



STANISLAUS COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY

Post Office Box 3387 • Modesto, California 95353 • (209) 558-7766 • Fax (209) 558-8170

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BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
2007 JUN 29 A 10:03

2006-2007

GRAND JURY MEMBERS

WILLIAM JAQUES, FOREPERSON

June 13, 2007

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William O'Brien
 Chair of the Board of Supervisors
 Stanislaus County
 1010 10th Street, Suite 6500
 Modesto, CA 95354

Supervisor O'Brien:

The Civil Grand Jury is providing you and/or your agency the attached copy of the portion of the grand jury report relating to you or your agency two working days prior to its release. You or other affected people may review this but the Penal Code prohibits you from disclosing any contents of the report prior to its public release.

Your response to the recommendations must be submitted to Presiding Judge Donald E. Shaver, Superior Court - Stanislaus County, P. O. Box 3488, Modesto, CA 95353. We are enclosing guidelines that may be helpful as you prepare your response. You are asked to submit an original and three copies.

Sincerely,

William A. Jaques
 Foreperson

Attachments: 07-34
 07-35/07-44
 07-40

**STANISLAUS COUNTY FIRE AND LIFE SAVING SERVICES
CIVIL GRAND JURY CASE #07-34
2006-2007**

SUMMARY

The 2006-2007 Stanislaus County Civil Grand Jury authorized a review and assessment of the fire and life saving services which are provided to the citizens of Stanislaus County.

Through interviews and document review, the Civil Grand Jury determined that the current fire service delivery system is inefficient and inadequate to meet the needs of a growing county population. The Civil Grand Jury believes that strong leadership from the County Board of Supervisors, in coordination with the various fire districts and the Stanislaus County Fire Chiefs Association, is needed to increase the effectiveness of this important public service.

BACKGROUND

Fire and life saving services in Stanislaus County are provided by 18 separate and autonomous fire safety organizations. Each organization has its own governance and financial base.

There are six municipal fire departments. They include: Ceres; Modesto; Newman; Oakdale; Patterson; and Turlock. Municipal fire departments are funded through general fund revenues.

In addition, there are fourteen special districts in Stanislaus County. They include: Burbank-Paradise Fire Protection District; Ceres Fire Protection District; Denair Fire Protection District; Hughson Fire Protection District; Industrial Fire Protection District; Keyes Fire Protection District; Mountain View Fire Protection District; Oakdale Rural Fire Protection District; Salida Fire Protection District; Stanislaus Consolidated Fire Protection District; Turlock Rural Fire Protection District; Westport Fire Protection District; West Stanislaus Fire Protection District; and Woodland Fire Protection District. It should be noted that two of these districts (Industrial Fire Protection District and Ceres Fire Protection District) have their fire service provided entirely by another contracted service provider. Special Districts are funded from their own tax base.

METHODS OF INVESTIGATION

The Civil Grand Jury interviewed a majority of the 18 fire chiefs, from the largest to the smallest organization, and reviewed "White Paper Stanislaus County Fire Chiefs Association Strategic Visioning Meeting Summary Report July 30, 2004" and also the March 2007 Stanislaus LAFCO Countywide Fire Services Municipal Service Review Final Report.

FINDINGS

Based on the interviews and document review the Civil Grand Jury found that among the 18 fire districts:

1. There is variation in the quality of training provided to staff.
2. There are varying response times and professional capabilities. Minimal standards cannot always be met.
3. Increasing population, new technology, legal mandates, rising equipment costs and unnecessary administrative staff duplication add to the financial burden.
4. New disaster planning requirements have expanded responsibilities and liabilities requiring closer coordination in the areas of planning and performance.
5. City expansion by annexation has markedly weakened the financial base of some rural fire districts making it increasingly difficult for these districts to meet their responsibilities.
6. State training mandates have made recruitment and retention of voluntary firefighters more difficult. Costly full time staff must be used to fill the formerly volunteer positions.
7. The merger of several smaller districts into fewer but larger areas would offer several benefits. Among them:
 - **Lower administrative costs.** The merger of many boards would lower total salary costs of both administrative and professional staff.
 - **More efficient deployment of expensive equipment.** Some pieces of equipment would become unnecessary.
 - **More efficient location of fire stations.** Given larger areas to protect, stations could be more efficiently placed.
 - **Standardized recruitment and training of personnel.** All staff would be held to the same standards of training and competence.
 - **Better use of specialized staff.** Specialists in such areas as hazardous materials and fire investigation could be more efficiently deployed.
8. There is need for an unbiased outside facilitator/mediator to work with all districts to change the current delivery system.

9. No government body has fully accepted the overall responsibility of addressing the need for change in fire and life saving services available to the citizens of Stanislaus County.
10. The Civil Grand Jury believes that any consolidation should occur only after full consideration of financial impact, proper planning and consultation/involvement from all concerned parties including the public.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Civil Grand Jury is fully aware that the provision of fire and life saving services is a complicated process and that no Civil Grand Jury member has the expertise to second guess the professionals who provide these essential services. The Civil Grand Jury has no desire to recommend specific changes beyond its expertise. However, a majority of Civil Grand Jury members believes that the present delivery system is inadequate and unable to fully meet the present and future needs of the citizens of Stanislaus County.

The Civil Grand Jury recommends that:

1. The County Board of Supervisors assume the leadership role of solving the multiple problems in fire and life saving services.
2. The County Board of Supervisors work with the Stanislaus County Fire Chiefs Association and various district boards to achieve appropriate consolidation of present districts consistent with the most effective and efficient use of manpower and resources.
3. The County Board of Supervisors share equally the cost of outside expert consultation and/or mediation with the various districts.

RESPONSE REQUIRED per Section 933(c) and 933.05 of the California Penal Code

Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors

**STANISLAUS COUNTY DISASTER PREPAREDNESS
CIVIL GRAND JURY CASE #07-40
2006 – 2007**

SUMMARY

The 2006-2007 Stanislaus County Civil Grand Jury conducted a review and assessment of the Stanislaus County Emergency Operations Plan (EOP). The purpose was to determine the scope and readiness of the County's plan to meet the needs of its citizens if and when a disaster occurs, such as flood, fire, earthquake, civil disorder, terrorism, agricultural terrorism, hazardous materials, et al. A County official stated, "This program is not about terrorists. This program is about the realities of life."

BACKGROUND

The most recent edition of the Stanislaus County Emergency Operations Plan was published in 2002. The plan was developed in conjunction with the National Incident Management System and the California Standardized Emergency Management System guidelines. Every five years the plan, which is reviewed annually and after emergency events, is modified, republished and redistributed. The plan is available at the Stanislaus County Library and online at www.schsa.org.

METHODS OF INVESTIGATION

The Grand Jury conducted its investigation through interviews with county public officials who have oversight responsibilities, through site visits and by reviewing the Stanislaus County Emergency Operations Plan.

Sites visited included:

- Emergency Services Disaster Preparedness Executive Office
- Coroner's Facility
- National Emergency Rescue Response Training Center
- Volunteer Center of Stanislaus County (United Way)

FINDINGS

1. The County Office of Emergency Services coordinates citizen/community/County disaster preparedness.
2. The Emergency Operations Plan is an all-risk document that addresses natural and man-made disasters. It addresses four phases of emergency management: mitigation, preparation, response and recovery.
3. The Emergency Operations Plan does not address how to serve the needs of those relocated to the County after a disaster in their region of residence.

4. The Approval Authority for Homeland Security Grant Administration Committee is responsible for administrative oversight of Homeland Security grants, which total about \$1,000,000 annually. The committee consists of:
 - County Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
 - Assistant Director of the Office of Emergency Services/Fire Warden
 - Stanislaus County Sheriff
 - City of Modesto Police Chief
 - City of Modesto Fire Chief
5. Each of the County's nine incorporated cities is responsible for its own emergency plan. City representatives serve on the County Operational Area Council. A designee from the County Office of Emergency Services chairs the committee.
6. There is a lack of centralized coordination and implementation of services provided by volunteer organizations.
7. The County Department of Public Health publishes yearly results of disaster preparedness and public health monitoring of reportable diseases and biological incidents. The results are available online at www.schsa.org.
8. The Coroner's Facility has inadequate space for autopsies, storage of corpses and supplies and for meetings with staff and greeting families. The ventilation system is inadequate. The data processing, record keeping, computer equipment and communication systems are inadequate.

Despite these limitations, the Coroner's Facility personnel are meeting guidelines of the Emergency Operations Plan.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Office of Emergency Services:

1. Seek methods to improve the level of collaboration with volunteer organizations.
2. Develop a plan to meet the needs of evacuees coming from surrounding regions when a state of emergency arises.
3. Update the data processing, record keeping, computer equipment and communication systems in the coroner's office.

It also is recommended that the master plan for an upgrade of the Coroner's Facility become a high priority.

RESPONSE REQUIRED per sections 933(c) and 933.05 of the California Penal Code

Stanislaus County Office of Emergency Services
Stanislaus County Department of Health
Stanislaus County Sheriff's Department
Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors

How to Respond to Recommendations

Responses

The California Penal Code §933(c) specifies both the deadline by which responses shall be made to the Civil Grand Jury Final Report recommendations, and the required content of those responses.

Deadline for Responses

All agencies to which recommendations are made are directed to respond to the Presiding Judge of the Stanislaus County Superior Court,

- Not later than 90 days after the Civil Grand Jury submits a final report on the operations of a public agency, the governing body of that agency shall respond to the findings and recommendations pertaining to the operations of that agency.
- Not later than 60 days after the Civil Grand Jury submits a final report on the operation of a County agency, the elected head governing that agency shall respond to the findings and recommendations pertaining to the operations of their agency.
- Information copies of responses pertaining to matters under the control of a county officer or agency are to be sent to the Board of Supervisors.
- A copy of all responses to the Civil Grand Jury reports shall be placed on file with the clerk of the public agency and the Office of the County Clerk, or the city clerk when applicable.
- One copy shall be placed on file with the applicable Civil Grand Jury by, and in the control of, the currently impaneled Grand Jury, where it shall be maintained for a minimum of five years.

Content of Responses

For each Civil Grand Jury recommendation, the responding person of entity shall report one of the following actions:

- The recommendation has been implemented, with a summary regarding the implemented action.
- The recommendation has not been implemented, but will be implemented in the future, with a time frame for implementation.
- The recommendation requires further analysis, with an explanation and the scope and parameters of an analysis or study, and a time frame if it is to be implemented later.
- The recommendation will not be implemented because it is unwarranted or unreasonable, with supportive explanation.

**SEND YOUR RESPONSES TO THE TO THE FINAL REPORT
RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE FORM OF AN ORIGINAL AND
THREE (3) COPIES TO:**

**Superior Court - Stanislaus County
Presiding Judge Donald E. Shaver
PO Box 3488
Modesto, CA 95353**



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June 29, 2007

William O'Brien
 Chair of the Board of Supervisors
 Stanislaus County
 1010 10th Street, Suite 6500
 Modesto, CA 95354

Supervisor O'Brien:

Please note the attached amended Grand Jury report. This supercedes Report #07-40 delivered to you earlier.

Sincerely,

William A. Jaques
Foreperson

Attachments: 07-40

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2006 – 2007**

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 - ✓ • County Public Health Officer
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RESPONSE REQUIRED per sections 933(c) and 933.05 of the California Penal Code

Stanislaus County Office of Emergency Services
 Stanislaus County Department of Health
 Stanislaus County Sheriff's Department
 Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors

**STANISLAUS COUNTY STATE OF LAW ENFORCEMENT
CIVIL GRAND JURY CASE #07-35/07-44
2006-2007**

SUMMARY

The Stanislaus County Civil Grand Jury Criminal Justice Committee read the Stanislaus County Crime Report for 2005-2006 and did a review of media reports on law enforcement and criminal justice. As a result, the Committee interviewed law enforcement and criminal justice officials in the County to determine their view of what the state of law enforcement is.

Interview questions would seek the following information:

- Recruitment of police officers
- Retention of police officers and other law enforcement and criminal justice staff
- Detention facilities and their capacities and condition
- General crime issues

BACKGROUND

The Civil Grand Jury is mandated by Penal Code §919(b) to inspect all detention facilities in the County, which includes Juvenile Hall, the Men's Jail, the Honor Farm, and the Public Safety Facility. As result of visiting these facilities, the Criminal Justice Committee wanted to hear responses from law enforcement and criminal justice officials as to their views of these facilities; recruitment of officers, retention of police officers and criminal justice staff; and general crime issues.

METHOD OF INVESTIGATION

The Civil Grand Jury toured all of the detention facilities in the County and had questions of interest and concern that it asked the Criminal Justice Committee to address. The Criminal Justice Committee set appointments with each law enforcement and criminal justice entity and asked them all the same questions concerning recruitment, retention, detention facilities and general crime issues.

FINDINGS

1. Recruitment of police officers is a concern of all law enforcement agencies. It would appear that recruitment of qualified candidates is a concern locally, statewide, and nationally.
2. Retention because of retirement; officers leaving for better working conditions, i.e., pay, education; and officers finding other employment

opportunities is an issue of concern for departments where recruitment is already an issue.

3. The following was found about detention facilities:
 - The Honor Farm was spacious, well kept and full.
 - Juvenile Hall is well run and seems well organized. Bed space, however, is limited and there is real danger of overcrowding.
 - The Public Safety Facility is fairly new, spacious, well organized, clean.
 - The Men's Facility (Downtown Jail) is old; smelly; overcrowded; out of date (building codes from the 1950's govern this facility); lacking in space for both staff and inmates.

4. The consensus of law enforcement and criminal justice officials is that collaboration between agencies through various task forces has contributed to reducing crime such as car thefts, home invasion, drugs, and gang involvement. The collaboration has been extremely important in all crime within the County.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. It is recommended that law enforcement pool their resources to recruit new law enforcement officers in Stanislaus County.
2. It is recommended that the Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors make the condition of the Men's Jail a priority for replacement.
3. It is recommended that the Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors extend the capacity of the Public Safety Center to include more bed space to accommodate additional inmates.

NO RESPONSE REQUIRED