

Tuesday, July 18, 2006

Honorable Judge Rodney Melville
Presiding Judge
Superior Court
312-M East Cook Street
Santa Maria, California 93455-5165

**Board of Supervisors' Response to the 2005-06 Civil Grand Jury Report on:
"Santa Barbara County Detention Facilities"**

Dear Judge Melville:

During its regular meeting of Tuesday, July 18, 2006, the Board of Supervisors adopted the following responses as its responses to the 2005-06 Grand Jury's report on "Santa Barbara County Detention Facilities".

The Board of Supervisors thanks the Grand Jury for its findings and recommendations on this important matter.

Finding 1

The Santa Barbara Main Jail has been cited by the California Corrections Standards Authority for being out of compliance due to overcrowding.

Response: The Board adopted the Sheriff Department's response as its response. (Agrees partially with the finding).

The Santa Barbara Main Jail was not (technically) cited by the California Corrections Standards Authority. The inspection for the Santa Barbara County adult detention facilities was conducted December 12 through December 15, 2005. The inspection report noted two areas of non-compliance within the Main Jail. Both areas related to cell usage and are a direct result of jail overcrowding.

Recommendation 1

Property should be purchased for the construction of a North County Jail.

Response: The Board adopted the Sheriff Department's response as its response. **(Recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future).**

On April 12, 2005, the Board of Supervisors directed the Sheriff and the County Executive Officer to proceed with planning for a new county jail at the Laguna Sanitation District (LCSD) site. The draft Environmental Impact Report for this site is being reviewed and is expected to be finalized and released for public comment by the end of July 2006.

Appraisals for land costs have been conducted on this site and the Sheriff's Department has proceeded with architectural plans for construction of a new facility. Property acquisition negotiations are expected to take place during FY 06-07.

Finding 2

Inmates are routinely given early release or placed in alternative programs as a result of overcrowding.

Response: The Board adopted the Sheriff Department's responses as its response. (Agrees with the finding).

On September 22, 1998, the Superior Court of the State of California for the County of Santa Barbara issued a Court Order Cap limiting the number of inmate beds at the Main Jail facility as a result of a 1988 lawsuit concerning jail overcrowding at the Santa Barbara County Main Jail. The Court Order allows for early release of sentenced inmates. Since the original Order was issued, it has been amended to include additional measures to reduce overcrowding. In an effort to comply with the Court Orders and ensure public safety, the Sheriff's Department has expanded the criteria of the Alternative Sentencing Programs. The expansion of criteria for Alternative Sentencing Programs allows the Sheriff's Department to reduce jail overcrowding by providing monitoring capabilities of individuals who do not meet the criteria for early release directly to the streets.

Recommendation 2

Sources for funding of a North County Jail should be secured.

Response: The Board adopted the Sheriff Department's responses as its response. **(Recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future).**

In planning for the construction of a new county jail, the Santa Barbara County Chief Executive Office and the Sheriff's Department held several meetings to discuss funding alternatives for construction and operation of a new facility. On December 13, 2005, these funding alternatives were presented to the Board of Supervisors as part of a public presentation titled County of Santa Barbara New Jail Planning Study.

The Sheriff's Department has acted upon the Board of Supervisor's directions and is working with the County Executive Office in an effort to identify funding and continue the planning process. Results of these actions will be presented to the Board of Supervisors in subsequent hearings.

Finding 3

Inmates are routinely required to sleep on the floor due to overcrowding.

Response: The Board adopted the Sheriff Department's response as its response, with an additional note of clarification.
(Agrees with the finding).

Despite the Sheriff's Department's best efforts to eliminate the condition of floor sleepers caused by jail overcrowding, inmates sleeping on the floor due to lack of bed space continues to be a daily occurrence.

It should be noted that "floor sleepers" actually use a mattress that is placed on the floor rather than on a bed.

Recommendation 3

A timeline for the purchase of land and the construction of a North County Jail should be established.

Response: The Board adopted the Sheriff Department's response as its response. **(Recommendation has been implemented).**

The Sheriff's Department has, within the Department's Strategic Plan, established goals and projected timelines for purchase of land and construction of a new county jail. However, this timeline has been delayed due to funding limitations.

Finding 4

Main Jail staff reports an increase of violence as a result of overcrowding.

Response: The Board adopted the Sheriff Department's response as its response. (Agrees with the finding).

It is increasingly difficult to manage the inmate population in the Santa Barbara County Jail facilities. All sentenced inmates who are considered to be a low risk to the community are being released early to either an alternative sentencing program or to the street. This leaves a population of largely hard core offenders. As a result, inmate-on-inmate mutual combats and assaults (242 PC) have increased by approximately 32 percent since 2003.

Finding 5

The Board of Supervisors has designated two million dollars toward the initial development of a new North County Jail.

Response: The Board agrees with the finding.

On December 13, 2005, the Board of Supervisors approved a budget revision transferring two million dollars from the VLF (Vehicle License Fee) repayment revenue to the General Fund Capital Designation in order to set aside funds for the potential purchase of land at the Laguna Sanitation District site.

Sincerely,

Joni Gray
Chair, Board of Supervisors

cc: Ted Sten, Foreperson Civil Grand Jury 2005-06