

FILED

MAY 20 2019

Superior Court of California
County of Tuolumne

By: Diana Neeley Clerk



2018-2019 Tuolumne County Civil Grand Jury



Photo Credit: David Douglass

TUOLUMNE COUNTY JAIL REPORT

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SUMMARY

The Tuolumne Grand Jury made its annual inspection of the Tuolumne County Jail with members of the Tuolumne County Sheriff's Department staff. The Grand Jury found the existing Jail outdated. In addition, it was found that the Jail was understaffed. With a new jail already in the construction phase, the 2018-2019 Tuolumne County Grand Jury had very few recommendations. In light of new construction, the Grand Jury considers making substantial repairs to the existing building a waste of the taxpayers' money.

BACKGROUND

California Penal Code (919)b mandates that the Grand Jury in each county inspect the condition of all jails every year. Sections 919(a), 925, and 925 (a) authorize the Grand Jury to investigate city and county jails, and other detention facilities.

METHODOLOGY

The 2018-2019 Tuolumne Grand Jury inspected the Tuolumne County Jail facility on October 30, 2018. Research included queries with members of the Tuolumne County Sheriff's Department staff and follow up questions via email.

DISCUSSION

Upon initial entry to the Jail, Grand Jury badges were not checked, nor were the Grand Juror members asked about having prohibited items on their persons. There was also a private citizen in the foyer when the 2018-2019 Grand Jury was receiving information about Jail operations, safety protocols and procedures.

Due to the age and deterioration of the current facility, a new jail is under construction. It is scheduled to be finished by December 2019. The new jail will accommodate approximately 230 inmates, whereas the current facility, built in 1959, houses only 147 inmates. It is also in a residential neighborhood within the Sonora city limits. The Grand Jury found the Jail to be clean and as well kept as could be expected given the age of the facility. Inmate capacity of the current facility is insufficient. Every day inmates are released and the Jail is again immediately filled to capacity.

JAIL INSPECTION

The inspection of the Tuolumne County Jail was conducted by five members of the Grand Jury. It was led by the Jail Commander and two other officers of Tuolumne County Sheriff's Department. A tour of the facility included most areas of the Jail, including "safety and sobering" cells, the control room, various cell blocks, the kitchen, and the rooftop recreation area. Inmates assume responsibility for the cleanliness of the Jail. The inmates were observed performing various tasks, such as laundry and fixing meals. Some of the Jail offices were very small and did not allow for natural lighting.

Recently the Jail installed a state of the art visitation system in the front of the Jail. Visitors can now communicate with inmates via monitors that have been installed in the reception area.

Safety and sobering cells are designed for a single person. These cells are for inmates just entering the Jail who may be alcohol or drug impaired, or have mental health issues. Each of these cells has a large window facing the control room so as to permit observation. These people need to be checked on a regular basis (every 15 minutes) should any medical or safety issue occur. Inmates in regular units are checked a minimum of once per hour.

The jurors were allowed in the control room to observe the booking procedure and to speak with personnel. They were informed of the decision-making process that occurs when someone must be released because the Jail operates at capacity and needs to create space for a newly incarcerated person. Some of the inmates have been incarcerated at the Jail for years due to Assembly Bill AB109, which realigns the

sentencing of nonviolent, nonsexual and non-serious offenders to serve their sentences in county jails instead of state prisons.

The jurors were also shown the officer locker rooms and clothing and supplies lockers. Due to the limited space, entrance to the women's lockers necessitated going through the men's locker room. Training was also done in this area.

Several leaks were noted of gray water being funneled into drums because of leaking pipes. These leaks were brought to the attention of the Jail by the 2017-2018 Grand Jury and still have not been addressed. The jurors also noted an extension cord running through a hallway into a cell block.

The staff discussed some of the programs available to the inmates. They also related some of their experiences and were eager to relocate to the new jail. They were hoping a lot of the existing problems will then be eliminated.

STAFFING

Minimum staffing, as required by law, is one supervisor and four deputies. The Jail is not fully staffed and, it appears, won't be in the near future, until the new jail is completed. At the present time there is no clear guideline for increasing of staff as this would require allocating additional funds by the Board of Supervisors. Therefore, if an employee is absent for any reason, there is no other option except for other employees to work overtime. One concern expressed by staff is the difficulty recruiting and retaining officers, especially women. The Jail tends to be a training ground, since jobs for officers in other capacities generally pay better. Dispatch and the administration staff will be staying in the old jail offices once the new jail is finished. Unfortunately some of the offices for staff are extremely small with no windows and barely large enough for room to work.

PROGRAMS

There are few educational programs available. The library is in dire need of maintenance. Inmates have access to computer terminals that allow

them some limited online research. They can also use these for filing complaints with staff.

The Jail has some work programs created under the auspices of the Jail Industries Authority. These programs provide training for inmates. Time spent in these programs counts toward reduction of inmates' sentences and gives them skills to fall back on when they are released.

There are some in-house occupational training opportunities, such as woodworking, landscaping and culinary arts. These include building bird feeders, chairs and dog houses. Inmates currently work in the kitchen preparing meals for the Jail, which also provides the meals for the Juvenile Detention Center. The inmates also do the laundry for the Jail.

Unfortunately the recidivism rate is quite high. Of 251 inmates in one year, 56 returned to jail (22.3%).

CONCLUSION

The Tuolumne County Jail is well operated when considerations are made regarding the age and deterioration of the building. The Jail is not fully staffed and it is difficult to keep staff due to budget restrictions. The only real concern would be to expand on security measures. Overall, the staff should be commended for a job well done.

FINDINGS

F1 The Jail is currently understaffed by four officers. With the opening of the new jail in 2019, additional officers will need to be hired.

F2 Safety issues found in the 2017-2018 Grand Jury report have not been addressed. These would include the gray water being collected in drums rather than repairing the pipes and correcting the extension cord running down the hall.

F3 There appeared to be a lack of adherence to security protocol.

F4 Better educational opportunities and rehabilitative programs may reduce repeat incarcerations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

R1 Recruit officers to fill current vacancies. This may include seeking additional budget funding. (F1)

R2 Address safety and health issues. These will need to be addressed if the building continues to be occupied as planned. (F2)

R3 Adhere to security measures. This could entail refresher training on admitting private citizens into the Jail. (F3)

R4 Pursue educational opportunities and rehabilitation programs for inmates. This may include studying for and obtaining a GED or post secondary degree, and counseling services. Maybe some retired professionals would be willing to donate their time. (F4)

REQUEST FOR RESPONSES

According to California Penal Code §933(c), no later than 90 days after the grand jury submits a final report on the operations of any public agency subject to the reviewing authority, the governing body of the public agency 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 and every elected county office or agency head for which the grand jury has jurisdiction pursuant to §914 shall comment within 60 days to the presiding judge of the superior court.

Tuolumne County Sheriff is requested to respond to: R1, R2, R3, R4

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FILED

MAY 20 2019

Superior Court of California
County of Tuolumne

By: Diana Neelley Clerk

SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

IN AND FOR THE COUNTY OF TUOLUMNE

IN RE:

GENERAL ORDER

2018-2019 Grand Jury

I certify that the 2018-2019 Tuolumne County Grand Jury
Final report section on Tuolumne County Jail complies with
Title Four of the California Penal Code and direct the County
Clerk to accept and file this section of the final report as a
public document.

Dated this 20th day of May, 2019

Kate Powell-Segerstrom

Kate Powell-Segerstrom
Judge of the Superior Court

GENERAL ORDER