

TUOLUMNE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

"Serving with Professionalism and Pride"

JAMES W. MELE
SHERIFF-CORONER

FILED

SEP 04 2012

Superior Court of California
County of Tuolumne

By:  Clerk

August 17, 2012

The Honorable Eric L. DuTemple
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court
41 W. Yaney Street
Sonora, CA 95370

Re: Response to 2011-12 Grand Jury Findings & Recommendations

Dear Judge DuTemple:

The following is the response related to the Tuolumne County Jail section of the 2011-12 Grand Jury Report as requested and required pursuant to Penal Code Sections 933 and 933.05. Below you will find listed each Grand Jury finding or recommendation followed by my response to each.

Tuolumne County Jail Findings

F1 Finding: Due to the age of the Jail, numerous additions, years of deferred and/or lack of maintenance, and inmate vandalism, the Jail will always generate an inordinate number of maintenance work orders. The leaking roof problem is scheduled to be corrected by replacing the last defective section in the spring of 2012. The remainder of the Jail roof is less than 5 years old and should not be in need of repair. Water damaged walls and deteriorated sewer plumbing remain a health concern.

Response – I agree with this finding.

F2 Finding: Inquiries were made into the surveillance system. For security reasons the Jury decided not to give details regarding numbers of cameras, or other pieces of equipment necessary to its operation. The Jury was informed that the system is currently at maximum camera capacity. No additional cameras can be added to the system, leaving key areas with no camera coverage.

Response – I agree with this finding.

Subject: Response to the Grand Jury

To: Honorable Eric L. DuTemple

From: Sheriff James W. Mele

F3 *Finding: Limitations on space continue to restrict inmate access to educational programming.*

Response – I agree with this finding.

F4 *Finding: Reading, which is one of the primary ways inmates cope with 'doing time', has been impaired by the removal of the reading cart and lack of shelving. This is being addressed by new shelving and book placement.*

Response – I agree with this finding.

F5 *Finding: The availability of the self-help approach, and materials for a GED, as well as Columbia College's provision for continuing study, make opportunities possible that the inmates might not otherwise have. However, these resources are limited to the self-motivated and directed inmates.*

Response – I agree with this finding.

F6 *Finding: A good plan to install a closed circuit system to broadcast educational and recovery programming has yet to be implemented.*

Response – I agree with this finding.

F7 *Finding: The recreational space is small and not adequate for any variety of sports. Exercise is an important part of maintaining good physical and mental health.*

Response – I agree with this finding.

F8 *Finding: Tuolumne County needs a new jail.*

Response – I agree with this finding.

F9 *Finding: The meals appeared to be adequate for each inmate's requirements. Dietary requirements (e.g., vegetarian, vegan, Kosher) were taken into account.*

Response – I agree with this finding.

F10 *Finding: The small size of the pantry (dry storage) dictates how often supplies are taken into the jail. A larger pantry area would allow for fewer food deliveries and less disruption to Jail routines. The size of the cold storage (refrigerator and freezer) also affects how often deliveries are made.*

Response – I agree with this finding.

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Recommendations

R1 *Recommendation: In order to ensure staff and inmate safety, and to improve morale and reduce stress related health issues, work orders from the Jail need to be given a higher priority than general county work order requests. This takes into consideration that a new jail may be several years away, the changing inmate population and the increasing average length of stay, all of which will contribute to the already poor current condition of the facility. For health and safety reasons, water damaged walls and deteriorated sewer plumbing need to be addressed as soon as possible.*

Response: The Sheriff's Office, County Facilities and representatives of the County Administrative Office have already met to discuss engineering reports on what has to been done to make the Jail a safer place. Still pending are further engineer reports and costs reviews. Additionally the Sheriff's Office and Facilities are entering into a new computer program that allows for work orders to be generated and tracked until completion.

R2 *Recommendation: The Jury believes the lack of a backup DVR is a security and safety issue and should be addressed. New DVR's should be purchased and put online. The old units should be refurbished to be used as backup. The existing units should be relocated to a cooler, cleaner area to preserve their longevity. In order to meet the needs of the staff and facility, every effort should be made to find funding for the replacement of the current system, including cameras, to make High Definition video recording, viewing, storage, and expandability possible.*

Response: The DVR's currently used in the Jail were a result of grant funding either through Homeland Security funding or Department of Justice grant funding. As additional grant funding becomes available for upgrades the project will move forward. Since the Grand Jury's last visit there has been an additional upgrade to one of the DVR's again using grant funding. Estimates to move the DVR's from their current location and change the type of cabinets they are housed in has been requested. However in consideration of this, the age of the current equipment is being considered and if upgrades in equipment are more cost effective than just moving the current equipment. Grant funding for such upgrades will continue to be a priority.

R3 *Recommendation: In lieu of a new jail facility, effort should be made to find inventive ways to make good use of the existing space.*

Response: The use of existing space is a constant review. What programs can be brought into the current jail and what space is available is considered almost daily. An example would be the area used for video arraignments is also the area used for daily or weekly programs to include but not limited to narcotics anonymous, alcoholics anonymous or other types of programs. The types and numbers of programs that can be brought into the jail are limited by the types of space available and the number of Sheriff's staff to provide security for volunteers.

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R4 *No recommendation.*

R5 *Recommendation: The Inmate Specialist should continue encouraging the interested and motivated. Staff should explore the possibility of recruiting volunteers to help with essay writing and math skills. Investments should be made into calculators for qualified inmates.*

Response: The Inmate Specialist has expanded the number of programs available for inmates and has obtained teaching materials from outside sources including but not limited to the State Prison system. State Prisons have reduced programs available in the Prison system and as a result some of the educational materials have become available to County Jails. Again the limited space and number of Tuolumne County Sheriff's staff become an issue and restrict the types of materials and programs that maybe provided to inmates.

R6 *Recommendation: Adapt plans for longer term inmate stays so these inmates can make strides for their futures.*

Response: The Sheriff's Office is still attempting to meet all the requirements of AB 109 and meet Corrections Authority Mandates for Jails. Meetings with other counties are on going in attempt to determine what programs are successful and which are not. Housing of inmates on a long term basis is continuing to present new challenges for not only this county but counties throughout the State. The Tuolumne County Jail was never designed to house inmates for extended periods of time.

R7 *No recommendation.*

R8 *Recommendation: When state funds become available, every effort should be made by the citizens of Tuolumne County to support efforts to pursue the construction of a new jail. This support should come despite the possibility of requiring additional county funding.*

Response: The Sheriff's Office is continuing to make inquiries as to the status of AB funding. These inquiries are being made directly to the AB 109 committee members, State Sheriff's Association and contacts with the California Department of Corrections. If it appears that funding can be obtained then meeting with County Administration to discuss public support will entered.

R9 *Recommendation: A detailed and informative video showing the inadequate, dilapidated and unsafe condition of this facility would help to make the citizens of this county aware of these problems and create the much needed support for a new jail.*

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Response: If funding for the Jail project through the State is obtained, then a detailed and informative video for public presentation should be sought in conjunction with other public awareness campaigns. The video should be made through a media company or possibly through the college. The video should contain information about the current jail needs, changing jail population and needs of the future. Once the video is made then scheduled presentations, similar to the Sheriff's town hall meeting could be presented to the public.

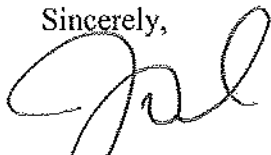
R10 Recommendation: There seem to be no viable options. A new jail with a larger pantry area and a larger cold storage area would solve such problems.

Response: Agreement with the Grand Jury recommendation.

R11 Recommendation: The Jury recommends that the Jail contract with local health providers, such as Sonora Regional Medical Center, to provide a detailed health care needs assessment to account for the new and future Jail population's health/medical care.

Response: In the past the Tuolumne County Jail population was served by county health providers. This practice the migrated to the health providers currently used at the Jail. Request for bids for health services, and mental health services are submitted and monitored by the Public Health Department. The current provider for medical services is one of the largest providers of jail inmate health services in the State of California.

Sincerely,



James W. Mele
Sheriff-Coroner

Cc: Craig Pedro, County Administrator