Sacramento should be notified to determine how to proceed with the case."

Response/Comment: This recommendation is not warranted nor it is reasonable. To implement a recommendation of preferential hiring of individuals outside of the area would be a violation of Federal and State personnel law. Furthermore, the department follows the State's MPP with regards to conflicts of interest.

Recommendation Number 7: "More diligence be given to input of data."

Response/Comment: This recommendation has been implemented. Expectations of timely data entry were reiterated to CFS staff as a whole and individually through Supervision. Weekly reports are shared with all staff to track and monitor progress.

Grand Jury Report: Special Districts-Special Taxes

Finding Number 1: "The board of directors for each district is responsible for notifying the Auditor's Office of the amount to be attached to the property tax bill each year."

Response/Comment: The Board of Supervisors agrees with the finding.

Finding Number 2: "The software being used by the Tax Collector's, Assessor's, and Auditor's offices is outdated and in jeopardy of being lost due to the retirement of the owner of the software."

Response/Comment: The Board of Supervisors agrees with the finding.

Recommendation Number 1: "The boards of directors of all special districts ensure they are submitting the correct amount to the Auditor each year. This could include reviewing ballot measures passed to establish their district."

Response/Comment: The Board of Supervisors agrees with the finding but believes it is not our place to address the recommendation.

Recommendation Number 2: "The Board of Supervisors should investigate the software issue and begin preparations to budget for an improved system."

Response/Comment: The Board of Supervisors is aware of the issue. The Board of Supervisors is relying on the office of the County Auditor, County Assessor, and County Treasurer/Tax Collector, three county wide elected officials, to assess appropriate replacement platforms, present a recommendation for which is the best, and to prepare a transition plan. The Board of Supervisors will, in turn, receive the recommendation, consider the funding request, assess funding available, and make an appropriate choice related to this need. This has not yet occurred.

Conclusion

The Board of Supervisors would like to once again take this opportunity to thank those who have served as Grand Jurors for the 2016-2017 year. It is a considerable commitment, and can, from what we have seen, be frustrating at times. This Board of Supervisors wishes to acknowledge our shared interest in making Lassen County a safer, happier and more productive place to live and work. We pledge to continue to work with future Grand Juries in reaching this goal.