

**Board of  
Supervisors**



**County Correctional  
Facility (Jail)**



**Law and  
Justice**



**Senior  
Nutrition**



**Hospital  
Districts**



**EXTRA**

**EXTRA**

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**2008-2009  
Plumas County  
GRAND JURY REPORT**

**DON'T MISS IT!**

Plumas County Grand Jury

Post Office Box 784, Quincy, California 95971



Honorable Judge Ira Kaufman  
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court  
County of Plumas  
State of California

Honorable Judge Janet Hilde  
Supervising Judge of the Superior Court  
County of Plumas  
State of California

Dear Judge Kaufman and Judge Hilde:

The 2008-2009 Plumas County Grand Jury is pleased to present the final report to you and the citizens of Plumas County as stipulated by California Penal Code Section 933. With this report, we complete the work of the 2008-2009 Plumas County Grand Jury.

The nineteen members of this panel have conscientiously pursued the tasks before them, bringing to bear the experience and expertise of their varied backgrounds in law enforcement, health care, industry, real estate, education, aeronautics, engineering, banking, fire service, management, and human services, plus a combined total of 220 years as residents in Plumas County. Some have lived in the county for five years or less, others have lived here for more than 50 years.

The activities performed by this Grand Jury include extensive research, interviews, attendance at committee meetings and general meetings, and tours of various facilities. Specifically, this panel:

Reviewed and followed up on required responses to the 2007-2008 Plumas County Grand Jury final report, conducted an inspection of the Plumas County Jail, reviewed all written and signed citizen complaints and followed up as appropriate. We interviewed witnesses, visited sites related to inquiries and investigations where appropriate, reviewed documents, policies, procedures, memoranda of understanding, and operation manuals as appropriate to investigations, met in committee sessions and met in general session twice monthly.

The effectiveness of a Grand Jury is determined, not only by the selection of topics, agencies and entities to be reviewed, but also by the sitting panel's thorough and attentive commitment to detail and accuracy so that a factual and clear report is produced. To that end, I thank this team who came together motivated to do the job well.

The 2008-2009 Plumas County Grand Jury is sincerely grateful to all of the interviewees who took time to share information with us so that we might have a clearer view of our county government and, ultimately, issue a report that informs and educates the citizens of Plumas County. We thank those who filed citizen complaints with the Grand Jury. We commend your honesty and citizenship. We also thank the folks in the various county offices who assisted us throughout the year.

The 2008-2009 Plumas County Grand Jury is proud to have served the citizens of Plumas County.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda L. Rean, Foreperson  
2008-2009 Plumas County Grand Jury

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**In the spirit of the times, the 2008-2009 Grand Jury is proud, at year's end, to be able to return a generous portion of our budget to the Plumas County General Fund.**

## Plumas County Grand Jury Members 2008-2009

|   |                |
|---|----------------|
| Linda Rean, Foreperson.....             | Chester        |
| Rachel Bartosz, Foreperson Pro Tem..... | Portola        |
| Martha Huber, Recording Secretary.....  | Clio           |
| Ronald Shafer, Treasurer.....           | Lake Almanor   |
| Thomas Cannon.....                      | Lake Almanor   |
| Sandra Carr, Chairperson.....           | Quincy         |
| Kathy Combs-Jeffries.....               | Quincy         |
| Michael Curry, Chairperson.....         | Maybe          |
| Lynn Desjardin, Chairperson.....        | Portola        |
| Howard Johnson.....                     | Cromberg       |
| Laurence Kellett, Chairperson.....      | Meadow Valley  |
| Diana Lindsey-Grace.....                | Greenville     |
| Bobbi May.....                          | Quincy         |
| Christy Randall, Chairperson.....       | Clio           |
| Lace Van Devender.....                  | Chester        |
| Carolyn Widman.....                     | Chilcoot       |
| Kent Williams.....                      | Quincy         |
| Kathleen Wilson.....                    | Greenville     |
| Ceacel Wittorff.....                    | Crescent Mills |

### Grand Jury Committees

|                                      |  |  |
|--------------------------------------|--|--|
| Board of Supervisors                 |  | Law and Justice                                      |
| County Audit Committee Participation |  | Plumas County Sheriff's Correctional Facility (Jail) |
| Editorial Review                     |  | Senior Nutrition Program                             |
| Hospital Districts                   |  |  |

# Introduction

The Plumas County Grand Jury is a body of nineteen Plumas County citizens charged and sworn to inquire into matters of civil concern within the boundaries of Plumas County and any incorporated city within these boundaries. Appendix A lists the County and City Departments that are open to Grand Jury inquiry. Grand Jury duties, powers, responsibilities, qualifications and selection processes are set forth in the California Penal Code Section 888 et seq. See Appendix B.

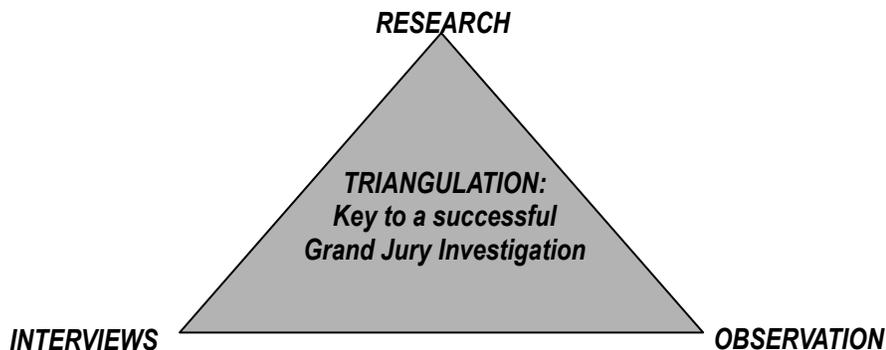
The Grand Jury functions lawfully only as a body. No individual grand juror may act alone and has no authority to act alone. Meetings of the Grand Jury are not open to the public. The Penal Code requires that all matters discussed before the Grand Jury and all deliberations are to be kept private and confidential. The end result of all investigations into civil matters is released to the public in a final report, which sets forth the findings and recommendations of the Grand Jury.

***Citizen tax dollars are the lifeblood of government, and one of the functions of the Grand Jury is to scrutinize the management of those dollars.***

Participation in Grand Jury service is an opportunity for citizens from various communities within the county to work together, get an in-depth look at local government, and to make informed recommendations which may improve and enhance services. The effectiveness of a Grand Jury is determined not only by the selection of topics, agencies and entities to be reviewed, but also by the sitting panel's thorough and attentive commitment to detail and accuracy so that the findings in the final report are substantiated, provable and verifiable.

Service on the Grand Jury is also a way to contribute and make a positive difference. Jurors serve twelve months and some jurors continue on to serve a second twelve months. The term of service runs from July 1 to June 30.

The panel reviewed the investigative history dating back to the 1995-1996 Grand Jury. Based on that history and the interest of the current panel members, committees were formed to look at the topics we had chosen. Once the selections were made, the committees used a process known as *TRIANGULATION* to examine the various subjects of our investigations.



**Research:** Each investigative committee looked at budgets, minutes, agendas, policies, rules of operation, Memoranda of Understanding, and other appropriate documents related to that investigation.

**Observation:** The committee members toured agencies, offices, and sites where appropriate, questioned facility usage, adequacy of space, and efficient use of quarters.

**Interviews:** The committees, upon approval of the entire Grand Jury Panel, prepared appropriate questions, set up interviews, and followed up to clarify the information for accuracy of the final report.

The term of the Grand Jury is limited and, by necessity, the panel must narrow its focus in order to be thorough. Therefore, the citizenry may question why certain issues are not covered in greater detail. If any citizen is concerned or interested in asking the Grand Jury to review a specific matter, the citizen complaint is the method, and the forms are available at the Plumas County website. Whether the issue is a complaint or simply a concern, this is the venue by which citizens may be heard and a response may be made. A sample Citizen Complaint form and directions for submission may be found in Appendix C.

This final report represents the work that has been done by the 2008-2009 Grand Jury, a body of research, observations, and interviews that have allowed this panel to formulate their findings and recommendations. The persons responsible for the departments, offices, and issues addressed herein may agree or disagree with our findings and recommendations, but they are obligated to respond. (Refer to Appendix D for the requirements set forth for response.) The nineteen members of this Grand Jury are privileged to have served the citizens of Plumas County, and we wish to convey our respect, as well, for all those who serve in county government.

# Board of Supervisors

## REASON FOR INVESTIGATION

**Getting to know you.** The 2008-2009 Grand Jury members are not strangers to Plumas County, many having lived here over 25 years. But in reviewing past Grand Jury reports, we stopped to ask ourselves what we knew about the responsibilities of our Board of Supervisors (Board). We discovered that we did not know as much as we would like. It was then we decided to interview the individual Board members before taking up our duties to examine county programs.

We wanted to find out what a Board of Supervisors was, what they did, and how they did it. In addition, we were interested in how the Grand Jury and the Board of Supervisors could work together for the betterment of the county.

*The California State Association of Counties states that "The Civil Grand Jury, when working in concert with the Board of Supervisors and the County Administrative Officer (CAO), can prove to be a valuable tool to examine county programs and departments and to provide constructive recommendations for the improved operation of county government."*

## PROCEDURE

**Interviews and research materials.** During the last half of 2008 the Grand Jury interviewed the five sitting members of the Board on an individual basis. In January of 2009 the Grand Jury interviewed the two new supervisors, again on an individual basis. The Grand Jury also interviewed the County Administrative Officer and the Clerk of the Board.

The Grand Jury learned from these interviews some of the key issues the Board is facing in the near future, as well as a few issues that have been unsatisfactorily explained to the public. These are the concerns we focused our energies on for this investigation and report:

- Board of Supervisors
- Jail
- Courthouse Annex
- Alcohol and Drug Program
- Litigation Issues

Our research materials and resources included:

- California Association of Counties, County Structure, [www.csac.counties.org](http://www.csac.counties.org)
- Interviews with 2008 and 2009 Supervisors
- Plumas County 2008-2009 Budget
- Interviews with Alcohol and Drug Advisory Board Members
- A fact-finding tour of Courthouse Annex
- A fact-finding tour of County Jail
- Interview with County Chief Administrative Officer (CAO)
- Interview with Clerk of the Board

# BACKGROUND

***Board of Supervisors.*** The individual sitting supervisors were asked about the high and low moments they experienced as supervisors and what they considered their biggest achievement. They told us what they would like to accomplish in the future, individually and as the whole body of the Board. The new supervisors were each asked why they ran for public office and what they hoped to change or improve over the next year. The County Administrative Officer was interviewed and asked about his interaction with the Board of Supervisors and county employees.

We asked the Supervisors what they considered the most important aspects of their jobs. Among other things, the majority said that a positive relationship with the public was significant, including being honest and transparent, and listening to their concerns.

The Board of Supervisors agreed that the budget is just about the biggest issue facing the county and the toughest to deal with. Hand-in-hand with the budget is the concern over litigation and its huge toll on the county budget. Add in the Courthouse Annex, the need for a new jail, and the many services needed in the county, and you can see that these are just some of the difficult situations our representatives need to handle.

The California Association of Counties provided us with important information as to the actual responsibilities of a Board of Supervisors.

Government Code Section 25000 requires each county to have a Board of Supervisors consisting of five members. ... **An official act of the Board of Supervisors can only be performed in a regularly or specially called meeting. The individual members have no power to act for the county....** Meetings of the Board of Supervisors are subject to the restrictions of the Ralph M. Brown Act.... With limited exceptions, the Brown Act requires that all Board of Supervisors meetings be open and public.

**A majority of the members of the Board constitutes a quorum.... A majority...must concur on any act of the Board.**

***Unlike the separation of powers that characterizes the federal and state governments, the Board of Supervisors is both the legislative and the executive authority of the county. It also has quasi-judicial authorities.***

The Board performs its executive role when it sets priorities for the county. The Board **oversees most of the county departments and programs and annually approves their budgets**; supervises the official conduct of county officers and employees; controls all of the county property; and **appropriates and spends money on programs that meet county residents' needs.**

As the legislative body of the county, the **Board of Supervisors may act by resolution, by board order, or by ordinance.** A resolution of a Board is ordinarily not equivalent to an ordinance; it is usually a declaration about future purposes or proceedings....

An ordinance is a local law adopted with all of the legal formality of a statute. The California Constitution allows a county or city to make and enforce...ordinances and regulations that do not conflict in any way with any of the state's own general laws.

In its quasi-judicial role, the Board of Supervisors **may settle claims made against the county and may examine and audit the accounts of all county officers as they relate to the management and disbursement of funds.**

**The county's 2008-2009 budget contains 403 positions and \$86,072,760 in total funds.**

The responsibilities of the Board are diverse. **A major task of the Board is to manage the public money which comes to the county from property tax, sales tax, fees, and federal and state income grants.**

**Additionally, a county supervisor may serve in many other capacities on various boards, commissions, or special districts. These can be on the local, state or federal level.**

This description of the duties of our Board of Supervisors was a revelation to our panel. We had no idea how comprehensive their responsibilities were and the amount of time and energy it takes to perform their jobs.

**Jail Advisory Committee.** The Grand Jury is required to inspect the jail every year. There is something new to report about the condition of the county jail: it is in worse shape than it was last year as reported by that Grand Jury. See the Plumas County Sheriff's Correctional Facility (Jail) Committee report for the latest update on this year's jail tour and condition.

**A new jail is not for the convenience of the inmates - it's for the safety of our correctional and safety officers and the general public.**

This committee's purpose in looking at the jail was to discuss the issue of a new jail with the Board of Supervisors and find out what the current thinking was in that regard. Some of the Board members had not recently toured the jail.

The Grand Jury discussed the possibility of the Board appointing a citizens advisory committee to research building costs, locations and financing for a new county jail. We posed that question to each of the Supervisors and the CAO, and they responded favorably.

After our tour of the jail the Grand Jury found that correctional officers and the general public are in more danger than is realized. While the building of a new jail may be several years away, the process toward a solution to this problem should begin now.

**Courthouse Annex.** The Grand Jury was intrigued by the very expensive Courthouse Annex. We wanted to know: 1) why it was built, 2) what are some of the issues with it, and 3) how can it be better utilized to reduce the cash drain on the county budget?

**The Courthouse Annex is 56,000 square feet in size; over 30% is unoccupied.**

The Courthouse Annex was built because the building occupying that land at the time was unsuitable for office use and was too old to cost-effectively retrofit. The Annex was financed with a 40-year obligation. It was occupied in March of 2006, and currently houses one private agency and four county departments. All departments are charged the same rate by the square foot, so the rent they pay depends

upon their square footage. The demise of the Alcohol and Drug program has left an even larger vacancy. There are so few occupants that the revenues do not cover the payments.

It was anticipated when the Annex was built that it would house county departments, and some state- and federally-mandated programs. Not all those tenants materialized, partly due to the high rents that were necessary to pay for the building. The recent tightening of the economy has also become a major factor.

All the Supervisors voiced concern about the drain the Annex has on the county budget. The Supervisors were all interested in finding viable tenants to utilize the building.

**Alcohol and Drug Program.** The Alcohol and Drug Program was closed by the Board of Supervisors in November, 2008. The Grand Jury was interested in finding out the reason for closing the department. The A&D program is a state program that is not mandated to be a county program. Even with partial state funding, it was in the red financially and too costly for county taxpayers to continue to support the program. The Board opted to let it revert to the state.

**Litigation.** Litigation against the county is a huge financial burden. A high number of lawsuits and resulting settlements on personnel issues revolve around the lack of policies and procedures.

Policies and procedures define when and how to do performance evaluations and employee improvement plans, specify proper employee record keeping, and provide a clear-cut process for disciplinary action. Current job descriptions for employees at every level enable both employees and management to have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and duties, as well as training requirements for their positions.

We were informed that there is now a committee consisting of the Chief Administrative Officer, Human Resources Director, Risk Manager and County Counsel to review disciplinary issues before action against an employee is taken.

## **FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Board of Supervisors**

***Finding 1:*** Each member of the Board of Supervisors expressed in one manner or another, their interest in having an open and more transparent relationship with their constituency. The Grand Jury discussed the mechanics of how the Board members could provide that accessibility and transparency.

***Recommendation 1:*** The Grand Jury recommends the Board take the following steps in order to accomplish that accessibility: publish a weekly notice in the newspaper that includes the Clerk of the Board's and their own telephone numbers, e-mail addresses, and business hours. In addition, we highly recommend they conduct quarterly town hall style meetings, with time, place and agenda published in the newspaper.

***Finding 2:*** Although the California Association of County Governments states that "The Board oversees most of the county departments and programs...." we found not all Supervisors were familiar with the heads of the departments under their supervision.

**Recommendation 2:** The Grand Jury recommends quarterly meetings (following Brown Act protocol) be held between the Board of Supervisors and the heads of all departments to discuss personnel issues, department needs, budget requirements, etc.

### **Jail Advisory Committee**

**Finding 1:** Not all of the Supervisors have toured the jail in recent years.

**Recommendation 1:** We recommend each Supervisor tour the jail on at least an annual basis to keep them apprised of the conditions there.

**Finding 2:** The jail is in very poor structural condition. Due to its outdated floor plan, poor radio communication in some areas, and other serious concerns, it is unsafe for officers and inmates alike. In addition, the jail itself, as well as the maximum security exercise yard, abut the public road into the transfer facility - a road used by families of our community.

**Recommendation 2:** The Board of Supervisors were in agreement with the Grand Jury's suggestion to appoint a "new jail" advisory committee from the citizenry. The Grand Jury recommends that this committee be formed within the next three months.

### **Courthouse Annex**

**Finding 1:** The Courthouse Annex was built to replace an old building and was intended to house county, state and federal agencies. The county owns a number of buildings, three airports and several parks.

**The county owns over 45 buildings, three general aviation airports, several parks and a number of parcels of land.**

**Recommendation 1:** We recommend that in the future, the Board of Supervisors diligently pursue retrofitting or otherwise making the existing buildings usable, or selling those properties, before taking on new construction.

**Finding 2:** The mortgage payment for the Courthouse Annex is due at the time that the county has the lowest cash flow in the General Fund, making it difficult to make payments and payroll.

**Recommendation 2:** The Grand Jury recommends that the county pursue avenues to restructure the mortgage payments.

**Finding 3:** The geothermal heating system does not work properly. The three contractors responsible for the system are no longer in business. Facilities personnel are working to correct the problems.

**Recommendation 3:** The Board should consult experts in this field to help the county correct the problems.

**Finding 4:** Some effort is currently underway to locate new permanent tenants for the Annex.

**What else could the Annex be used for? A Chamber mixer; art show; meeting rooms for civic groups; designated office space for Board of Supervisors?**

**Recommendation 4:** We recommend that the county actively pursue other tenants by advertising both inside and outside the county, subsidizing the rents, and moving other county departments into the building.

**Finding 5:** It is our understanding that no efforts have been made to use the building for temporary events.

**Recommendation 5:** As permanent tenants are being located, the Grand Jury recommends that this beautiful building be used by the citizenry for a multitude of purposes, and that the Board actively publicize the availability of the space for community use.

## Alcohol and Drug Program

**Finding 1:** The biggest complaint we encountered was that the Board of Supervisors was not forthcoming in communicating the rationale for closing the program and the details of the state taking over.

**Recommendation 1:** We urge the Board as we go forward in these difficult economic times to keep the public informed to the fullest extent possible regarding decisions like this in order to minimize the uncertainties and fears of those affected.

**Finding 2:** Difficult as the decision was to allow the Alcohol and Drug Program to revert to the state, the economics of continuing to operate it was determined by the Board to be financially unsupportable by the county.

**Recommendation 2:** This Grand Jury feels that the Board of Supervisors acted prudently and wisely in turning this program back to the state.

## Litigation

**Finding 1:** The Grand Jury found that department-specific policies and procedures did not exist. Department-specific policies and procedures would help resolve many issues, and the Grand Jury did not find any for those departments we reviewed.

**Part of the answer to litigation issues?  
Follow proper policies and procedures.**

**Recommendation 1:** The Grand Jury recommends that each department develop a policies and procedures manual with the guidance and expertise of the human resources department. Further, we recommend that the manual be required annual reading for managers, supervisors, and employees to ensure understanding of the rules.

**Finding 2:** The most recent job description we could find was dated 2005. Most were updated in the mid to late 1990s.

**Recommendation 2:** In order to hold employees accountable for their work, we recommend that accurate and timely job descriptions should be immediately developed for every level of county employee.

**Finding 3:** Noted in the 2008-2009 Plumas County Budget, one of last year's accomplishments of the Risk Management Department was to "...provide specialized focused training within the department to lessen risk exposure, i.e., Supervisors Training, Team Building, Conflict Resolution...."

**Recommendation 3:** The Grand Jury recommends that similar training and additional job-specific training be mandatory for all county employees.

## CONCLUSION

**The Board is made up of five individuals so, as one of them said, "please don't paint us all with the same paintbrush."**

The Plumas County Board of Supervisors has a very large job to do, and they sometimes face a lot of criticism for the way they do it. It is true that because they manage the finances and almost all other aspects of county government, "the buck stops with them." But we found them to be sincere in their efforts to do the best they can for the county and we learned that we should not judge them as a group, necessarily, because they are not always of one mind.

Many of the Findings and Recommendations of this Committee are based on the Supervisors' testimony that they wanted a positive relationship with the public, being open and honest and listening to their concerns.

There are specific requirements for response by those who are investigated by the Grand Jury. Historically, responses have taken the easy out, saying things like, "it's in progress" or "it's not economically feasible" or similar excuses. It is the sincere desire of this Grand Jury to fulfill our obligation to "be a valuable tool to examine county programs and departments and to provide constructive recommendations for the improved operation of county government." To that end, we expect the Board of Supervisors to seriously consider these recommendations and make a concerted effort to answer fully and respectfully.

# **Plumas County Sheriff's Correctional Facility (Jail)**

## **REASON FOR INVESTIGATION**

The Plumas County Grand Jury is required to annually inspect any jail within the county in accordance with the California Penal Code.

## **PROCEDURE**

The Plumas County Grand Jury conducted two inspections of the Plumas county jail accompanied by supervisory and correctional officer staff and had one additional meeting with staff.

## **BACKGROUND**

The Plumas County jail was constructed in the 1970s, for a maximum capacity of 37 inmates. This structure also housed the administrative headquarters for the Plumas County Sheriff Department.

In the 1980s Plumas County was sued by an inmate alleging unsafe conditions in the jail because of lack of staff. Plumas County lost the lawsuit and under court order, brought staffing up to minimum standards.

In the 1990s a separate administrative headquarters was purchased for the Sheriff Department. This allowed enlarging the jail capacity to 67 inmates. Unfortunately, staffing of the jail was not sufficiently increased even with the almost doubling of inmate population.

The location of the jail is adjacent to a maintenance yard and the access road to a public dump.

## **FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Plumas County Grand Jury recognizes that economic conditions make it difficult for the county to fund a needed replacement for the existing jail facility or to increase staffing to meet full staffing requirements. However, there are critical needs that may be met by Plumas County that would increase safety within the jail for staff and inmates at a manageable cost.

### **Facility**

**Finding:** The facility is over 35 years old and is one of the last three linear-designed jails in California. This design does not permit staff to easily observe inmates in different parts of the jail and to respond to emergencies. Radio communications with sheriff's dispatch in case of emergencies is often impossible depending on the part of the jail in which the emergency is taking place. Both men and women inmates are held in minimum, medium, maximum and segregated facilities often exceeding capacity. This overcrowding often results in the forced early release of inmates into the local community.

The building has outdated plumbing, wiring and utilities requiring constant and costly maintenance. The structure was built prior to the mandatory use of computers and video surveillance systems and installation of this equipment required extensive wall mounted conduits, cables and wiring.

Because of the ability of non-law enforcement personnel and the public, including children, to access the area adjacent to the jail facility and outdoor recreation yard, the security of the jail is compromised. Weapons, drugs and other contraband can be secreted along the fence line to be retrieved later by inmates. This situation endangers the safety of Correctional officers and other inmates.

The kitchen is inadequate, the laundry does not have enough capacity, there is a lack of storage and office space and the control room is not secure. The medical room lacks secure storage for medications and medical records.

***Recommendation 1: New Jail***

The State of California has placed Plumas County on a list to receive future funding for a new courthouse. Properly designed, the new construction could provide for a new jail, as well as court facilities. The Board of Supervisors should actively engage in efforts to elevate Plumas County's position on the list and secure the funding. In addition, the Board should challenge its state representatives to support funding of a new combined facility.

The Board of Supervisors has recently established a committee to meet with state representatives about possible locations for the new courthouse. We recommend that a citizens advisory committee be assigned to investigate and report other alternatives for the necessary replacement of the jail.

The Sheriff should assign a task force from within the department to provide detailed documentation to support the need for a new jail facility.

***Recommendation 2: Critical Need***

Additional fencing and signage need to be constructed to provide for an exclusion zone so that persons may not approach the inner, recreation yard fence.

**Staffing**

***Finding:*** Sixteen Correctional Officers provide coverage 24/7. Inadequate staffing leaves evening and graveyard shifts staffed by only two officers. One is required to staff the control room in order to monitor inmates while the second officer is out in the jail. In an emergency, the control room officer must abandon the control room to come to the aid of the second officer. If both officers were to be overpowered, inmates would have access to the control room and could release all prisoners.

Especially critical is the evening shift staffed by only two officers. It is during this time that special programs are going on, inmates may be out of their cells and the majority of bookings of new inmates take place. The danger of disruption and possible attack of correctional officers are greatest on this shift.

**These dangerous conditions are a breeding ground for injury, death and costly lawsuits.**

Inspections by the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation have shown that the jail is understaffed by a minimum of five correctional officer positions. Three prior Grand Juries and this Grand Jury have also found the jail to be inadequate and unsafe. This places correctional officers, as well as inmates, in jeopardy. Without additional officers, this could potentially result in future lawsuits costing the county millions of dollars.

***Recommendation 1: Critical Need***

At minimal cost, civilian positions could be funded by the Board of Supervisors to provide control room coverage. This would allow Correctional Officers to be out in the jail for mutual support and to assure the security of the control room.

The Board of Supervisors should immediately fund and authorize one additional Correctional Officer position to be assigned to the evening shift before a tragedy occurs.

***Recommendation 2: Critical Need***

An adequate communication system needs to be installed so that officers are able to communicate with the sheriff's dispatch center in case of an emergency. Internal repeaters with a hard-line system to the dispatch center or other adequate system needs to be installed before an officer or inmate is injured or killed in an emergency.

## **CONCLUSION**

In spite of inadequate staffing and facilities, the staff of the Plumas County jail does an outstanding job in serving the citizens of Plumas County.

Progress toward replacement of the jail needs to move forward and existing critical needs must be addressed.

The Grand Jury expects responses from both the Plumas County Sheriff and the Plumas County Board of Supervisors.

## Law and Justice

### REASON FOR INVESTIGATION

Law enforcement is a critical function of county government. The committee chose to review the three law enforcement departments in the county, Sheriff Department, Probation Department and the District Attorney's Office. The committee inquired into the status of each department, and how they interacted and communicated with one another.

### PROCEDURE

The committee conducted interviews with the Sheriff, the District Attorney and the Chief Probation Officer.

### BACKGROUND

The District Attorney's Office is responsible for deciding which crimes to prosecute and for the prosecution of offenders within the county.

The Probation Department is responsible for the supervision of adult and juvenile offenders while on probation within the county as directed by the courts.

The Sheriff Department is responsible for the enforcement of state and county laws within Plumas County. By statute the Sheriff Department operates the Plumas County Jail, serves warrants and provides security for the courts. The Sheriff Department is one of the primary emergency response agencies within the county.

### FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### **Communication and Working Relationship Between Departments**

**Finding:** Each of the department heads stated that there was strong communication and a positive working relationship at the field level as needs arose. There currently is not a process for regular meetings of department heads or supervisory personnel to discuss law enforcement issues within the county.

**Recommendation:** The three departments should consider a quarterly management meeting to discuss issues of mutual concern, law enforcement problems and the process of working together efficiently.

#### **Status of each Department**

##### **Finding 1:** District Attorney's Office

The District Attorney reports that the District Attorney's Office is adequately staffed and funded at this time. The District Attorney has proposed the development of a Unified Family Court System that would coordinate court proceedings and services for families.

##### **Recommendation 1:** District Attorney's Office

The Plumas County Grand Jury supports the implementation of a Unified Family Court System.

***Finding 2: Probation Department***

The Probation Officers have an extremely heavy and growing workload. Adequate supervision of adult and juvenile offenders is critical to the safety of the citizens of Plumas County and decreases the number of probationers re-offending.

***Recommendation 2: Probation Department***

The County Board of Supervisors needs to fund one additional full-time Probation Officer to meet the workload required to supervise adult and juvenile offenders.

***Finding 3: Sheriff Department***

The Sheriff Department is operating with the same number of officers today as it did in the 1980s. The county has not increased funding to provide staffing to keep up with increases in population, crime and drug activity. This lack of adequate staffing jeopardizes the safety of the citizens of Plumas County as well as the officers assigned to patrol the county.

Communication in the field is inadequate and jeopardizes the safety of the officers. Many areas have intermittent or no communication, meaning that officers in an emergency cannot call for assistance if needed.

***Recommendation 3: Sheriff Department***

The Plumas County Board of Supervisors and the Plumas County Sheriff should work together to complete a review of the staffing of the Sheriff Department. This review should consider current and future law enforcement needs, adequate backup and supervision for officers in an emergency, and support personnel for dispatch and administrative functions.

A survey of radio communications within the county should be conducted and a plan developed to provide adequate radio communication in all areas of the county. This survey and plan must also include communications within the Plumas County Jail.

## **CONCLUSION**

The staff of these three departments are competent, dedicated individuals providing outstanding service to the citizens of Plumas County. Unfortunately, there is a critical need to address the extreme staffing shortage in the Sheriff Department. Failure to do so jeopardizes the safety of the citizens of Plumas County and places the county in great liability if inadequate staffing and communications were to result in the loss or injury of an officer or citizen.

The Plumas County Grand Jury expects responses from the Board of Supervisors, as well as the three agencies reviewed.

# Senior Nutrition Program

## REASON FOR INVESTIGATION

The 2008-2009 Grand Jury elected to review the Senior Nutrition Program (SNP) because several of us were interested in knowing how the program works, and the program had not been investigated since 1996. Our goal was to find out: "How does the senior nutrition program benefit seniors"?

## PROCEDURE

***Where did we get our information?*** Our committee reviewed hundreds of pages of government documentation in order to understand the program, from the Older Americans Act down to the local level. In addition, we dined at each of the nutrition sites at least two times each to see, hear and taste the program!

We toured the kitchens, conducted interviews with the Director of Public Health, Director of Environmental Health, nutrition program Division Director, site managers and an Advisory Board member. In addition, we visited with seniors to gain their perspective. We also questioned some members of the Board of Supervisors and the County Chief Administrative Officer and heard their reasons for supporting the program.

Our research led us to read and review dozens of documents including: environmental health inspection reports, the code of ethics and responsibilities of the bus drivers, by-laws of the Advisory Board, a proposal for funding, forms and manuals, and much more. We've include a partial list of resource materials at the end of this report for those who want to explore this program further.

## BACKGROUND

***How does the program work?*** In 1965 the Federal government recognized the importance of good nutrition and socialization for our senior citizens. Several revisions later, the Older Americans Act (OAA) is alive and well. The program is funded through the OAA to the States' Area Agency on Aging (AAA), and in Northern California through the Passages organization.

Many resources state that the health and well-being of our senior population depends to a large degree on getting the nutrition they need, as well as keeping active through socializing with other people. Isolation and poor nutrition contribute to mental decline and poor health. The Senior Nutrition Program is specifically designed to combat those problems.

***The lunch meal provides at least one-third of the daily required nutrients. The menus are prepared by a registered dietitian.***

The purpose of the SNP is described by the California Department of Aging:

***The Nutrition Program provides nutritionally-balanced meals, nutrition education and nutrition counseling to individuals 60 years of age or older. In addition to promoting better health through improved nutrition, the program focuses on reducing***

***the isolation of the elderly and providing a link to other social and supportive services such as transportation, information and referral, escort, employment, and education.***

Funding starts at the federal level and includes state matching "in-kind" contributions. At the local level, funding is provided by local government and/or private resources. Donations from participants, grants, monetary and food donations from local businesses and community members, and fund raising events by the Advisory Boards also finance the nutrition and transportation program.

**While many other counties are limiting their programs because of the economy, the Plumas County Board of Supervisors has provided unyielding and generous support for this program since 1998. Our local sources noted that Board support has been paramount to the program's success.**

Each state sets up its own internal departments to manage the many facets of the Federal Older Americans Act. It is beyond the purview of this report to detail the various departments involved. In Plumas County the SNP is managed by the Plumas County Public Health Agency, the Plumas County Board of Supervisors and the SNP Division Director.

County governments and private entities may respond to the Request for Proposals that Passages advertises every four years. The contract to provide the nutrition and transportation services in Plumas County has been under the purview of the Plumas County Public Health Agency since 1998.

The contract for services is awarded with the money separated into two funds, one for nutritional services and one for transportation. The transportation allocation is usually not sufficient, so the California Department of Transportation also provides funding for that portion of the program. The

**YOU'RE INVITED!**  
**Seniors 60 years and older are encouraged to attend lunch at their SNC. Dine on delicious homemade food while you meet friends and enjoy the day! Homebound Seniors have a program, too!**

Director of Public Health applies to Plumas County Board of Supervisors for the remainder of the basic funds. An annual update to the proposal is submitted to allow adjustments to the contract, especially reflecting the drop in attendance in the winter months when many temporarily relocate to warmer climates."

Two dining options are available to seniors. They may gather for lunch at senior nutrition centers (SNC) in Quincy, Portola, Chester, and Greenville and at the Mohawk Resource Center in Blairsden. Homebound seniors, those with a medical condition

or certain transportation issues, can have meals delivered directly to their home - a hot meal on delivery day and frozen meals for the remaining days of the week. Surveys are taken annually to obtain the seniors' opinion of the food.

Some of our seniors receiving the homebound service are in isolated areas of the county and the drivers of the senior transportation buses provide them a contact with the "outside" world. In addition to providing a friendly face and a little conversation, drivers are trained to alert a responsible party if they note conditions or circumstances which place the senior in imminent danger.

| <b>Senior Nutrition Contacts</b><br><b>(<a href="http://www.countyofplumas.com/publichealth/senior_services.htm">www.countyofplumas.com/publichealth/senior_services.htm</a>)</b> |                             |
|---|-----------------------------|
| <b>Blairsden</b>  | <b>836-0446 or 832-4173</b> |
| <b>Chester</b>  | <b>394-7636</b>             |
| <b>Greenville</b>   | <b>284-6608</b>             |
| <b>Portola</b>  | <b>832-4173</b>             |
| <b>Quincy</b>   | <b>283-0643</b>             |

For additional information regarding hours, donations, reservations, etc., for the nutrition centers and the homebound delivery program, contact your local nutrition site or check out the website. The menu is published in the local newspaper.

**Why do seniors like this program?** Activities vary at the five sites. The Director of Public Health, the Division Director of the SNP, and the site managers develop activities that interest their local seniors. In Portola, for example, there is a monthly bus trip to Reno so seniors can shop and enjoy a ride through the country. The Chester senior community has the good fortune to have the SNC

**Reasons to attend the SNC included chatting with friends, sharing pictures of grandkids and getting out of the kitchen. And, as one senior remarked, "Going to the SNC for lunch gives me a reason to get up, get dressed and get out of the house for a while."**

located at Wildwood Senior Housing facility, where their lunches are often accompanied by live piano music. Quincy SNC tries to arrange a bus tour at Christmas to see the homes decorated with lights for the holiday. Blairsden's lunch program is held each Wednesday at the Mohawk Resource Center, where they may set up a card table after

lunch and enjoy a few hands of cards. Greenville seniors go to Chico once a month for their shopping excursion. Other activities may include crossword puzzles, book exchanges, and jigsaw puzzles at the various centers.

**Who's in charge?** The Senior Nutrition Program in Plumas County involves the following:

**Public Health Agency.** The Director plans, organizes, directs, coordinates, and administers public health programs for the county. She is the supervisor of both the Director of Environmental Health and the Division Director of the SNP.

**Environmental Health Department.** This regulatory agency ensures that California State food safety standards are met at the SNCs. They perform unannounced inspections twice yearly, and follow-up inspections are done if any problems require action and re-inspection.

**Advisory Boards.** Each SNC's Board holds quarterly meetings to assist in problem solving and improving site operations and to keep participants apprised of all aspects of the program. They may also host fundraisers to keep petty cash on hand in case of emergency, such as for the repair of an appliance.

|  |
|--|
| <b>Approximate Number of Meals Served in a Month</b> |
| <b>Chester - 1352</b>                                |
| <b>Greenville - 884</b>                              |
| <b>Quincy - 1205</b>                                 |
| <b>Portola - 958</b>                                 |
| <b>Mohawk - 67</b>                                   |
| <b>GRAND TOTAL = 4465</b>                            |

**Senior Services.** The Division Director has primary responsibility for directing and overseeing the Senior Nutrition and Transportation programs for Plumas County. This includes food service management, business administration and supervision/management of personnel, and more. She regularly visits each site, visiting with the seniors and she attends the Advisory Board meetings.

**Nutrition Site Managers.** Each manager is responsible for all nutrition site day-to-day operations, and this is no small task! Those responsibilities include planning, scheduling and coordinating all the homebound meals and nutrition site lunches and activities. These include transportation; outreach to seniors and the public; supervising/training kitchen staff; attending public, agency and Advisory Board meetings; handling suggestions and other issues.

**Head Cooks.** Each one prepares the homebound meals and food for the lunches. They are responsible for safety, cleanliness, food storage, training the assistants, record keeping, kitchen staff activities and more.

**Assistant Cooks.** They help prepare the food, wash the cookware, dishes and other food prep equipment, and clean the kitchen. They also help prepare the home bound meal packages and perform many miscellaneous kitchen tasks.

**Bus Drivers.** They not only transport seniors to and from the nutrition sites, but take them to doctor appointments, the pharmacy, the hairdresser, shopping and special events. Drivers assist passengers while boarding and unloading, load wheel chair clients, and see to the overall comfort of their passengers. They also perform a daily safety inspection of the bus for gas, oil, tires.

## FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**We found the nutrition program is an excellent benefit to our seniors. We believe the following recommendations will further enhance the program.**

### **Advertising**

**Finding:** The SNP menu is printed in the local newspapers.

**Recommendation 1:** To ensure all senior community members are kept informed, we recommend that flyers or other visible reminders of the program be posted in places such as libraries, churches, medical/dental offices, post offices, etc.

**Recommendation 2:** We recommend an Open House, Bring a Friend to Lunch Day, or other organized activities to introduce seniors to this great program. Advisory Board funds, as well as community business and private donations could potentially be used to support these activities.

### **Advisory Board Members**

**Finding:** Some Advisory Boards face difficulties recruiting new Board members.

**Recommendation:** We recommend increasing public awareness of Board vacancies to encourage participation.

### **Donations**

**Finding:** Donation boxes were not always placed in an area that was confidential. One was placed where the Site Manager had full view of the box; others were located at the sign-in table. The donation boxes were not fully screened.

**Recommendation:** We recommend the donation boxes be moved to a more secure, private area out of view.

### **Job Descriptions**

**Finding:** Pertinent job descriptions dated back as far as the mid-1990s and may not reflect current job responsibilities.

**Recommendation:** We recommend these be updated as necessary and reviewed annually.

### **Policies and Procedures**

**Finding:** Our interviews revealed that there is no policies and procedures manual for the nutrition centers. This has led to operational inconsistencies among the sites.

**Recommendation:** We strongly recommend that a written manual specific to the needs of the Plumas County senior nutrition sites be developed by the end of this calendar year. This manual should include but not be limited to:

- Food preparation and distribution
- Accounting procedures
- Special events
- Complaint process
- Employee conduct

### Senior Nutrition Surveys

**Finding:** An annual survey is conducted to assess the seniors' interests and satisfaction with the program.

**Recommendation:** We recommend two surveys per year to address seasonal attendance fluctuations. We also recommend that the survey be expanded to include suggestions for activities.

### Site Managers

**Finding:** We found the site managers are very "hands on" in their approach to their jobs. They go the extra mile to invest their time, energy, empathy and concern in the seniors they serve.

**Recommendation:** Keep up the good work!

### Website and Published Contact Information

**Finding:** We found that Plumas County SNP information (e.g., telephone numbers, donation amounts) on several websites and in some publications was not accurate.

**Recommendation:** We recommend that these sources be corrected immediately, reviewed annually, and updated as necessary to maintain accuracy.

## CONCLUSION

**Did we answer our question?** Our investigation started with the question: "How does the senior nutrition program benefit seniors"? Well, there's no rubber chicken here! The meals are delicious, as well as nutritionally balanced, which encourages seniors to dine out on healthy food. Getting away from the television, having conversation with others and being out in the fresh air is healthful for both mind and body. Requesting a donation instead of charging a fee is helpful to those who may be on limited resources but is also fair to those who wish to contribute to the funding. The welcoming attitude of the staff and management provides an atmosphere of friendliness and companionship that helps seniors stay involved and included in their community.

A big "thank you" to all of those who participated in our interview process and to the many seniors who welcomed us into their circle, shared their tables and stories and made us feel at home.

This Grand Jury is very impressed with the Plumas County Senior Nutrition Program and the all the great people who make it happen. Everyone we interviewed was committed to serving our senior population, enthusiastic about doing a good job, and very pleasant.

Kudos to the "volunteer" seniors who attend the lunches and are very helpful, assist in bussing tables, and act as "good will" ambassadors to the diners.

We STRONGLY encourage those seniors who do not currently enjoy this program to call their local senior nutrition center and sign up. We had a great time!

## **Partial List of Resource Materials:**

- Advisory Board Functions and By-Laws
- California Area on Aging, Area PSA3, Home Delivered Meals Handbook
- California Area on Aging, Participant Confidentiality/Policy on Contributions
- Champions for Change, Healthy Communities of the North State
- Chester Senior Nutrition Program
- Congregate Meals, July 2008 to January 2009
- Congregate Nutrition Services Budget, 2008-2009
- Homebound Meals, July 2008 to January 2009
- Home Delivered Nutrition Services Budget, 2008-2009
- Nutrition Guidelines for Senior Citizens
- Passages ([www.passagescenter.org](http://www.passagescenter.org))
- Plumas County Public Health Agency Divisions ([www.healthyplumas.org](http://www.healthyplumas.org))
- Plumas County Senior Nutrition Program and Senior Transportation ([www.countyofplumas.com](http://www.countyofplumas.com))
- Plumas Rural Services Community Connections Pamphlet
- Senior Services in Plumas County

# **Plumas County Hospital Districts**

## **REASON FOR INVESTIGATION**

Healthcare is a vital and timely topic nationwide and one that also significantly impacts the citizens of Plumas County.

The 2008-2009 Grand Jury chose to look at the current condition of healthcare services in our communities and to present some of the unique challenges facing our rural hospital districts now and in the near future. By providing residents of Plumas County with the information in this report, it is hoped that the citizenry, hospital boards, and medical providers will together find ways to meet these challenges.

## **PROCEDURE**

Keeping the goal of presenting the unique challenges facing our rural hospital districts in mind, the Grand Jury Hospital Committee pursued avenues of information including:

- Hospital District Publications
- Financial reports from the Hospital Districts
- Interviews with Hospital District Chief Executive Officers
- Medicare Publications
- Several websites including:
  - <http://guidetogov.org/ca/state/overview/districts.html>
  - <http://www.oshpd.ca.gov/HID/Products/Hospitals/Chrgmstr/2005/chrgmstrE.html>
  - [http://city-data.com/county/Plumas\\_County-CA.html](http://city-data.com/county/Plumas_County-CA.html)
  - <http://www.chcf.org>
  - <http://labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov>
  - <http://jointcommission.org>
  - <http://www.medicare.gov>
  - <http://www.raonline.org>
  - <http://www.docboard.org>

## **BACKGROUND**

This Committee focused its efforts on the three Plumas County hospital districts centered in Chester, Quincy and Portola. The three functioning Plumas County hospital districts are Seneca Healthcare District in Chester, Plumas Hospital District in Quincy, and Eastern Plumas Health Care in Portola. The Indian Valley Health Care District closed its hospital in late 2006 and, since then, Eastern Plumas Health Care supports the healthcare services in Indian Valley, as well as Graeagle and Loyalton.

Special Districts are units of local government established by residents of an area to provide a service or services not provided by the county or city. Special Districts can be Independent or Dependent, Single Purpose or Multipurpose, and Enterprise or Non-Enterprise. The three Plumas County Hospital Districts are Independent, Single Purpose Enterprise Special Districts with citizen-elected Boards. All

three Plumas County hospital districts receive some financial support from Plumas County residents through taxes.

### **Challenge #1 – Staffing**

As with most rural hospital districts, our hospital districts struggle with the lack of availability of health care professionals, family practice physicians and specialists, laboratory technicians, nurses, nurses assistants and many other skilled personnel. It is difficult to attract and retain healthcare staff and employees. Factors contributing to the lack of availability of family practice physicians and specialists include few job opportunities for a working spouse, the lack of shopping and other amenities found in urban areas, competition with job alternatives offering higher financial rewards and state-specific licensing requirements (a doctor practicing in Nevada must also get a license to practice from the state of California before serving Plumas County residents).

### **Challenge #2 – Compliance with Seismic Safety Law**

In 1973, as a direct result of the 1971 Sylmar earthquake (magnitude 6.6), the California State Legislature passed the Alfred E. Alquist Seismic Safety Act. This Act called for state regulations to establish design and construction standards for new hospital buildings and additions. In 1994, the California Legislature passed SB1953 concerning retrofits and enhancements to hospital architecture, equipment, utilities and communication systems to improve operational capabilities immediately following an earthquake.

**To meet new state-mandated seismic standards, Eastern Plumas Health Care and Seneca Healthcare will have to invest significant amounts of capital into facility improvements.**

This bill included unprecedented provisions that would require seismic retrofits or replacements of existing, privately owned structures. Given the difficult business environment for California hospitals, there have been questions about the financial feasibility of compliance and the possibility of large-scale industry disruption if hospitals undertake large state-mandated construction projects.

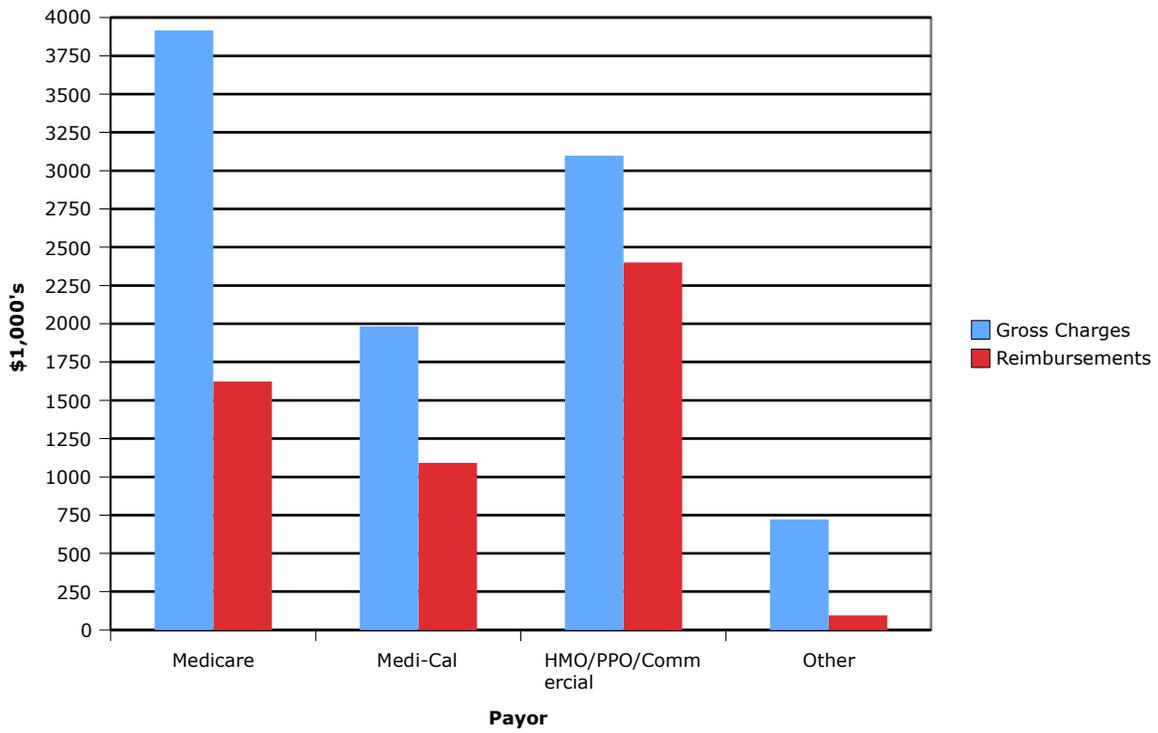
In July 2008, Plumas County District 4 voters approved Measure A, providing \$17.5 million in upgrades and expansion to the Plumas District Hospital. One of the stated purposes of Measure A was to “ensure the hospital meets mandatory seismic safety requirements. By state law, the hospital must be upgraded or closed.” To enable continuous community involvement, the Board of Directors of the Plumas Hospital District also approved a proposed citizen’s committee that will oversee the allocation of the expansion project funds. In order to meet these new state-mandated seismic standards, Eastern Plumas Health Care and Seneca Healthcare will have to find and invest significant amounts of capital into facility improvements. One source of the needed capital is community-supported bond initiatives, such as the recently-passed Measure A.

### **Challenge # 3 – Reimbursement**

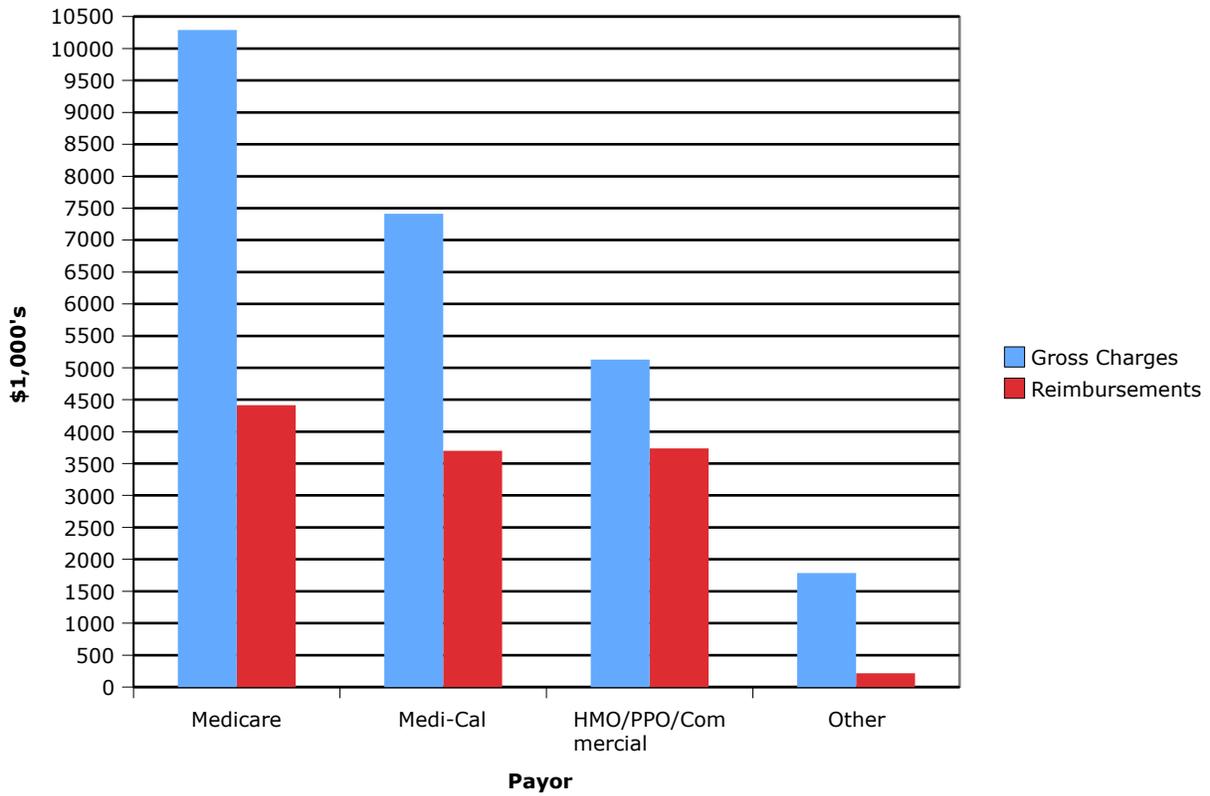
Sources for reimbursement (payors) of hospital district costs are: Medicare, Medi-Cal, employee-sponsored insurance (HMO/PPO/Commercial), and others that include private pay (no insurance or patient pays bill), worker’s compensation, charity (patient doesn’t pay), etc.

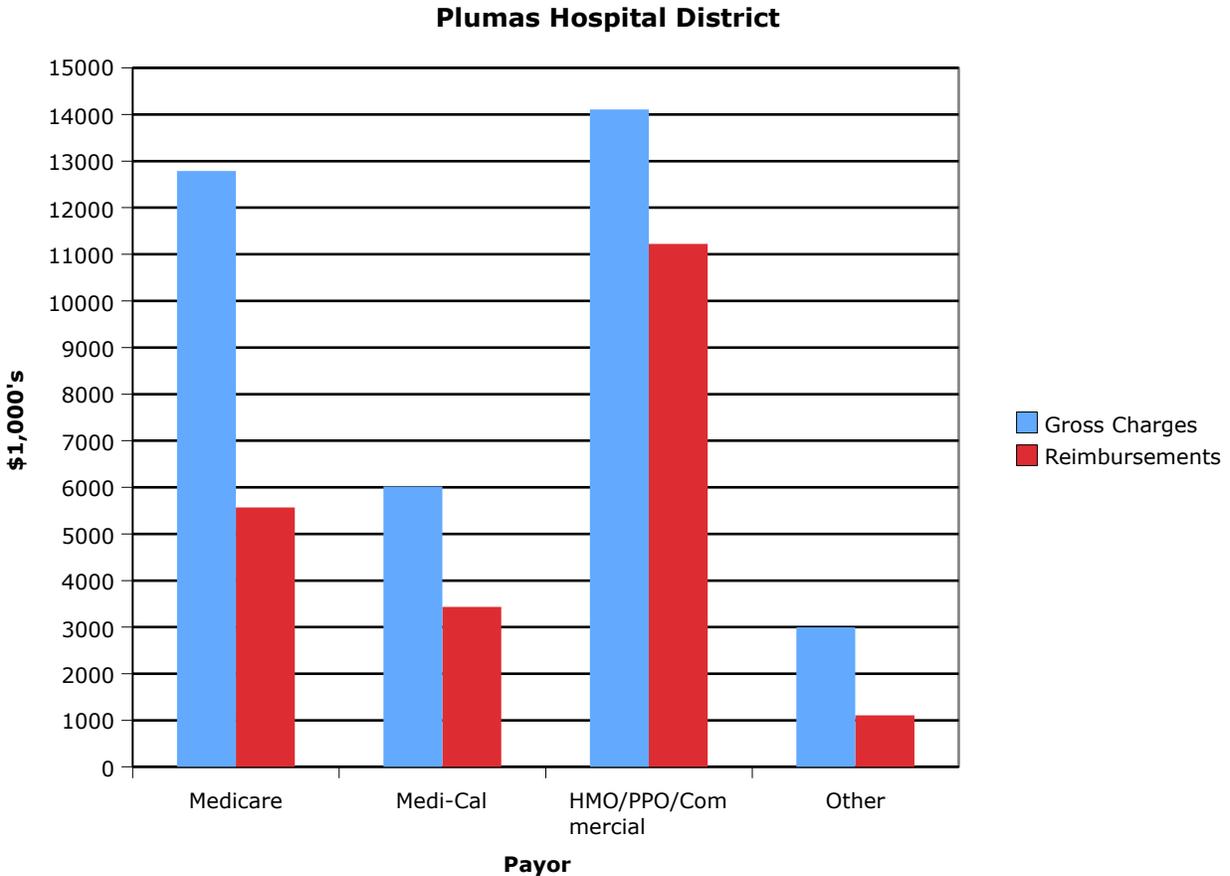
The following charts show, by payor, the year-end June 2008 gross revenue due for services billed (in \$1,000s) and the reimbursements received:

### Seneca Healthcare District



### Eastern Plumas Health Care





Medicare represents a significant share of billed services for the three hospital districts. However the rate of Medicare reimbursement is below 50%. Our hospital districts have made efforts to maximize Medicare reimbursement by becoming Critical Access Hospitals. A Critical Access Hospital is a facility that provides outpatient, inpatient and emergency services to people in rural areas and is certified to receive cost-based reimbursements from Medicare (versus reimbursement by diagnosis related grouping). However, Medicare reimbursement remains low compared to that of the HMO/PPO/Commercial payors.

**Challenge # 4 – Electronic Medical Records**

An electronic medical record is a medical record in digital format. The benefits of electronic medical records include:

- Efficient information storage and retrieval
- Standardization of forms, terminology and abbreviations and data input
- Ease of sharing of historical and current health information between providers
- Replication of data in the event of catastrophic information loss at one location
- Continuation of patient information in the event a provider retires or expires
- Avoidance of costly duplicate imaging procedures
- Access to unprecedented amounts of clinical data for research

Addressing the need for the development of standards for electronic record interoperability, in 2005 the US Federal government awarded a contract to the Certification Commission for Healthcare Information Technology to develop certification criteria for electronic medical record systems. This set the stage for effective nation-wide implementation of electronic medical records. However, electronic medical record adoption by US healthcare providers has been minimal, due primarily to the cost of implementation.

Signed in February 2009, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act included \$29 billion for healthcare information technology. Healthcare providers can receive incentive payments if they adopt and use qualified electronic medical record systems. Physicians who haven't adopted certified electronic medical systems by 2014 will have their Medicare reimbursements reduced by up to 3% beginning in 2015.

## FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### **Staffing**

**Finding:** A generally low volume of surgical procedures, job opportunities for spouses, lack of amenities, lower rates of pay, and state licensing requirements have all contributed to the part-time use of qualified surgeons and specialists from surrounding areas, including Redding, Chico, Paradise, Truckee, Reno, Davis and Sacramento.

**Recommendation:** Building upon the concept of part-time, visiting professionals, the Grand Jury recommends pursuing the possibility of increased sharing of part-time professionals among our county's three hospital districts.

On-going hospital district efforts to identify potential out-of-state specialists who can also practice in California may be benefited by taking advantage of internet sources such as [www.docboard.org](http://www.docboard.org). This resource is a combined database of all medical and osteopathic licensing jurisdictions.

### **Compliance with Seismic Safety Law**

**Finding:** The Alfred E. Alquist Seismic Safety Act requires Eastern Plumas Hospital and Seneca Hospital to conform to the January 1, 2030 deadline of ensuring their hospital will be capable of operating following a large earthquake. Without community support for bond initiatives similar to Measure A, without other sources of financing, and without changes to the state-mandated seismic standards, these two hospitals may have to close in 2030.

**Recommendation:** None. Bond initiatives, like Measure A, may be proposed by the other hospital districts in Plumas County. It is hoped that the citizenry will be able to make an informed determination of support when, and if, new bond initiatives are proposed or the state reconsiders the requirements of the Alfred E. Alquist Seismic Safety Act.

### **Reimbursement**

**Finding:** Reimbursement rates from Medicare and Medi-Cal are restricted by law and are often lower than reimbursement rates from commercial insurers.

**Recommendation:** Because timely and clear billing for all services results in swifter reimbursement, facilities need to be certain that claims are correct and complete. Persons involved in all facets of billing procedures, including in-house and outsourced staff, need to be sufficiently trained and kept current with changes that take place in the law and accurate coding.

## **Electronic Medical Records**

**Finding:** All three functioning Plumas County Hospital Districts have implemented some form of electronic medical records systems.

**Recommendation:** Efforts should be made to take advantage of the incentive payments available from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to implement fully qualified electronic medical records systems. If these qualified electronic medical records systems are implemented by 2014, a 3% reduction in Medicare reimbursement will be avoided.

## **CONCLUSION**

The challenges facing our three hospital districts are a reflection of healthcare issues facing other rural hospital districts, as well as those facing our nation as a whole (one exception being the challenge of conforming to California seismic standards). By presenting these challenges, this Grand Jury hopes that our county residents will better understand these issues and will feel confident in their opinions and voting decisions.

**Our hospital districts offer a variety of healthcare services and will prosper only with the active and ongoing support of Plumas County residents.**

# Grand Jury Participation on County Audit Committee

## BACKGROUND

Audits are a required and integral part of the government process. These audits examine special districts, county offices and entities, and determine the appropriate and legal use of taxpayer dollars.

The 2005-2006 Grand Jury discovered that two members of the Grand Jury panel were to be assigned to the County Audit Committee, along with two members of the Board of Supervisors, the Chief Administrative Officer, the County Auditor, and the County Treasurer/Tax Collector.

The 2008-2009 Grand Jury panel had been seated for several months but remained unaware of this duty to be part of the Audit Committee. Upon learning of the requirement, two members of the jury panel were appointed to the committee. At that time, the yearly audit was in progress. No meetings of the entire committee were set to take place until March 2009, at which time a review of the 2007-2008 audit was scheduled. This meeting occurred just prior to the time the contracted audit firm was to present its report to the Board of Supervisors. As a result of late entry onto the committee, the 2008-2009 Grand Jury participated in only a portion of the audit process.

## FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

***Finding:*** The Audit Committee has already begun work at the time the new Grand Jury is being seated, thus, the new panelists are not routinely advised of their responsibility in this matter and do not assign two members at the beginning of the term.

***Recommendation 1:*** The Chief Administrative Officer, or his/her designee will establish a policy and procedure by which the incoming Grand Jury Foreperson is advised of the necessity to appoint two members of the panel to the Audit Committee, said participation to include attendance at all meetings of the Committee

***Recommendation 2:*** At the first meeting of the incoming Grand Jury, two members of the panel will be selected by majority vote of the panel to serve on the County Audit Committee.

# Complaint Summaries

## Plumas County Grand Jury – 2008-2009

### Complaint No. 08/09-1:

**Nature of Complaint:** The complainant alleged possible mismanagement of time and personnel, as well as lack of policies and procedures for the Senior Nutrition Program.

**Response:** The 2008-2009 Grand Jury had determined to review the Senior Nutrition Program and formed a committee for said purpose. Subsequent to that decision, the Citizen Complaint came to the Grand Jury. Please refer to Senior Nutrition Investigative review which is a part of this final report.

### Complaint No. 08/09-2:

**Nature of Complaint:** Complaint was submitted inquiring about Sheriff Department media policy. Complaint was withdrawn.

**Response:** No follow up necessary.

### Complaint No. 08/09-3:

**Nature of Complaint:** Email complaint alleged possible mismanagement of time and personnel in a county official's office.

**Response:** The Grand Jury requires that complaints be submitted through the official means of the Citizen Complaint Form. While all complaints are held confidential, the official submission of the complaint must follow Grand Jury protocol. The complainant declined to file a formal complaint.

### Complaint No. 08/09-4:

**Nature of Complaint:** This complainant alleged possible criminal acts by an employee of a county agency.

**Response:** The Plumas County Grand Jury is civil in nature. The complaint did not fall under the jurisdiction of this Grand Jury and was, therefore, referred to the Office of the District Attorney.

### Complaint No. 08/09-5:

**Nature of Complaint:** This complainant alleged possible criminal acts by an employee of a county agency.

**Response:** The Plumas County Grand Jury is civil in nature. The complaint did not fall under the jurisdiction of this Grand Jury and was, therefore, referred to the Office of the District Attorney.

### Complaints No. 08/09-6 and 08/09-7:

**Nature of complaint:** The above-numbered complaints were received from an anonymous source.

**Response:** It is the policy of the Plumas County Grand Jury that all complaints must be in writing, signed and dated using the official complaint form. Therefore, these complaints were not considered by the Grand Jury.

**Complaint No. 08/09-8:**

***Nature of complaint:*** Complainant requested Grand Jury assistance with personnel dispute regarding pay out of sick leave and vacation benefits.

***Response:*** The Grand Jury elected not to intervene in this matter. Complainant was encouraged to pursue resolution through his union representative.

## Appendix A - List of County and City Departments

Following is the most current list of county and city departments provided to the Grand Jury.

### PLUMAS COUNTY GRAND JURY HISTORY OF INVESTIGATIONS

| DEPARTMENT, AGENCY, PROGRAM          | Prior | 2000-01 | 2001-02 | 2002-03 | 2003-04 | 2004-05 | 2005-06  | 2006-07 | 2007-08 | 2008-09 |
|--------------------------------------|-------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|----------|---------|---------|---------|
| Administrator/CAO                    | 95-96 |         | X       |         |         |         |          |         |         |         |
| Agriculture Commissioner             |       |         |         |         |         |         |          |         |         |         |
| Airport Operations                   |       |         |         |         |         |         |          |         |         |         |
| Alcohol and Drug                     | 95-96 |         | Inc.    |         |         |         |          |         |         |         |
| Animal Services                      | 95-96 |         | X       | X       |         | X       | Foll. up | X       |         |         |
| Assessor                             | 98-99 |         |         |         |         |         |          |         |         |         |
| Auditor/Controller                   |       |         | X       |         |         |         |          |         |         |         |
| Board of Supervisors                 |       |         | X       |         |         |         | X        | X       | X       | X       |
| Building & Panning Services          |       |         |         | X       |         | X       |          |         |         |         |
| Cemetery Districts                   |       |         |         |         |         |         |          |         |         |         |
| Clerk/Recorder                       |       |         | Inc.    |         |         |         |          |         |         |         |
| Community Services Districts         |       |         |         |         |         |         |          | X       |         |         |
| County Counsel                       |       |         |         |         |         |         |          |         |         |         |
| District Attorney                    | 98-99 |         |         |         |         |         |          | X       |         |         |
| Facility Services                    | 99-00 |         |         | X       |         | X       |          |         |         |         |
| Fair                                 |       | X       |         |         |         |         |          |         | X       |         |
| Farm Advisor                         |       |         |         |         |         |         |          |         |         |         |
| Feather River College                |       |         |         |         |         |         | Inc.     | X       |         |         |
| Fire Departments                     |       |         | X       | X       |         | X       | Foll. up |         |         |         |
| Flood Control/Water Conservation     |       |         |         |         | X       | X       |          |         |         |         |
| Health Dept./Env. Health             |       |         |         |         |         |         |          |         |         |         |
| Hospital Districts                   |       |         | X       |         |         |         |          |         |         | X       |
| Housing & Comm. Development          |       |         |         |         |         |         |          |         |         |         |
| Human Resources                      | 99-00 |         |         |         | X       |         |          |         |         |         |
| Information Technology               | 99-00 |         |         |         |         |         |          |         |         |         |
| Jail                                 | 98-99 | X       | X       | X       | X       | X       | X        | X       | X       | X       |
| Juvenile Hall                        |       |         |         | X       |         | X       |          |         |         |         |
| Library                              | 98-99 |         |         |         |         |         |          |         |         |         |
| Local Agency Formation Comm. (LAFCo) |       |         |         |         |         |         |          |         | X       |         |
| Mental Health                        | 99-00 |         |         |         |         |         |          |         |         |         |
| Museum                               | 98-99 |         |         |         |         |         |          |         |         |         |
| Nutrition Program                    | 95-96 |         |         |         |         |         |          |         |         | X       |

| DEPARTMENT, AGENCY, PROGRAM      | Prior | 2000-01 | 2001-02 | 2002-03 | 2003-04 | 2004-05 | 2005-06 | 2006-07 | 2007-08 | 2008-09 |
|----------------------------------|-------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Off. of Emergency Services (OES) |       |         |         |         |         |         |         |         | X       |         |
| Plumas Corporation               |       |         | X       |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| Public Health Agency             |       |         |         |         | X       |         |         |         |         |         |
| Plumas Unified School Dist.      |       |         |         | X       | X       | X       |         |         |         |         |
| Probation                        | 98-99 |         | X       |         | X       |         |         |         |         |         |
| Public Works                     | 98-99 |         | X       |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| Recreation Districts             | 95-96 |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| Sheriff/Coroner                  | 98-99 |         | X       |         | X       |         |         |         | X       | X       |
| Social Services/Public Guardian  | 95-96 |         |         |         |         |         |         | X       |         |         |
| Treasurer/Tax Collector          | 98-99 |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| Veteran/s Services               | 95-96 |         |         |         |         |         | X       |         |         |         |

**KEY: Foll. up = Follow up Inc. = Incomplete**

## **Appendix B – Requirements per Penal Code Section 888 et seq.**

The Penal Code requires the Grand Jury to:

- Inquire into the condition and management of the public prisons;
- Inquire into the willful or corrupt misconduct in office of public officers;
- Investigate and report on the operations, accounts, and records of county officers, departments, or functions of the county. The investigations may be conducted on some selective basis each year;
- When requested by the Board of Supervisors, investigate and report upon the needs for increase or decrease in salaries of the county elected officials; and,
- Submit a final report of its findings and recommendations no later than the end of its term, to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court.

In addition to these requirements, the Grand Jury may:

- Investigate and report upon the needs of all county officers, including the abolition or creation of offices and the equipment for, or the method or system of performing the duties of, the several offices;
- Examine the books and records of a redevelopment agency, a housing authority, or a joint powers agency and may investigate and report upon the method or system of performing the duties of such agency or authority; and,
- Examine the books and records of any special-purpose assessing or taxing district located wholly or partly in the county or the local agency formation commission in the county and may investigate and report upon the method or system of performing the duties of such district or commission.

Although not mandated by the California Penal Code, it is the policy of the Plumas County Grand Jury to review and acknowledge all written, dated, and signed citizen complaints. See Appendix D for more information about filing a citizen complaint.

## Appendix C – Citizen Complaint Form and Explanation

**PLUMAS COUNTY GRAND JURY,** P.O. Box 784, Quincy, CA 95971

### **CITIZEN COMPLAINT FORM**

(Please print or type all information)

#### **Person Filing Complaint**

Date:

Name: Phone

Address: City State/Zip

**SAMPLE**

#### **Agency or person about whom complaint is made**

Name: Title

Department:

#### **1. Describe your complaint**

(Briefly state action that is (was) dishonest, improper, illegal, inefficient, etc.)

#### **2. Set forth the facts upon which the complaint is based.**

(Describe in detail, include all names, dates, places, etc.)

#### **3. What other agencies, officials or persons have you contacted about this matter? What was (has been) their response to you?**

(Give names, addresses, phone numbers, contact dates and any other information you think is pertinent.

#### **4. Is the complaint involved in litigation? No Yes**

#### **5. Should we contact any other agencies or persons?**

(Please give names, addresses, phone numbers, etc.)

#### **6. What action do you think the Grand Jury should take?**

Signature:

IT IS A CRIME TO REPORT TO THE GRAND JURY THAT A CRIME  
HAS BEEN COMMITTED KNOWING THE REPORT TO BE FALSE.

(Penal Code No. 148.5.d)

ATTACH COPIES OF PERTINENT DOCUMENTS AND CORRESPONDENCE  
(USE AND ATTACH ADDITIONAL SHEETS IF NECESSARY)

The Grand Jury may also review and acknowledge all written, dated and signed citizen complaints. Within the time allowed by its established investigatory priorities, the Grand Jury may investigate complaints where appropriate. All complaints are treated confidentially. This applies to the written documents as well as the testimony of witnesses and participants. The complainant may be asked to appear as a witness. Note should be made that the sitting panel functions only as a civil Grand Jury and does not deal with criminal matters. If a complaint appears to involve the criminal court system, the matter is handed over to the office of the District Attorney for review and investigation.

Citizen Complaint forms may be obtained on-line at the Grand Jury page of the Plumas County Website or by sending a written request to:

Plumas County Grand Jury  
P.O. Box 784  
Quincy, CA 95971

## **Appendix D - Note to Respondents/Requirements for Response**

As a result of Grand Jury investigation and reporting, certain agencies, entities, departments, districts, and functions of county government may be the subject of the final report which outlines findings and recommendations. Penal Code Sec. 933.05 outlines the requirements for those responding to the Grand Jury final report. For the assistance of all respondents, this Code is summarized as follows:

The responding person or entity must, within time frames specified in Penal Code 933(c), respond in one of two ways:

- That you agree with the finding;
- That you disagree wholly or partially with the finding, in which case the response shall specify the portion of the finding that is disputed and shall include an explanation of the reasons for the disagreement.

Recommendations by the Grand Jury require action (Penal Code 933.05). The responding person or entity must report action on all recommendations in one of four ways:

- The recommendation has been implemented, with summary of the implemented action;
- The recommendation has not yet been implemented but will be implemented in the future, with a time frame for implementation;
- The recommendation requires further analysis. If the person or entity reports in this manner, the law requires an explanation of the analysis or studies in a time frame not to exceed six months;
- The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable, with an accompanying explanation.

If either finding or recommendation deals with budgetary or personnel matters of a county department headed by an elected officer, both the elected officer and the Board or Supervisors shall respond if the Grand Jury so requests, but the response of the Board of Supervisors shall address only those budgetary or personnel matters over which it has some decision-making authority.

### **Requirement to Respond**

No later than 90 days after the Grand Jury submits a final report on the operations of any public agency subject to its reviewing authority, the governing body of the public agency (includes departments) shall comment to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court on the findings and recommendations pertaining to matters under the control of the governing body. Every elected county officer or agency head for which the Grand Jury has responsibility pursuant to Section 914.1 shall comment within 60 days to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court, with an information copy sent to the Board of Supervisors, on the findings and recommendations pertaining to matters under the control of that county officer or agency head and any agency or agencies which that officer or agency head supervises or controls. All of these comments and reports shall forthwith be submitted to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court who impaneled the Grand Jury.

## **Appendix E - Grand Jury Report Distribution List**

The Honorable Judge Ira Kaufman  
The Honorable Judge Janet Hilde  
Plumas County Grand Jury for 2008-2009  
Plumas County Grand Jury for 2009-2010  
Plumas County Administrative officer  
Plumas County Auditor/Controller  
Plumas County Board of Supervisors  
Plumas County Building Department  
Plumas County Clerk of the Board of Supervisors  
Plumas County Community Development Commission  
Plumas County Counsel  
Plumas County Court Executive Officer  
Plumas County Department of Animal Services  
Plumas County Department of Human Resources  
Plumas County Department of Social Services/Public Guardian  
Plumas County District Attorney  
Plumas County Flood Control and Water Conservation District  
Plumas County Information and Technology Department (Website)  
Plumas County Jail  
Plumas County Libraries  
Plumas County Office of Emergency Services (OES)  
Plumas County Planning Department  
Plumas County Probation Department  
Plumas County Public Health Agency, Director of Public Health, Director of Environmental Services,  
Division Director of Senior Nutrition Program  
Plumas County Sheriff  
Plumas County Unified School District  
Plumas Corporation  
Plumas Facility Services Department  
Plumas Hospital District, CEO  
Plumas - Sierra County Fair  
California Attorney General's Office  
California Grand Jurors Association  
California State Archivist  
City of Portola  
Eastern Plumas Healthcare, CEO  
Feather River College  
Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo)  
Special Districts (55)  
Seneca Healthcare District, CEO  
Senior Nutrition Centers: Portola, Blairsden, Greenville, Chester, Quincy