



# BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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September 12, 2023

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

Re: **RESPONSE TO 2022-2023 PLUMAS COUNTY GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT issued June 13, 2023**

Dear Judge Prouty:

Pursuant to section 933 of the California Penal Code, please consider this the response to the above-referenced report. First and foremost, the Plumas County Board of Supervisors appreciates the services of all members of the 2022-2023 Grand Jury. They have worked diligently to monitor our local government operations and provide input to improve and guide the County moving forward. The service provided by the Grand Jury is important to the stability and function of a local government, and the Grand Jury participants are commended for their time and diligence in investigating these matters and bringing them to the Board's attention.

Furthermore, the Board appreciates the county officials and employees who assisted the Grand Jury with their investigation and oversight of County Government. Transparency is essential to government, and cooperation between the Grand Jury and the County employees is one of the most important ways to create that transparency.

The Board of Supervisors takes all findings and recommendations of the Grand Jury seriously, and even if unable to implement the changes as written, will endeavor to incorporate the spirit of the recommendations in all future actions.

## **A PERFECT STORM: USING TRANSPARENCY TO CLEAR THE AIR**

### **FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:**

#### **Findings:**

***Finding F1:*** *"The misrepresentation of the use of a 10-county comparative wage survey by HR for appointed department heads led to distrust in the Human Resource Department in establishing a fair wage system."*

**Response:** The members of the Plumas County Board of Supervisors are unable to agree with the finding to the extent that it is subjective, and disagree that any misrepresentation was intentional.

Though the County historically has utilized ten counties that were previously determined to be somewhat similar to Plumas County for the sake of salary comparison, there is no agreement in place requiring these counties be used in all salary comparisons, and frequently there is no way to do a full salary comparison as not all counties have similar positions. The two counties omitted in the report were the counties of Lassen and Del Norte. In this case, Lassen County was omitted for a variety of reasons, including that it does not have a salary schedule available on its website. It also does not have a Human Resource Department, but instead a Personnel/Risk Analyst. Additionally, Lassen has a contract with a third-party for County Counsel services, and a Health and Human Services Department instead of separate Behavioral Health, Social Services and Public Health Departments. As Lassen County did not have a sufficient number of comparable positions, nor a salary schedule, it was omitted from the salary comparison.

Similarly, Del Norte County has a significant number of positions that are not comparable to Plumas County, including a Health and Human Services Agency instead of separate departments, a Director of Building Maintenance and Parks with a separate Airport Director, as opposed to Plumas County's Facilities Director who is also the Airport Director, and a Human Resource Manager as opposed to a Human Resource Director.

***Finding F2:*** *"The assumption of the role of CAO by the BOS failed to provide adequate oversight for department heads."*

**Response:** The members of the Board of Supervisors agree that the CAO of a County does provide an additional level of input and oversight for Department Heads, however, ultimately the members of the Board of Supervisors are the decision makers. Due to the structure of county government certain roles such as the DA, the Sheriff, the Auditor, the Elections Officer, the Assessor, and the Treasurer, are elected, and so the BOS has limited oversight over these agencies, regardless of the presence of a CAO.

***Finding F3:*** *"The lack of a policy to keep department head salaries competitive resulted in fourteen department heads resigning within three years."*

**Response:** The members of the Board of Supervisors agree in part and disagree in part. Over the course of three years, 19 department head level employees left the County. This was for a variety of reasons. Twelve retired, one passed away, and five resigned. While keeping salaries competitive is an important factor in retention, it is not the only factor.

**Finding F4:** *The county's lack of oversight for the use of deferred holiday pay resulted in additional unbudgeted costs to the taxpayers.*

**Response:** The Board of Supervisors agree in part, in that oversight would have resulted in deferred holiday pay being paid out sooner, but disagree to the extent that the majority of employees who collected deferred holiday pay were entitled to that pay, which is incorporated in the County's budget. Due to the pay being "banked" instead of paid out as stated in the policy, the holiday needed to be paid out at their current pay rate, which in some, but not all, cases resulted in a higher cost than if it was paid when initially incurred.

### **Recommendations:**

**Recommendation R1.** *"The Grand Jury recommends that the CAO work with all employee groups to implement an annual review process that compares wages for all county positions with the same group of 10 similar California counties on a yearly basis."*

**Response:** The Board of Supervisors appreciates the recommendation to create a regular wage review, however, implementation is not warranted at this time, as there are multiple methods that already implement this comparison, including ongoing labor negotiations and regular updates to classifications. Adding an additional yearly analysis would be onerous, and is not feasible as recommended as not all ten (10) counties contain similar position classifications. Increases to employee wages need to be based upon the County's financial ability to pay, and while reviewing similar counties is helpful, it is not the determining factor.

**Recommendation R2.** *"The Grand Jury recommends that the BOS commit to retaining/supporting an active CAO going forward to provide needed supervision and evaluation of staff."*

**Response:** The Board of Supervisors agrees with this recommendation, and has implemented it by elevating the previous County Administrator position to a County Administrative Officer, and increasing the wage.

**Recommendation R3.** *"The Grand Jury recommends that the BOS support the Sheriff's Office in setting an appropriate wage level to attract and retain law enforcement personnel. Suggested completion date: October 1, 2023."*

**Response:** The Board of Supervisors appreciates this recommendation, and will make ongoing efforts to increase the Sheriff's Office wage level, but cannot implement it as written, as it does not allow sufficient time to determine the County's budget and work with the Sheriff's Office, and the term "appropriate" is too subjective to result in a clear plan moving forward.

**Recommendation R4.** *"The Grand Jury recommends that the CAO publish all salary and wage changes for county employees in the past 10 years on the county's website, following the approach used by Glenn County."*

**Response:** Though directed to the CAO, the Board of Supervisors appreciates the intent of the recommendation, however, as Human Resources is the source of salary and wage information, it would properly fall under Human Resources. Plumas County Human Resources maintains salary and wage changes, which are available for public review pursuant to California Code of Regulations section 570.5, and CalPERS Circular Letter: 200-0003-20. Wage information from 2020 on is available on the Human Resources page of the Plumas County website, and additional wage information for Plumas County employees is also available from a variety of online sources. Researching past wages and creating wage tables for past employee wages is not a beneficial use of employee time as that information is publicly available from other sources. However, the recommendation will be implemented on an ongoing basis so that past wage information will continue to be available on the website until the County has ten (10) years of data available.

**Recommendation R5.** *"The Grand Jury recommends that the BOS ensure that any potentially controversial action items are included in its agendas and are thoroughly discussed in open session before a vote is taken."*

**Response:** The Board of Supervisors appreciates the intent of this recommendation, but it is not reasonably able to implement the recommendation. Determining whether an item goes on open or closed session is based on a legal analysis of the applicable Government Code sections and the facts of the item, and not on whether or not the item is potentially controversial. The Board has, and will continue to, determine whether an item is properly in closed or open session, in accordance with the Brown Act.

Respectfully submitted,

PLUMAS COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

By:

Greg Hagwood, Chair

GH:sj

cc:

1. Plumas County Clerk
2. 2022-2023 Plumas County Grand Jury