

2014-2015 Siskiyou County Civil Grand Jury Final Report



Photo Courtesy David Scott

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SISKIYOU COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY RESPONSES TO THE 2013-2014 FINAL
REPORT 39



1Photo by Dale Lehman

Foreperson's Report

Ah, the trials and tribulations of spending time on a civil grand jury (no pun intended)!

Why, you may ask, would anyone in their right mind want to give of their time - and I do mean give (the pay is minimal at \$15.00 a day plus mileage) - to spend it on the Civil Grand Jury? The answer to that question will vary with every grand jury member, past and present. What will not change is the need these folks have to volunteer to serve their community - in this case the citizens of Siskiyou County.

I recently asked the members of the 2014/2015 Siskiyou County Civil Grand Jury what was important to them and what others should know to help make a positive decision about joining the grand jury. What I heard was that the work was challenging to be sure, but interesting and educational as well. They felt that for the most part, they could effect a change in the way things were done where warranted. They all felt strongly that it was a very important job that needs to be done for the sake of educating the public about what goes on in the county, in some cases with elected officials, as investigated by fellow citizens of the county. They enjoyed the camaraderie and the fun - yes, fun - they had, especially during the stressful time of proof reading, editing and formatting the reports you are about to read to meet the deadline before our term ended.

The charge to the Civil Grand Jury is to investigate complaints that are sent to them, in confidence, regarding public entities, whether it be a school board, city or county government department, or special districts. In addition, the Civil Grand Jury is required to do "watchdog" investigations on a few of these entities, even if there have been no complaints received. Also, by law, the Civil Grand Jury is required to inspect and report annually on the jail, the juvenile facility, and on Deadwood Conservation Camp located in Siskiyou County.

When the reports are completed, they are submitted to the Civil Court Manager, who then obtains approvals from the Siskiyou County Counsel and the Presiding Judge. Individual reports are then sent to the separate entities about which they are written, and, if requested, those entities are required to submit responses to the findings in the report.

This jury decided to follow up with some of these entities from the 2013/2014 year, some of which failed to submit the requested responses. You will read about these as separate reports in the "CONTINUITY" section. It is our wish to make sure the work that is done by the grand jury does not go ignored, especially where improvement or change is warranted for an entity that has been investigated. As the grand jury, we would be doing a disservice to our fellow citizens by not following up on these issues.

Due to various circumstances, the jury that ended this year was smaller than that which began last July. While we ended the year short in numbers, we were big on desire to get the job done, done right, and on time. The members of the 2014/2015 Siskiyou County Civil Grand Jury certainly came through when it was important to do so, and as foreperson, I would like to thank them for their dedication. I appreciate each and every one of them as individuals, and hope that those who are not staying on for next year's term consider coming back at some point in the future. And, to those who read this and have never participated in the Civil Grand Jury, please

consider doing so; you will not be sorry. There is a lot more to learn about your county more than you have ever realized, and many wonderful people to meet in the process!

Thank you,

Susan Boston, Foreperson,

2014/2015 Siskiyou Civil Grand Jury

2014-2015 Grand Jurors:



Susan Boston

Colleen Collins

William Duval

Mark Ferrante

Don Kaae

Charles Kelly

Sue Landstrom

Dale Lehman

Terry McGhee

Virginia Rea

Amber Schriver

Ruth Simpson

Roxanne Woods

Note to Complainants

The Civil Grand Jury operates on a July 1 to June 30 fiscal year. When the term ends on June 30, all open investigations are ended. The new Civil Grand Jury that starts July 1st must, by law, begin all investigations anew. To be included in the final report, an investigation needs to be completed by early May, since there is a review process that takes six to eight weeks to complete. Since an investigation takes four to six months, a complaint needs to be submitted between July and December for the jury to have time to complete the investigation. If you submitted a complaint late in the fiscal year that is not mentioned in this report, feel free to resubmit the complaint in July or August for the next Civil Grand Jury.



Photo by Dale Lehman

Siskiyou County Coroner's Office

Introduction

The Siskiyou County Coroner's Office mission statement includes the duty to conduct complete and objective medical-legal investigations of unattended, violent, unexpected, and suspicious deaths in order to determine the cause, manner and circumstances of death. This duty is of utmost importance to the families of deceased individuals and the safety of our community. The Coroner acts for the purpose of protecting the rights of the dead while benefiting the living. The Coroner has countywide jurisdiction in death investigations. It is imperative that the Coroner be independent from, yet maintain good working relationships with other Sheriff's divisions, other law enforcement agencies, medical care providers, the county Health and Social Services office, the District Attorney's office, and other investigative agencies. Like some other counties in California, Siskiyou County is a Sheriff-Coroner county. This means that the Sheriff (or his representative) is also the coroner. The Sheriff's representative in Siskiyou County is the Chief Deputy Coroner.

Methodology

Interview with Chief Deputy Coroner

Review of Coroner Literature

Discussion

Pursuant to Government Code Section 27491, the role of the Coroner is as follows: "It shall be the duty of the Coroner to inquire into and determine the circumstances, manner and cause of all violent, sudden, unusual deaths, and unattended deaths (deaths where the deceased had not been attended by either a physician or a registered nurse who is a member of a hospice care interdisciplinary team, as defined by subdivision (e) of Section 1746 of the Health and Safety Code in the 20 days before death)."

Pursuant to Health and Safety Code section 102850: "A physician or surgeon, physician assistant, funeral director, or other person shall immediately notify the Coroner when he or she has knowledge of a death that has occurred or has charge of a body in which death occurred under any of the following circumstances: without medical attendance, during the continued absence of the attending physician and surgeon, where the attending physician and surgeon or the physician assistant is unable to state the cause of death, where suicide is suspected, following an injury or an accident, under circumstances as to afford a reasonable ground to suspect that the death was caused by the criminal act of another."

In addition, the Coroner is responsible for determining the identity of the deceased, notifying next of kin, securing the property of the deceased, and providing for the interment of the indigent dead.

The Coroner shall be notified as soon as possible of any of the following types of deaths: notable homicides at the discretion of the Coroner Detective; in-custody deaths; fire deaths; multiple fatality incidents wherein there are three or more victims; deaths directly related to the actions of law enforcement personnel; deaths involving city, county, state or federal leaders; aircraft crashes; and deaths that represent a potential public safety or public health hazard.

The Coroner reports are public record under California law, including the Coroner's investigative report and autopsy and toxicology reports. If the death is suspicious, a detective completes the investigation and the Coroner is in charge of the identification of the deceased, notification of relatives, and the toxicology report. The Supervising Coroner or Coroner Investigator provides an opinion as to the circumstances of a death, or medical history or other information concerning death investigations. If the Coroner finds that the deceased is an organ donor, the Coroner contacts the Northern California Transplant Bank (NCTB). The NCTB will contact the family and request consent for organ donation. Once the consent is received, the Coroner gives instructions to insure the organ donation will not impair criminal or medical investigations. In addition, the Coroner is a member of the Child Death Review Team, which reviews all Siskiyou county child deaths.

On average, there are approximately 400 deaths per year in Siskiyou County. A medical doctor determines the cause of death in about 300 of those cases, and the remainder are investigated by the Chief Deputy Coroner. There is one (1) Chief Deputy Coroner for the county, with no mandated training. There is a training facility in Orange County for Deputy Coroners, but the current Siskiyou County Chief Deputy Coroner has not attended the training.

Along with death investigations, the Coroner also receives reports of deceased individuals with no known or identified next-of-kin and /or no funds to provide for burial expenses. The Coroner investigator will have the deceased delivered to the Coroner's morgue facility and will verify their identity. An attempt is made to locate and secure any property belonging to the deceased that could be sold to defray the cost of indigent cremation. An attempt is made to locate next-of-kin to determine the deceased's eligibility for indigent cremation, financial status of any family members residing within the State of California, and any interested persons willing to pay for burial or cremation. Abandoned bodies, where no next of kin can be found, are cremated and stored in a crypt in Mount Shasta at a current cost of \$1,800 plus storage fees. If no one else is willing to pay the cost, the County Board of Supervisors has a set budget for indigent burials.

Consulting pathologists are located in Mount Shasta and Yreka. The fee set for an autopsy is negotiated, and set by contract; the cost is currently \$500 for a general autopsy and \$800 for the services of a forensic pathologist. A toxicology report is completed on all investigated deaths. All samples are sent to independent laboratories. DNA and fingerprint samples are sent to the Department of Justice.

A case file is kept for one year of all natural deaths, three years for accidents and suicides, five years for undetermined and sudden infant death, and indefinitely for homicides and specified undetermined deaths. The exceptions are if any of the above classified cases are involved in civil or criminal litigation; as directed by the court, the specimens shall be maintained until such litigation is terminated.

Conclusion

The Siskiyou County Coroner's Office appears to be operating efficiently. It is the opinion of the Civil Grand Jury that the Deputy Coroner would benefit from additional training. The current Deputy Coroner appears to be doing an excellent job, having learned “on-the-job”. It is always beneficial for employees with such specialized duties to be able to learn from peers, and to share their knowledge with others.

In addition, the Civil Grand Jury encourages Siskiyou County to provide resources necessary to complete a Policies and Procedures Manual so that future Deputy Coroners have some guidance in doing the job.



Photo by Amber Schriver

Deadwood Conservation Camp

Summary

The 2014/2015 Siskiyou County Civil Grand Jury conducted an annual investigation of the Deadwood Conservation Camp located in Fort Jones in accordance with Penal Code Section 919(b). This section of the penal code requires the Civil Grand Jury to conduct an annual inspection of every detention facility within Siskiyou County.

Background

Deadwood Conservation Camp opened on June 1, 1962. The camp is jointly operated by the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) and the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE). The camp employs approximately 68 minimum security male felons to provide fire-fighting services as well as community service, flood control, and conservation projects; the remainder of the inmates (about 20) work as cooks, porters, clerks, maintenance, and skilled shop workers for the operation of the camp itself. Inmates are screened to ensure that none of them have convictions for violent crimes, sex crimes, escape, arson, or murder.

A more detailed background is available in previous Civil Grand Jury reports.

Methodology

On February 10, 2015, members of the 2014/2015 Civil Grand Jury toured the Deadwood Conservation Camp. The tour was led by CAL FIRE and CDCR staff. During the tour, numerous staff and inmates were interviewed.

Discussion

Deadwood camp crews provided 151,210 work hours towards project and conservation work in the 2014 calendar year. In addition, inmate crews worked 92,619 hours fighting fire through the end of 2014. The camp purchased more than \$339,000 in goods and services through local vendors, and CDCR and CAL FIRE employees served as volunteers in community services. Recycling efforts have resulted in approximately nine tons of material being diverted from landfills in 2014. Inmate crews provide maintenance on county, state, and federal vehicles and also build well-designed, beautiful furniture for government offices. In addition, they make trophies and toys for local charities.

Inmates are able to attend Narcotics Anonymous (NA) and Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) meetings, outreach and religious programs, and craft classes. Inmates can study for their GED (high school equivalency) exams. They also gain valuable work experience in a variety of trades while at Deadwood.

The grounds were well-maintained and all areas of the camp visited were clean and orderly. Staff asserted that concerns over water issues from last year's Civil Grand Jury visit had been addressed. However, they did state that the buildings and infrastructure were getting old and may need to be repaired.

Staff reported that at the time of the tour, the camp held 78 inmates; they stated that the passage of Proposition 47 had resulted in a decrease in the number of inmates eligible for fire camps such as Deadwood. Staff has concerns about their ability to continue to provide the work force and community services they have been able to maintain in the past. It was reported that CAL FIRE and CDCR have an excellent working relationship and good communication among staff. The Deadwood Conservation Camp appears to be working smoothly and providing a valuable service to Siskiyou County residents.



Photo by Dale Lehman

SISKIYOU COUNTY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT COMPLAINT PROCESS

SUMMARY

The Siskiyou County Planning Division is one of the three divisions within the Siskiyou County Community Development Department (Planning, Building, and Environmental).

The prime responsibility of the Planning Division is to manage the County General Plan, zoning ordinances, and the California Environmental Quality Act. This department processes applications for land divisions, use permits, zone changes and variances. The Building Division deals with physical structures. The Environmental Division deals with health-related issues including hazardous materials, water/sewage systems, and restaurant inspections. They manage their own complaints within their jurisdiction.

The Planning Division makes presentations to the Planning Commission for their approval or disapproval. The Planning Commission meets once a month in a public forum. Planning Commissioners are county residents, one per district, appointed by the County Board of Supervisors (BOS).

Complaints about land use issues under the jurisdiction of the Planning Division are received from the public and managed by the division. They investigate, identify, and resolve these complaints.

The Civil Grand Jury elected to review the Planning Division in regards to how complaints are managed.

APPROACH

The Civil Grand Jury reviewed Planning Division documents and interviewed six individuals involved with or related to the Planning Division. The complaint log was also studied.

DISCUSSION

The Planning Division currently has a staff of five who are primarily planners. This staff has been reduced in recent years due to budget issues within Siskiyou County.

The complaint and enforcement function is currently shared among several staff members within the division. They lost their enforcement person some time ago due to budget cuts. This person was shared by all three divisions. With some exceptions, the complaint and enforcement function is not currently a high priority due to staffing limitations.

Division policy is to accept only *written* complaints from the public. The only exception would be emergency public health issues communicated in person or by telephone. Complaints received are given a number, logged into a computer report system, and filed in a binder. The complaint document is given to the appropriate division staff member for follow-up. All complaints are kept in one integrated computer and binder system. The binders are used for referencing the complaint if needed.

The computer system print log of filed complaints has provisions that tell the reader most of the pertinent information in an abbreviated format. It shows to whom it was assigned, date received and date resolved.

The Planning Division has several ways of dealing with complaints received from the public. The complaint is first investigated to verify its validity and to determine what specific permits or ordinances apply.

Once the complaint is confirmed as valid, the Community Development Department works with the individuals involved to see if the issue can be corrected and brought into compliance. Urgent issues will have priorities set for faster resolution. If this effort fails, the Planning Division has the option of issuing monetary fines dictated by code. Staff stated that this process is lengthy, entails several notices, and is finally resolved by the court if necessary. Staff advises that the process of getting an issue to court can take several months, and the return to the county is small, as fines are only a few hundred dollars. Fines are currently set by state law.

Staff advises that compliance with log updates is inconsistent.

The Planning Commission does have the authority to revoke use permits.

FINDINGS

F1) We reviewed the computer logs for the years 2013 and 2014. In 2013, 271 complaints were entered, with 28% showing unresolved; in 2014, 57% showed unresolved. Since the complaint binder, which includes unresolved complaints, is put into storage at the end of the year, the percentage of unresolved complaints may actually be lower. Inaccurate and untimely reporting of complaint resolutions may affect these statistics. It was learned that log print-outs are not reviewed regularly, or used as a management tool. There appears to be no designated individual assigned to track complaint handling. Staff shortages may make this tracking difficult.

F2) At the end of each year the original written complaints in the binder, both resolved and unresolved, are sent to storage. New binders are then started for the new year. The complaint computer print-out with a summarized listing of all complaints remains more readily available to staff. It is a quicker and more reader-friendly source of complaint subject matter. Staff advises that this complaint log is not used regularly, and some appeared not to be aware of its existence. Staff also commented that at any given time it is difficult to know the exact status of any unresolved complaint.

F3) The issuance of fines and the permit revocation process is time-consuming and unfortunately, not used often. While we understand the staff's desire to minimize these actions,

those affected by the violations are seeking help from their paid-for county services. The absence of an enforcement officer makes this situation even more difficult.

RECOMMENDATIONS

R1) The computer logging system for tracking complaint status could be a good source of information. It should be updated regularly. A log print-out should be used as a management tool to see what progress, or lack of progress, has occurred. It would be more efficient if the print-outs could be done on a division basis. This would provide valuable input for management.

R2) We believe that the binder can be a useful resource. It is suggested that only the resolved complaints be sent to storage. The binder could then become a quick, complete reference of unresolved complaints regardless of when they were received. When a complaint is resolved and noted in the binder, the computer log print-out should also be changed to reflect the resolution date. Both of these complaint reference tools should reflect the same information. Management should strive to educate staff on the best use of the complaint computer print-out log. Keeping this log up to date would allow quick and easy reference to determine the current status of the filed complaints.

R3) We are advised that the Planning Division is working on a new ordinance that may streamline the fining process. We commend the department for this effort and encourage the completion and approval by the BOS. Use permit revocation should be used more often, and fines increased as stronger motivation to resolve complaints.

As of this Civil Grand Jury report, the County Planning Commission report dated March 18, 2015, notes a New Business Agenda item: "Comprehensive Code Enforcement Ordinance Amendment (SP-14-03)." A summary states the following: "The proposed code amendments would retain, modify, and add provisions relating to the classification of code violations, the establishment of fines for infraction convictions, increasing the fine for misdemeanor convictions, the recovery of administrative costs, and the establishment of uniform code enforcement procedures, including voluntary compliance provisions, citation procedures, hearing provisions, and the recovery of costs."

We understand that as of March 24, 2015, the subject code enforcement amendment is to be reviewed by the County Board of Supervisors.

RESPONSE REQUESTED

Pursuant to Penal Code Section 933.5 the Grand Jury requests responses as follows:

F1, F2, and F3, and R1, R2, and R3 Community Development Department

F3 and R3 Board of Supervisors



Photo by Amber Schriver

PSA-2

SUMMARY

The grand jury elected to investigate the Planning and Service Area 2 Agency on Aging (PSA-2) to determine whether or not it was adequately providing services to senior citizens in Siskiyou County.

This agency acts as a conduit for funds coming from state and federal governments. The agency does not run any programs for seniors itself; this is done by contractors.

BACKGROUND

Members of the grand jury were interested in how PSA-2, which handles all services for five California counties, functions.

METHODOLOGY

The grand jury reviewed the following documents:

PSA-2 revised and administrative budget July 10, 2014

PSA-2 (Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy Program) HICAP and Ombudsman budget July 7, 2014

PSA-2 County % Allocation

PSA-2 Siskiyou County service provider listings

Sample grant award documents

Audit report prepared by Aiello, Goodrich & Teuscher for fiscal year ending June 30, 2014

US Census Bureau data

PSA-2 and contractor brochures

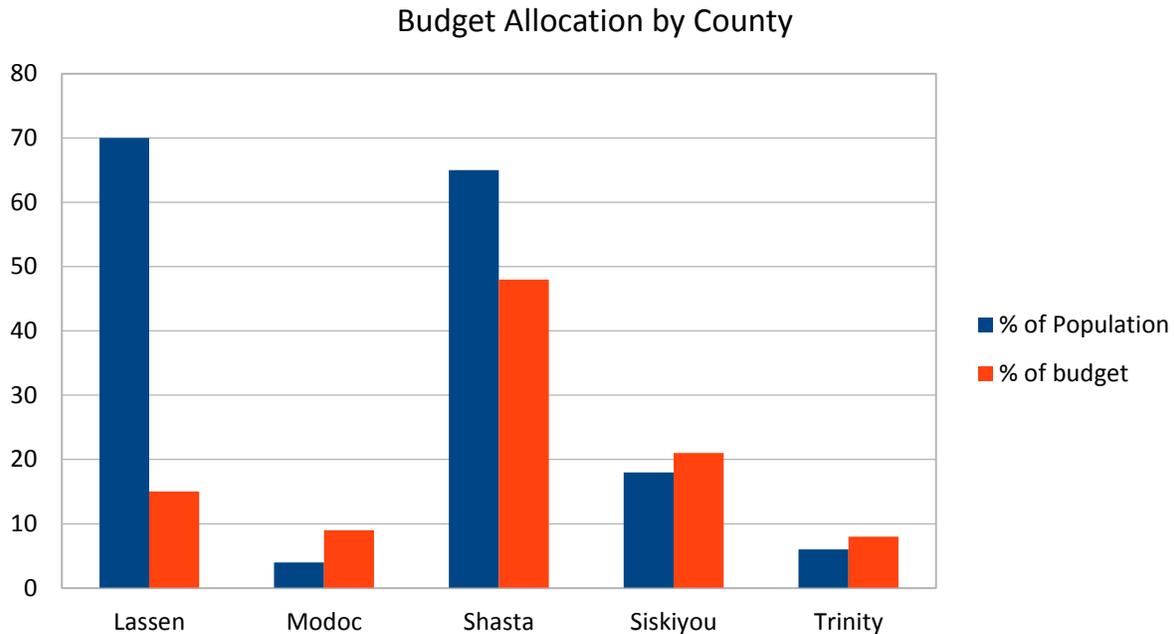
The Grand Jury also interviewed agency staff and contractors.

DISCUSSION

The agency handles senior services for five counties: Lassen, Modoc, Shasta, Siskiyou, and Trinity. This covers a fairly large geographic area, so it is reasonable that some costs, travel in particular, may be higher than average than in other areas in the state.

The agency handles eleven programs. Of these, only three are active in Siskiyou County: Nutrition, Caregiving (family members of disabled people over 60), and the Senior Information and Assistance Program. In Siskiyou County the agency does not run these programs itself; contractors do that.

PSA-2 is essentially a conduit for monies received from state and federal agencies. Most of this funding is mandated by law and regulated by a board of directors. Money is allocated to the counties according to a standard formula. Shasta County receives just under half of the available funds, with the remainder disbursed among the other four counties. The following chart shows the proportion of seniors over 65 for each county (from Census data) along with the proportion of the budget allocated to each county (2014-2015 agency budget):



In Siskiyou County, funds are distributed to contractors who provide the actual services. The contractors are Madrone Hospice, the Happy Camp Nutritional Center and the Mt. Shasta Recreation District. Madrone Hospice and Mt. Shasta Recreation District write grants to get funding from PSA-2. PSA-2 audits the contractors about once a quarter and administers the grants; the timing of the audit may vary depending on how funding comes in from the government. Contractors also provide much of their own funding from sources in addition to PSA-2. The total budget for PSA-2 in the five counties is \$1,226,055. Of this total, Siskiyou County receives approximately \$255,000. The county also receives additional funding from other sources. The nutrition program requires that each contractor hire a licensed nutritionist to plan the menus. This is an additional cost to the contractor and is included in the grant.

PSA-2 conducts information fairs at various places throughout the year, including Yreka (at the Community Center, in November) and Mt. Shasta (at the Mt. Shasta Resort in May), as well as in Redding and other places. PSA-2 uses some public service announcements and newspaper advertising. Local senior agencies help with advertising. Local agencies raise funds through various outreach programs. While they do some outreach, Madrone staff indicated that they need more volunteers and fresh ideas. In most cases, the contractors have received significant funding from cities and service clubs such as Kiwanis, Rotary, Lions and Elks. Contractors accept donations from seniors being served but do not formally charge for nutritional services.

FINDINGS

- F1) PSA-2 needs to better inform seniors of available services.
- F2) PSA-2 might assist contractors in seeking additional funding.
- F3) Mt Shasta Recreation District does a superb job serving seniors and obtaining additional funding.
- F4) Madrone indicated that they need more volunteers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- R1) PSA-2 might consider looking into additional methods of informing seniors about available services.
- R2) PSA-2 might consider using volunteers to assist with outreach.
- R3) PSA-2 might consider assisting contractors in finding additional sources of funding.

INVITED RESPONSES

Director of PSA-2



Photo by Dale Lehman

SISKIYOU COUNTY VETERANS SERVICES

Introduction

The Siskiyou County Veterans Service Office (SCVSO) is not the federal Veterans Administration; it is a county organization funded by the county and the state that serves veterans and their families and assists them in obtaining federal veterans benefits. According to information from the California Association of County Veterans Service Officers, Inc. (CACVSO), which oversees and directs activities of individual county veterans service offices in 57 of 58 California counties, approximately \$100 in federal benefits are brought in by every \$1 spent by the state. The VSO is the principal advocate in ensuring that veterans receive the benefits they have earned in serving our country. The Siskiyou County VSO states that, as advocates for veterans and their families, they are committed to providing the support veterans need with an attitude of caring, courtesy, and respect. Local veterans may be eligible for benefits of which they are not aware. They may contact the Siskiyou County Veterans Service Office located at 105 Oberlin Road in Yreka, at 530-842-8010.

Methodology

Staff from the SCVSO were interviewed and agency literature was studied.

Discussion

The Siskiyou County VSO was established in 1946. Staff stated the SCVSO serves veterans from World War II to current conflict veterans. In 2011, the office was moved to the Oberlin Road location. Based on the number of contacts they make over the year, staff estimates that there are 6,500 to 7,000 veterans in the county (higher than the state's figure of 5,480 veterans), with 70-80% being over the age of 60. The VSO:

- disseminates information on veterans benefits
- assists in applying for state and federal benefits
- facilitates the referral process to appropriate outside agencies
- helps obtain relevant military records and decorations
- provides information in locating transportation to local VA Medical Centers
- other services

The SCVSO also assists veterans in obtaining relevant documents and submitting claims for benefits to the appropriate VA Regional Office. They assist and guide veterans, surviving spouses and dependent children with:

- disability compensation

- non-service connected pensions
- dependency and indemnity compensation
- vocational rehabilitation
- burial and death benefits
- home loan eligibility
- widow's/death benefits
- education benefits
- VA life insurance
- national cemetery benefits
- healthcare/medical benefits.

The lobby has extensive amounts of informational material available. The very informative California Veterans Resource Book is available to all veterans and their family members.

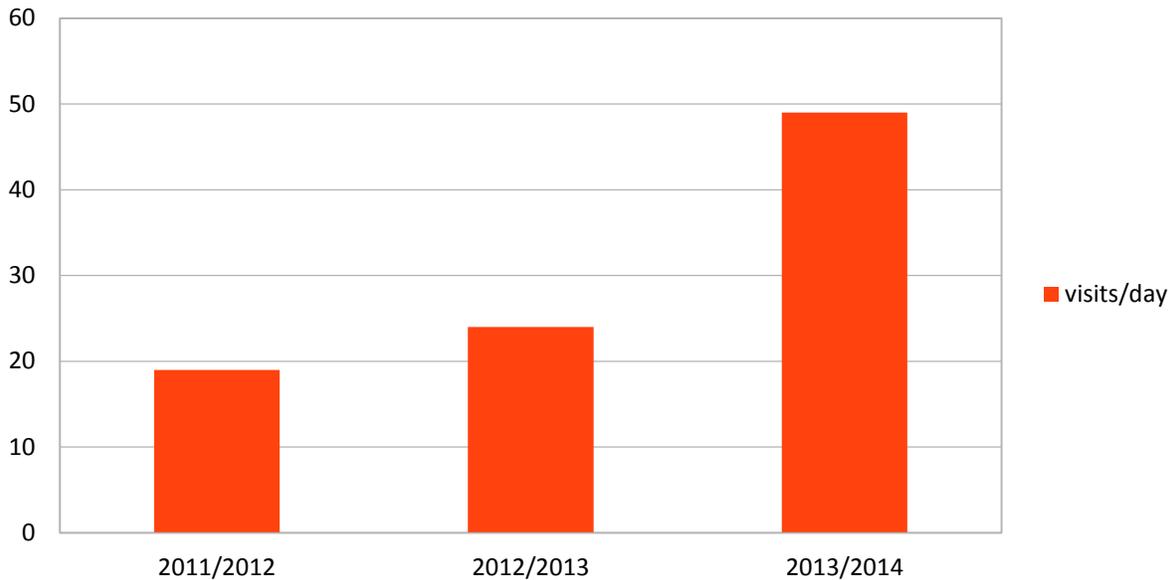
The Siskiyou County Veterans Service Office is budgeted under the Siskiyou County Sheriff's Office. Though this is somewhat unusual, two VS offices in other counties are also under the auspices of the Sheriff's department. In Siskiyou County, approximately \$52,000 of the SCVSO budget comes from the state, based on work load units, with the county providing the rest. The current Siskiyou County Sheriff donates a part of his salary to help fund the program. In 2012/2013 and 2013/2014, the California State legislature doubled its funding of the SCVSO, resulting in the hiring of additional staff; however, it could at any time rescind that funding for future fiscal years, in which case the SCVSO would potentially not be able to provide the level of staff and services to veterans they are currently offering.

Routine medical care is available at the VA medical facility adjacent to the Oberlin Road location. Veterans requiring specialized care are referred to VA hospitals in California and Oregon, with transportation available from volunteer drivers.

Outreach programs are conducted monthly at the Family Resource Centers in Mount Shasta, Dorris and Happy Camp. Outreach is also conducted at the Siskiyou County Fair, Fort Jones Christmas Parade and Etna Veterans Parade.

Statistics from the CACVSO indicate that Siskiyou County ranked 12th out of 32 "small counties" in California for workload units and financial benefits derived from that work. "Work load units" are measured by the number of forms submitted to the Veterans Administration; staff estimates this number separately from the actual number of contacts with veterans. In 2014, 634 claims were filed by the Siskiyou County VSO, with the average amount of each new award being \$4,143. The value of new and increased benefit payments in the county was \$2,626,450. Clearly, the addition of staff has resulted in a much improved rate of service to Siskiyou County veterans.

Increase in average number of daily visits by year



Conclusion

The Siskiyou County Veterans Service Office appears to be doing an excellent job of helping our local veterans given the small number of office personnel and budget limitations. The Civil Grand Jury encourages the County to continue funding this fine office and the important work they do, so that our veterans and their families continue to receive the benefits to which they are entitled, and which they so richly deserve. SCVSO are making the county's slogan “We Honor Veterans” a reality.



Photo by Amber Schriver

CHARLIE BYRD YOUTH CORRECTIONAL FACILITY

Summary

The Siskiyou County Civil Grand Jury is required to inspect the conditions and management of all correctional facilities in Siskiyou County on a yearly basis, according to Penal Code Section 919(b).

Background

The Charlie Byrd Youth Correctional Facility is located at 269 Sharps Road in Yreka, California. The facility was opened in January of 2006. There are eighteen Juvenile Corrections Officers that work varying shifts, one Senior Probation Officer, a Deputy Chief Probation Officer, three Field Officers and a Facility Manager.

Methodology

On October 23, 2014, members of the 2014/2015 Siskiyou County Civil Grand Jury conducted a Watchdog Investigation of the Charlie Byrd Correctional Youth Facility. The tour was led by the Chief Probation Officer, Deputy Chief Probation Officer and the Facility Manager.



Photo by Amber Schriver

Discussion

The building consists of two housing units; currently only one is in use. The classification system for the juveniles is color-coded shirts of yellow, blue or green. The colors are used to convey to the staff members the current judicial status of the juveniles. Minors earn points according to behavior, chores done, and contribution. When a juvenile is processed, the staff assesses risk and clothing is provided along with their color-coded shirt. Their personal possessions are stored and a cell is assigned.

Mental Health services are offered to juvenile offenders. The facility contracts with various agencies using grants to fund the use of equine therapy, individual and group counseling, and therapists. Substance abuse avoidance classes are also available to the juveniles. Religious services are held on Sundays.

Searches for drugs and contraband are continually conducted in the juvenile cells and surrounding areas of the facility. These searches ensure the safety of staff, visitors, delivery persons, and those incarcerated. All juvenile visitation is monitored by staff. There is a large visitation room available. It is used for visitation, staff training, group meetings, and family events such as culinary arts and musical performances. Minors with a reduction in points for poor behavior are allowed visits in a non-contact room. There have been two successful escapes from the facility in the past eight years.

There is a medical unit on site, and a nurse is on-call 24 hours a day. All juveniles incarcerated in the facility are seen by a nurse within 72 hours of booking. Emergency injury or illness cases are transported by ambulance, and non-emergency cases are transported by staff to Fairchild Medical Center in Yreka.

There are currently fewer than ten youths present in the facility daily on average. Staff attributes this low juvenile population to innovative Siskiyou County diversion programs, as well as the newly implemented Risk Assessment System. There is a culinary program available two days per week to juveniles, which teaches them to cook, clean, and learn nutritional values. The Siskiyou County Jail now provides all meals for the Juvenile Corrections Facility. There is also a garden and greenhouse area where they can learn to grow food.

Staff states that providing these services to juveniles and their families has resulted in a lower recidivism rate. Staff focuses on providing services geared toward minor rehabilitation and family reunification. Siskiyou County has one group home that houses females only, and has a capacity of six. Staff states that making family placements whenever possible has resulted in a lower recidivism rate for the juvenile offenders.

The options open to staff when booking a minor are:

- Detention in the Juvenile Corrections Facility
- Home incarceration
- Home ankle monitoring

- Release with formal or informal probation

There are GED courses available to the juveniles, as well as a library and a resource room. There are three credentialed staff and two aides. There are approximately 2,000 books available for juvenile education.

The conference room is now being used as a staff work area. Staff states there is not enough room for staff, file cabinets and cubicles.

Findings

F1. Staff needs an administration building with an appropriate amount of room to house staff, records, and staff cubicles.

Recommendation

R1. Since only one side of the Juvenile Corrections Facility is being used to house juvenile offenders, the other side could be used for the staff's administrative purposes.

SISKIYOU COUNTY TREASURER/TAX COLLECTOR AND AUDITOR/CONTROLLER

SUMMARY

This report details findings and recommendations relative to the cash investment policies and management process performed by the County Treasurer/Tax Collector's office.

- The elected Siskiyou County Treasurer/Tax Collector has *sole* control of the County's cash investment decisions.
- The Auditor/Controller's office performs audits of the Treasurer/Tax Collector, including cash investments. The monthly audits performed would be more beneficial if the auditors were aware of the cash investment policies and relevant state government codes.
- A Treasury Oversight Committee is not meeting regularly. Their responsibility is to audit annually; review and monitor cash investment policy.
- The County's decreased revenue has caused a reduction in operating budgets, including manpower. The Civil Grand Jury noted increased work load requirements among staff.
- The Auditor/Controller's office performs financial functions for many district entities. This work is performed without charge.

BACKGROUND

County Treasurers throughout California are generally charged with investing cash which is not required for current day to day use. Both large and small counties perform this function. Treasurers are elected officials and usually serve a four-year term. Siskiyou County is no exception, and has an elected Treasurer who, in Siskiyou County, is also the Tax Collector.

On most given days the Treasurer/Tax Collector office manages approximately one hundred million dollars (\$100,000,000) of invested funds. The county Treasurer/Tax Collector investment activities include cash from most county school districts, special districts and county funds in a pooled fund. These services are provided at no charge. These districts normally account for less than half of the total funds.

In Siskiyou County as well as in other counties in California, the Auditor/Controller's office participates in the management of cash investments. Their prime responsibility is to provide auditing services of cash being handled by the Treasury Department.

The Civil Grand Jury decided to review the cash investment process of the Siskiyou County Treasurer's office, but not the specific investments.

METHODOLOGY

The Grand Jury reviewed numerous documents from the Treasurer/Tax Collector's office as well as the Auditor/Controller's office. These included:

- The publication "State Law in California Affecting Local Codes and Ordinances" published by Municipal Code Corporation
- The 2011-2012 annual audit
- California Government code sections were studied as they apply directly to the Treasurer's function
- The Civil Grand Jury also conducted nine (9) interviews with county staff as well as elected officials involved in the process

DISCUSSION

Treasurer/Tax Collector

The Siskiyou County Treasurer/Tax Collector office has a staff of seven people including the elected Treasurer/Tax Collector. Their staff has been reduced by two (2) in recent years due to county budget issues, while department responsibilities have stayed the same. The county has been experiencing some decrease in revenue which has caused them to reduce operating budgets. This has been happening across California. These responsibilities primarily include investment services, general obligation bonds, tax collection services, special assessments, tax sales and seizures of property, information services, and occupancy tax and business licenses.

Approximately one third of the staff is involved in cash investments. Cross training of staff for backup has become more difficult due to reduced staff personnel.

The management of invested cash is controlled by California Government Code 53600-53610. This code specifies what investments can be made, and in some cases the amount of cash in certain investments and time limits. In addition, Siskiyou County has adopted a Treasury Investment Policy; the latest one reviewed by the Treasurer and approved by the Board of Supervisors was in May of 2014.

California Government Code 27130-27137, and County Treasury Investment Policy provide for an appointed five-member Treasury Oversight Committee to review and monitor adherence to investment policy. Code 27134 states: "*The county treasury oversight committee shall cause an annual audit to be conducted to determine the county treasurer's compliance with this article. The audit may include issues relating to the structure of the investment portfolio and risk.*" The County has appointed this committee, but it does not meet on a regular basis.

The County Treasurer/Tax Collector publishes a monthly investment report to the Oversight Committee, Board of Supervisors and other county officials. This report details current cash investments.

The Treasurer/Tax Collector invests primarily through a Local Agency Investment Fund (LAIF). LAIF is established by the state treasurer for the benefit of local agencies, and has its own investment officers and controls. LAIF invests on a pooled basis and distributes losses or earnings to the participants.

The Treasurer/Tax Collector uses a bank as a trustee to purchase and sell securities or other financial instruments. Currently the Treasurer/Tax Collector is earning about one percent.

Another responsibility of the Treasurer/Tax Collector is to make sure the investment strategy gives the county and other districts the liquidity and safety required.

Auditor/Controller

The Auditor/Controller is an elected office in the County of Siskiyou. In other counties this office may be appointed. The Auditor/Controller office has a staff of thirteen, which includes the Auditor/Controller. This office has had staff reductions recently, but work requirements have remained constant. Cross training of staff for backup purposes has become more difficult due to these staff reductions. Auditor/Controller staff have many functions within the county. Some examples include payroll, payment of county obligations, recording of county funds received, monitoring of budgets and auditing services. They also provide accounting services to over two dozen special districts and other entities within the county. They try to alternate their auditors so that the same staff members are not dealing with each other month after month. Staff reductions make this more difficult.

A prime responsibility of the Auditor/Controller's office to the Treasurer/Tax Collector is to audit cash handling in the Treasurer/Tax Collector's office. Audits ensure that all cash is accounted for. These monthly audits are not published. If issues arise, they are shared with appropriate staff. It is not the job of the auditors to determine if investments follow state government investment codes or county guidelines, but to make certain all cash is accounted for.

The Auditor/Controller's office also manages the outside annual independent county audit, which includes the audit of the Treasurer/Tax Collector. The last annual published audit, as of this report, was for the year ending June 30, 2012. This audit contains substantial information about Treasurer/Tax Collector cash investments.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

F1) The elected Treasurer/Tax Collector is in sole control of Siskiyou County cash investment decisions. This may not be unique to, or improper, in small counties like Siskiyou County. It raises the question of having qualified backup for this critical function. Should the Treasurer/Tax Collector not be able to perform duties of cash investment management,

continuity issues could arise. Cross training is occurring in various areas, but due to staff reductions this may be limited.

F2) The Auditor/Controller's office performs audits of the Treasurer/Tax Collector's office on a monthly basis. They try to alternate their auditors so that the same staff members are not dealing with each other month after month. Staff reductions make this more difficult. The monthly audits performed would be more beneficial if the auditors were aware of the relevant government code and the Treasurer's office cash investment policy.

The monthly audit of the cash in the Treasurer/Tax Collector's office is an important service. This office manages, on a daily basis, an average of one hundred million dollars (\$100,000,000) in investment cash. To maintain credibility, the auditor as well as the Auditor/Controller's office needs to be independent of the Treasurer/Tax Collector's office.

F3) The *Treasury Oversight Committee* is not meeting regularly. The committee does receive monthly County Treasury Investment Reports. The reports detail the current invested cash. Their responsibility is to conduct an annual audit, review and monitor investment policy. County policy may be inconsistent with state government code.

F4) The county has been experiencing some decrease in revenue which has caused them to reduce operating budgets. This has been happening across California.

The Board of Supervisors, Auditor/Controller's Office, and Treasurer/Tax Collector need to work closely to fund or reduce workloads.

The numbers of parcels taxed does not decline, so work requirements remain the same. Tax revenue dollars might decline, but departments still have the same expenses. Budgets still need monitoring, and audits still need to be performed. It was noted that audits of other county departments have declined due to staff reductions. Some examples of potential problems associated with increased staff workloads could include collecting tax delinquencies and property seizures.

F5) The Auditor/Controller's office performs financial functions for over two dozen special districts and other entities within the county. These services are provided at no charge.

Recommendations

R1) The Civil Grand Jury feels it is important that the Treasurer/Tax Collector share information with key staff members at least monthly. This should include strategy, liquidity goals, contacts, reports, software and location of key information.

R2) It is not the job of the auditors to determine if investments follow state government investment codes or county guidelines, but to make certain all cash is accounted for. It would be helpful if the auditors are aware of government investment codes and Siskiyou County Treasurer investment policy. This would allow them to highlight items needing attention should the audits reveal something of interest. Currently these items may only be noted by the independent, annual outside auditor's process.

Rotation of auditor personnel needs to be a high priority. Separation of duties of these departments must be maintained as much as possible to keep an independent view.

R3) If the oversight committee is to be an important factor in the auditing process, they should meet after the independent outside auditor's report is published. This would allow committee review of audit results, and a discussion of any findings. County investment policy should be reviewed by the oversight committee, specifically regarding the oversight committee functions (Gov. Code Sections: 27130, 27132.4, 27133, and 27134)

R4) Staff interviews revealed that the Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors (B.O.S.) is aware of potential problems caused by increased individual workloads.

All departments should research how to become more efficient, and modify work procedures to improve work output.

If the Auditor/Controller and Treasurer/Tax Collector have suggestions for improvement, they need to be considered.

R5) The BOS. may consider reviewing this policy and determine if it would be appropriate to charge for financial services being performed for these entities. It seems logical that users of these services should pay for the work that is performed. The burden now falls to the general taxpayers of the county. This policy of billing for services is done in other counties in California. The income received by the Auditor/Controller's office could pay for additional staff or projects.

RESPONSE REQUESTED

Pursuant to Penal Code section 933.05 the Civil Grand Jury requests responses as follows:

Treasurer/Tax Collector – Findings 1, 3, 4, and 5 and recommendations 1, 3, 4, and 5

Auditor/Controller – Findings 2, 4, 5 and recommendations 3, 4, and 5

Board of Supervisors – Findings 4 and 5 and recommendations 4 and 5



Photo by Amber Schriver

Siskiyou County Jail

SUMMARY

Concerns have been raised about overcrowding in the Siskiyou County Jail. In addition, plans to build a new jail are still under discussion by the Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors (BOS). The new deadline for making a decision is, at the time this report was written, November 2015.

BACKGROUND

The Siskiyou County Grand Jury inspects the conditions and management of all correctional facilities in Siskiyou County on a yearly basis as directed by Penal Code Section 919(b). A tour of the Siskiyou County Jail was conducted and information presented by representatives of the Sheriff's Department on October 16, 2014; this report is the result of that tour.

METHODOLOGY

Members of the 2015 Civil Grand Jury toured the County jail, interviewed jail staff, and read several articles in the Siskiyou Daily News.

DISCUSSION

The current jail was built in 1987, with a capacity of 104 beds (double celled). The jail now averages 98 inmates daily (which means that on some days, the jail is over capacity) due to AB 109 Post-Release Community Supervision (PRCS) policies which demand that felony inmates be housed in the county under certain circumstances, rather than being sent to state prisons. There is no possibility for expansion of the current jail; it cannot be built upwards, and there is no space to build more infrastructure such as laundry and kitchen facilities in order to serve the increased population. It is not possible to extend the building out into the parking lot area, either. According to jail staff, the cost of sending inmates out of county to other jails in the case of overcrowding is approximately \$80 per day per inmate; if 50 inmates are sent out per year, the cost is estimated at \$1,440,000 per year, plus transportation costs. Staff is also responsible for transporting inmates to court hearings; currently about 12 inmates per day are transported.

Staff reported that they are currently understaffed by eight positions, and have not had a raise in pay in approximately seven years. They also reported safety concerns about being unable to isolate and/or segregate certain prisoners as necessary because of gang affiliations and classification issues due to the overcrowded conditions. In addition, staff raised safety concerns due to the location of the current jail in the middle of the city of Yreka. Jail staff mentioned the possibility of potential lawsuits if the jail remains overcrowded. There are 11 protective custody beds and four administrative segregation beds. If hospital beds within the jail are utilized, a total of 17 beds are available for inmates who need to be segregated from the general population due to violence or the nature of their crime. Due to AB109 PRCS, inmates convicted of felonies and

having violated probation are currently housed in the jail, as opposed to prisons. On average, according to staff, 14.7 jail beds are taken up by PRCS inmates. These inmates are meant to have non-violent, non-sexual, non-serious offenses, but their classification as such is based on their probation violation, not their original offense or history of convictions. There has also been an increase in the number of older and more medically fragile inmates who need special housing and care. Staff project that by 2020, 279 beds will be needed to house inmates, and 303 beds by 2030. If these projections are accurate, the new jail under consideration as of the date of this report (Spring 2015) will be obsolete by the time it is built. However, if the passage of Proposition 47 (which reduces many felonies to misdemeanors) results in fewer inmates being incarcerated, it is possible that the jail would actually have fewer inmates. It is difficult to predict exactly how Siskiyou County and its jail population will be impacted by the various changes in these and other laws.

As stated in the 2013/2014 Civil Grand Jury Report, Siskiyou County was awarded a grant under AB 900 to design and build a new jail for the county. A 5% match by the county is required, and time is of the essence, as the offered funding has an expiration date. It may be extended, or other funding may be found somehow, but this is unlikely at the time of writing. Accurate figures regarding cost are hard to obtain, as the numbers vary depending on who is giving them. A recent article (dated January 29, 2015) in the Siskiyou Daily News states that the county was “awarded a \$24.1 million grant” to replace the jail, with a funding gap of \$7.5 million; jail staff reported a much smaller funding gap of \$2 - \$3 million. A later article, dated January 30, 2015, stated that the architectural firm in charge of the process has determined that costs could be reduced by using a different type of concrete for exterior walls and eliminating previously planned roads and parking lots (which could possibly be added later). In addition, there was discussion about proposals to eliminate the proposed kitchen and infirmary as a cost-saving measure, but it was unclear from the article whether these measures were to be taken or not, and if so, what additional savings might be incurred. Of course, eliminating plans for a kitchen does not eliminate the need for feeding inmates, and a cost-benefit analysis would have to be generated to ascertain whether or not it is even feasible to outsource meals, much less whether it would be economically possible. As it appears that most inmates are seen at Fairchild Medical Center for serious illnesses, and that a nurse can be called for less serious ailments, perhaps the impact of not having an infirmary and its services available will be minimal. The fact that there is sufficient space at the proposed new jail site to add these features later if necessary, when more funds might become available, is encouraging.

The design, bid, and construction of a new jail occurs in phases, and Siskiyou County is currently in Phase Two of the AB900 funding process. Due to financial constraints, jail staff stated that the initial plan for a 180 bed facility has been reduced to 150 beds, with space at the site (27.28 acres on N. Foothill Drive in Yreka, of which the jail would occupy approximately 7.8 acres) to build another facility later on if necessary. As stated earlier, if staff estimates prove to be accurate, a 150-bed jail would be obsolete by the year 2020, and although the situation would be better than it currently stands because there would be room to expand the jail, more costs would be incurred to avoid overcrowding once again. According to staff, at current funding estimates, the jail would be understaffed by ten positions. The Sheriff’s Department estimates the county will need to fund approximately 5%, or \$2-3 million of the cost. However, as time passes, estimated costs increase; if the new jail is approved, occupancy is now estimated to be August 2019, as opposed to last year’s estimate of 2018. Suggestions for funding the gap in construction

costs include a 5% sales tax increase, sale of surplus property, use of the insurance payment from the loss of the gold display, lease revenue bonds, or possibly a SB 863 grant (realignment funds), among others.

A Siskiyou Daily News article dated January 30, 2015, states that in the meeting held January 29, 2015, the Supervisors “directed staff to set up some informational meetings in the coming months to assist in making the decision of whether or not to proceed with the project”. An article in the Siskiyou Daily News dated March 12, 2015, states that “a delay in implementing a second round of funding” has resulted in an extension of the deadline for deciding whether or not to fund the jail to November 2015.

The Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors’ response to last year’s report regarding the jail indicated that they “continue to work closely with the Sheriff’s Office in the construction of a new jail facility...However, securing and maintaining a stable revenue source for construction and facility operations remains a serious obstacle for counties throughout California... Siskiyou County does not have the revenue base as other California Counties may possess...At this time, Siskiyou County does not have adequate financial reserves or sufficient fund balances to offset unforeseen contingency costs during construction nor does the county maintain extra revenue streams that are stable to fund operations once the facility is constructed... the fact remains financial resources are not yet available to meet this need and any future long or short term revenue growth does not indicate that picture will significantly improve.”

Planning for a new jail appears to be proceeding, despite a stated lack of funding resources necessary for building the jail, much less staffing it. An article in the Siskiyou Daily News dated January 23, 2015, reports that “...the city of Yreka is currently improving infrastructure on Foothill Drive using State Transportation Improvement Program funding” to include a sewer main to the property, and that the Supervisors unanimously approved a Memorandum of Understanding with the city “that would allow the main to be built with the county later reimbursing the city for up to \$100,000”. In addition, the county has currently invested between \$250,000 and \$400,000 in a feasibility study and other preliminary costs, as well as the cost of the property acquired for building the new jail, without having made a decision as to whether or not to actually build it.

FINDINGS

F1. The County Board of Supervisors are to be commended for continuing to explore options for a new jail, and for continuing to inform the public about progress in that direction.

F2. Apparently, the BOS is now directing staff to set up informational meetings. While it may have been more timely to set this process in motion earlier, it is understandable that as new information becomes available, new issues arise that must be dealt with; however, it is to be hoped that the BOS will move forward with energy and efficiency to make this decision a priority.

F3. It is hoped that much research and planning will be done between now and November 2015, and that the BOS will work in close collaboration with the Sheriff’s office and the firm of architects, so that a sound decision is made regarding this very important matter.

RECOMMENDATIONS

R1. The Board of Supervisors should continue to keep the residents of Siskiyou County informed about the progress being made in this endeavor in a timely manner as events unfold.

R2. The Civil Grand Jury recommends that the Board of Supervisors move forward with all possible speed to determine what funding is available to build a new jail, consulting closely with the Sheriff's Department, the architectural firm, and other prison and jail personnel who have recent experience with building new facilities.

R3. The Civil Grand Jury would like clarification from the Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors as to whether or not they plan to build a new jail. If so, the Civil Grand Jury would like to know what specific plans the BOS has to fund both the jail's construction and its operation. Also to be considered is under what conditions the jail could be built and staffed; for instance, whether it is feasible to include a kitchen and infirmary, and if not, what measures would be taken to provide for health care and meals.

R4. If the County Board of Supervisors opts not to build a new jail, the Civil Grand Jury would like to hear what plans the Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors has to deal with current and potential future overcrowding in the jail.

Invitations to Respond

None at this time.



Photo by Dale Lehman

Weed School District Fire Evacuation: Lessons Learned

SUMMARY

The Civil Grand Jury decided to review the evacuation plans of Weed schools due to the recent Boles Fire. No lives were lost and no students were injured; however, things could have been much worse had a number of people not gone beyond the bounds of duty to aid in the evacuation. As a result, significant changes have been made to the evacuation plans.

The Civil Grand Jury wishes to commend teachers, staff, students and concerned citizens for being diligent in the performance of their duties.

BACKGROUND

The Civil Grand Jury felt that an investigation would be valuable not only to the Weed School District but to other school districts as well.

METHODOLOGY

- Interviews with the Weed Elementary School staff
- Interviews with Big Springs Elementary School staff
- Interviews with Weed High School staff

DISCUSSION

A number of things were noted in these interviews:

All schools conduct regular emergency drills in association with law enforcement and fire officials. These drills cover not only fire, but intruders, predators, and natural disasters as well.

School principals and first responders meet at least once a month to review and improve disaster plans. Since the Boles Fire, these plans have been revised.

Weed schools conduct fire drills once a month. Once a year, a full evacuation drill is held. At this time an actual evacuation is conducted. The students leave the building and gather at an evacuation site off campus. As it happens, this evacuation drill was scheduled to occur a few days after the fire. This meant that there were several new employees who had never participated in an evacuation. All rose to the occasion and did their part with no major issues.

Prior to the Boles Fire, the drills stopped when the students were safely gathered in the evacuation area. There was no plan of action beyond that.

The principals at both Weed Elementary and Weed High Schools decided not to pull a fire alarm at first. School officials stated that under the circumstances, a noisy fire alarm would

drown out the school intercom system. Instead, instructions were issued over the intercom system and a 911 call was made. This allowed the instructions to be clearly heard.

Weed Elementary School has a system for checking whether all students are present after evacuating the building. Each teacher has one red and one green card. If all students are present, the teacher holds up the green card. If a red card is held up, one or more students are missing. This allows for a quick check. Once all children are accounted for, the elementary students proceed to Lobus Field as planned. Prior to the fire, elementary classes lined up in age order, kindergarten up to eighth grade. The order has now been changed to allow and encourage older children to help.

Many of the seventh and eighth graders comforted the younger children and assisted in getting them to safety. Once the children arrived at Lobus Field on the Weed High School Campus, older students also voluntarily helped in managing the younger students.

Weed High school students were allowed to go to their cars and leave the school in accordance with school policy.

Staff checked to be sure all students were out of the building; power to the buildings was then turned off.

The evacuation area was under imminent threat of fire as well. The original safe area was Lobus Field. Both principals deemed this area unsafe, so the students were moved to the nearby football practice field.

The bus drivers were preparing the buses for the afternoon run when the alarm sounded at the high school. They drove the buses to the evacuation area and positioned for a quick exit.

Neither principal had contact with fire and police personnel at this point. The high school principal contacted the Siskiyou County Office of Education to inform them the evacuation site had been changed. The Education Office then contacted Big Springs Elementary School to set up an evacuation point there. The Education Office also informed first responders, who were quick to arrive at the new site.

The students were loaded onto the buses and transported to Big Springs Elementary School - far enough away to be safe. First responders assisted in this evacuation. Law enforcement provided the exit route from Weed High School to Hoy Park at Lake Shastina. They then traveled from Hoy Park down Big Springs Road to Big Springs Elementary School. Note that this was not in the original evacuation plan.

The Big Springs Elementary School principal was advised by the county Office of Education that students from Weed were on the way. He was able to take advantage of his Siskiyou After School For Everyone (SAFE) program to accommodate the students and staff in his gym. This was done with minimal disruption to Big Springs classes. The SAFE program provided water and snacks to the evacuated students and staff. Weed Elementary and High School staff had a list of the evacuated students present and took charge of reuniting families.

A number of parents panicked. Some parents drove up to the school and took their students. This caused significant problems in keeping track of the students. All children were eventually accounted for.

The Weed school principals were not able to communicate with first responders because cell phone communication was not effective.

The elementary school principal had difficulty communicating with staff in the outdoor environment.

Staff was not prepared to discuss what would happen in the event of a disaster such as a significant volcanic eruption that would cause major disruptions over a significant portion of the county.

Prior to the fire, principals and superintendents were meeting regularly with fire and police officials to discuss evacuation plans. Since the fire, significant changes have been made to the plan, including alternate evacuation routes and walking paths. In addition, the schools have implemented a new procedure for communicating with parents.

FINDINGS

F1) Training made the evacuation plan successful.

F2) All staff should be commended for quick and calm thinking. Staff worked hard to insure that all children were safe.

F3) Panicking parents are a major concern in carrying out any evacuation plan.

F4) A significant factor in the success of the evacuation in this case was individuals improvising to insure all students were safe when the plan was insufficient.

F5) At the time of the fire, there was no means of effective communication among schools, parents, and first responders.

F6) The plan did not provide for the possibility that the planned refuge might itself be unsafe, or that the evacuation route might be blocked.

F7) Planning does not include drills for large-scale events such as volcanic eruptions.

F8) Some staff had not yet had experience in handling a fire evacuation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

R1) The evacuation drill should include a simulated parent/student pick up. It might be wise to give information to the parents so they know what the procedure is. If parents know what the school is doing, and why they are doing it, they may not panic as much.

R2) Provide two-way radios (or other means of communication) so that school staff and emergency personnel can communicate. The schools should have bullhorns and whistles for on-site communications.

R3) Include all staff such as custodians, and cafeteria workers, etc., in the evacuation plan.

R4) Determine alternate evacuation routes. Have a refuge far enough away to be safe even in a major disaster.

R5) Change the fire alarm sound from a noisy siren to something that doesn't interfere with communications. Perhaps a calm voice that simply informs classes that a fire has been discovered, evacuate immediately, would work.

R6) Include plans for a large-scale event or natural disaster.

Invited responses

- Weed Elementary School
- Weed High School
- Big Springs Elementary School

DISCLAIMER

The grand jury attempted to interview first responders for confirmation of this report but was unable to do so.



Photo by Dale Lehman

SISKIYOU COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY RESPONSES TO THE 2013-2014 FINAL REPORT

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Introduction

The 2014-2015 Civil Grand Jury presents the responses to the work accomplished by the 2013-2014 Civil Grand Jury. This year's Civil Grand Jury has chosen to publish these reports as a document separate from the investigative reports.

Pursuant to the law, the government entities investigated must respond to the recommendations and findings of the 2013-2014 Civil Grand Jury. This report enables the public to evaluate whether Siskiyou County agencies are serving the public interest. Agencies that fail to respond are brought to the attention of the public.

The current Civil Grand Jury wishes to provide follow up and accountability to the public regarding the 2013-2014 reports.

In conclusion, this separate public document enables the public to see their county government in action.

Additional detailed information can be found in the 2013-2014 Civil Grand Jury Report.

DEADWOOD CONSERVATION CAMP WATER ISSUE

BACKGROUND

The 2013-2014 Civil Grand Jury conducted a mandatory watchdog investigation of the Deadwood Conservation Camp in accordance with Penal Code Section 919(b). This section of the Penal Code requires the Civil Grand Jury to conduct an annual inspection of every detention facility within Siskiyou County.

The watchdog investigation had determined that the Deadwood Conservation Camp may have difficulty supplying adequate water volume due to the drought.

Response:

The Board of Supervisors agrees that a larger pump will be purchased for the well if it becomes necessary.

The 2014-2015 Civil Grand Jury reviewed the response by the Board of Supervisors. During the 2014-2015 tour, the Civil Grand Jury determined that the water source for the camp is adequate. The camp has significantly decreased their water consumption from fifteen thousand gallons per day to eleven thousand gallons per day. The purchase of a larger water pump is not necessary at this time.

The 2014-2015 Civil Grand Jury accepts the response and no further actions are necessary.

SISKIYOU COUNTY FISH & GAME COMMISSION

BACKGROUND

The Fish & Game Commission is an advisory body to the Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors. They report methods of and make recommendations regarding the propagation and protection of fish and game in the County of Siskiyou.

The 2013-2014 Civil Grand Jury determined four areas of Findings and Recommendations.

Findings

F1:

Notices of public meetings are not being posted

F2:

Fish & Game Commissioners are not aware of county ordinances

F3:

Expenditures do not comply with the County Fish & Game Commission

Ordinances or with State of California Fish & Game Code Sections 13100 and 13103

F4:

Job vacancies and re-appointments are not being posted

RESPONSES:

R1:

The Board of Supervisors will remind the Fish & Game Commissioners to post meeting dates and times prior to the meetings.

R2:

The Board of Supervisors concurs with Finding 2. A copy of County and State Ordinances will be provided to the Commissioners.

R3:

The Board of Supervisors will recommend that the Fish & Game Commissioner Representative be made aware of expenditures concerning county and state ordinances.

R4:

The Board of Supervisors does not concur with the Civil Grand Jury that all vacancies and re-appointments are not well posted.

This Civil Grand Jury determined through further investigation that postings of the Fish & Game Commission vacancies and re-appointments are being posted.

The 2014-2015 Civil Grand Jury accepts the responses and no further action is necessary.

SEXUAL ASSAULT RESPONSE TEAM (SART)

BACKGROUND

The Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) assists victims of sexual crimes. SART is a multidisciplinary team providing victim-centered response with quality care to victims of sexual assault. A collaborative response team addresses the physical, emotional, financial, and legal needs of victims.

The 2013-2014 Civil Grand Jury made the following findings and recommendations:

Findings

F1:

Examination rooms are expensive.

F2:

The District Attorney's Office currently seeks outside funding via grants to offset the financial costs of operating the SART program.

F3:

Currently, registered nurses are not paid for the time they spend in SART training.

RESPONSES:

R1:

The Board of Supervisors concurred with the Civil Grand Jury and provided a full interview office at the request of the District Attorney prior to the Civil Grand Jury Report. No mention was made regarding the cost and expense of an examination room.

R2:

The Board of Supervisors concurs with the Civil Grand Jury recommendation and will have staff seek out applicable funding sources for the SART program.

R3:

The Board of Supervisors concurs with the Civil Grand Jury, and will direct staff to seek out applicable funding sources to reimburse out-of-pocket expenses for registered nurses receiving the required forensic training to assist sexual assault victims.

So far, no funding has been made available.

PUBLIC SAFETY REALIGNMENT & POST RELEASE COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS PARTNERSHIP (PRCCP) (AB109)

BACKGROUND

AB109, or Public Safety Realignment, was enacted to reduce the state prison population as mandated by court order. This law changed the landscape of California criminal justice by shifting what previously had been state responsibilities to the counties. The Probation Department is responsible for the non-violent, non-serious, and non-high risk offenders.

Findings

F1:

A larger Day Reporting Center is recommended to provide adequate space for classes and private rooms for counseling.

The 2013-2014 Civil Grand Jury Report recommended that the Probation Department be combined into one location at the Juvenile Hall Center. Adult offenders would not be allowed at the Juvenile Hall facility. The expansion of office space is for the probation officers only, not the offenders.

Responses:

R1: The Board of Supervisors (**BOS**) disagrees with the Civil Grand Jury approach, but will continue to lobby for funding to provide space for the Probation Department.

The BOS is aware of the space needed and considers this to be an unmet need for the county.

LAKE SHASTINA POLICE DEPARTMENT

BACKGROUND

Lake Shastina is a Community Service District (CSD); it is not an incorporated city. In January 2013, the CSD combined the police and fire departments into one Department of Public Safety. The consolidation of these two departments was primarily due to financial concerns.

Findings:

F1:

The police department's budget is not being fully funded by current parcel fees. Reserve funds are being used to balance their budget.

F2:

Some CSD board members are unaware of their term durations.

F3:

CSD board members lack knowledge of the police department's budget.

F4:

The animal control kennel is in need of repair and is inadequate in inclement weather.

F5: The police department currently does not have a policy manual.

RESPONSES

R1:

An increase in parcel fees through a voters' ballot measure failed. CSD will continue to seek funding for the Public Safety Department.

R2:

CSD members have been made aware of their term durations on the Board.

R3:

CSD members are more aware of the Public Safety Department's budget.

R4:

There was no response to the animal control kennel condition finding.

R5:

Findings 4 & 5 responses were not received from the Chief of Police as requested.

The 2014-2015 Civil Grand Jury toured the police department in regards to Finding 4.

The recommendation for repairs to the shelter has not been fully implemented.

A wind break has been constructed on two sides of the kennel. Exposure to inclement weather is still an issue. The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) standards should be consulted. It is understood that funding remains an issue. The CSD should provide funding necessary for a much-needed shelter for animals located in their district.

F5:

The police department does not have a policy manual. One should be made available to all employees.

The 2014-2015 Civil Grand Jury found that a policy manual does exist.

CITY OF FORT JONES ADMINISTRATION OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANTS (CDBG)

BACKGROUND

Many cities in Siskiyou County have Community Development Block Grant programs (CDBG). CDBGs are awarded to local jurisdictions on a competitive bid basis by the State of California using taxpayer funds. These grants are used to make loans to both individuals and businesses that would not normally qualify for loans by traditional lending institutions.

The 2013-2014 Civil Grand Jury decided to review CDBG programs within Siskiyou County and elected to review the process utilized by the Town of Fort Jones.

The 2014-2015 Civil Grand Jury has determined that the Town of Fort Jones responded appropriately to the Findings and Recommendations.

The town staff of Fort Jones is to be commended for the work they do. No further recommendations need to be addressed.

CITY OF WEED ADMINISTRATION OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANTS (CDBG)

BACKGROUND

The City of Weed has over 70 outstanding loans totaling approximately 3.3 million dollars according to their “2012-2013 Annual Recap.” The categories of loans are Economic Development Block Grants (EDBG) and Community Development Block Grants (CDBG); repayment can either be deferred or non-deferred.

The 2013-2014 Civil Grand Jury made 13 Findings and Recommendations to the City of Weed.

The City of Weed has failed to respond to any of the 13 Findings and Recommendations as mandated by Penal Code Section 933.05. The Siskiyou County Superior Court and the District Attorney should consider pursuing this matter.

The 2014-2015 Civil Grand Jury suggests that the 2015-2016 Civil Grand Jury consider further investigation into the City of Weed CDBG and EDBG funding of taxpayer monies to individuals and businesses. In addition, the City of Weed should be compelled to explain why they did not respond.

More details can be found in the 2013-2014 Civil Grand Jury Report.



Photo by Dale Lehman