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GRAND JURY SANTA BARBARA COUNTY

30 March, 2011

Mr. Robert Nisbet, Director
General Services Department
County of Santa Barbara
105 East Anapamu Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

Dear Mr. Nisbet:

The following constitutes an Activity Report issued by the 2010-11 Santa Barbara County Civil Grand Jury (Jury) regarding the Santa Barbara County General Services Department (Department). It was prepared in accordance with the *California Penal Code Sections 925 and 928*.

The Jury conducted a general review of the Department and did not investigate a specific issue per se, nor conduct an operations audit. The Jury examined various Department business units regarding their operations and management. In conducting the study the Jury:

- Met with senior level officials
- Visited divisions
- Reviewed documents, reports, and budgets
- Compared some of the services with similar services offered by outside vendors

General Services is one of the larger units within Santa Barbara County government in terms of funding and in the scope of the services provided. For 2010-11, the Department has an operating budget of over \$63 million, a capital budget over \$20 million, and a staff of over 100 people. During the year, information technology service responsibility was added to the Department.

The Department provides services out of three general funding areas:

- General Fund
 - Building maintenance, janitorial, facility space planning, real estate, purchasing, and mail services
- Capital Outlay Fund
 - Construction management services
- Internal Service Fund

¹ Santa Barbara County 2010-2011 Operating Plan, General Services , pg D-413

- Reprographics and digital services, vehicle operations and maintenance, utilities management, and risk management for workers' compensation claims, general liability claims, and medical malpractice insurance

The Jury was impressed with the professionalism of the people interviewed and with the service orientation of the Department. It experienced a reduction in funding and manpower for 2010-11, yet the Department appears to be adjusting to the difficult economic environment. The Jury was particularly interested in the subject of outsourcing as a method of reducing the size and cost of government work and was pleased to learn that some outsourcing is being done.

The Department operates with the view that a service unit should be economically sustainable or face the possibility of being closed down, is currently exploring its options in this regard, and expects to make some decisions later this year.

The Jury is aware of the differences in managing a service business in the public sector and the private sector and appreciates the need in the public sector to protect public trust and be prudently risk averse. In this period of reduced funding and steady demand for services it is encouraging to find a proactive management style that implements best practices from either sector. The Jury applauds the promotion of an enterprise frame of mind and an environment which recognizes those who take initiative.

Under *California Penal Code Section 933.05* this report does not require a response.

Sincerely,



Kathryn McKee
Foreperson

cc: Board of Supervisors
Chandra Wallar, Chief Executive Officer
Jason Stilwell, Assistant Chief Executive Officer