

## FOLLOW-UP TO 98-99 GRAND JURY REPORT

### INTRODUCTION

The Humboldt County Grand Jury is charged with the authority and responsibility to investigate and report on the functioning of local government. Local government entities which are addressed in grand jury reports are required by state statutes to reply to the Presiding Judge of Superior Court within a specific time frame using a limited range of responses, pursuant to California Penal Code, section 933.05. [PC 933.05]

One continuing obligation of the Grand Jury is to monitor the actions of local government entities in response to the findings and recommendations of prior grand juries. The purpose of this monitoring process is to determine what actions local government officials have taken regarding recommendations they agreed to implement or to study for possible implementation. The time frame allowed for items to be studied shall not exceed six months.[PC 933.05, (b), (3)]

### PROCEDURE

The written responses provided by local government officials to the 1998-1999 Grand Jury Report were reviewed by the 2000-2001 Grand Jury. All responses concerning recommendations which officials agreed to implement, or to study for possible implementation, were identified for follow-up investigation. Appropriate documents were consulted and officials were contacted to determine what actions had been taken toward implementing the recommended improvements.

The following information is a synopsis of the recommendations and responses contained in the 1998-1999 Grand Jury Report and investigation results for those areas in which changes were expected. For a full text of the recommendations and responses to the 1998-1999 Grand Jury Report, please contact the Humboldt County Library to examine a copy of the 1998-1999 Grand Jury Response Report published in January, 2000.

**Note:** No responses are requested for items discussed in this report (01-00).

### HUMBOLDT COUNTY MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM

#### **Report 99-00A**

**Recommendation 1** - The 1998-1999 Grand Jury recommended that the County Board of Supervisors (BOS) review the adequacy, currency, and convenience of information provided to it regarding all the major operations of county government.

**Response** - The Board of Supervisors responded that the recommendation has been implemented. However, the Board has recognized one major deficiency in the current accounting system, namely, the need to implement the accounts receivable tracking component of the electronic accounting system. On January 5, 1999, the Board of Supervisors directed the

Auditor-Controller to provide quarterly updates to the Board on the status of implementing the accounts receivable portion of the electronic accounting system.

**Background Information** - The accounts receivable component of the electronic accounting system consists of two principal parts, the "recognized receivables" and the "later receivables". The "recognized receivables" are those received within 60 days of the beginning of the fiscal year. They are entered into the electronic accounting system by the Auditor-Controller's staff and are available to all county departments who use the electronic system. The "later receivables" are all other receivables that are anticipated for the remainder of the fiscal year.

Findings - The 2000-01 Grand Jury makes the following findings:

F-1 No quarterly update reports have been received by the Board of Supervisors from the

Auditor-Controller's office concerning the status of implementing the accounts receivable portion of the electronic accounting system.

F-2 The Auditor-Controller's office made a study of the procedures being used by some departments which were manually tracking accounts receivables and concluded that, for the present time, the manual method of tracking was the most efficient way of dealing with these accounts.

F-3 The Auditor-Controller's office expressed interest in incorporating all receivables into the electronic tracking system. However, work on this project has been delayed in deference to other data processing projects underway in FY 1999-2000.

F-4 The "later receivables" have not been incorporated into the electronic tracking system currently used and must be tracked manually by the County Administrator's Office and any affected department.

F-5 The "later receivables" may comprise up to 50% of the total accounts receivables and portions of these funds may be received at any time from September through June of the fiscal year, after the close of the fiscal year, or not at all.

### Conclusions

C-1 In the absence of a competent electronic tracking system, it is difficult to know the whereabouts of the "later receivables" during the course of the fiscal year and to effectively use the information for budgetary purposes.

## **COUNTY VEHICLE USE**

### **Report 99-00B**

This report contains extensive findings which indicate that some policies adopted by County's Vehicle Use Committee were not being followed by all county departments. Particular attention was given to policies concerning which employees may be permitted to take county vehicles home at night.

Recommendation 3 - The 1998-1999 Grand Jury recommended that the County Vehicle Use Committee's draft policy become formalized by action of the Board of Supervisors.

Response - The County Equipment Supervisor responded a recommendation will be submitted to the Board of Supervisors (BOS) for implementation on or before August 31, 1999.

Findings - The 2000-2001 Grand Jury makes the following finding:

F-6 A formal policy was submitted to the Board of Supervisors for approval on June 24, 1999. The policy was adopted on July 13, 1999.

Recommendation 4 - The 1998-1999 Grand Jury recommended that the County Administrative Officer (CAO) and the Sheriff meet to resolve the problem of a Sheriff's Department employee driving a county vehicle home without the approval of the Vehicle Use Committee.

Response - The Sheriff and the CAO both stated that the recommendation is being implemented. Further, on July 21, 1999, the BOS requested the Sheriff to justify his travel budget request for FY 1999-2000. On July 21, 1999, The CAO wrote to the Sheriff explaining the Board action and asking him to participate in the Vehicle Use Committee process.

Findings - The 2000-2001 Grand Jury makes the following findings:

F-7 The Sheriff's office is participating in the Vehicle Use Committee.

F-8 The Vehicle Use Committee has reconsidered and approved the Sheriff's request for the employee referenced in Recommendation 4, above, to drive a county vehicle home.

F-9 Both the Sheriff and the CAO state the Vehicle Use Committee process seems to be working satisfactorily at the present time.

Recommendation 5 - The 1998-1999 Grand Jury recommended the BOS oversee the progress of the resolution of the problem of vehicle use and take fiscal measures to enforce the recommendations of the Vehicle Use Committee.

Response - The County Equipment Supervisor responded that further analysis was needed by other county departments. No response was provided by the Board of Supervisors, as required by Penal Code Section 933.

Findings - The 2000-2001 Grand Jury makes the following finding:

F-10 The BOS made adjustments to the Sheriff's travel budget and required specific justification for travel budget requests before final approval of the Sheriff's budget. (See also Findings F-7, F-8, & F-9.)

## HUMBOLDT COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

### **Report 99-01**

Recommendation 7 is the only recommendation in this report for which future action was expected.

Recommendation 7 - The 1998-1999 Grand Jury recommended that the Sheriff prepare a five-year plan to guide policies and procedures in the future.

Response - The Sheriff agrees with the concept of a five-year plan and serves on the California

State Sheriff's Association committee which addresses the recruitment and retention of law enforcement employees.

Findings - The 2000-2001 Grand Jury makes the following finding:

F-11 The Sheriff stated he is working on the development of a long-range plan. One element of his plan is a proposal to upgrade his computer system. A computer system upgrade proposal was presented to the Board of Supervisors by the Sheriff's Office in August 2000. No other details of his plans were available at the time of this investigation.

## SPECIAL DISTRICTS

### **Report 99-02**

This report provides an overview of special district operations at the county government level. The report focuses particularly on the following county entities: Auditor-Controller, Planning and Building Department, Treasurer, and, the Local Agency Formation Commission. Particular concern was expressed regarding delinquent audits from several special districts and the lack of a summary of special district operations in the County's data bank.

Recommendation 1 - The 1998-1999 Grand Jury recommended that recording and communication between the three affected county departments be improved and regularly updated.

Response - The offices of the Auditor-Controller, Treasurer, and Department of Planning and Building all indicate a willingness to maintain and improve communications.

Finding - The 2000-2001 Grand Jury makes the following finding:

F-12 Affected agency officials have been in frequent contact with each other and the Planning and Building Department is currently working on a Project Report for special district support and plan update.

Recommendation 2 - The 1998-1999 Grand Jury recommended consideration be given to creating a Management Information System type summary of district operations in the County's data bank.

Response - No response was submitted for this recommendation, as required in Penal Code Section 933.

Findings - The 2000-2001 Grand Jury makes the following finding:

F-13 The office of the Board of Supervisors reported, upon inquiry, that this recommendation will not be implemented at this time.

Recommendation 3 - The 1998-1999 Grand Jury recommended that the affected offices examine the current number and status of special districts and encourage changes in operations and district consolidation proposals, if and as appropriate.

Response - The Department of Planning and Building stated that this recommendation will be implemented in concert with the required update of the Sphere of Influence Reports.

Findings - The 2000-2001 Grand Jury makes the following findings:

F-14 A revised list of special districts has been made and is routinely updated by the Department of Planning and Building.

F-15 A Master Service Element is being developed to be used in conjunction with the Sphere of Influence Reports used in land use management.

Recommendation 4 - The 1998-1999 Grand Jury recommended that Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) establish: (1) estimated completion dates for the NOT ADOPTED Sphere of Influence Reports, and (2) a review schedule for those reports already adopted.

Response - The Department of Planning and Building responded that LAFCO staff will prepare the recommended schedule for review and approval by LAFCO in fiscal year 1999- 2000. The office of the Treasurer-Tax Collector did not respond , as required by Penal Code 933.

Findings - The 2000-2001 Grand Jury makes the following finding:

F-16 Work on the recommended review schedule was still in progress at the time of this investigation.

Recommendation 5 - The 1998-1999 Grand Jury recommended that the Auditor-Controller be granted sufficient resources, for a fixed period, to assist or compel compliance, which ever is appropriate, to resolve the delinquent special district audit situation.

Response - No response was provided for this recommendation, as required by Penal Code section 933.

Findings - The 2000-2001 Grand Jury makes the following finding:

F-17 The office of the Board of Supervisors stated, upon inquiry, that this recommendation requires further study.

*Note: It should be noted, however, that during fiscal year 1999-2000, the Board of Supervisors did approve the addition of one half-time position for the Auditor-Controller's office for the expressed purpose of addressing delinquent special district audits.*

Recommendation 6 - The 1998-1999 Grand Jury recommended that the Auditor-Controller revise, as appropriate, the Special Districts-Local Board portion of the General Ledger Fund to reflect current status.

Response - The Auditor-Controller disagreed with this recommendation. However, the Auditor-Controller's response did state that the Special Districts-Local Board section of the General Ledger will be reviewed to determine if any inactive fund should be closed.

Findings - The 2000-2001 Grand Jury makes the following finding:

F-18 The General Ledger was reviewed by the Auditor-Controller and no fund was found which needed to be closed.

## HUMBOLDT COUNTY CORRECTIONAL FACILITY

### **Report 99-03**

This report concerns the Humboldt County Correctional Facility (HCCF) with particular emphasis on procedures and staffing. Of the five recommendations made by the Grand Jury, future action was anticipated only for Recommendation 1.

Recommendation 1 - The 1998-1999 Grand Jury recommended that the Sheriff and Chief Deputy become more accessible to the staff.

Response - Both the Sheriff and the Chief Deputy have an "open door" policy and will arrange to meet with staff when requested. Additionally, the Chief Deputy moves through the facility daily and is usually available to the staff during the lunch period in the staff break room.

Findings - The 2000-2001 Grand Jury makes the following finding:

F-19 A new Chief Deputy was appointed to the HCCF in August, 2000, and staff reaction to the new leadership, concerning accessibility, was not conclusive at the time of this investigation.

## PUBLIC WORKS INTERIM REPORT

**Report 99-04**

This report concerns the breaching of county policies contained in Ordinance No. 681, in the disposition of salvageable bridge materials which were given away to private individuals.

*Additional information on this matter can be found in the 1999-2000 Grand Jury Report, item 00-08.*

Recommendation 1 - The 1998-1999 Grand Jury recommended that the Director of Public works send a letter to each Public Works employee reaffirming that the Humboldt County Public Works Department will obey each law, ordinance, and public works policy applicable to the department.

Response - Notices were sent out to each employee with the June 3/4 (1999) paychecks.

Findings - The 2000-2001 Grand Jury makes the following finding:

F-20 Each new employee is given a copy of Ordinance No. 681 and all supervisors are reminded of the ordinance during the year.

Recommendation 2 - The 1998-1999 Grand Jury recommended that the Director of Public Works provide a new or updated set of policies and procedures to provide the necessary controls to assure legal compliance with Ordinance No. 681.

Response - Updated policies and procedures have been completed to assure compliance with Ordinance No. 681.

Findings - the 2000-2001 Grand Jury makes the following finding:

F-21 Updated policies are in place and appear to be working well.

HUMBOLDT COUNTY JUVENILE DETENTION HALL AND  
NORTHERN CALIFORNIA REGIONAL JUVENILE DETENTION FACILITY

**Report 99-05**

This report was the result of a routine annual inspection by the Grand Jury of the juvenile facilities in Humboldt County, as mandated by state statutes.

Recommendation 3 - The 1998-1999 Grand Jury recommended that the Board of Supervisors make funding to upgrade the Humboldt County Juvenile Detention Facility a high priority.

Response - This recommendation will be implemented with construction anticipated to take place in fiscal year 2000-2001.

Findings - The 2000-2001 Grand Jury makes the following finding:

F-22 The firm of LRS Architects, Inc., hired by Humboldt County, estimated construction on the remodel of the juvenile detention facility will begin in November, 2000.

CHILD WELFARE SERVICES  
EMERGENCY RESPONSE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

**Report 99-06**

This report provides several findings concerning the policies, procedures, and effectiveness of the Child Welfare Services Emergency Response unit. Of the six recommendations made by the Grand Jury, all were responded to with favorable explanations or had been implemented. No further improvements were anticipated on the basis of responses provided.

*Note: This subject was again reviewed by the 1999-2000 Grand Jury and further information may be found in the 1999-2000 Grand Jury Report (Item 00-12) at the Humboldt County Library.*

PLANNING AND BUILDING DEPARTMENT

**Report 99-07**

This report concerns upgrading policies and procedures in the Humboldt County Planning and

Building Department, with particular emphasis on the permit and fee process.

Recommendations - The 1998-1999 Grand Jury made the following three recommendations:

- a. The department periodically publicize changes in department operations.
- b. Advise each customer of a target date for the completion of the permit process.
- c. Staff explain the "revenue neutral" concept to permit applicants, using a handout.

Response - All three recommendations have been implemented.

Findings - The 2000-2001 Grand Jury makes the following finding:

F-23 The above recommendations have been implemented and are generally working well. However, occasional exceptions occur when: (1) a permit processing date cannot be

met, and (2) an individual cannot seem to understand the "revenue neutral" concept.

## DISPOSAL OF REAL PROPERTY IN THE CITY OF EUREKA

### **Report 99-08**

This report contains findings concerning the transfer of real property owned by the City of Eureka to non-profit organizations in which the City has waved the procedures provided for in the Policy and Procedures Memorandum governing real property transfers.

Recommendation 1 - The 1998-1999 Grand Jury recommended that the Eureka City Council pass an ordinance that will have the force of law for the disposal of public property.

Response - The Eureka City Council is reviewing the City's process for the disposal of public property. An updated process is expected by December 31, 1999.

Findings - The 2000-2001 Grand Jury makes the following findings:

F-24 The City of Eureka enacted City Ordinance No. 632 - C.S., effective November 2, 1999, to provide procedures regulating transfers of city owned real property.

F-25 Ordinance No. 632 - C.S. does permit "expedited" transfers of City-owned real property to a non-profit organization without consultation with or advice from the Planning Commission and without complying with the provisions set forth in the Policy

and Procedure Memorandum governing real property transfers, if the City Council makes a finding that all of six (6) conditions exist concerning a proposed transfer. (See section 40.02, Ordinance No. 632 C.S.)

Recommendation 2 - The 1998-1999 Grand Jury recommended that the Eureka City Council hold public hearings to discuss the disposal of public property.

Response - The City Council will include the need for improved public participation as part of the Council's review of the process of disposal of public property.

Findings - The 2000-2001 Grand Jury makes the following finding:

F-26 Two public hearings are required before disposal of city property to a non-profit organization. (See Section 40.02 (a)(6) of Ordinance No. 632-C.S.)