

August 2, 2001

Honorable Judge Rodney S. Melville  
Presiding Judge, Santa Barbara County Superior Court  
1100 Anacapa Street  
Santa Barbara CA 93121

**Board of Supervisors' Response to 2000-01 Grand Jury Report on:  
"COUNTY GOVERNMENT SPACE NEEDS"**

Judge Melville:

During its regular meeting of July 17, 2001, the Board of Supervisors adopted the attached response to the referenced Grand Jury report. The Board thanks the Grand Jury for its report.

Sincerely,

Joni Gray, Chair  
Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors

Attachment

C: Michael Brown, County Administrator  
William L. Cathey, Grand Jury Foreperson

**Finding 1:** The County is critically short of office space for its employees throughout the County, jeopardizing its ability to serve County residents cost effectively.

Agree:

The County's space utilization, needs and future needs were compiled and presented to the Board of Supervisors in February and August of 2000. These two reports, one for North County and one for South County, detailed the current space needs for all County departments as well as the 5-year projected needs. Based on approved space standards the studies showed the County to be short by 276,711 ft<sup>2</sup> and projects a shortage of 442,610 ft<sup>2</sup> in 5 years.

The impact on the quality of service as a result of the current shortage is speculative.

**Finding 2:** The space deficit is expected to grow substantially in the next five years commensurate with population growth.

Agree:

As mentioned above, the two County space studies indicate a projected need for 442,610 ft<sup>2</sup> in 5 years. These projections are based on the best knowledge of each department regarding the services they provide, the laws and regulations under which they operate and other factors pertinent to their operation. Population growth would certainly have been one of the factors.

**Finding 3:** The County has not addressed the office space deficit in a meaningful way and continues following the policies that have led us to the current space deficit.

Disagree:

In May 1999 the General Services Department embarked upon a Five Phase process, modeled after a methodology used by the State of California, to strategically address space issues facing the County. This process was approved by the Board of Supervisors in February 2000 and has been aggressively followed. The steps are:

**Phase 1:** Project Initiation/Determining Current Space Needs

Define parameters of space utilization; create a graphic catalog of all existing office space; compile data regarding departmental space needs; produce a space utilization study.

- The North County study was accepted by the Board of Supervisors February 1, 2000 and the South County study was accepted August 8, 2000.

**Phase 2:** Standards and Operations

Establish standards of space allocation.

- These standards were established and accepted by the Board of Supervisors February 1, 2000.

**Phase 3:** Projections

Assess quantity and location of space by department (current and 5-year projection).

- This assessment was completed and accepted by the Board of Supervisors in February 1, 2000.

**Phase 4:** Facility Evaluations

Adopt space allocation guidelines; evaluate current and future space needs based on existing

conditions; form a Workplace Taskforce to make recommendations to the County Administrator and the Board of Supervisors regarding space allocation.

- The facility evaluation is currently underway to determine the condition of current facilities to assess their ability to provide service over the long haul. The Workplace Taskforce has been brought together in anticipation of the work they will be involved in during Phase 5.

**Phase 5: Transition Planning/Financing Strategies**

Explore solutions based on highest and best use for County property; create a Facility Master Plan which would consider appropriate solution options such as renovation, construction on current land, construction on new land, lease.

- General Services is just beginning this phase, crafting a straw-man of the Facilities Planning Policy Framework, a policies document. This is a widely encompassing task, as the document will be reviewed by the Workplace Taskforce, the County, the Cities, community stakeholders and ultimately the Board of Supervisors for approval. Based on adopted policies the Facility Master Plan would be developed.

**Finding 4:** The County is, as of April 2001, paying \$2.72 million annually in leases.

Agree:

The General Services Department has presented lease expenditure information in the County Environmental Scan process since 1998. This information was strong motivation to develop and begin the Five Phase space planning process currently underway. A lease request/approval policy is currently under review which would have all lease requests routed through the Debt Advisory Committee of the County, for consideration along with other forms of long term debt.

**Finding 5:** The County has developed numerous master plans for County government space needs in the past 15 years, but has let them languish.

Partially agree:

There have been many studies and documents created over the past 15 years though it would be a misnomer to consider any of them a “master” plan. Staff developed feasibility studies, assessments and single site plans though none of them reached the Board of Supervisors, the strategic level. The current Five Phase space planning process is the only fully defined, strategically approved process to completely assess needs, evaluate current conditions, develop policies, consider options and create a Master Facility Plan. This process provides the basis for continued vitality of strategic space planning decisions.

**Finding 6:** The County’s Five-Year Capital Improvement Plan, cited by some County officials as long-range strategic planning, is neither long range nor is it actually strategic planning. It is a conceptual plan for how the County might deal with current space deficits over the next five years.

Partially Agree:

The CIP document does not claim to be either long-range or strategic. In essence, the projects in the CIP are a means to implement strategic plans and policies contained in other

documents approved by the Board of Supervisors. For example, the CIP includes a number of projects included in the Orcutt Community Plan, an adopted long-range and strategic plan for development of the Orcutt area.

The CIP does provide a comprehensive view of the County's funded and unfunded capital projects proposed for the next five years. Approximately 65% of the \$600 million dollars in the CIP are for Public Works' roads and bridges, flood control facilities, solid waste and sanitation projects, for Parks' land acquisition and facilities, and for Affordable Housing projects. The remaining 35%, which could be considered County building and major equipment acquisition projects, include approximately \$80 million for the North County Jail. When this project, and \$10 million for equipment purchases, is removed, only about \$120 million, or around 20%, of the CIP's total of \$600 million in projects, is for projects dealing with County office space deficits.

Thus, office space projects are one of the components, but certainly not the only or the largest part, of the CIP. Regarding County office space planning, on April 24, 2001, less than two weeks before the Grand Jury released its report, the Board of Supervisors directed staff to begin development of a long-range County Facilities Master Plan. One purpose of the master plan is to address some of the longer-range issues mentioned by the Grand Jury.

In the last 15 years, however incremental the planning process may have been, the County has moved functions from downtown Santa Barbara to its Calle Real campus and has provided a significant number of new government facilities, such as the Betteravia Government Center, to serve its North County constituents. As documented in the latest CIP, further changes of a similar nature are planned.

**Finding 7:** Attempts are being made to encourage the Supervisors to sanction long-range facilities planning, but none of the current plans are looking at an obvious answer to the County's space needs—government centers on County-owned land.

Disagree:

The suggested solution is premature. As detailed above the Five Phase space planning process engages stakeholder participation of the community and other governmental agencies in the policies and plan development phases. Complete evaluation of all possible solutions and consideration from these stakeholders will provide an appropriate solution that considers all positive and negative factors of available options.

**Finding 8:** The County owns prime developable land on which to build both a North and South County Government Center.

Partially agree:

The County does own land but land owned by the County would have to go through the normal planning process including environmental impact evaluation prior to any determination of its

development capability. The Five Phase space planning process will take such elements into consideration if new building sites are part of the recommended solutions.

**Finding 9:** The County owns real estate in downtown Santa Barbara as well as Betteravia Center in North County that could be sold to offset the acquisition of new facilities on County-owned property

Partially agree:

The County is ultimately the owner of the properties mentioned but the bulk of their value has been leveraged with Certificates of Participation (COPs) to fund essential projects previously approved by the Board of Supervisors such as the Sheriff's computer aided dispatch center, the Social Services building, a new fire station in Montecito, acquisition of office buildings and park land. Should these County owned properties be sold, the bulk of the income would be used to satisfy these liens. It is premature to propose the best solution to the County's space needs. At the conclusion of the Five Phase space planning process the funding needs for appropriate solutions will be developed as a part of the overall plan.

**Finding 10:** The County may well be able to finance new Government Centers within existing debt limitations.

Disagree:

The new Government Centers suggested have a price tag that reaches beyond the County's debt limit. Funding priorities have already been established in the County's Capital Improvement Plan, earmarking the County's available debt capacity for these priorities. Funding priorities are based on many considerations. One consideration is availability of funding from another source, whether grant or governmental. In one example, the proposed North County Juvenile Justice Center project will have \$8 million available from the Board of Corrections which would cover 25% of the entire project, \$4.74 million of which would fully fund the utility and building costs.

**Recommendation 1:** The Board of Supervisors should immediately mandate long-range strategic planning before approving master planning County property.

Has been implemented:

Long range strategic planning is underway with the Five Phase space planning project. A Master Facility Plan will be the outcome of this project.

**Recommendation 2:** The Board of Supervisors should consider an obvious solution to current and future space needs: build a Government Center or Campus in both North and South County.

Requires further analysis:

This recommendation is premature. The Five Phase space planning project will provide a Master Facility Plan which will present solutions that have been developed and considered by all stakeholders including the community and from all perspectives from environmental to fiscal. One

priority for increasing space will be to make highest and best use of currently developed County property.

**Recommendation 3:** The Board of Supervisors should appoint a Special Citizens Commission to advise the Board on when, where, and if to build County Government Centers and to effect citizen participation in the process.

The recommendation will not be implemented:

The Five Phase space planning project currently underway specifically includes stakeholder involvement. Identified stakeholder groups include the Tax Payers Association, the Downtown Merchants Association, the Chambers of Commerce, the Cities, Non-Profit Organizations and Industry. Others can be added as the project develops. The plan was adopted by the Board of Supervisors in February 2000.