

**2021 – 2022 KERN COUNTY GRAND JURY**

**BUTTONWILLOW RECREATION  
AND  
PARK DISTRICT**

*Dilemma versus Dreams*

**December 1, 2021**



# **BUTTONWILLOW RECREATION AND PARK DISTRICT**

## **Dilemma versus Dreams**

### **SUMMARY:**

When the cost of a dream outstrips the revenue, you can find yourself in a dilemma; the same can happen to a government entity. The 2021-2022 Kern County Grand Jury (Grand Jury) has discovered such a case.

The Buttonwillow Recreation and Park District (District) in 2008, having an abundance of revenue from oil field valuations, built new recreation facilities for the community. Using capital received from a bond issue, they built a large gymnasium, including new offices and other amenities, to equal facilities seen in other areas. Then, in the next decade, oil was devalued resulting in diminished tax revenue.

Today, the debt service cost is more than the property tax revenue, creating a negative budget year after year. Reduction of expenses has helped reduce the gap, however, the fact remains... dilemma versus dream.

Can the dilemma be solved?

### **PURPOSE OF INQUIRY:**

The 2015-2016 Kern County Grand Jury Report on Buttonwillow Recreation and Parks District highlighted the loss of approximately \$200,000. This was due to oil price's severe reduction resulting in a major loss of property tax valuation. Pursuant to Penal Code §933.5, the 2021-2022 Kern County Grand Jury decided to re-examine the District to obtain their current status.

### **METHODOLOGY:**

The Grand Jury reviewed the previous report, examined financial documents, spoke with District Board Members and staff, toured the facilities, and observed the Board Meeting of November 15, 2021. The Grand Jury consulted with other sources to assist the District in getting back on track, and thereby restoring the dream.

## DISCUSSION OF FACTS:



Founded in 1895, the area was named Buena Vista (Good View), but was soon changed to Buttonwillow for a lone buttonbush (*Cephalanthus Occidentalis*), which served as a landmark on an old trans-valley trail. The landmark was used by the Yokut Indians as a meeting place and later became the site of settlers' rodeos. The Miller-Lux Holdings Company eventually established a headquarters and store near the tree. This tree is listed as California Historical Landmark No. 492 and is now known as the Buttonwillow Tree. (Photos by Grand Jury)



The Buttonwillow Recreation and Park District was formed in 1974. An excerpt from the Manual of Operations: *The purpose of the Buttonwillow Recreation and Park District in (sic) to provide a venue and outreach that promotes the development of the human potential in all its richness and variation via a three-dimensional community role:*

1. **Primary Purpose:** *Provide Leadership in identifying, rallying, and administering the finances, programs and area facilities while encouraging the community in which we serve to engage in leisure time activities.*
2. **Immediate Purpose:** *Help create, in cooperation with private and public partners/institutions, a physical environment and social climate conducive to the highest use of leisure.*
3. **Ultimate Purpose:** *Foster progress toward a society in which each individual and each group has the opportunity and capability for self-directed constructive use of leisure which will contribute to the cultural growth of the individual and society for the attainment of happiness, exercise and growth from well-reasoned and thought out activities and events is imperative.*

- A. Based on a recorded population of 1,508 in 2010, and a 2020 population of 1,443, Buttonwillow's population has declined 4.31%:
  - The average household income is \$48,793. The poverty rate is 37.81%.
  - The median age of the population is 21.
  - The workforce is primarily agriculture workers.
  - Only 41% of the population works fulltime.
  - The community is served by the Buttonwillow Elementary School District consisting of one K-8 school. There are 328 children enrolled.
  - High school students attend either Wasco, Shafter, or Taft high schools.
- B. The township of Buttonwillow has a total area of 6.9 square miles; however, the District services an area of 215 square miles with a population of approximately 1,800. According to the Kern County Assessor's Office there are 2,885 separate taxable parcels within the boundaries. (See Appendix A)
- C. The District is governed by a five member Board:
  - Members are elected for a four-year term.
  - Terms are staggered on a two-year cycle.

- Board members receive no compensation.
  - All members have filed required documents and attended required training sessions.
  - Some members of the Board have been serving for many years.
- D. Currently, the District has an agreement with West Side Recreation and Park District, located in Taft, California, allowing their General Manager and staff to assist in governing the District. The agreement was instituted in 2018 when the previous General Manager retired.
- The following statements are excerpts from the agreement:
    - *Whereas, **BUTTONWILLOW** desires TO retain the services of WESTSIDE to augment its ability, and strengthen its ongoing efforts, goals, and mission by retaining the services of a contract General Manager and for him to delegate staff and services as needed to perform the essential functions set forth.*
    - *BUTTONWILLOW shall pay all costs associated with said services monthly to WESTSIDE. The total amount shall not exceed \$24,000 without agreed upon extension. WESTSIDE will provide a minimum 8 hours per week on-site site in addition to unlimited support during BUTTONWILLOW business hours. BUTTONWILLOW will make payable a \$6,000 payment quarterly to WESTSIDE at which time both BUTTONWILLOW and WESTSIDE will complete a financial review. The initial payment will be due upon the execution of this agreement.*
    - *This Agreement may be terminated by action of the governing body of either BUTTONWILLOW or WESTSIDE by providing a 30-day written notice to the other party stating the effective date of the termination of the service.*
    - *The term of this Agreement shall begin upon execution of this agreement until **January 30, 2024.***
- E. The District has one full-time employee, a Recreation Supervisor, and two part-time employees with office and recreation supervision duties.
- F. The District has a well-defined manual detailing all aspects of the operations.
- G. Maintenance and landscaping is contracted to West Side Recreation and Park District at a cost of \$98,000 per year. The contract specifies two experienced individuals full-time and additional manpower and/or equipment as needed. Duties include:
- Participate in maintenance of District parks and landscaped areas.
  - Maintain facilities including carpentry, refinishing, plumbing, and electrical tasks.
  - Provide custodial duties and upkeep of all facilities.
  - Move and set-up furniture for daily recreation programs.
  - Preparation of ball fields for District, league or rental use.

- Maintenance record keeping and filings as required.

The duties listed are illustrations of the various types of work that may be performed. Other duties may be assigned.

- H. The cost of electricity budgeted for 2021-2022 is \$44,600, averaging \$3,716 per month.
- I. The children’s wading pool is in need of repairs, primarily the filtration system.
- J. In 2008, the District generated a bond issue for \$4,870,000 at approximately 5.08% interest. The bond was issued at a time when oil prices were high, creating more tax revenue which was sufficient to retire the bond debt. With these funds, the District built a facility that included a gymnasium, weight room, kitchen, meeting rooms and District office, softball field, soccer field, and a swimming pool along with a small children’s wading pool.
- K. The District refinanced the General Bond Debt of \$3,978,000 in 2017, reducing the interest rate to 2.5%. This reduced the total obligation for the next 21 years by \$461,514.
- L. Interest payments for the bond was \$137,272 for 2021, made in two payments. Principal payments are made once per year. For 2021, the principal payment was \$158,802, for a combined total of \$296,074. The debt obligation will be completed in 2039.
- M. The majority of the District’s revenue is from property tax. The median house value is \$120,700. The 2020-2021 Budget was \$259,294. The 2021-2022 Budget is \$276,173, with a 5% increase. This is due to an anticipated rise in oil prices.
- N. Supplemental revenue is budgeted from facility rental, program fees and miscellaneous income. Facility Rentals Brochure lists rental fees: (See Appendix B)
- District Programs \$33,220  
(Day Camp, Sports Programs and Fitness Center)
  - Other Income 30,500  
(Special Events, Rentals and Swimming Pools)
  - Interest Income 15,000
  - Kern County Park & Rec South 6,000
  - Supplemental Revenue Total \$84,770
- O. The 2021-2022 Budget Revenue is established at \$360,893, total expense at \$456,450.10. The District’s projected loss is \$95,557.10:
- Program revenue, in 2019 was \$41,767, dropping in 2020 to approximately 52% to \$19,861 due to COVID-19.
  - The 2020-2021 financial result was a loss of \$79,011.96.
  - The COVID-19 Relief Fund through Kern County granted \$81,974 to the District to offset major one-time expenses.

- P. The District's Reserve Fund at the end of this fiscal year will be approximately \$400,000.
- Q. The District has submitted a Parks and Water Bond Act of 2018, Proposition 68, Grant Request for \$174,000. The grant is to be utilized for park infrastructure. The plan is to restore the tennis courts and add markings for an indoor soccer field. This will allow dual use of the facilities.
- R. In 2008, the average price of oil was \$99.67 per barrel; in 2016, the average price was \$43.29. The collapse of the oil prices resulted in a major reduction of Property Tax revenue. Since 2017, the District has continually operated with a negative budget. Although expenses have been greatly reduced, they have had to balance the budget utilizing the Reserve Fund.
- S. Buttonwillow Community Foundation (Foundation), a nonprofit organization, supports the District by providing financial assistance for local children to enjoy the recreational facilities. Furthermore, the Foundation also helps the District by sponsoring several activities throughout the year.

## **FINDINGS:**

- F1. The facilities are excellent, given the size of the community, providing numerous activities for both children and adults. Maintenance of the buildings and grounds demonstrate a dedication to the surrounding community.
- F2. The building rental rates, the sport field rental and program fees are comparable to fees in other nearby districts. A fee increase could be imposed in the physical fitness facilities.
- F3. The demographics of the population suggests that the activities could be planned to match the age and social desires of the community.
- F4. The population of Buttonwillow is declining which may reduce utilization of the facilities.
- F5. The current debt service cost is more than the property tax revenue. This tax revenue will not be substantially increased in the foreseeable future.
- F6. The District will exhaust the Reserve Fund in about five years at the current rate of withdrawal.
- F7. When the reserve funds are exhausted, the facilities will not be maintained, staff will be reduced and programs diminished. Such a loss would be detrimental to the community.

- F8. Informing the community of the financial dilemma could energize the community to become more involved.
- F9. The District needs to increase revenue to continue the dream of bringing a high level of recreation to the area; a full-time General Manager would be an asset in accomplishing this task.
- F10. A solar power system could be installed in the parking area to assist in lowering energy costs.
- F11. The repair cost of the children’s wading pool is estimated to be over \$7,000. This is a cost the District cannot afford. This will affect the quality of life in the community.
- F12. Board and staff reside in the area and are dedicated to providing recreational activities for the entire community. Some of the Board members sponsor and/or coach a youth sports team in season.

**COMMENTS:**

The Grand Jury would like to thank the Directors and staff for the valuable input into this investigation. The willingness to come forth with the requested information is admirable. During the interviews, a comment, “*children deserve the best*” was made. The Grand Jury recognizes the District has to provide recreation for the community. Although they are in a financial dilemma, the Board and staff are positive the dream can be maintained—that Buena Vista—Good View—may make the dream a reality.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- R1. The District should conduct a survey, schedule a town hall meeting, and ask the entire community what activities they would prefer before the next fiscal year. Informing the community of the financial situation should be done at this time. Adjusting the programs to fit the community could create better utilization of the facilities. (Findings 1, 2, 3, 4 and 8)
- R2. Within the next twelve months, the Board of Directors should seek advice from county officials about the possibility of seeking an additional parcel fee to be applied to the bond debt until retired. The proposal of the fee would require an extended time to bring before the constituents for a vote. Advice should be sought quickly to establish a plan, before the District has exhausted its Reserve Fund. (Findings 5, 6 and 7)
- R3. The District should continuously seek to find other sources of revenue. Increasing fees for some programs will help. Other revenue sources could be selling refreshments at sporting activities, offering a Casino/Bingo night, or a meal in the

evening for a reasonable cost using volunteers to assist. The community and District must think outside the box to avoid further financial instability. (Findings 8 and 9)

- R4. Although it would increase the financial burden, the District, prior to establishing the fiscal year 2022-2023 budget, should establish a goal to find a qualified General Manager. Another alternative could be to offer to an in-house individual who would qualify if, at the District's expense, they agree to pursue the education required. They could also function as Interim General Manager with mentoring from other General Managers. (Findings 8 and 9)
- R5. Before the higher energy usage season, the Board of Directors should inquire into the possibility of installing a solar system to help lower energy costs. Further research should also be conducted to seek a grant for such a project. (Finding 10)
- R6. The District should, within 90 days, make the community aware of the major repair costs of the children's wading pool. A community-minded company or individual could step forward to fund. The pool could then be named after the donor if desired. (Finding 11)
- R7. The District should, within 90 days, propose selling naming rights for the gymnasium or sports field, in consideration of an annual donation from a company or individual. Also, advertisement banners could be solicited from companies to be placed on the walls of the gymnasium with an annual donation. (Findings 8 and 9)

## **NOTES:**

- The Buttonwillow Recreation and Park District should post a copy of this report where it will be available for public review.
- Persons wishing to receive an email notification of newly released reports may sign up at: [www.kerncounty.com/grandjury](http://www.kerncounty.com/grandjury)
- Present and past Kern County Grand Jury Final Reports and Responses can be accessed on the Kern County Grand Jury website: [www.kerncounty.com/grandjury](http://www.kerncounty.com/grandjury)

## **RESPONSE DEADLINES:**

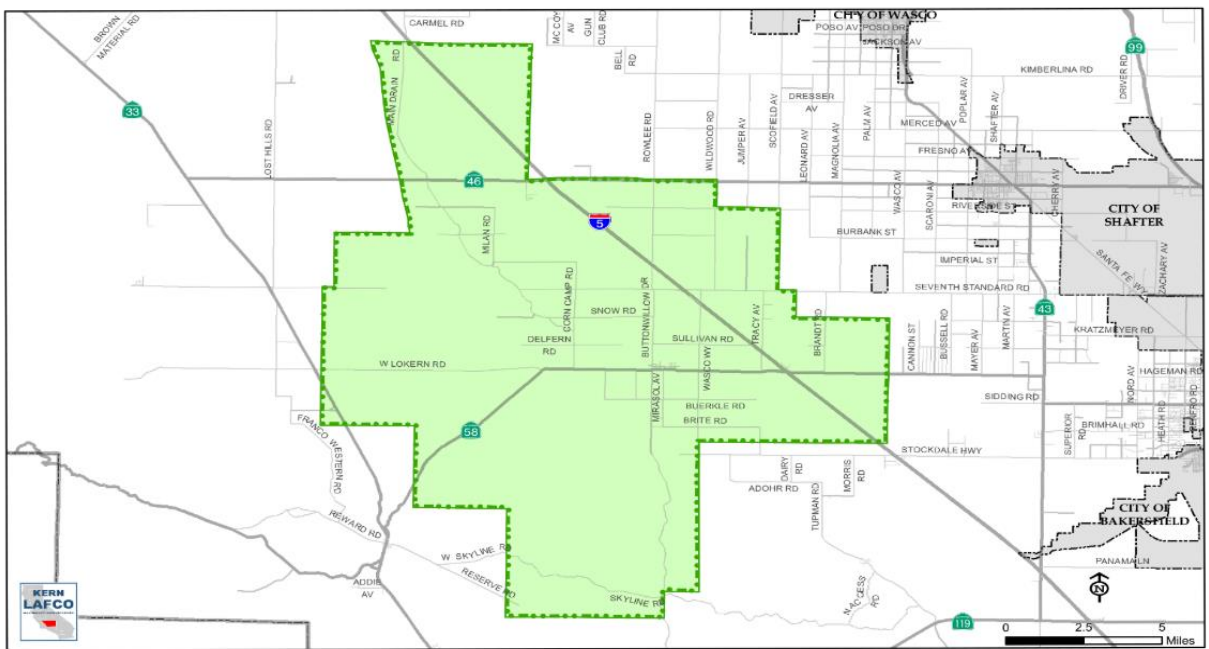
**RESPONSES ARE REQUIRED PURSUANT TO CAL. PENAL CODE § 933, SUBD. (C) AND 933.05 WITHIN 90 DAYS TO:**



- **PRESIDING JUDGE  
KERN COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT  
1415 TRUXTUN AVENUE, SUITE 212  
BAKERSFIELD, CA 93301**

- FOREPERSON**  
**KERN COUNTY GRAND JURY**  
**1415 TRUXTUN AVENUE, SUITE 600**  
**BAKERSFIELD, CA 93301**

Reports issued by the Grand Jury do not identify individuals interviewed. Cal. Penal Code § 929 requires that reports of the Grand Jury not contain the name of any person or facts leading to the identity of any person who provides information to the Grand Jury.

APPENDIX A:



 Sphere of Influence  
 Service District Boundary

This map and/or data is for general reference purposes only. LAFCo assumes no liability for the misuse or misinterpretation of the data.

**Buttonwillow**  
**Recreation & Park District**  
**Sphere of Influence**



Document Path: C:\GIS\Assignments\ButtonwillowRPD-SOI\_2017.mxd Date Saved: 6/21/2017

APPENDIX B:



**Buttonwillow**  
Recreation and Park District

## Facility Rentals Brochure

**556 Milo Ave  
Buttonwillow, CA 93206  
(661)764-5205**

**Office Hours  
10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.**  
\*Seasonal hours vary from 8:00 a.m. - 8:30 p.m.



Contact us by email  
[mlucas@buttonwillowrpd.com](mailto:mlucas@buttonwillowrpd.com)

Like Us On  **facebook**

[www.facebook.com/buttonwillow-Recreation-and-Park-District](http://www.facebook.com/buttonwillow-Recreation-and-Park-District)

# Buttonwillow Park

556 Milo Avenue, Buttonwillow

## Grand Shelter

Large Covered Pavilion  
 Full Day Rental  
 1-50 People \$35  
 50+ People \$50



## Lion's Den Shelter

Closest to playground  
 Full Day Rental \$25



*\*Water, electricity, lights, & BBQ pits  
 available at both pavilions*

## Field Rentals

### Prepped Field Rentals (Infield Dragged & Chalked)

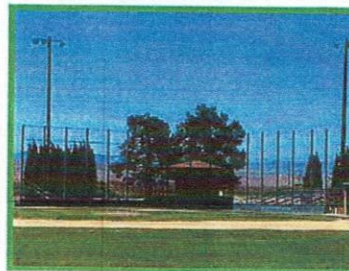
	No Lights	Lights
Softball Field	\$50	\$75
Little League Field	\$50	\$75
Babe Ruth Field	\$50	N/A
Soccer Field	\$50	\$75

### No Prep Field Rentals

	No Lights	Lights
Softball Field	\$25	\$50
Little League Field	\$25	\$50
Babe Ruth Field	\$25	N/A
Soccer Field	\$25	\$50



*Price is for  
 2 hours of lights  
 After 2 hours  
 the price is  
 an additional  
 \$15 per hour*



# Aquatic Facility



Reservation availability June-August

## 2 Hour Parties

Friday 6:30-8:30 p.m.  
 Saturday 2:30-4:30 p.m.  
 5:00-7:00 p.m.  
 Sunday 2:30-4:30 p.m.  
 5:00-7:00 p.m.

## 3 Hour Parties

Friday 5:30-8:30 p.m.  
 Saturday 2:00-5:00 p.m.  
 5:30-8:30 p.m.  
 Sunday 2:30-5:30 p.m.

<b>Fees</b>	<b>2 Hours</b>	<b>3 Hours</b>
1-40 Swimmers	\$200	\$275
41-60 Swimmers	\$225	\$315
61-80 Swimmers	\$250	\$350

\$25 non-refundable payment/deposit is due at the time of reservation.

Payments are due in full 1 week from the date reservation is made.

If reservation is made less than 1 week from party date,  
 fees are due in full immediately.

# Building Rentals Multi-Purpose Facility

## Events:

*(Includes Kitchen)*

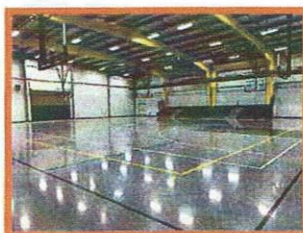
Facility Rental \$1500  
Refundable Deposit \$800  
Security Guards \$450  
Custodial Services \$300  
*(Optional)*

## Courts for Sports:

\$25 per hour  
\$100 for 4 hours  
\$250 for full day

## Meetings:

\$250 for 4 hours  
\$600 for full day  
*(Includes chair set up)*



## Scouts Hall

Full Day Rental \$40  
Key available for access  
*(Non-profit rates & fee reduction available upon request)*



## Media Room

\$15 per hour  
\$40 for 4 hours  
*(Reservations subject to Recreation Center hours)*



## Frequently Asked Questions

### How soon can I make a reservation?

Reservations are available up to 6 months in advance. A letter to the General Manager can be written to request a reservation outside 6 months.

### Are water slides allowed at your park?

Water slides are prohibited at our park and pavilions.

### When are my fees/deposit due?

Fees are due 2 weeks from time reservation is made. Any reservations made within 2 weeks of the rental date will be due at the time the reservation is made. Fees/deposits not paid by due date are subject to cancellation.

### What is your cancellation policy?

Cancellations that occur less than 10 business days prior to the reservation will be assessed a 1/3 of the rental fee.

### Is alcohol allowed at facilities?

Each facility has its own policy on alcohol usage. More information may be discussed at the time your reservation is made.



March 22, 2022

Presiding Judge  
Kern County Superior Court  
1415 Truxtun Avenue, Suite 212  
Bakersfield, CA 93301

Re: Responses to 2021-2022 Grand Jury Report

To the Honorable Presiding Judge:

The Buttonwillow Recreation and Park District ("District"), has reviewed the 2021-2022 Grand Jury Report regarding the District titled "Dilemma versus Dream." A response to the Grand Jury's recommendations and findings was prepared by the Contract General Manager. In preparing these responses, the District considered factors such as the District's small size, budget and current practices.

The responses were presented to the Buttonwillow Recreation Board of Directors at a regularly noticed meeting on February 21, 2022 for final review and edits. The Board of Directors has approved the attached responses and authorized (see signature pages) the Contract General Manager to file them with the Kern County Superior Court.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Les Clark III", is written over a blue circular scribble.

Les Clark III  
Contract General Manager

cc: Foreperson, Kern County Grand Jury  
Board of Directors, Buttonwillow Recreation and Park District

### RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY REPORT

(Buttonwillow Recreation and Park District - Dilemma versus Dream)

#### **PC 933.05**

The governance of responses to Grand Jury Final Report is contained in Penal Code 933 and 933.05. Duly noted Buttonwillow Recreation and Park District’s response must be submitted within 90 days. Said report was made public on February 1, 2022. Therefore, it is noted that the response to the Kern County Grand Jury is to be submitted no later than May 11, 2022. Buttonwillow Recreation and Park District formulated and made final a response signed by the Board Chairman Andrew Houchin and voted unanimously 5-0 by the Board of Directors of Buttonwillow Recreation and Park District on Monday, March 21, 2022. Buttonwillow Board of Directors are duly elected members of the Board. Staff supported the Board of Directors and assisted in preparing the report.

#### *Responses to:*

##### **PRESIDING JUDGE**

Kern County Superior Court  
1415 Truxtun Avenue, Suite 212  
Bakersfield, CA 93301

##### **FOREPERSON**


Kern County Grand Jury  
1415 Truxtun Avenue, Suite 600  
Bakersfield, CA 93301

**Report Title:** Buttonwillow Recreation and Park District (Dilemma versus Dream)    **Report Date:** February 1, 2022

**Response by:** Buttonwillow Board of Directors                      **Vote for authorization of response:** 5-0

**Total number of pages:** 6

**Signed by:** Andrew Houchin; Board President

X   
\_\_\_\_\_

#### **COMMENTS:**

The Buttonwillow Board of Directors, staff and member(s) thank the Kern County Grand Jury for the valuable input, careful findings and recommendations provided in your report. The information and passion you all have for your County is evident and appreciated. We look forward to implementing your suggestions and studying other options as it relates to any and all reported comments. Thank you for working with us for positive outcomes.

**Findings:**

I (we) agree with the findings numbered:

**F1. F2. F3. F4. F8. F10. F11. F12.**

I (we) disagree wholly or partially with the findings numbered:

**F5. F6. F7. F9.**

**F5. The current debt service cost is more than the property tax revenue. This tax revenue will not be substantially increased in the foreseeable future.**

Buttonwillow wholly disagrees with this finding. The history of the rise and fall of the oil industry and more importantly, property tax revenue, is unpredictable at best and generally a forecast. 2022 is showing signs of growth with the price topping over one hundred dollars per barrel. History will repeat itself and it could be sooner rather than later. As for the debt service on the bond that was passed, it was a limited tax general obligation bond. In case of a limited tax general obligation bond, the municipalities (The County of Kern/Buttonwillow) are allowed to raise property taxes if it is essential to meet current debt obligations. The Buttonwillow Board of Directors believe this is safe now and in the future due to the aforementioned.

**F6. The District will exhaust the reserve fund in about five years at the current rate of withdrawal.**

Buttonwillow wholly disagrees with this finding. Buttonwillow is a proud community that rallies for support of the recreation district and we have a vast track record of community involvement. We feel that the success of the past will continue well into the future. Buttonwillow staff and the Board of Directors will continue to develop a five-year Strategic Plan to ensure the viability (with community input) of its future.

**F7. When the reserve funds are exhausted, the facilities will not be maintained, staff will be reduced and programs diminished. Such a loss would be detrimental to the community.**

Buttonwillow partially disagrees with this finding. While such a loss would be detrimental to the community (reserve funds exhausted), Buttonwillow feels that if such an event were to occur (we believe this will not happen) that the community, Board and partners would step up much like they already do (see F12). The community and groups such as the Buttonwillow Chamber, Buttonwillow Foundation, Buttonwillow School District, West Side Recreation & Park District, Buttonwillow Board of Directors and the community abroad have a commitment to the Recreation District and will not allow it to suffer. (See R1 and the response)

**F9. The District needs to increase revenue to continue the dream of bringing a high level of recreation to the area; a full-time General Manager would be an asset in accomplishing this task.**

Buttonwillow agrees with the increase of revenue but unfortunately do not believe the community at large would be able to support this. Future partnerships with industry surrounding the area and continued support from the Foundation will continue to help offset lost revenue. An increase in the aforementioned can be sought after. We believe we cannot support a full-time general manger at this time and wholly disagree with this finding. Currently West Side Recreation & Park District has offered its full services – budget and finance, programming mentorship, maintenance-irrigation and general manger services for a nominal fee to be paid to the organization. We feel this service has provided a great result and allows us to meet our demands as a Board of Directors, but more importantly the District. The financial burden of a general manger (full-time) would outweigh any potential benefits that it may provide.

**Recommendations:**

1. Recommendations numbered: R3. R6. R7. have been implemented in part or wholly. Please see below.
2. Recommendation numbered: R1. has not yet been implemented, but will be in the future:
  - R1. Timeframe of implementation and or action taken (August 2022).
3. Recommendations numbered: R5. R6. R7. require further analysis in part or wholly.
  - R5. Timeframe of study and or action taken (August 2022).
  - R6. Timeframe of study and or action taken (August 2022)
  - R7. Timeframe of study and or action taken (August 2022).
  - R2. Timeframe of implementation and or action taken (July 2022).
4. Recommendations numbered: R4. R2. respectfully cannot be implemented because they are not warranted and/or are not reasonable.

**R1. The District should conduct a survey, schedule a town hall meeting, and ask the entire community what activities they would prefer before the next fiscal year. Informing the community of the financial situation should be done at this time. Adjusting the programs to fit the community could create better utilization of the facilities. (Findings 1, 2, 3, 4 and 8)**

The Buttonwillow Board of Directors agrees with this recommendation. The recommendation has not yet been implemented but will in the future (no later than August 2022). Buttonwillow continues to hold meetings open to the public monthly and address any and all concerns and review pros/cons to potential new programs and or ideas. Buttonwillow Board of Directors plans on posting a “town hall/budget meeting” in July and finalize in August of 2022 (*new fiscal year 2022-2023*). Ideas that will be discussed are potential programs from staff, and surveys that will be available to the public on Facebook and will be mailed to homes within the sphere of influence. The transparency of the budgeting process is important as it relates to cost and the need for community involvement. Meetings currently are held the third Monday of every month unless there is a holiday, in which the meeting will still be held within the week.

**R2. Within the next twelve months, the Board of Directors should seek advice from county officials about the possibility of seeking an additional parcel fee to be applied to the bond debt until retired. The proposal of the fee would require an extended time to bring before the constituents for a vote. Advice should be sought quickly to establish a plan, before the District has exhausted its Reserve Fund. (Findings 5, 6 and 7)**

The Buttonwillow Board of Directors disagrees with this finding wholly due to the type of bond that was passed as explained on page 3/F5. In case of a general obligation bond, the municipalities are allowed to raise property taxes if it is essential to meet current debt obligations. There is no need to add an additional parcel fee to be applied to the bond debt. However, a meeting with the Kern County Supervisor that represents the Buttonwillow District will be set up before the end of the fiscal year (*July 2022*) to discuss potential opportunities and partnerships to help with the viability of the District. \*\*\* *Item for future agenda; discussion only April 2022.*

**R3. The District should continuously seek to find other sources of revenue. Increasing fees for some programs will help. Other revenue sources could be selling refreshments at sporting activities, offering a Casino/Bingo night, or a meal in the evening for a reasonable cost using volunteers to assist. The community and District must think outside the box to avoid further financial instability. (Findings 8 and 9)**

The recommendation has been implemented. Recommendation to continuously seek to find other sources of income is on-going. Recently members of the Buttonwillow Board of Directors attended Foundation meetings and attended events where money was raised and ultimately is earmarked for future Buttonwillow activities and facility needs. Ongoing activities will be looked into and are currently being researched for the future. Depending on the potential cost/benefit, the Board of Directors will explore and support its programming. We believe the response of R1 is closely related to the ongoing work that the Board and staff are committed to.

**R4. Although it would increase the financial burden, the District, prior to establishing the fiscal year 2022-2023 budget, should establish a goal to find a qualified General Manager. Another alternative could be to offer to an in-house individual who would qualify if, at the District's expense, they agree to pursue the education required. They could also function as Interim General Manager with mentoring from other General Managers. (Findings 8 and 9)**

The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not reasonable at this time. As stated above, the financial burden to the District would be too costly to add a full-time (qualified) General Manager for the 2022-2023 budget year or prior to. We believe West Side Recreation & Park District is providing more than adequate services to the Buttonwillow District and in addition is accomplishing the task of mentoring the current Recreation Supervisor as this person fulfills the day-to-day duties of the District.

**R5. Before the higher energy usage season, the Board of Directors should inquire into the possibility of installing a solar system to help lower energy costs. Further research should also be conducted to seek a grant for such a project. (Finding 10)**

The recommendation requires further analysis. West Side Recreation & Park District is currently conducting a study on solar with a company called ABM that will be shared with Buttonwillow. From there we will discuss potential (similar) opportunities and discuss at the town hall/budget meeting referred to in the response to R1. **(August 2022)**

**R6. The District should, within 90 days, make the community aware of the major repair costs of the children's wading pool. A community-minded company or individual could step forward to fund. The pool could then be named after the donor if desired.**

The recommendation has been implemented and is on-going. Buttonwillow Recreation and Parks conducts monthly Board meeting and during these meeting items like the swimming pool are discussed and community input is always welcome. In addition, issues like the pool have been discussed with the Buttonwillow Foundation and other members of the community. We will continue to problem solve and hopefully gain the community's support. *As it relates to the naming rights, this can and will be discussed at the meeting in August 2022. In addition, we will work on a plan on how to work on this recommendation/opportunity.*

**R7. The District should, within 90 days, propose selling naming rights for the gymnasium or sports field, in consideration of an annual donation from a company or individual. Also, advertisement banners could be solicited from companies to be placed on the walls of the gymnasium with an annual donation. (Findings 8 and 9)**

The recommendation has been implemented. Currently we have implemented annual donation banners on our baseball fence for each and every season. Adding sponsor banners for the gymnasium is a great recommendation and will be


implemented for the next fiscal year. As for the naming rights of the gymnasium or a sports field we will explore this in our August budget/town hall meeting (August 2022).

**Conclusion:**

Once again, the Buttonwillow Board of Directors thanks the Kern County Grand Jury in your thorough recommendations and findings.

Sincerely,

Buttonwillow Board of Directors and Staff

Date: 4/5/22 Signed:  \_\_\_\_\_

Name: Andrew Houchin

Position: Board Chairman