



Office of the Sheriff

1400 E. Main Street, Quincy, California 95971 • (530) 283-6375 • Fax 283-6344

GREGORY J. HAGWOOD
SHERIFF/CORONER

Response to the 2011-2012 Grand Jury report

By: Sheriff Gregory J. Hagwood

The Plumas County Sheriff's Office provides public safety, emergency service, law enforcement and security for the courts and the citizens of Plumas County. The County Jail is operated by the Sheriff, an elected official. The County Jail houses inmates detained awaiting trial, inmates that have been sentenced to a County Jail term and those sentenced to State prison and awaiting transfer. It is the sheriff's responsibility to provide for the safety and welfare of these inmates in a humane manner and in accordance with state and federal mandates.

The Plumas County Grand Jury completed its required tour of the Jail facility in September of 2011 with at least one follow up inspection later in the year.

The following is the Sheriff's response to the finding as documented in the annual Grand Jury Report.

The Grand Jury is correct in stating the Jail is currently operating under a Federal Consent Decree. This decree has been in place since 1992 as a result of federal litigation brought against the county in 1989. Active measures are currently being taken in an effort to gain relief from this decree. Our efforts to gain relief will largely be contingent upon maintaining adequate staffing at the facility. It is anticipated that staffing will improve in the correctional facility in the coming months as four deputy sheriff's will be laid off due to budget reductions and those former deputies will assume positions in the correctional facility thereby allowing us to maintain appropriate staffing levels.

The Grand Jury noted in its findings that the correctional facility is old and efforts have been undertaken to periodically renovate or update portions of the facility. It is agreed that the facility, because of its age, is difficult, labor intensive and expensive to maintain.

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By Therese Phelps Clerk

I do not anticipate this changing anytime soon; in fact this will only worsen with time. The only solution to this ongoing problem will be the construction of a new correctional facility. The Sheriff has identified an appropriate property with a suitable existing building that would provide land for a new correctional facility as well as accommodating the entire Sheriff's Office as well as the Probation Department. The property is currently available for purchase at a price of approximately two million dollars and the Sheriff has determined that most of the debt service can be realized without impacting the general fund by utilizing solar energy, maintaining the current tenant which occupies approximately 1/3 of the building and selling the surplus properties currently occupied by the Sheriff's Office and the Probation Department. At least one member of the Board of Supervisors has already publicly stated they will not support this proposal so it is doubtful that this opportunity to build a new jail will be realized anytime soon. Therefore the county can reasonably anticipate the ongoing and increasing expenses and liability exposures associated with this facility for many years to come.

The Grand Jury also correctly points out that perimeter security is grossly inadequate to prevent the transfer of contraband from areas of public access to the inmate population. This is an accurate observation and this condition will exist until such time that a new facility is built. For clarification, "contraband" is a term that includes firearms, knives and other weapons as well as narcotics.

Other findings noted in the report include damaged and missing recreational equipment, wiring hazards, damaged walls and flooring, unsafe furniture, missing emergency medical equipment, a failure to label valves and their functions and a failure to train staff on valve locations, functions and operations. These are accurate observations and remedial measures have been taken to address these issues. Most of these issues were corrected during the term of the Grand Jury and the corrections are noted in their report.

The Grand Jury correctly points out that radio and wireless phone communications lack integration and functionality as reported by the 2010/2011 Grand Jury report. During the course of the last eight months upgraded radio equipment has been installed in the facility and hand held radios which has significantly improved radio function in the building.

The Grand Jury correctly notes that the Jail Policy and Operations manual is grossly inadequate and outdated. During the course of the past year we have sourced the latest and contemporary operations and policy material relating to Jail operations. This material is currently being reviewed and modified to address the issues specific to our operations and the Sheriff anticipates full implementation of the updated Orders and Policies prior to the end of this calendar year.

The grand Jury report correctly points out a lack of documentation that deficiencies noted in the 2008 Fire Marshal's inspection of the jail have been corrected. This issue has been addressed and corrected. On May 30, 2012 the Fire Marshal inspected the jail and deficiencies are being addressed by staff and Facility Services.

The Grand Jury correctly notes that Corrections Standards Authority has documented areas of non compliance related to staffing levels. This has been a consistent theme in CSA inspections for many years. It is anticipated that this issue will be finally satisfied as the Sheriff's Office has obtained outside (non general fund) funding for three additional correctional officers as well as the four sheriff's deputies that will be demoting to correctional officers. Over the past year the Correctional Facility has suffered a disproportionate number of injury related absences and subsequent retirements in addition to several officers departing for other non injury related reason. It is hoped that the correctional staff will stabilize this year with sufficient staffing levels to bring relief from the consent decree and satisfy the Corrections Standard Authority.

The Grand Jury makes a number of recommendations at the conclusion of their report and the Sheriff agrees, without exception, to these recommendations.

The Sheriff has consistently and repeatedly invited the Board of Supervisors to tour the correctional facility at their convenience as well as review, at any time, our financial records or interview our staff.

The Sheriff wishes to thank the Grand Jury for their dedicated efforts and hard work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gregory J. Hagwood', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Sheriff Gregory J. Hagwood