

# BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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TERRY SWOFFORD, DISTRICT 1  
KEVIN GOSS, DISTRICT 2  
SHERRIE THRALL, DISTRICT 3  
LORI SIMPSON, DISTRICT 4  
JEFF ENGEL, DISTRICT 5



September 29, 2016

The Honorable Janet Hilde  
Presiding Judge  
Superior Court of California, County of Plumas  
520 Main Street, Room 104  
Quincy, CA 95971

Re: **RESPONSE TO 2015-2016 PLUMAS COUNTY GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT**

Dear Judge Hilde:

Please find the Plumas County Board of Supervisors response and comments to the 2015-2016 Plumas County Grand Jury final report written below.

## PLUMAS COUNTY ANIMAL SERVICES

### **FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:**

#### **Findings:**

***Finding F1:** "The Grand Jury commends the Shelter and its employees for the excellent job they are doing to reunite lost pets with their owners and to find new homes for abandoned pets. Their cooperative work with other shelters, the use of the internet, and the use of newspaper ads to achieve these goals speaks volumes about the care and concern the Shelter and employees have for the County's pet population. They are fulfilling their Mission Statement and Statement of Function."*

**Response:** The members of the Plumas County Board of Supervisors agree with this finding. The Board of Supervisors is proud of the excellent work performed by Animal Services employees on behalf of the County and its animals.

***Finding F2:** "The current under-supervised inmate work program raises multiple safety concerns:*

*"A. Inadequate staff levels with inmates present create multiple safety issues for the public, employees and volunteers, and animals.*

*"B. Inmates have the opportunity to have unsupervised communication and interaction with the public.*

*"C. Inmates have the opportunity to obtain and conceal contraband on Shelter property."*

**Response:** The members of the Plumas County Board of Supervisors do not have sufficient information to render an opinion upon this finding, but will request that the Sheriff's Office investigate this finding and report back to the Board upon completion of the investigation.

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***Finding F4:*** “Given the size of the County, one Animal Control Officer in the field is not enough to protect the public from vicious or uncontrolled animal situations.”

**Response:** The members of the Plumas County Board of Supervisors do not have sufficient information to render an opinion upon this finding, but will request that the Sheriff’s Office investigate this finding and report back to the Board upon completion of the investigation.

***Finding F5:*** “The absence of an approved and implemented Policies and Procedures Manual, lack of regular scheduled staff meetings, and failure to provide annual employee reviews contribute to misunderstandings among employees.”

**Response:** The members of the Plumas County Board of Supervisors do not have sufficient information to render an opinion upon this finding, but will request that the Sheriff’s Office investigate this finding and report back to the Board upon completion of the investigation.

***Finding F6:*** “Non-functioning security camera surveillance is a serious safety concern for the public, the workers, and the animals.”

**Response:** The members of the Plumas County Board of Supervisors agree that, to the extent that there are security cameras at the Animal Shelter that are non-functioning, this is an area of concern that should be addressed.

***Finding F7:*** “The emergency generator for the Shelter is not connected to the Shelter’s electrical system, but is operational. In the event of a power outage no heat, air conditioning, or light is available for staff and animals.”

**Response:** The members of the Plumas County Board of Supervisors agree that, to the extent that the emergency generator at the Animal Shelter is non-functioning or otherwise non-available in the event of a power outage, this is an area of concern that should be addressed.

***Finding F8:*** “The crematory oven is being used without any regular maintenance or servicing to assure its operational safety, which constitutes a risk to the Facility, staff, public, and animals. No on-site documentation is posted to verify maintenance, service, or operator training.”

**Response:** The members of the Plumas County Board of Supervisors do not have sufficient information to render an opinion upon this finding, but will request that the Sheriff’s Office investigate this finding and report back to the Board upon completion of the investigation.

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***Finding F9:*** “The failure to vaccinate all dogs being admitted to the Shelter endangers the health of all dogs at the Facility and in adoptive homes.”

**Response:** The members of the Plumas County Board of Supervisors do not have sufficient information to render an opinion upon this finding, but will request that the Sheriff’s Office investigate this finding and report back to the Board upon completion of the investigation.

***Finding F10:*** “The two large animal exercise yards (approximately ¼ acre each) are not utilized efficiently; the lack of interior fencing allows for only one animal to occupy each of the ¼ acre areas at a time.”

**Response:** The members of the Plumas County Board of Supervisors do not have sufficient information to render an opinion upon this finding, but will request that the Sheriff’s Office investigate this finding and report back to the Board upon completion of the investigation.

**Recommendations:**

***Recommendation R1.*** “The Grand Jury recommends the Sheriff’s Department and the Board of Supervisors commend Shelter employees and volunteers for their excellent work, caring for, placing for adoption, and locating owners for the animals.”

**Response:** This recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future. The Board of Supervisors will provide a public acknowledgement of the excellent work performed by the Animal Shelter employees at a future Board meeting.

***Recommendation R2.*** “A. The Grand Jury recommends the Sheriff suspend the inmate work program until the Risk Management Department evaluates the safety and security issues stated in this report:

- “1) Potential risk to the public, employees and volunteers, and animals at the Facility;
- “2) Unsupervised communication and interaction with the public;
- “3) Opportunity to obtain and conceal contraband at the Facility.

“B. The Grand Jury recommends that during the time of addressing inmate safety and security concerns, the Board of Supervisors approve funding for the Sheriff to hire a full-time kennel worker to perform the duties that had been assigned to the inmates.”

**Response:** This recommendation requires further analysis. The Board of Supervisors will place the inmate worker program on the agenda for a future Board meeting to have Sheriff’s Office representatives discuss the program and its impacts upon the Animal Shelter. Potential alternatives will also be discussed, as well as the financial impact of those alternatives.

**Recommendation R4.** *“The Grand Jury recommends the Sheriff add an additional Animal Control Officer to the staff of the Shelter.”*

**Response:** This recommendation requires further analysis. The Board of Supervisors is currently engaged in the final budget process for the Fiscal Year 2016-17 budget. A significant projected deficit exists for the general fund that must be closed in order to achieve a balanced budget. It is unclear whether sufficient general fund revenue will exist that would permit the hiring of an additional Animal Control Officer. Only after all spending priorities have been discussed and ranked will this information be known.

**Recommendation R5A.** *“The Grand Jury recommends the County Human Resources Director work with the Sheriff to finalize the Animal Services Policy Manual and assure its use in training employees, volunteers, and, if applicable, inmates.”*

**Response:** This recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future. The Board will direct the Department of Human Resources to provide the Sheriff’s Office whatever assistance may be required to finalize the Animal Services Policy Manual.

**Recommendation R6.** *“The Grand Jury recommends the Board of Supervisors direct Building Maintenance to repair or replace the surveillance camera system with recording capability and arrange for its regular maintenance.”*

**Response:** This recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future. The Board will direct the Department of Facility Services to perform, or arrange for the performance, of any necessary repairs or maintenance to the Animal Shelter’s surveillance camera system.

**Recommendation R7.** *“The Grand Jury recommends the Board of Supervisors direct Building Maintenance to properly install the existing emergency generator and provide regular maintenance.”*

**Response:** This recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future. The Board will direct the Department of Facility Services to perform, or arrange for the performance, of any necessary repairs or maintenance to the Animal Shelter’s emergency generator.

**Recommendation R8.** *“The Grand Jury recommends that the Board of Supervisors allocate and implement regular maintenance and servicing of the Animal Services crematory oven by qualified personnel according to manufacturer’s specifications.”*

**Response:** This recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future. The Board will provide whatever assistance to the Sheriff’s Office is necessary to arrange for the professional maintenance of the Animal Shelter’s crematory.

**Recommendation R9.** *“The Grand Jury recommends that the Board of Supervisors direct and allocate the Sheriff’s Department to provide the Shelter with the means to provide basic vaccinations to new animals brought into the Facility.”*

**Response:** This recommendation requires further analysis. The Board of Supervisors is currently engaged in the final budget process for the Fiscal Year 2016-17 budget. A significant projected deficit exists for the general fund that must be closed in order to achieve a balanced budget. It is unclear whether sufficient general fund revenue will exist that would permit universal vaccinations of all shelter animals. Only after all spending priorities have been discussed and ranked will this information be known.

**Recommendation R10.** *“The Grand Jury recommends the Board of Supervisors direct and allocate monies to install interior fence partitions for the two large exercise yards to allow for multiple animals to use the outside yards.”*

**Response:** This recommendation requires further analysis. The Board of Supervisors is currently engaged in the final budget process for the Fiscal Year 2016-17 budget. A significant projected deficit exists for the general fund that must be closed in order to achieve a balanced budget. It is unclear whether sufficient general fund revenue will exist that would permit construction of additional fence partitions at the Animal Shelter. Only after all spending priorities have been discussed and ranked will this information be known.

**THE STATE OF PLUMAS**

**FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**Findings:**

***Finding F1:** “The Plumas County Organizational Chart is outdated, demonstrating a lack of organizational clarity and direction by the Board of Supervisors”*

**Response:** The members of the Plumas County Board of Supervisors agree with the finding that the County’s organizational chart should be updated. The members further agree that providing organizational clarity and direction is a primary job for the Board of Supervisors and should be a priority for them going forward.

***Finding F2:** “The job description for CAO was written in 1999. A current CAO job description has not been developed that reflects the needs of the County and the Board.”*

**Response:** The members of the Plumas County Board of Supervisors agree with this finding. The CAO job description should be reviewed and updated prior to beginning a search for a new CAO once the decision to hire one has been made.

***Finding F3:** “By not hiring a CAO the Board of Supervisors has assumed some of the CAO responsibilities and shifted some to Elected Officials and Department Heads, leaving unclear areas of responsibility.”*

**Response:** The members of the Plumas County Board of Supervisors generally agree with this finding, although the Board has made and will continue to make efforts to provide clear areas of responsibility with respect to former CAO duties.

***Finding F4:** “CAO responsibilities have not been reassigned with updated Department Head/Elected Official job descriptions.”*

**Response:** The members of the Plumas County Board of Supervisors agree that Department Head job descriptions have not been updated to reassign former CAO responsibilities. The duties of elected officials are established by statute, however, and are not subject to Board-approved job descriptions.

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***Finding F5:*** “The Plumas County Code of Ordinances establishes the position of CAO; the position and responsibilities are an integral part of all written County policies. No attempt has been made to fill the position or correct the Ordinance.”

**Response:** The members of the Plumas County Board of Supervisors disagree with this finding to the extent that it implies that the Plumas County Code has never been amended to account for the vacancy in the CAO position. In 2012, the Board of Supervisors approved an ordinance amending the Code to reassign the duties of Risk Manager from the CAO to the Auditor/Controller. The members of the Plumas County Board of Supervisors also wish to clarify that, although the CAO position is referenced frequently within the County Code and in various County policies, the position itself is not required to be filled by the Code, and the Board of Supervisors has worked to identify and reassign any CAO duties as necessary. The Board of Supervisors otherwise agrees with this finding.

***Finding F6:*** “Several Board members reported the Board had difficulty managing the CAO; no clear policy with regard to Board oversight and management of a CAO exists.”

**Response:** The members of the Plumas County Board of Supervisors agree that there is no formal policy in place regarding Board oversight and management of the CAO. However, the CAO is directly supervised by the Board, and would be subject to regular and ongoing performance evaluation and communication with the members of the Board.

***Finding F7:*** “The Board has stated the rationale for not hiring a CAO has been a lack of budget funds. Alternate sources of funding have not been addressed.”

**Response:** The members of the Plumas County Board of Supervisors disagree with this finding to the extent that it implies that unexplored “alternative sources of funding” for the CAO position exist. The CAO position is a quintessentially general fund position, as it is responsible for management of the County government as a whole. The services of the CAO to non-general fund departments are reimbursed through the annual cost plan process. While a portion of grants and other special funds may be used to pay for indirect overhead, those are typically set percentages of the grants or funds (often 10%), and are already being recovered. It has not been the experience of the Board of Supervisors that grant funds exist to fund general government administration.

**Finding F8:** *“Two of the past four Grand Juries recommended that the Board of Supervisors fill the CAO position. Most of the Supervisors and the majority of department heads interviewed said that the County would operate better with a CAO.”*

**Response:** The members of the Plumas County Board of Supervisors agree that two of the past four grand juries have recommended hiring a CAO. The Board of Supervisors does not have any information that would dispute the survey result stated in the second sentence of the finding.

**Finding F9:** *“Current, accurate job descriptions for all County positions are a necessary management tool for evaluating the performance of employees, but are not consistently in place.”*

**Response:** The members of the Plumas County Board of Supervisors strongly agree that current and accurate job descriptions are a vital tool for employee management. The Board of Supervisors would be happy to review and update any job description believed to be out-of-date.

**Finding F10:** *“The Board of Supervisors has not followed their written policies requiring annual performance reviews for Department Heads (first adopted in 2000 and re-adopted in 2015).”*

**Response:** The members of the Plumas County Board of Supervisors agree that, prior to 2015, regular performance reviews for department heads did not occur. However, such reviews have been scheduled for each department head within the past year, and the Board fully intends to continue the practice of annual performance reviews for all department heads.

**Finding F11:** *“The Board of Supervisors did not have a backup plan for replacing the jail when they failed in their attempt to qualify for State Grant funds in 2015. The Grand Jury could find no evidence of a current financial plan in place to replace the jail.”*

**Response:** The members of the Plumas County Board of Supervisors agree that currently there is no formal financial plan to replace the jail. Given the County’s significant budget troubles over the past decade, it has been a significant effort simply to maintain basic services. Unfortunately, major capital projects such as jail replacement have been temporarily put aside as a result. Without a grant from the State for the jail, the County would likely require new sources of revenue, possibly including new bond revenue, to obtain a new jail. The Board continues to seek funding sources for the jail that will not result in an added burden upon Plumas County taxpayers.

***Finding F12:*** “The County is losing revenue based on:

“A. Loss of TOT tax revenue;

“B. Lack of opportunities to be informed of possible revenue through non-participation in the CAOAC;

“C. Loss of County and State sales tax revenue due to the County’s purchasing outside the County and State.”

**Response:** The members of the Plumas County Board of Supervisors agree that some sources of transient occupancy tax may have escaped collection in the past; however, it is the Board’s understanding that the Plumas County Tax Collector is increasing collection efforts with respect to outstanding TOT. With respect to items B and C, the Board does not have enough information to render an opinion as to whether significant revenue is being lost due to these factors. On their face, though, these factors appear unlikely to have a material effect upon the budget.

***Finding F13:*** “The Board of Supervisors has no formal method of passing institutional knowledge to newly elected Board Members.”

**Response:** The members of the Plumas County Board of Supervisors agree with this finding. Information is exchanged informally, however, and new Board members receive support and assistance from the other Board members.

***Finding F14:*** “There is no formal procedure for handing off information from an incumbent Chairperson or Supervisor to his/her successor.”

**Response:** The members of the Plumas County Board of Supervisors agree with this finding. Information is exchanged informally, however, and new Board chairs and supervisors receive support and assistance from the other Board members.

***Finding F15:*** “One Supervisor actively pursues knowledge of other supervisorial districts by visiting the districts.”

**Response:** The members of the Plumas County Board of Supervisors disagree with this finding to the extent that it implies that the other four supervisors do not pursue knowledge of the other districts. Each current supervisor is a longtime resident of Plumas County, and regularly travel to all parts of the County for meetings, recreation, and other business.

***Finding F16:*** “County residents often have difficulty attending regular Supervisorial meetings, due to travel and work schedules. Additionally, the format of the meetings makes it difficult to ask questions or contribute input to local government.”

**Response:** The members of the Plumas County Board of Supervisors agree that traveling to Board meetings from outside the Quincy area can be a significant challenge for many County residents. This is why the Board of Supervisors livestreams all Board meetings on the internet, and maintains archives of prior Board meetings on the County website. The members of the Plumas County Board of Supervisors disagree that the format of Board meetings discourages questions or public input. Public comment is offered at the beginning of each regular Board meeting, as well as during each agenda item. In addition, the members of the Board are happy to receive correspondence from their constituents, which can be discussed during the “Board correspondence” item included on every regular meeting agenda.

**Recommendations:**

***Recommendation R1.*** “The Grand Jury recommends the Board of Supervisors and Human Resources update the Plumas County Organization Chart so that it reflects accurately the County’s current chain of command.”

**Response:** This recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future. The Board of Supervisors agrees that it is important to maintain an updated organizational chart, and will direct staff to do so.

***Recommendation R2.*** “The Grand Jury recommends the Board of Supervisors and Human Resources write a job description for a CAO that reflects the current needs of the County and the Board.”

**Response:** This recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future. The Board of Supervisors will reevaluate the job description for the CAO position prior to beginning its recruitment. The date when circumstances will permit and warrant such recruitment has yet to be determined.

***Recommendation R3.*** “The Grand Jury recommends that in the current absence of a CAO the Board of Supervisors establish clear written guidelines for assigned CAO responsibilities.”

**Response:** The recommendation has been partially implemented. Over the past few years, the Board of Supervisors has amended policies and the County Code as needed to account for the vacancy in the CAO position. The Board will continue to do so as the need arises.

**Recommendation R4.** *“The Grand Jury recommends that in the current absence of a CAO the Board of Supervisors and Human Resources update Department Head/Elected Official job descriptions to reflect reassigned CAO responsibilities.”*

**Response:** This recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future. The Board of Supervisors will reevaluate the job descriptions for department heads on an ongoing basis, to ensure that the stated responsibilities match the County’s current needs. As discussed above, the duties of elected officials are statutorily defined, and accordingly elected officials do not have County-generated job descriptions.

**Recommendation R5.** *“The Grand Jury recommends that Board of Supervisors follow the established Plumas County Code of Ordinances regarding a CAO”*

**Response:** This recommendation has been implemented. The Plumas County Code establishes the CAO position, but does not mandate that it be filled. The Board of Supervisors is accordingly in compliance with the Plumas County Code in this regard.

**Recommendation R6.** *“The Grand Jury recommends the Board of Supervisors establish a written policy regarding Board oversight and management of a CAO.”*

**Response:** This recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future. The Board of Supervisors will develop such a policy concurrent with the hiring of a new CAO. The date when circumstances will permit and warrant such hiring has yet to be determined.

**Recommendation R7.** *“The Grand Jury recommends that the Board of Supervisors fund the CAO position this year out of the General Fund and/or utilize alternate funding from non-general fund sources.”*

**Response:** This recommendation requires further analysis. The Board of Supervisors is currently engaged in the final budget process for the Fiscal Year 2016-17 budget. A significant projected deficit exists for the general fund that must be closed in order to achieve a balanced budget. It is unclear whether sufficient general fund revenue will exist that would permit the hiring of a CAO. Only after all spending priorities have been discussed and ranked will this information be known. As discussed above, the Board of Supervisors is unaware of any realistic source for funding a CAO outside of the general fund.

**Recommendation R8.** *“The Grand Jury recommends that the Board of Supervisors follow the recommendations of this and past Grand Juries to hire a CAO.”*

**Response:** This recommendation requires further analysis. The Board of Supervisors is currently engaged in the final budget process for the Fiscal Year 2016-17 budget. A significant projected deficit exists for the general fund that must be closed in order to achieve a balanced budget. It is unclear whether sufficient general fund revenue will exist that would permit the hiring of a CAO. Only after all spending priorities have been discussed and ranked will this information be known.

**Recommendation R9.** *“The Grand Jury recommends the Board of Supervisors and Human Resources review all, and when appropriate rewrite, County job descriptions so that they accurately reflect and describe the duties of each office and employee.”*

**Response:** This recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future. The Board of Supervisors and Department of Human Resources will reevaluate the job descriptions for each job classification on an ongoing basis, to ensure that the stated responsibilities match the County’s current needs.

**Recommendation R10.** *“The Grand Jury recommends the Board of Supervisors follow their existing policies and conduct annual performance reviews of Department Heads.”*

**Response:** This recommendation has been implemented. Since last year, the Board of Supervisors has conducted performance reviews for each department heads, and will continue to do so on an annual basis.

**Recommendation R11.** *“The Grand Jury recommends the Board of Supervisors establish a clear plan to fund and locate the needed new Plumas County Jail, and ensure that monies currently assigned for the jail remain available for the purpose of replacing the jail.”*

**Response:** This recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future. The Board of Supervisors agrees that a new jail must be built in the near future. The Board has received information that a new round of state funding for jail construction may be made available, and the Board intends to vigorously pursue this funding. If for any reason the County is unable to secure state funding for a new jail, the Board will explore all potential funding sources that may be available for jail construction.

**Recommendation R12.** *“The Grand Jury recommends the Board of Supervisors:  
“A. Direct the Treasurer/Tax Collector to identify uncollected TOT revenues and see to the consistent collection of those taxes;  
“B. Direct the CAO or a representative of the County to attend CAOAC conferences.”*

**Response:** Recommendation 12A has been implemented. The Board of Supervisors has already had conversations with the Treasurer/Tax Collector regarding the need for stronger TOT enforcement, and the Treasurer/Tax Collector is working to bolster TOT collections. Recommendation 12B has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future. The Board will explore having a representative attend CAOAC conferences in the future.

**Recommendation R13.** *“The Grand Jury recommends the Board of Supervisors create written policies and procedures for:  
“A. Educating and informing new Board Members in the responsibilities and rules governing the Board;  
“B. Apprising new Board Members about current Board issues, District-wide and County-wide.”*

**Response:** This recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future. Although these tasks have been performed informally in the past, the Board will attempt to develop a formal policy and procedure for providing new supervisors with necessary information.

**Recommendation R14.** *“The Grand Jury recommends that the Board of Supervisors create a formal procedure for passing information from an incumbent Chairperson to his/her successor.”*

**Response:** This recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future. Although this task has been performed informally in the past, the Board will attempt to develop a formal policy and procedure for providing new Board Chairs with information and guidance from their predecessors.

**Recommendation R15.** *“The Grand Jury recommends that, in order to inform themselves of other County Districts’ needs and concerns, each member of the Board of Supervisors spend a minimum of one day per year in each of the other four Districts in the company of that District’s Supervisor.”*

**Response:** This recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future. Each Board member will make a goal of spending at least one day per year in the company of each of the other Supervisors, in those Supervisors’ districts.

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**Recommendation R16.** *“The Grand Jury recommends that each District Supervisor conduct a Town Hall meeting in his or her District at least quarterly to insure that all County residents have an opportunity to address individual Board members, and to encourage citizens to participate toward the health of the County.”*

**Response:** This recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future. The members of the Board of Supervisors will endeavor to conduct regular town hall meetings in their respective districts regarding pending County issues and citizen concerns.

Respectfully submitted,

PLUMAS COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

By:   
Sharon Thrall, Chair

ST:sm

Cc:

1. Plumas County Clerk
2. 2015-2016 Plumas County Grand Jury