

# TULARE COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT 2023-2024





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## TULARE COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY

A major function of the Tulare County Civil Grand Jury is to examine Tulare County and city governments, special districts, school districts and any joint powers agency operating within the county to ensure their duties are being carried out lawfully. The Grand Jury does not investigate criminal, state, federal or court activities nor personal disputes.

The Civil Grand Jury:

- ❖ Civil Grand Jurors serve a one (1) year term from July 1st through June 30th. The jury panel consists of nineteen (19) persons who are assigned to various committees.
- ❖ May review and evaluate procedures used by these entities to determine whether more efficient and economical methods can be employed
- ❖ May inspect and audit the books, records, and financial expenditures of those entities to ensure that public funds are properly accounted for and legally used.
- ❖ May investigate any charges of willful misconduct in the office by public officials.

To request an investigation, the attached complaint form must be filled out in its entirety and submitted to the Civil Grand Jury either electronically or by mail. All complaints received by the Grand Jury are confidential.

1. Name of complainant and contact information must include address, phone number and email.
2. Complete nature of complaint to include name of person(s) or department(s) against which the claim is being filed.
3. Complaint form must be signed.
4. Written confirmation of complaint will be sent to complainant.

EMAIL FORM TO: [grnd\\_jury@tularecounty.ca.gov](mailto:grnd_jury@tularecounty.ca.gov)  
OR MAIL FORM TO: Tulare County Civil Grand Jury  
5963 S. Mooney Blvd.  
Visalia, CA 93277

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Photo By: David Gonzalez

## Tulare County Civil Grand Jury 2023-2024

*Front row: Luis Sepulveda, Sharon Kordan, Sonia Garcia-Sepulveda, Salvatore Massaro, Joel Harris, (Foreman) Lindell Yoshimura (Pro-Tem), Valerie Bustamante, Laurie Avila, Paul Fry, Maxine Sanders, Cheryl Blevins*

*Back row: Raymond Cerniga, Ron White, Richard Pavich, Steven Walker, David Curschman, Delbert Blythe and Lynda Fillmore*

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## LETTER FROM THE JUDGE



### Superior Court of the State of California

Stephanie Cameron  
Court Executive Officer/  
Jury Commissioner

**COUNTY OF TULARE**  
ADMINISTRATION  
221 S. Mooney Blvd., Room 303  
Visalia, California 93291  
Telephone: (559) 730-5000  
Facsimile: (559) 737-4290

### JUDGES' COMMENTS

On behalf of the entire bench of the Tulare County Superior Court, I want to sincerely thank the 2023/2024 Civil Grand Jury for all the work they have performed on behalf of the citizens of Tulare County. Once again another Civil Grand Jury's term has been completed. Your efforts are especially appreciated during these difficult times. With the recent pandemic challenges and hurdles, the Civil Grand Jury remained diligent and worked hard to complete their duties.

Civil Grand Jurors always assume a great deal of responsibility whenever they agree to be a part of a year's panel. They willingly do this as volunteers without any purpose other than to insure that governmental agencies and individuals are properly performing their duties. The taxpayers of Tulare County were well served by all the time and effort put forth by this Civil Grand Jury. Our Court is especially grateful for the efficient manner in which this year's Civil Grand Jury performed these tasks and the overall cooperation and respect they showed to each other.

Much is misunderstood by the general public as to the functions and purpose of the Civil Grand Jury. It is empowered by statutory authority to investigate local governmental agencies and process citizen complaints involving local government issues. No other agency or group has mandate to be a "watch-dog" to insure that our local government works effectively, efficiently, and to the best interest of all citizens. We need responsible, dedicated people such as those on this year's Civil Grand Jury to serve in the future. If you would like to volunteer to do meaningful work for our community, we invite you to apply for service on Civil Grand Jury by contacting the Superior Court at (559) 730-5000 x1359 and ask for an application.

In closing, Tulare County Superior Court applauds each member of this Civil Grand Jury for your dedication to service on behalf of all citizens who live in Tulare County.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Nathan D. Ide  
Assistant Presiding Judge

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## LETTER FROM THE FOREMAN

### Tulare County Civil Grand Jury

5963 South Mooney Boulevard  
Visalia, CA 93277

(559) 624-7295 • Fax (559) 733-6078

Honorable Judge Juliet L. Boccone  
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court  
State of California  
County of Tulare

Honorable Judge Nathan D. Ide  
Assistant Presiding Judge of the Superior Court  
State of California  
County of Tulare

Dear Judge Boccone and Judge Ide,

Pursuant to California Penal Code 933, the 2023-2024 Tulare County Civil Grand Jury presents this final report to the court and citizens of Tulare County. It is the Jury's obligation to improve the Trust, Transparency and Accountability within the County of Tulare and local government operations. Therefore, it is vital that the public is made aware of the importance of oversight of all local governments to ensure its effectiveness and efficiency. It is our hope that our efforts to produce this report will help the citizens of the County to stay better informed and aware of issues concerning the affairs of the government agencies operating in the County of Tulare, and the recommendations to correct those issues.

During this session of the Jury we were operating with 18 members, one short of the normal Grand Jury membership of 19. These members were dedicated to working diligently to investigate and make appropriate decisions concerning citizen complaints and evaluate the effectiveness of local government operations. I am very proud to have served with the members of this Jury as they worked to fulfill their solemn oath to serve the citizens of Tulare County. These members come from diverse geographic areas and backgrounds and worked closely together to fulfill their obligations.

I would like to personally thank Judge Nathan Ide who served as our court advisor for this Jury term, as well as Superior Court Executive Secretary Ellen Kennedy, and Judicial Secretary Rocio Felipe. I also want to thank the County Counsel's office for their support, guidance and assistance, and County Printing Services for their many years of expertise in the final report. A special thank you to Annette Jones, the Tulare County Civil Grand Jury Clerk, who has proved again to be indispensable to the Jury and a proven resource in all areas of the jury's operations.

The members of the 2023-2024 Tulare County Civil Grand Jury are unanimous in their opinion that it has been a privilege and fulfilling experience to serve the citizens of Tulare County. We hope that our endeavors will further the efficiency and effectiveness of Tulare County and other local government operations.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Joel R. Harris".

Joel R. Harris, Foreman

2023-2024 Tulare County Civil Grand Jury • [grnd\\_jury@tularecounty.ca.gov](mailto:grnd_jury@tularecounty.ca.gov) • [www.co.tulare.ca.us](http://www.co.tulare.ca.us)

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## GRAND JURY RESPONSE 2023-2024 COMPLIANCE REVIEW

### OVERVIEW OF GRAND JURY RESPONSE DUTIES:

The Tulare County Civil Grand Jury (TCCGJ) is impaneled annually to act as the public's watchdog by investigating and reporting on the affairs of county agencies, local governments, school districts and special districts within Tulare County. TCCGJ reviews complaints brought by citizens and internally initiates investigations about perceived government irregularities. As a fact-finding body, the TCCGJ makes constructive recommendations to a wide range of local governmental problems. This is done by reviewing and evaluating policies and procedures, methods and systems utilized to determine if more efficient and economical programs can be employed. TCCGJ is authorized to, and in some cases must, do the following:

- Inspect and audit books, records, and financial expenditures to ensure that public funds are properly accounted for and legally spent
- Examine the books and records of any nonprofit organization receiving local public funds
- Inquire into the conditions and management of jails and detention facilities
- Inquire into any charges of willful misconduct of County and local officials or employees

TCCGJ does not investigate private entities, nonprofit organizations not funded by the county, state or federal agencies, courts, school curricula, personnel issues, pending litigation, or other matters not connected with local governments.



TCCGJ annually issues a final report which contains specific reports addressing one or more issues. California Penal Code §933(c) requires responses from governing agencies, Tulare County Board of Supervisors, city and county government entities, schools, special

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districts, certain non-profit corporations and other entities. This ensures these entities have performed their function in a lawful, economical and efficient manner. Each report contains information such as the background regarding the subject matter, reasons for the investigation, the procedures followed in obtaining information, findings, conclusions, and recommendations. All required responders must reply in writing to each finding and recommendation in the specific report within a specified period.

## **ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMITTEE:**

1. Reviewed responses to the 2022-2023 Grand Jury Final Report
2. Inquired into the status of implementation of the 2021-2022 Grand Jury recommendations
3. Reviewed relevant California Government and Penal Codes
4. Compiled statistics regarding the responses

## **The 2022-2023 TCCGJ required responses from the following agencies and reports, (Title and Agencies)**

### **The Dream Center Hope For Foster and Homeless Youth**

Tulare County Office of Education

### **Who Let The Dogs Out? K9's in Tulare County**

Dinuba Police, Exeter Police, Farmersville Police, Porterville Police, Tulare Police,  
Visalia Police, Woodlake Police, Tulare County Sheriff

### **Is Your Food Safe?**

Tulare County Health & Human Services Agency

### **Fire! Fire !**

Tulare County Fire Department

### **Visalia Ala Cart**

City of Visalia's Community Development Dept.

### **Schools, Learning in a Safe Environment**

Tulare County Office of Education, Visalia Unified School District, Tulare Joint Union High School District, Exeter Unified School District, Porterville Unified School District,

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Woodlake Unified School District, Farmersville Unified School District, Dinuba Unified School District

**Still Raining Cats and Dogs!!**

Tulare County Health & Human Service Agency, City of Porterville Police Dept. Animal Control

**South County Detention Facility**

Tulare County Board of Supervisors

Tulare County Sheriff's Office

**Tulare County Board of Supervisors**

Parks: Relax and Enjoy

**Special Districts Website Requirements**

(No response required)

**DATA REVIEWED:**

1. There were 9 TCCGJ reports published requiring 23 agencies to respond in the 2022-2023 Final Report.
2. There were 35 findings and 17 recommendations in the 2022-2023 Final Report that required responses from the agencies listed above.
3. In the 2022-2023 Final Report, 22 agencies agreed with the findings, 1 agency disagreed with findings. 22 agencies implemented the recommendations, 3 agencies indicated that the recommendations required study.

**SUMMARY**

Entities responding to a report shall do so in accordance with California Penal Code §933.05.

The 2023-2024 Final Report and responses may be found on the Tulare County Civil Grand Jury website:  
<http://tularecounty.ca.gov/grandjury>

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## **REVIEW OF 2021-2022 IMPLEMENTATION**

TCCGJ annually issues a final report addressing one or more issues requiring responses from various agencies in Tulare County. All required responders must reply in writing to each finding and recommendation in the specific report. The 2021-2022 Civil Grand Jury Final Report included 7 reports with 17 recommendations. 8 agencies were required to respond with 4 agencies invited to respond. The TCCGJ is obligated to follow up and verify implementation of recommendations made in these past reports.

### **METHOD OF FOLLOW UP:**

1. Clarification letters were sent to the designated responders
2. Reviewed websites and confirmed updates were completed
3. Reviewed updated documents and responses

### **SUMMARY:**

Of the 11 reports, 5 Tulare County agencies responded they had implemented the recommendations, 2 District Hospitals responded they had implemented the recommendations, 1 City Department responded they would be implementing the recommendation. Board of Supervisors and Tulare County Administration Officer did respond to the report when requested..

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## **SUMMARY:**

Every city in Tulare County has seen an increase in individuals experiencing homelessness in their communities. Unhoused individuals have a dire need to connect to housing, resources, and health services. This year the state budget has included a larger allotment to address unhoused individuals throughout California. Tulare County has received an influx of funds to address those needs. The Tulare County Civil Grand Jury (TCCGJ) elected to investigate how these additional funds are being used, who is providing outreach to unhoused individuals and what services or projects are available.

## **BACKGROUND:**

There has been a history of homelessness throughout the United States. Historians documented homelessness during the Great Depression (1929-1939) which sparked the first large-scale federal response. Following the Depression and WWII, homelessness was focused more on skid row and impoverished areas of cities. Between the 1970's and 1990's more people became homeless. Federal funding for housing was cut, state mental hospitals were deinstitutionalized, and many veterans returning from deployment became homeless. In the early 2000's homelessness among individuals increased by nearly 12%, among veterans 7%, and among families with children by 15%. Some of the contributing factors were low-paying jobs, unemployment, illness, lack of support networks, evictions, foreclosures, natural disasters, and lack of affordable housing.

In 2016 the Tulare County Board of Supervisors created the Tulare County Task Force on Homelessness (TCTFOH) to address the growing concerns of unhoused individuals in Tulare County. TCTFOH is intended to serve as a platform for coordinating existing local services and programs leading to an increase in service-delivery efficiency and an overall reduction of homelessness in Tulare County. The main purpose of TCTFOH is to advise and assist the Tulare County Health & Human Services Agency (HHS) and to report to the Tulare County Board of Supervisors. TCTFOH also addresses changing legislation, the cause and effect of increasing homelessness, alternative solutions to help individuals experiencing hardship and help prioritize state and federal funding. TCTFOH joined the Kings/Tulare Homeless Alliance which is a broad-based coalition of homeless housing and service providers, advocates, government representatives and consumers working together to plan and make decisions.

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Another surge of Homelessness was noted in both Kings and Tulare counties following the COVID-19 pandemic with an increase of 16% between 2022 and 2023. In Tulare County 779 people slept in an unsheltered location, 165 people slept in an emergency shelter and 109 slept in transitional housing. In Tulare County the unhoused population was recorded in 2023 as Visalia 434, Porterville 299 and Tulare 284 with the remainder being counted in smaller towns and unincorporated communities.

## **METHOD OF INVESTIGATION:**

1. Website reviews
2. Review documents
3. Presentation by HHSA

Sources of information include:

Presentation on Homeless Initiative Program from HHSA

Attended and viewed on-line Tulare County Task Force on Homelessness monthly public meetings.

Reviewed funding: Landscape Analysis of State, Federal and Local Funding

Responses from stakeholders: Health Care District's Street Medicine Program, Lighthouse Rescue, Visalia Police Department Homeless Outreach and Proactive Enforcement HOPE, Tulare Police Department Homeless Assistance Liaison Officer HALO, Community Service Employment Training CSET, Tulare County Sheriff's Office Homeless Enforcement and Resource Team HEART, City of Exeter, Tulare County Hope and faith-based organizations

Relevant documents and data: pamphlets, veteran resources, medical resources, and the Home Safe Program which aims to prevent and address homelessness among seniors and dependent adults.

Review of Point in Time Report conducted by Kings/Tulare Homeless Alliance includes Kings and Tulare Counties, US Department of Housing and Urban Development and the cities of Hanford, Porterville, Tulare, and Visalia.

## **DISCUSSION:**

The HOPE Team conducts outreach to unhoused individuals in the City of Visalia through proactive daily contacts as well as in response to calls for services. HOPE team Officers provide resource cards on contact with unhoused individuals regardless of circumstance/outcome and attempts to connect them to available resources. The Visalia Police Department has also established partnerships with Tulare County Mental Health that provides for a mental health clinician who is partnered with a HOPE Team Officer to provide resources directly in the field in a more efficient and expeditious manner. The Visalia Police Department was also successful in attaining a grant from the US Department of Justice to deploy two Crisis Service Workers with the HOPE Team.

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The city of Tulare has implemented HALO. This program consists of two officers and one sergeant. This approach gives much needed time for officers to better understand individuals' particular needs. Since mental health issues and drug usage are common among people that are unhoused, this creates a challenge for the city of Tulare. The city has created a temporary encampment for people willing to seek treatment and transition to productive citizens. The temporary encampment area is two acres of land with the capacity to house 139 tents. Residents of the encampment are required to follow specific rules and work together to keep the area clean.

The HEART team is active in the field daily talking with unhoused individuals. The three primary requests received from the unhoused population is food for their pets, water, and food for themselves. The homeless usually have multiple pets and are unable to locate a shelter who will accept all their pets. Outreach to the unhoused is essential as individuals are not comfortable in an office setting and prefer being assisted in the field. An important factor is building rapport, building trust and encouragement to determine their needs. HEART provides resources in the form of a pamphlet in English and Spanish along with business cards if further assistance is needed. HEART will also assist by attempting to locate available shelter, reaching out to allied agencies and providing transportation.



TCTFOH holds a meeting on the third Wednesday of each month. Meetings can be seen remotely on the Tulare County HHSA Facebook page, and meeting information is posted online. If the public wishes to comment on an agenda item they can submit written comments. Voting members update the committee on projects, new developments, and concerns. Outside speakers on topics of interest or concerns are also asked to give presentations to assist the committee in making informed decisions. The Board of Supervisors directly supports several initiatives including the Visalia Warming Center at St. Paul's Church. It is currently one of two shelter options for the homeless community in Tulare County.

# TULARE COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT 2023-2024

Tulare County Task Force on Homelessness Members as of June 1, 2023	
City of Dinuba	Appointed Position
City of Farmersville	Appointed Position
City of Porterville	Appointed Position
City of Tulare	Appointed Position
City of Visalia	Appointed Position
Housing Authority	Appointed Position
Kings/Tulare Area Agency on Aging	Appointed Position
Kings/Tulare Homeless Alliance	Appointed Position
Board of Supervisors	Appointed Position
HHS Director/Designee	Appointed Position
Tulare County Office of Education	Appointed Position
Transit Authority	Appointed Position
Tulare County Sheriff's Office	Appointed Position
Tule River Indian Tribe	Appointed Position
Youth Advisory Board	Appointed Position
Unincorporated Community	Voluntary Position
Affordable Housing Developer	Voluntary Position
Community Action Agency	Voluntary Position
Faith Community	Voluntary Position
Lived Experience Community	Voluntary Position
Health Care Sector	Voluntary Position
Partner	Voluntary Position

The City of Exeter has been under new leadership in the last five to six years and they have not been contacted or approached by TCTFOH. Based on discussions with other small cities, TCTFOH deals with larger scale issues that small cities like Exeter may not experience, and health and human services are provided through county departments not located in Exeter. Exeter currently has 12 unhoused individuals with a population of 11,000 people. The Exeter Police Department has developed fliers to provide the unhoused with information they need to get assistance. The Exeter Police Department has also met with the police department homeless teams in other cities to learn how they have assisted the unhoused. There are some medical services provided by Kaweah Health Care clinics located in Exeter, the community also has a Food Link and the Exeter Food Closet that provide food. Several of the churches in Exeter also provide items such as clothing and other essentials. Exeter strives to be involved with programs and projects within the capacity of its small city resources to assist current unhoused individuals and to minimize the potential of others becoming unhoused in Exeter.

In the original by-laws for TCTFOH it contained voting member seats for Lindsay, Exeter, and Woodlake. Over the years, due to a lack of engagement, these positions were removed through revisions. Other voting member positions have been added or removed since 2016 and are reflected in the most recent by-laws which were adopted by the Board on May 23, 2023. Should interest from a jurisdiction rekindle, TCTFOH can re-examine and add a position via amendment of the by-laws and needs to seek initial approval and submit to Board of Supervisors for final approval.

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# TULARE COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT 2023-2024

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Point in Time (PIT) Report is a snapshot of unhoused individuals in each selected community based on a survey of homeless individuals on a single night in January. Volunteers from numerous agencies canvas areas on a specific date where unhoused individuals and families tend to congregate, including encampments, warming centers, food distribution sites, and emergency shelters and ask them to voluntarily respond to a list of pre-determined questions. The questionnaires are gathered and reviewed by the agencies to assess needs and programs to assist unhoused people and families. Reports for each selected community are shared with the public, local government, and volunteer service agencies.

The 2023 PIT survey indicated there are 1,053 people experiencing homelessness in Tulare County. Of the 1,053 homeless individuals in Tulare County, 779 people slept in an unsheltered location, 430 have a disability, 65 are US veterans, and 58 were unaccompanied youth.

In 2023 the PIT count saw an increase because of the following circumstances:

- The end of COVID-19 area support projects including Project Room Key and the eviction moratorium.
- The cost-of-living increases resulting from higher rents, utility costs, food costs, etc.
- The lack of affordable housing
- The City of Tulare Encampment Resolution Funding Project has centralized people making them easier to count
- The increase in the number of volunteers participating in street canvassing for PIT

## **HOMELESS VETERANS OF TULARE COUNTY**

There were 48 homeless veterans counted in Tulare County during the 2019 PIT count, with 40 living unsheltered. Veterans are living in cars, encampments or on the street. Of these 40 veterans, one out of two are chronically homeless due to disabilities or have been homeless for at least a year. Vouchers are provided for rapid housing (temporary) to permanent supportive housing. There are actually no services here in Visalia, the homeless are referred to Veterans Affairs located in Fresno for housing in Visalia.

The TCCGJ investigation also reached out to other organizations and stakeholders that provide support services to unhoused individuals daily. When asked what the needs of unhoused individuals are in Tulare County they responded:

1. Affordable housing
2. Rental Assistance
3. Access to long term safe shelters
4. Access to drug treatment facilities
5. Addiction counseling
6. Mental health care, assessment, and counseling
7. Positive, purposeful work to do throughout the day

# TULARE COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT 2023-2024

8. Food for pets and available shelters that welcome pets
9. Available Water and food
10. Laws to address mental health care

## Summary of Funding:

Summary of Funds		
Funding Type	Total	High Level Summary
HHSA Allocations (All Branches) specific to Fiscal Year 23/24	\$5,054,479.50	Programs and services that directly impact homeless clients such as housing navigation, outreach, housing vouchers/deposit assistance, and similar activities or expenses
HHSA – Homeless Org - 1150	\$3,457,441.44	Operations and long-term support for permanent supportive housing. Many revenue streams are one-time funds
ARPA Homeless Projects	\$3,250,000	One-time funds to assist with building new emergency and permanent housing units
Passthrough Projects	\$54,510,000	One-time funds used to support new permanent housing in partnership with eligible developers.

Funding needs to continue in order for Tulare County service providers to have the ability to provide services like showers, substance abuse help and other needs. They have been utilizing funds through several grants including funds from Treatment for Individuals Experiencing Homeless (TIEH), Encampment Resolution Funding (ERF), and Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homeless (PATH) as well as funding from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). Most recently \$500,000 additional funds were secured in the state budget and presented to Tulare County in February 2024.

Further investigation on successful housing solutions found Housing First, a plan implemented in Finland more than 10 years ago, which has had great success in getting most homeless off the street and into housing. These are tiny apartments in hi-rise structures where residents share a common kitchen and recreation room. The residents also share the cleaning and maintenance tasks for the common area. Staff are there to provide support. Referrals to treatment programs are available upon request. Their plan does not restrict use of drug or alcohol as long as residents use it in the privacy of their own units. Funding for the construction and ongoing subsidies are provided by Finland’s Federal and State Governments.

The newest project addressing the homeless crisis in Tulare County is the Visalia Navigation Center. The Visalia Navigation Center broke ground in April 2023. This low – barrier navigation center (LBNC) will have service enriched living quarters focused on guiding residents into permanent housing. The center will accommodate up to 100 temporary residents and provide access to an array of services through CSET and partner organizations.

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Based on the national Housing First approach, the “low barrier” aspect of the center will employ best practices to reduce common barriers to entry, including a resident’s need to bring partners and/or pets, store personal possessions, or adhere to religious beliefs. The “navigation” aspect of the center refers to the presence of case managers to connect residents to supportive services. On-site resources will include beds, showers, laundry facilities, meals, phone/mail services, animal kennels, storage space, and parking for residents. On-site services will include employment training, public benefits, health services, substance abuse and mental health services, and connections to permanent housing opportunities.

Despite the multiple agencies working to alleviate homelessness in Tulare County, there is no common database of shared information about homeless individuals.

Frequently asked Questions and information:

How do I get help with homelessness in Tulare County?

Permanent housing and comprehensive case management for individuals and families who have experienced chronic homelessness and have a verifiable disability, mental health issue, substance abuse, or HIV/AIDS. To start the referral process, contact the Kings-Tulare Homeless Alliance at 559-738-8733.

Where can I get emergency hotel vouchers?

Hotel/motel vouchers are provided to individuals who are receiving cash aid through CalWORKs for up to 30 days. If you are an individual adult and homeless and in need of housing, please call Home Connect at 1-800-498-8847.

## **FINDINGS:**

- F1. HHSA and TCTFOH have prioritized and coordinated with many agencies and faith-based organizations across Tulare County. Their efforts to reduce homelessness are commendable and the leadership is strong, knowledgeable, and committed to developing solutions.
- F2. It may take weeks or months after assistance is sought to obtain services due to completing required paperwork, qualifying for assistance, and finding housing.
- F3. Little or no data is kept on unhoused individuals that decline services or individuals that return to homelessness.
- F4. Grants and/or programs do not always develop enough data/results to justify continuance of services.
- F5. Tulare County Homeless Veterans are referred to Fresno VA for approval of housing services.
- F6. No database connecting all stakeholders to streamline services currently exist.

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# TULARE COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT 2023-2024

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## RECOMMENDATIONS:

- R1. HHSA and TCTFOH should maintain open communications and reach out annually to smaller communities or changing leadership to provide updates and resources to address the changing needs of unhoused individuals.
- R2. TCTFOH should post meeting handouts and PowerPoint presentations online in case insufficient copies are available at the meeting and should also highlight on their websites progress and updates on projects.
- R3. TCTFOH should reach out to the Veteran Community and extend an invitation to become a voting member to address specific needs of veterans in Tulare County.
- R4. HHSA should develop a Tulare County Data Base on homeless services and make accessible to all stakeholders that work with unhoused individuals including county and state agencies, service providers, police departments, faith-based organizations, medical assistance agencies and the community. The database would reduce the time needed to obtain services and help coordinate the support needed to assist unhouse individuals sooner.

## REQUIRED RESPONSES:

Tulare County Board of Supervisors Findings: F1- F4 , F6 Recommendations: R1-R4

## INVITED RESPONSES:

HHSA Findings: F1-F4 Recommendations: R1-R4

TCTFOH Findings: F1, F3, F4, F6 Recommendations: R1-R3

### Disclaimer

Grand Jury reports are based on documentary evidence and the testimony of sworn or admonished witnesses, not on conjecture or opinion. However, the Grand Jury is precluded by law from disclosing such evidence except upon specific approval of the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court, or another judge appointed by the Presiding Judge (Penal Code Section 911, 924.1 (a) and 929). Similarly, the Grand Jury is precluded by law from disclosing the identity of witnesses except upon an order of the court for narrowly defined purposes (Penal Code Section 924.2 and 929).

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## Books - Challenged or Banned (2023-2024)

### SUMMARY:

In light of book bans and censorship across the nation and book restrictions in many states, the Tulare County Civil Grand Jury (TCCGJ) decided to inquire as to what school districts in Tulare County are doing about challenged books. TCCGJ sent out questions to three school districts and the Tulare County Library (TCL), asking about what prompted the review of a book or what is their policy when a book is challenged. All the schools were very specific explaining their policies and procedures concerning challenged books. The TCL also went on to explain their goal is to stock libraries with up-to-date books and reference materials to prepare students to become life-long learners. They also

take into consideration diverse interests, abilities, and maturity levels of students in the books they read. TCCGJ sought to explore if this trend has had a significant impact on Tulare County residents.



### BACKGROUND:

Nationwide prior to 2020, most challenges to school and library books were brought by a single parent who sought to remove or restrict access to a book their child was reading. In 2022, nearly 51% of the demands to censor targeted books, programs, displays, and other materials in school libraries and classrooms; 48% of book challenges targeted materials in public libraries. In 2023 data shows a record surge from multiple individuals to challenge, censor, ban, restrict, limit, review, or withdraw books. In the last two years the number of challenged books across the country has increased by 33%. In 2023 preliminary data shows record surge of challenges in public libraries to limit, retain, restrict or revoke books. TCL uses many factors to determine what materials are age-appropriate for children's literature. It uses a wide variety of resources recommended by professional educators, librarians, authors, and publishers. Librarians and library staff use these sources to select materials. Both the school districts and public library try to provide a broad range and balanced educational, informal, and recreational quality reading materials.

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Tulare County maintains the TCL system under the laws of the State of California. TCL offers free access to hundreds of online databases, tools, an open Literacy Center, and other services to empower all patrons. The TCL system has 17 branches. The library also has a 10-member Advisory Board appointed by the Board of Supervisors that represents the community and works with the County Librarian. The purpose of the board is to act as a community advisory body to the Board of Supervisors regarding library policies and operations, maintain and improve library services, provide public input, review federal, state, and local legislation pertaining to library funding. Current policy language on banned books prohibits books to be taken off the shelves. A committee process to review books is being modeled after the Visalia Unified School District policy. Book events have not been canceled by the library but because of threats an event was withdrawn to assure the safety of everyone.

## **METHOD OF INVESTIGATION:**

- Website reviews
- Review of documents
- Presentation by the Tulare County Librarian

## **DISCUSSION:**

TCCGJ requested information regarding book reviews from the three largest school districts, Visalia Unified School District, Tulare City School District, Porterville Unified School District, and the TCL.

The Tulare County Office of Education (TCOE) does not have county wide procedures or guidelines to address challenged books and allows each district or school to handle the matter as they see fit:

- Below is what was found within these three school districts:
  - A. All three districts are similar in their approach involving material being challenged.
  - B. Anyone within the community who submits a written request regarding material they consider inappropriate triggers a review process.
  - C. The review starts with an informal verbal discussion between complainants and the principal.
  - D. If a resolution isn't achieved, further actions may include a written complaint to the principal which initiates the Superintendent's involvement and possibly a review committee.
  - E. Book reviews and complaints have not been an issue in recent years.
- The TCL has a different set of rules when it comes to books within the library.
  - A. The library has their Materials Selection Policy (1982) that is used during the review of books coming into the library:

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# TULARE COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT 2023-2024

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1. General Purpose
2. Philosophy
3. Objectives
4. Purchase of Materials
5. Suggestions for Purchase
6. Selection Criteria
7. Special Areas or Formats
8. Local Authors
9. Recordings/Cassettes
10. Sexually Explicit Material
11. Collection Maintenance
12. Challenged Material

B. Before a book is moved to a different age appropriate section, a committee from within the library will review the book to determine, if it is in the correct section of the library, and is better suited for a different age group, and/or does it go against anything within the Materials Selection Policy.

C. The library is predicated on the Library users' right to read and similarly, the users' freedom from censorship by others. TCL firmly believes that while all of us are free to reject for ourselves books and other materials which we do not approve, we should not, and cannot, in the context of a free society, exercise this freedom to the point of censoring or restricting the reading freedom of others. (Material Selection Policy, Section X CHALLENGED MATERIAL).

In September of 2023 the Governor of California signed AB1078 to ban book bans and textbook censorship in the State of California. This law bans censorship which prohibits book bans of instructional materials and strengthens California law requiring schools to provide all students access to textbooks.

## **FINDINGS:**

- F1. The TCOE does not have set guidelines to address challenged books and allows each school district or school to handle the matter as they see fit.
- F2. The TCL has strong policies and procedures embedded in their by-laws to address the request to remove or review books from shelves which prohibits the banning of books.

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# TULARE COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT 2023-2024

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F3. Although these school districts have not banned or removed books from their libraries, they have formed committees to address community concerns about specific books.

## RECOMMENDATIONS:

R1. TCOE should create a general guideline that can be modified by the individual school districts.

R2. TCL should continue with the current policies and procedures that allows them to be prepared for any books brought to their attention.

R3. The school districts should continue their due diligence in addressing all community concerns regarding learning materials.

## REQUIRED RESPONSES:

Visalia Unified School District Findings: F1, F3 Recommendations: R1, R3

Tulare City School District Findings: F1, F3 Recommendations: R1, R3

Porterville Unified School District Findings: F1, F3 Recommendations: R1, R3

Tulare County Office of Education Finding: F1 Recommendation: R1

## INVITED RESPONSE:

Tulare County Librarian Finding: F2 Recommendation: R2

### Disclaimer

Grand Jury reports are based on documentary evidence and the testimony of sworn or admonished witnesses, not on conjecture or opinion. However, the Grand Jury is precluded by law from disclosing such evidence except upon specific approval of the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court, or another judge appointed by the Presiding Judge (Penal Code Section 911, 924.1 (a) and 929). Similarly, the Grand Jury is precluded by law from disclosing the identity of witnesses except upon an order of the court for narrowly defined purposes (Penal Code Section 924.2 and 929).

## Cannabis Sales Impact in Tulare County

### SUMMARY




Over the past few years due to the legalization of cannabis in California, some Tulare County cities have approved the sales of cannabis within their city limits. The Tulare County Civil Grand Jury, (TCCGJ) was interested in discovering the impact of the approved cannabis dispensaries within these cities of Tulare County. The TCCGJ has not previously reported on this type of business, therefore, TCCGJ explored how these businesses are affecting local communities.

During the research, the following questions were asked of city officials:

- How has the opening of these dispensaries affected your city?
- What additional sales tax revenues have the dispensary(s) generated in your city?
- What business opportunities have been created?
- Have any donations to the community been received from the dispensaries?

## MANY DIFFERENT STRAINS OF CANNABIS

STRAIN IS USED TO DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN CANNABIS SATIVA AND INDICA. IT REFERS TO THE SPECIFIC BREED OF EACH INDIVIDUAL PLANT. OVER THE YEARS, FAMILIAL STRAINS HAVE DIVIDED INTO SPECIFIC SUBSECTIONS. THOUGH STRAINS MAY SHARE LINEAGE, THE DIFFERENCES ARE NUMEROUS

 <h3 style="color: #2e7d32;">SATIVA STRAINS</h3> <p>Sativa strains have an uplifting effect and offer a cerebral high that includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Laughing uncontrollably</b></li> <li>• <b>Engaging in in-depth conversations</b></li> <li>• <b>Thinking creativity</b></li> </ul> <p>Sativa strains grow tall and thin - the plant can grow up to 20 feet in an outside garden. Popular strains include:</p> <div style="display: flex; flex-wrap: wrap;"> <div style="width: 50%; padding: 5px; background-color: #4f7942; color: white; padding: 5px;"> <p><b>AMNESIA HAZE</b> Beloved by morning users, it offers an uplifting boost.</p> </div> <div style="width: 50%; padding: 5px; background-color: #4f7942; color: white; padding: 5px;"> <p><b>CHERRY AK</b> With a sweet, fruity smell and taste, this strain can help elevate a bad mood.</p> </div> <div style="width: 50%; padding: 5px; background-color: #4f7942; color: white; padding: 5px;"> <p><b>BUBBA KUSH</b> With a coffee and chocolate taste, this strain has a heavy tranquilizing effect.</p> </div> <div style="width: 50%; padding: 5px; background-color: #4f7942; color: white; padding: 5px;"> <p><b>HEROJUANA</b> To battle insomnia, this strain induces a heavy, relaxing sleep.</p> </div> <div style="width: 50%; padding: 5px; background-color: #4f7942; color: white; padding: 5px;"> <p><b>BLUE DREAM</b> Offers a total relaxation while energizing the mind.</p> </div> <div style="width: 50%; padding: 5px; background-color: #4f7942; color: white; padding: 5px;"> <p><b>GIRL SCOUT COOKIES</b> This strain is a more extreme version of Blue Dream, so go easy!</p> </div> </div>	 <h3 style="color: #2e7d32;">INDICA STRAINS</h3> <p>Indica strains have a relaxing, sedative effect, often used to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Reduce stress</b></li> <li>• <b>Relieve pain</b></li> <li>• <b>Limit anxiety</b></li> </ul> <p>Indica strains are a bushy plant that can grow between 3 and 6 feet tall and are suitable for growing indoors. Popular strains include:</p> <div style="display: flex; flex-wrap: wrap;"> <div style="width: 50%; padding: 5px; background-color: #4f7942; color: white; padding: 5px;"> <p><b>NORTHERN LIGHTS</b> This pure indica is known to have come from the "mother plant."</p> </div> <div style="width: 50%; padding: 5px; background-color: #4f7942; color: white; padding: 5px;"> <p><b>SKYWALKER OG</b> This strain is known for its healing properties for those with PTSD.</p> </div> </div>	 <h3 style="color: #2e7d32;">HYBRID STRAINS</h3> <p>Hybrid strains offer a mix of effects, combining the traits they inherited from their parent strains. Hybrids are known to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>offer a relaxing body effect</b></li> <li>• <b>Create balance of mind and body</b></li> <li>• <b>Limit anxiety</b></li> </ul> <p>Of the roughly 779 strains, over half of them are hybrids. Popular strains include:</p> <div style="display: flex; flex-wrap: wrap;"> <div style="width: 50%; padding: 5px; background-color: #4f7942; color: white; padding: 5px;"> <p><b>HEADBAND</b> Great for pain relief and a feeling of elation.</p> </div> <div style="width: 50%; padding: 5px; background-color: #4f7942; color: white; padding: 5px;"> <p><b>PINEAPPLE EXPRESS</b> This sweet, tropical strain leaves one feeling happy and euphoric.</p> </div> </div>
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# TULARE COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT 2023-2024

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- Have the revenues from your cannabis tax fund gone to your general fund, or are they kept separate to accomplish additional things that would or may not have been possible without them?

## **BACKGROUND**

The first dispensary in Tulare County was opened in Woodlake in 2018. There are now over 1,200 dispensaries in California. Of these, 13 dispensaries are currently operating in cities within Tulare County. The following communities that have currently approved the sales of cannabis are:

- Farmersville
- Lindsay
- Porterville
- Tulare
- Woodlake

The TCCGJ received data from all of the above cities, except Lindsay. All had local ballot measures passed that determined how the revenues generated from the dispensaries' sales taxes would be utilized by each city. The responding cities each reported benefits from the revenue generated by the opening of the dispensaries. The taxes collected from the dispensaries go into the General funds of each city and are spent according to how their measures were written.

Many of these cities have found that these taxes have allowed them to enhance their cities more than could have been done without the businesses. Some dispensaries, not all, have been able to make donations directly to projects in their communities. Each city has an oversight committee that monitors and audits the use of the funds.

## **METHOD OF INVESTIGATION:**

- Presentation by City officials
- Questionnaires to City officials
- Review of Websites

## **DISCUSSION**

The sale of cannabis was approved as the result of referendums drafted, discussed, and edited with final approval via vote by the citizens in each city. The following information highlights the benefits the cities have experienced.

### **Farmersville, Lindsay, Porterville**

Funds are allocated to the general fund and used to supplement the city budget. Primary benefactor have been public safety such as, city police and fire departments, and parks departments.

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## **Tulare**

Initial benefits have accrued to public safety, and so far they have purchased new vehicles and other equipment. Tulare plans to use revenues to fund annual operating expenses for a large homeless shelter currently under construction, which will create additional jobs.

## **Woodlake**

Primary use of funds have been directed toward parks and recreation, expanding sports fields, improvements to park landscaping and trails, and public safety for local police department, including roads and lighting.

Dispensaries led to the creation of industry related business, including a warehouse distribution center, and operations focused on cultivation. Added approximately 500 new jobs, and these industry related businesses appropriated buildings which had been standing vacant.

Related businesses that have been created nearby such as restaurants.

From presentations made to TCCGJ and information available through public records, the cities reported few issues related to the collection of tax revenues, disruption to businesses in the immediate area of the dispensaries or minimal citizen complaints from the operations of the dispensaries.

There are a few cities in which the approved referendum has been in place for a year or less. The experiences of some of the cities where the referendum has been in place for over a year have experienced few administrative issues with the businesses, and benefits from the revenues are already in place.

The industry related businesses that have been developed have added to city fee revenues, property taxes (from refurbishing of abandoned buildings).

State regulations require the following of dispensaries:

- a. Security guards
- b. Camera systems tied directly to local police
- c. Checking of customer IDs
- d. Strict background checks of owners and employees
- e. Strict inventory control at all times

Some dispensaries have made separate donations to community organizations and activities.

## **FINDINGS**

F1. To date, the cities that have passed local referendums have experienced positive impact from the new source of revenues in areas such as public safety and leisure activity.

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- F2. The cities with cannabis dispensaries have or may experience benefits from additional business that may be developed in support of cannabis.
- F3. The cities with cannabis dispensaries have not experienced measurable negative impact to the cities culture or daily way of life.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- R1. Each city should annually highlight to the public information about the revenues generated from all cannabis activity as well as how the funds are utilized to benefit each city.

## REQUIRED RESPONSES:

City Council of Farmersville	Findings:	F1 – F3	Recommendations:	R1
City Council of Lindsay	Findings:	F1 – F3	Recommendations:	R1
City Council of Porterville	Findings:	F1 – F3	Recommendations:	R1
City Council of Tulare	Findings:	F1 – F3	Recommendations:	R1
City Council of Woodlake	Findings:	F1 – F3	Recommendations:	R1

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## **EFFORTS DURING THE WINTER FLOODING DISASTER OF 2022-23**

### **SUMMARY:**

The Tulare County Office of Emergency Services (TCOES) is the County’s emergency management agency, responsible for coordinating multi-agency responses to complex, large-scale emergencies and disasters within Tulare County. The residents of Tulare County were severely impacted by the winter storms of 2022-23. The Tulare County Civil Grand Jury (TCCGJ) decided to review the role TCOES during the disaster and challenges it confronted.



### **BACKGROUND:**

Between December of 2022 and March of 2023 Tulare County was overwhelmed by 12 major storms which produced the third wettest year on record. Between the record snowpack of 190% of normal on March 3, 2023 and the copious amount of rain, Tulare County quickly experienced a wide range of cascading emergency situations. This required multiple agency efforts

focused on rescue, repair, relocation and communications for county residents.

The TCOES is the conduit for information and resource coordination between the State of California, local governments and unincorporated areas of Tulare County. This is codified in California’s Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS). The SEMS provides structure and protocols to coordinate response efforts to emergencies such as wildfires, flooding or earthquakes.

During the period of the winter storms, many conditions created by the flooding required the TCOES to initiate emergency response procedures. One of the first steps was the activation of the Emergency Command Center. The command center includes representatives from local government agencies, cities as well as first responders. The TCOES is responsible for coordinating multi-agency responses to complex, large-scale emergencies and disasters within Tulare County.

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## METHOD OF INVESTIGATION:

- Presentation by agency representatives
- Reviewed specific documents
- Website review

## DISCUSSION:

During the period of the flooding, the TCOES was managing responses to residents needs for assistance, which continued to cascade as the flooding occurred in different areas of Tulare County as it faced different storm related emergency issues.

1. **Rescue Operations** - Deploy needed resources, such as first responders and equipment, for rescue operations of residents in peril from flooding.
2. **Shelter Operations** - Coordinate between the cities, unincorporated areas and agencies, governmental and charity organizations, the opening of shelter operations for residents displaced from their homes. The sheltering efforts included providing clothing and meals for displaced residents. This was a fluid situation as needs from various emergency areas occurred at various times during this period, and services might be required for a few weeks, or in some instances a few months.
3. **Vendor Procurement** – The size of the disaster often requires tremendous resources that are far greater than county agencies may employ. TCOES maintains a list of approved contractors providing a wide range of services that may be required during an emergency. During the repair and recovery process, the county utilizes many private contractors to assist in the required repairs created by the flooding. The timely deployment of these contractors was critical to assisting with the emergency that required emergency responses.
4. **Communication To Public** – Public information was especially important at various stages during the emergency period.
  - a) Critical information, such as risks from the changing conditions, access to food or medicines, requests from at-risk residents for help to relocate to shelters was incredibly important. Especially for vulnerable residents like the elderly, infirmed, unhoused or special needs.
  - b) Quickly relaying the information regarding road conditions, closures and detours, were not only critical for residents, but also important for commerce as many industries, especially agriculture, rely on trucks to move products from farm to storage or to customers.
  - c) Emergency warnings to evacuate or potential evacuations were of real time importance during certain periods.
  - d) How to begin to access the services provided during an emergency by Federal Emergency Management Administration, Small Business Administration or any other government agencies to begin the process of rebuilding or repairing any damages.

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TCOES, local government, and non-government agencies have extensive procedures defined in their emergency response plans. These are often reviewed during emergency planning sessions held each year. Review of available material based on TCOES responses during the emergency period indicates minimal if any issues related to timely opening of shelters or in the adequate levels of services, such as food, and clothing etc. This includes efforts of charitable and nonprofit organizations aiding in a variety of areas which supported the efficient responses at the shelters.

Critical to timely response during the various stages of the emergency was the use of private contractors. There are specific rules and regulations legislated by the State in relation to utilization of private contractors. As part of TCOES emergency plan, there is a list of pre-approved vendors or contractors who have been vetted and meet requirements to be deployed in an emergency.

The County of Tulare had many residents who wanted to volunteer and simply help. There are certain restrictions and requirements related to residents who want to volunteer required by the State before an individual or group can be involved in emergency efforts. Many who wished to volunteer had difficulty finding out where to go to become part of the emergency effort. The use of volunteers by the TCOES eased workload in many departments. These volunteers assisted with both local agencies and private vendors' efforts after being vetted. The biggest role TCOES was tasked with communication to the public. The most challenging area of communication TCOES encountered was with the vulnerable segment of the population, including the infirmed, seniors, unhoused and special needs.

Generally, this segment of the population does not have the same access to the internet or means to digital communication available to most residents in the community. TCOES employed diverse methods of communication efforts to contact and inform the most vulnerable and at-risk residents of the County including person to person communication.

TCOES also faced challenges with real time information to the public related to road conditions including closures and detours, the location of and services available at public shelters, and access to services including Federal and State support agencies. TCOES utilizes several social platforms including county website, county Facebook site, and text messaging platforms. Available to every resident in every town in Tulare County is the AlertTC emergency system that was launched in 2008. This system is designed to keep all residents and businesses informed during such times. It is considered a mass lifesaving service. Each resident must go to the website, [www.AlertTC.com](http://www.AlertTC.com) and register their messaging choice of email, text, landline, voice, fax or TDD. All residents are encouraged to go online and register or call TCOES at 559-624-7495 for more information. There exists some disconnect between public awareness and access to these communication sources.

## **FINDINGS:**

- F1. TCOES continues to refine and improve their overall emergency response plan based on actual emergencies and the required responses over the last few years including major forest fires, challenges from COVID and the winter floods, as well as continued information shared by other County, State and Federal agencies.

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- F2. To meet the complex challenges from a developing emergency experienced from the constant flooding, the effective use of private contractors is a key factor in real time performance. The successful response to repair and recovery efforts is the ability to quickly identify the areas requiring the private contractors use, and how quickly those contractors can be contacted and physically on location.
- F3. Proactive efforts to pre-approve a wide range of contractors and services is critical to meeting the goals outlined in F2.
- F4. During times of emergency, volunteers are a critical resource available to TCOES. They can supplement first responder's efforts and lessen the stress, as well as repair and recovery.
- F5. Communication of the programs related to shelter operations, road conditions, evacuation orders, procedures to volunteer or be approved as a private contractor. This was a daunting task but was not only essential to success in handling the emergency, but also to the residents' perception of the effectiveness of TCOES performance.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- R1. Continue efforts to pre-approve as many contractors and service providers as possible. In addition, improve availability of information related to the approval process for contractors or service providers to become part of the program.
- R2. Improve efforts to recruit and pre-approve volunteers in a manner like contractors and service providers outlined in R1. The goodwill, skills and commitment from many residents in this county are assets that need to be fully developed. There should be ample information making it easy for residents to volunteer in advance, or at the height of an emergency.
- R3. Frequent posting to emergency service announcements via television, radio and the web to make it easier for residents to know ahead of an emergency to use the AlertTC website. Continue efforts to improve access to real time information related to evacuations, shelter operations, road conditions pertaining to closures and detours. A possible source of emergency information released would be to alert all cell phones (similar to an Amber alert) and frequent posting of emergency service announcements via television and radio. Explore automatic inclusion for alerts to all county residents.
- R4. Continued refinement of process and procedures for outreach to the vulnerable segments of the population.

## **REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

Tulare County Board of Supervisors                      Findings F1 - F5                      Recommendations R1 - R4

## **INVITED RESPONSES:**

Tulare County Director of HHSA                      Findings F1 - F5                      Recommendations R1 - R4

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## Exeter Public Cemetery District

### SUMMARY

The Tulare County Civil Grand Jury (TCCGJ) received a complaint regarding the operations of the Exeter Public Cemetery District (EPCD). The TCCGJ reviewed the issues related to the physical upkeep of the cemeteries as well as compliance by the EPCD Board of Directors to State disclosure requirements. EPCD is composed of three locations the Hamilton Cemetery north of Exeter, the Exeter Cemetery in Exeter and the Deep Creek Cemetery in Farmersville.

### BACKGROUND

The EPCD has been challenged with the operation and maintenance of three cemeteries in the face of declining revenues. The Deep Creek Cemetery, one of the oldest cemeteries in Tulare County, has been without a working source of water for the last ten years which has resulted in the landscaping and grounds being barren during most of the year.

The Exeter Cemetery was near capacity until the recent acquisition of additional land. The expansion created an additional area requiring maintenance and upkeep, creating additional responsibility for the existing staff.

The primary sources of revenues for EPCD are derived from property taxes levied on residents of the district, sale of burial plots and sale of vault liners. In 2022, a qualified special tax to pay for maintenance and upkeep, upgrade facilities and drill a new water well at Deep Creek was defeated by the voters within the district. This qualified special tax would have raised \$270,000 at a rate of \$35 per parcel. A yes vote by two-thirds of the voters was required to pass the measure. This was the second defeat in recent years of a proposed tax increase for the EPCD.

The daily operations of cemeteries such as EPCD are governed by The State of California Health and Safety Code. The rules governing board meetings, public disclosure requirements, and quorum to enact board business are defined by the State Health and Safety Code and the Brown Act for public transparency. The Health and Safety code were written to avoid competition between public and private cemeteries.

### METHOD OF INVESTIGATION

Interviewed witnesses

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# TULARE COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT 2023-2024

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Reviewed documents

Visited websites

Visited EPCD cemeteries

## **DISCUSSION:**

The lack of revenue growth has hampered the overall maintenance of the cemeteries.

The Deep Creek Cemetery has experienced the biggest challenges to upkeep due to the lack of a stable source of water. The cost of drilling a well is expensive. The EPCD has explored other solutions such as purchasing water from other local sources and delivering the water to the cemetery via pipeline or delivering purchased water via tanker truck.

Cost and availability of water at the other sites becomes a challenge, especially during the extreme drought experienced in recent years. This has created periods where the cemetery grounds and landscaping has dried out creating an impression that the daily maintenance is not being met.

Representatives of TCCGJ conducted a site inspection of all three cemeteries. At this time of year all three cemeteries were very green with weeds and grass and all in need of mowing, but will be dry once weather changes and the problem of dryness will continue. The visit to the Hamilton Cemetery proved to be a wonderful view in a peaceful setting of olive trees with an old, torn flag flying. Part of the sign at the entrance was visible but broken off at the bottom portion and a very remote old cemetery. Deep Creek Cemetery is closer into Farmersville with a 24 hour open walk-in entrance with signage. TCCGJ observed that the office is now open at the larger Exeter cemetery with mature trees and noticed a new section was being readied for expansion. Only one section was not in compliance with the cemeteries' guidelines for plot adornments. Per staff, plot adornments increase the maintenance expenses.

The Tulare County Board of Supervisors (TCBOS) are responsible for appointing the members of the EPCD Board. State regulations stipulate the Board shall consist of 3-5 members. During the last few years the EPCD has not had sufficient members on the Board to create a quorum, or at monthly meetings sufficient Board attendance to create a quorum. This has delayed any business decisions required by the EPCD Board. The difficulty in maintaining Board members has also hampered the ability of the Board to develop long-term business plans.

The EPCD has struggled to meet state requirements for public disclosure. These issues included announcement of monthly meetings, posting of meeting agendas and resultant minutes, development of public website, and proper conduct of actual meetings. An example of disclosure is the annual audit report. The full audit report for the year ending June 30, 2021 is posted to the district website, but subsequent annual audit reports for year ending 2022 and 2023 had not been posted during the time TCCGJ researched this issue.

The inability of the Board of EPCD to have regular meetings, post information for public consumption and lack of opportunity to oversee planning for long term success has created concerns and complaints from residents within the EPCD area.

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## **FINDINGS:**

- F1. Due to the lack of a quorum, the leadership of the EPCD Board has hampered making decisions. The leadership issue is not reflective of prior member’s ability or efforts, but the lack of necessary membership to fulfill quorum requirements. Strategic planning has suffered.
- F2. EPCD long-term sustainability is a concern. The lack of revenue growth is highlighted by the failure of the two recent bond measures.
- F3. In spite of the lack of water and resources at Deer Creek Cemetery, and to a lesser extent Hamilton Cemetery, EPCD has the opportunity to develop plans for utilization of the properties.

## **RECOMMENDATION:**

- R1. The TCBOS should continue the effort to increase the size of the EPCD Board to five members.
- R2. EPCD should continue with efforts to improve the districts’ website, update all prior postings of the required public information and meet all disclosure public information requirements moving forward.
- R3. The EPCD Board should become familiar with and ensure full training and compliance with all state laws concerning public district cemeteries

## **REQUIRED RESPONSE**

Tulare County Board of Supervisors

Recommendations R1

## **INVITED RESPONSES**

Exeter Public Cemetery District

Findings F1–F3

Recommendations R2–R3

### **Disclaimer**

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# TULARE COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT 2023-2024

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## Impact of Winter Storms of 2022-2023

### SUMMARY:

During the winter of 2022-23 Tulare County received record snow and rain, creating unprecedented flooding since the 1950's, which left many bridges, crossings and roads throughout Tulare County impassable or destroyed. The storms impact required massive efforts by the Tulare County Resource Management Agency (RMA) to make repairs to many county roads and bridges. The Tulare County Civil Grand Jury (TCCGJ) decided to explore the scope of the repair efforts and the financial impact of the damages.

### BACKGROUND:

Annual precipitation is measured over a 12 month period beginning on July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023. Tulare County was hit by 12 atmospheric river storms between December of 2022 and March of 2023, which led to 54 inches of rain, the third wettest year on record. In the mountains snowpack was at 74% above normal on January 1, 2023, and at 90% above normal on March 3, 2023. Many of the later storms were warmer with rain below the 9,000 foot elevation.



The worst flooding occurred between January 1, 2023 and March 31, 2023. The resulting flooding from January and February storms significantly impacted the mountain and foothill communities with issues such as:

1. Damages to roads and bridges limited or restricted access to many mountain communities such as Ponderosa, Alpine Village and Camp Nelson.
2. Hindering access to many parts of the foothill communities of Three Rivers, Springville and California Hot Springs.
3. Damages to roads and bridges also occurred on the valley floor in Tulare County.

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# TULARE COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT 2023-2024

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During March of 2023, this flooding dramatically impacted Valley communities causing:

1. Widespread flooding including reformation of the Tulare Lake basin, requiring evacuations west of Highway 43.
2. Isolating communities such as Allensworth, or requiring residents in towns such as Ducor to take lengthy detours to reach basic services such as food, fuel etc.
3. Flooding and evacuations along the Kings River.

Repair and rebuilding of the damages to bridges and infrastructure have been ongoing during 2023, with anticipated completion of some projects occurring throughout 2024 and into 2025.

## **METHOD OF INVESTIGATION:**

- Conducted interviews
- Reviewed documents
- Website review

## **DISCUSSION:**

RMA is one of many county agencies that coordinates with the Office of Emergency Services of Tulare County. RMA initiated their emergency response plan in January of 2023. The challenges that RMA faced as the record rain and snow rapidly melted were multi-faceted.

1. Assessing structural damage to roads, other infrastructure systems and bridges (31 were washed out or closed).
2. Prioritizing the emergency projects, getting resources to those projects and ensuring that farm to market roadways were a priority.
3. Assisting with private property damage inspections (total of 2,802 damage assessments done).
4. Hiring independent contractors to assist on many of the projects.

In RMA's response to the emergency, they confronted numerous challenges during the December through March period. RMA was not managing just one major incident, but several new incidents as each major storm occurred. The result was a cascading number of incidents which stretched the RMA resources to a critical point. It was during this time, that the County requested the State provide an Incident Command Team to lead response efforts countywide. There were more than 1,000 first responders deployed per day at the emergency peak.

RMA partnered with numerous government agencies during this period in order to maximize the effectiveness of the repair and rebuilding efforts and minimize the impact to County residents and businesses. These agencies would

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# TULARE COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT 2023-2024

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include the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to address road repairs, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to assist the rural residents and Small Business Administration (SBA) to assist business owners. Both must call an RMA inspector to begin paperwork, inspect the damages and make recommendations. Damages must be verified to expect any level of reimbursement or grant dollars.

Damage specific to roads and bridges alone in Tulare County totaled 308 locations with an estimated cost of over \$104 million dollars. The annual budget for road repair and maintenance in fiscal year (FY) 2022-23 was \$37 million. The County will need continued financial assistance from federal agencies. Reimbursement from the federal agencies is approximately 75% to 80%. Tulare County will need to apply for additional grants from the State of California to pay for the incurred expenses. Reimbursement from the federal and state sources will be a slow process, which could impact the annual budget available to the RMA for normal road repair and maintenance.

RMA would like to create a website to capture real time road closures that would include better mapping to inform and benefit first responders and residence alike.

## **FINDINGS:**

- F1. The volume of rain and snow from the winter storms was unprecedented, further exacerbated by the short window in which the storms occurred and the warmth of the later storms.
- F2. RMA's response to the storms during the January through March period was commendable. The mobilization of resources required to recover, repair and rebuild under the challenges outlined was to be commended.
- F3. RMA's challenges and efforts were not limited to roads and bridges, but included damage inspections to private property, assistance with flood debris removal and recovery from private property. RMA also assisted with grant programs for local businesses and residences affected by the floods.
- F4. During the height of the emergency period, the challenges of gathering and disseminating information related to road closures and detours was cumbersome and at times ineffective.
- F5. The reimbursement of costs from federal and state agencies for the repair, rebuild, replacement of roads and bridges is significant and delays of these payments will impact RMA's future operating budget.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- R1. Explore all opportunities to address the financial deficit created by the storms recovery to minimize impacts to RMA's normal operating budget.
- R2. Continued review and update of potential best practices available to reach and assist communities isolated by flood damages to bridges and roads.
- R3. Continue to review and improve real time reporting, the system for communication of road closures and alternate routes available during flooding or other emergencies.

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# TULARE COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT 2023-2024

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## **REQUEST FOR RESPONSE:**

Board of Supervisors                      Findings F2 - F5      Recommendations R1 – R3

## **INVITED TO RESPOND:**

Resource Management Agency      Finding F4              Recommendations R1- R3

### **Disclaimer**

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# TULARE COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT 2023-2024

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## PARKS FACELIFT

### SUMMARY:

There are 11 Tulare County operated and maintained parks located in 10 communities throughout Tulare County. All park locations have been the recipient of monies for the purpose of retrofitting and upgrading beginning in 2022. These renovations are nearing completion with paving of roads being the last scheduled work. These parks are located throughout the 5 supervisorial districts that make up Tulare County.

The renovation monies were received from:

1. \$8 million dollars allocated from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)
2. \$3.6 million dollars were received from County Capital Improvement Fund
3. \$2.8 million dollars were received from county grants

The grant from ARPA of \$8 million has provided the largest amount and the spending on renovations has been increased by \$1.1 million dollars as of December 2023. This is in part due to the past winter water damages where renovations were already partially completed at Bartlett Park and these costs will be turned in to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the County is expecting to be reimbursed but dollars are unknown at this time.

The Tulare County Civil Grand Jury (TCCGJ) initiated a review of the parks department to verify how best these



monies were spent, what parks received benefits and were all funds spent wisely to best benefit all residents surrounding each park location.

### BACKGROUND:

Websites regarding Tulare County, mention these parks are considered “local treasures” for all of our communities and their residents:

**Alpaugh Park** at 3.25 acres of green space and located in District 2

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# TULARE COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT 2023-2024

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Supervisor, Pete Vander Poel III. It is located at Road 38 & Park Avenue in Alpaugh. The land was purchased by the County Board of Supervisors in January 1935 and is considered one of the smallest of all county parks.

**Balch Park** is 160 acres of beauty above Springville at 6000 ft elevation and is under District 5 Supervisor, Dennis Townsend. The County purchased this property located at 48200 Bear Creek Drive, from Mr. & Mrs. Allan Balch and the sale was finalized on Dec 14, 1930. It was stipulated in the sale that all trees and fauna were to remain and be forever maintained and to be used and enjoyed for the public only. Balch is the county's largest park.

**Bartlett Park** 34 acres was purchased by Porterville in 1923 and was donated to Tulare County under the condition they operate and maintain the park for public use only. It is fronted by the Tule River and located at 28801 Worth Drive, Porterville and under District 5 Supervisor, Dennis Townsend.

**Cutler Park** was donated to Tulare County on June 3, 1919, and named after Judge John Cutler Jr. It was so stipulated that it was to be forever maintained by the County and designed for public use only. Its' 70 acres includes a small natural marshland, the largest Valley Oak Woodlands in Central California and boasts riverfront access. It is located at 15520 Ivanhoe Drive in Visalia under District 1 Supervisor, Larry Macari.

**The Community Park of Goshen** is under the District 4 Supervisor, Eddie Valero. It is located at 6800 Ave 310 in Goshen. It has the design of a water recharging basin and boasts 2 acres of green space used for sporting and recreational activities. There is no signage to indicate it's a park and it is the county's most recently established park in 2018.

**Kings River Park** is 86.4 acres and has a disc golf course set along the great Kings River located off Highway 99 and Road 28. This park falls under District 4 Supervisor, Eddie Valero.

**Ledbetter Park** is 11 acres and located in Orosi, at 45779 Road 128. This site was the original Ledbetter homestead on which Lee Ledbetter was raised as a boy before the turn of the century. He and his wife Hazel gave this property to the community in hopes that it could be developed into a "mini-Mooney Grove" in 1972. This park is under District 4 Supervisor, Eddie Valero.

**Mooney Grove Park** was donated to the County and established in 1909 from 100 acres of farmland owned by Michael Mooney. Stipulations were put into place that the oak trees were to remain into perpetuity and only to be used as a public park. It remains today, the oldest county park in the State of California. In 1923, Mooney Grove expanded to 155 acres and is under District 3 Supervisor, Amy Shuklian and located on South Mooney Blvd. This is the 2nd largest park next to Balch Park and has the most amenities of any Tulare County Park.

**Pixley Park** is a 20 acre tract of land that the surrounding communities pitched in and purchased for \$750 in 1938 and deeded over to the county to develop and always maintain. Plants were to come from the Mooney Grove nursery and any lumber needed was to be provided at a lesser cost from Balch Park sawmill. Hundreds of oak tree seedlings were transplanted to the parcel. It was a community effort. It is located at 850 N Park Drive in Pixley and it features a historical marker of the park origin at its entrance to a lovely greenspace and is under District 2 Supervisor, Pete Vander Poel III.

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# TULARE COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT 2023-2024

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**West Main Street Park** is only 0.11 acres in size and located at 2825 W Main Street, Visalia and is referred to as an urban pocket park. It runs along Mill Creek and is an open play area and utilized for walking, located within District 3 Supervisor, Amy Shuklian.

**Woodville Park** is 9.68 acres under District 1 Supervisor, Larry Macari. It includes a sports field and playground contained in a rectangular configuration. This park is located in Woodville at 16482 Avenue 168.

## **METHOD OF INVESTIGATION:**

1. Site visits
2. Interviews
3. Reviewed documents
4. Reviewed websites

## **DISCUSSION:**

The county parks have a long established history in Tulare County with the overall development and maintenance falling to the county to provide. It also requires responsibility from more than the 150 thousand residents that enjoy these outdoor spaces and amenities yearly for the care of the parks. Throughout all the years, countless organizations and individuals have worked to donate/build amenities added to any given park or donated their hours for beautification. This is in conjunction with the County's day to day work that is done today with 15 full-time employees, and 5 seasonal employees. It is a continuing effort to keep the parks well maintained, watered, trimmed and all amenities in safe condition to draw in the patrons to bring in some park revenue. In 2016, a strategic business plan was put together from data gathered regarding overall condition, maintenance issues, needed improvements and community efforts to tackle within the next 5 years that had \$856,000 earmarked for 7 of the county parks. At this time, there were approximately 27 full-time employees. Looking at the same issues of 2016, this time with an \$8 million dollar windfall provided from ARPA in 2022 and along with the noted additional monies, these renovations began almost immediately and most parks are completed to date and a few will be finalized in early 2025.

Of the 11 County Parks, all received many upgrades and renovations with West Main Street Park being the only exception. All others received arbors in the form of brand new or repaired or painted, picnic tables and new grills/ fire rings were standard. In addition, Alpaugh, Bartlett, Cutler, Ledbetter and Pixley all received new irrigation systems and 2 parks had wells replaced that were needed to prevent trees and grounds from drying out. Partly due to the past big winter flooding, Alpaugh and Bartlett Parks had restroom improvements. Alpaugh Park also had a basketball court built for its patrons. Kings River Park had an entrance improvements made. Bartlett Park sustained major flood damages from the Tule River in the great flooding of 2022-2023 after some renovations were already completed. The County is in the continuing long process of massive cleanup and re-restoration to this park and the process will be signaled completed with the paving of its roads. Cutler and Pixley parks will also complete their improvements with road paving projected for next year. Finally, Mooney Grove with the most amenities in the County, had funds earmarked for huge projects like the Inclusive Playground, the Pillar Square,

# TULARE COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT 2023-2024

a new dedicated space for a dog park, restoration to the bridge and finally emptying of the Lily Pond. The pond project includes cleaning it out and installing a new cement retaining wall and cement walkway all the way around the pond. This pond is a reservoir that collects water and pumped out to keep the trees and grass of Mooney Grove alive and maintained.

Information received states all funds received through ARPA, Capital Improvements and County grants obtained has been distributed, with each park receiving much needed infrastructure and upgrading to the benefit of 10 out of the 11 parks and all area residents. Using the graph below, District 3 received the bigger slice of all funds, about 1/3rd of all monies due to the size of Mooney Grove and the developed amenities. District 5 received about 1/3rd, mainly due to the flood damage that recently occurred at Bartlett Park and road damages to Balch Park, both remain closed at the time of this report. The remaining parks in Districts 1, 2 and 4 split the remaining 1/3rd of the total funds amongst those six parks.

## Q1 - Money Spent By District and Source of Funds

Sum of Cost Funding Source	District					Grand Total
	1	2	3	4	5	
ARPA	\$ 1,559,057	\$ 2,221,657	\$ 2,246,179	\$ 1,082,415	\$ 2,081,855	\$ 9,191,163
County (Capital Improvement)		\$ 280,150	\$ 240,261	\$ 337,874	\$ 2,703,544	\$ 3,561,829
FEMA/Prop Insurance					\$ -	\$ -
Grant/County			\$ 2,804,588			\$ 2,804,588
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$ 1,559,057</b>	<b>\$ 2,501,807</b>	<b>\$ 5,291,028</b>	<b>\$ 1,420,289</b>	<b>\$ 4,785,399</b>	<b>\$ 15,557,580</b>
	<b>10%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>31%</b>	

## Q2 - ARPA Funding By District and Projected Completion

Sum of Cost Funding-Completion	District					Grand Total
	1	2	3	4	5	
ARPA	\$ 1,559,057	\$ 2,221,657	\$ 2,246,179	\$ 1,082,415	\$ 2,081,855	\$ 9,191,163
2022		\$ 46,900				\$ 46,900
2023	\$ 416,714	\$ 104,480	\$ 763,457	\$ 257,384	\$ 308,654	\$ 1,850,689
2024	\$ 1,142,343	\$ 2,070,277	\$ 1,482,722	\$ 825,031	\$ 1,773,201	\$ 7,293,574
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$ 1,559,057</b>	<b>\$ 2,221,657</b>	<b>\$ 2,246,179</b>	<b>\$ 1,082,415</b>	<b>\$ 2,081,855</b>	<b>\$ 9,191,163</b>
	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)	

Footnotes On 2022-2024 Projects By District - ARPA Funding

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# TULARE COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT 2023-2024

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- (A) District 1 \$1,493,264 = Cutler and \$65,793 = Woodville
- (B) District 2 \$800,447 = Alpaugh and \$1,421,210 = Pixley
- (C) District 3 \$2,246,179 = Mooney Grove
- (D) District 4 \$837,266 = Ledbetter, \$116,894 = Kings River,  
\$128,255 = Goshen
- (E) District 5 \$ 2,081,855 = Bartlett

With all of the infrastructure and the renovations occurring since 2022 and continuing until the paving of some park roads, all of the patrons who enjoy the parks, must be good stewards of these lands. In response, the Board of Supervisors established a Parks Advisory Committee (PAC) in 2015 that is still active today. The PAC's mission is to increase public awareness and to target outreach within the communities; always seeking ways to involve the communities and its residents.

## **FINDINGS:**

- F1. It is a constant demand on the County to preserve and maintain parks into perpetuity.
- F2. All monies invested into the parks since 2022 and forward, have been necessary and needed infrastructure improvements and patron friendly amenities for all to enjoy.
- F3. All residents in the Tulare County area need to be aware of the model of good stewardship in order for our parks to survive to be enjoyed by future generations.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- R1. The County of Tulare should continue to strive to make the decisions for the parks system for the best benefit of its residents by increasing budget and park staffing.
- R2. The PAC should continue its outreach efforts to every school, church and organization to constantly invent ways to better the parks, raise awareness of good stewardship and searching for volunteers when in need.
- R3. The County of Tulare should continue to seek out any grants or any funds available to keep up with the demands of continuing maintenance, repairs and groundskeeping.

## **REQUIRED RESPONSE:**

Tulare County Board of Supervisors

Findings: F1-F3 Recommendations: R1-R3

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# TULARE COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT 2023-2024

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## INVITED RESPONSES:

County of Tulare General Services Agency Findings: F1-F3 Recommendations: R1, R3  
Director

County of Tulare Parks Division Manager Findings: F1-F3 Recommendations: R1, R3

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# TULARE COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT 2023-2024

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## Synopsis

An inquiry generally begins with a Citizen's Complaint submitted to the Grand Jury or with a Grand Jury Initiated Investigation. If it is determined by a committee that the complaint or jury investigation warrants a more in-depth investigation the committee will schedule interviews, visits and data reviews. After the committee completes its investigation, it will determine if the issue warrants a final report.

In 2023-2024 the Tulare County Civil Grand Jury had 12 Citizen's Complaints and 9 Jury Initiated Investigations.

One final report was published in response to a filed citizen's complaint.

Of the 12 complaints 1 was against Charter School, 7 against law enforcement, 1 against a cemetery district, 2 against private districts, and 1 against Tulare County agency.

All complaints were investigated. 11 did not qualify for a report; 2 had issues that had been corrected or no wrongdoing was found, 2 complaints due to lawsuit pending, 3 complaints due to various reasons, 2 were not within the jurisdiction of the Grand Jury and 2 had representation was retained by the complainant.

Of the 9 Jury Initiated Investigations, 5 Tulare County agencies, 1 hospital, 1 county and school libraries, 1 special district, and 1 City Department.

All Jury Initiated Investigations were conducted, 6 warranted reports, 1 not within jury's purview, 1 not to pursue and 1 ran out of time.



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# TULARE COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT 2023-2024

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## TULARE COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY APPLICATION/QUESTIONNAIRE 2025-2026

**2025-2026**  
**CIVIL GRAND JURY**

This jury service differs from jury duty as a trial juror. Your participation is voluntary and it is considered to be a privilege to be chosen to serve on the Civil Grand Jury.

The Civil Grand Jury is composed of 19 active panel members who meet, form committees, investigate and report on the operations, accounts and records of the officers, departments and functions of the county. Service on the panel is from July 1st through June 30th and requires approximately 10-12 hours per week during the fiscal year.

Please complete the application/questionnaire and return it to Room 303, Visalia Courthouse. This questionnaire will assist the Judges of the Superior Court in compiling a list of nominees, which fairly represents a cross-section of our community. Your personal information is confidential and will only be used by the Judges of the Superior Court to assure that the group nominated represents various age groups, economic and social backgrounds. Your application will still be considered even though you may leave some of the questions unanswered.

If there is anything you would like us to know feel free to attach additional information, if necessary.

*Your prompt attention to the completion and return of the questionnaire will be greatly appreciated.*

*Any questions, please call: (559) 730-5000 ext. 1359*

*Fax application to: (559) 737-4290*

*Email application to: [administration@tulare.courts.ca.gov](mailto:administration@tulare.courts.ca.gov)*

*Court's website is: [www.tularesuperiorcourt.ca.gov](http://www.tularesuperiorcourt.ca.gov)*

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# TULARE COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT 2023-2024

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## DUTIES OF THE CIVIL GRAND JURY

Civil Grand Jurors serve a one (1) year term from July 1st through June 30th. The jury panel consists of nineteen (19) persons who are assigned to various committees plus three (3) alternates. It is understood that Civil Grand Jurors may be absent for reasonable periods for vacations. During your term as a Civil Grand Juror you would be excused from trial jury service in the State Courts.

The Civil Grand Jury is a time-honored component of our Anglo-American legal system. Civil Grand Jurors are selected citizens of the county who are expected to exercise sound judgment in reviewing and commenting upon the actions of governmental agencies.

Essentially, the Civil Grand Jury operates as an investigative agency performing a two-fold function. First, the Civil Grand Jury has powers and duties with respect to the oversight of public offices, officers, and transactions. Designated State and all County and special District agencies that serve Tulare County are routinely reviewed and critiqued by the Civil Grand Jury in its annual and interim reports.

Secondly, the Civil Grand Jury has powers and duties with respect to inquiry into possible public offenses, misconduct in office by public officers and determining whether to return indictments charging the commission of felonies.

The Tulare County Civil Grand Jury selection process will be conducted May - June annually. The process involves completing this questionnaire and being interviewed by the designee of the Presiding Judge of the Tulare County Superior Courts. After selection, the designee of the Presiding Judge will further instruct jurors of their duties. Throughout its term, the Civil Grand Jury may request advice on legal matters from the District Attorney and County Counsel.



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# TULARE COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT 2023-2024

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## *TULARE COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY APPLICATION/QUESTIONNAIRE*

*Pursuant to California Penal Code section 893, the following questions must be answered:*

**STATUTORY QUALIFICATIONS:** (Place a check in the appropriate box)

- |    |     |   |
|----|-----|---|
| No | Yes | Are you a citizen of the United States?   |
| No | Yes | Are you eighteen years of age or older?   |
| No | Yes | Have been a resident of Tulare County for at least one year prior to the date of this application?                          |
| No | Yes | Are you in possession of your natural faculties? Are you of ordinary intelligence and of sound judgment and fair character? |
| No | Yes | Do you possess a sufficient knowledge of the English language?  |

**STATUTORY DISQUALIFICATIONS:** (Place a check in the appropriate box):

- |    |     |  |
|----|-----|--|
| No | Yes | Are you serving as a trial juror in any court of this State? If Yes, County _____  |
| No | Yes | Have you been discharged as a grand juror in any court of this State within one year prior to the date of this application? If Yes, County _____ |
| No | Yes | Have you ever been convicted of malfeasance in office or any felony or other high crime?   |
| No | Yes | Are you currently serving as an elected public official?   |

\_\_\_\_\_ (initial here) I am interested in serving on the Tulare County Civil Grand Jury for the fiscal year **2025-2026** and I understand the time commitment required.

If you answered **NO** to any **STATUTORY QUALIFICATIONS** or you answered **YES** to any **STATUTORY DISQUALIFICATIONS**, you do not qualify. There is no need to continue or to return the questionnaire.

**IF QUALIFIED**, please continue and complete the questionnaire, returning it to Court Administration – Rm 303

**CALIFORNIA RULES OF COURT**, Rule 10.625, regarding certain demographic data relating to regular grand jurors.  
{Please check the appropriate box to the following}

(A) Age range, please check the appropriate box:  18-25     26-34     35-44     45-54     55-64     65-74

75 and over (B) Gender:             Male     Female

(C) Please indicate your ethnic origin by **circling one** of the following (may select more than one):

American Indian or Alaska Native    Asian    Black or African American    Hispanic/Latino  
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander    White    Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Decline to Answer

Place of Residence by Supervisorial District:     District 1     District 2     District 3     District 4     District 5

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# TULARE COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT 2023-2024

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THIS QUESTIONNAIRE IS TO ASSIST THE JUDGES OF THE SUPERIOR COURT IN COMPLETING A SOME OF THE QUESTIONS THAT MAY SEEM PERSONAL ARE NECESSARY IN ORDER TO ASSURE THE JUDGES THAT THE GROUP THEY NOMINATE, FROM WHICH THE FINAL NAMES WILL BE DRAWN, REPRESENTS VARIOUS AGE GROUPS, ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND ETHNIC BACKGROUNDS.

*PLEASE PRINT LEGIBLY*

1. Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_  
(First) (Middle) (Last)

2. Address (Phys.): \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip +4: \_\_\_\_\_

Address (Mail): \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip +4: \_\_\_\_\_

Residence Phone: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ Business Phone: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ Fax Number: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

Employer: \_\_\_\_\_

If retired, previous occupation \_\_\_\_\_

4. Can you afford the time required to be a Civil Grand Juror (approximately 10-12 hours per week)? \_\_\_\_\_

If not, briefly state why not: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Do you have any physical or mental condition which would interfere with your ability to function as a Civil Grand

Juror? \_\_\_\_\_ If yes, explain briefly \_\_\_\_\_

What accommodations would the Court need to provide to accommodate your physical or mental impairment?

\_\_\_\_\_

6. Education (Circle highest grade completed):

6 (or less) 7 8 9 10 11 12 College: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Name of schools attended and degrees or certification attained: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

7. Clubs or organizations: List any civic, service organizations or any volunteer work to which you belong.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

8. Spouse / Domestic Partner Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

If retired, list previous occupation you retired from \_\_\_\_\_

Employer: \_\_\_\_\_

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# TULARE COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT 2023-2024

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9. Are you or any immediate family member an appointed or elected public officer of any public agency? \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, explain: \_\_\_\_\_

10. Are you currently involved in any litigation (law suits) in this county? \_\_\_\_\_

11. Are you or any of your immediate family members employed by the County of Tulare or any school district within the county? \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, where? \_\_\_\_\_

12. Do you have any significant problems reading or understanding the English Language? \_\_\_\_\_

13. Do you have any suggestions, comments or other matters you would like to bring to the judges attention in connection with your application? \_\_\_\_\_

14. Please tell us about any special skills or abilities that you have which the judges should know about in considering your application? \_\_\_\_\_

15. Please tell us why you are interested in serving on the Tulare County Civil Grand Jury. (Please attach additional pages as needed) \_\_\_\_\_

16. Describe any background experience or skills you have which would be helpful to grand jury service (i.e., computer skills, leadership skills, or experience writing/editing reports, working in groups, or conducting investigations or interviews.) \_\_\_\_\_

**Mail to:**                   **Attention: Civil Grand Jury**  
                                  **Tulare County Superior Court**  
                                  **221 S. Mooney Blvd., Room 303**  
                                  **Visalia, CA 93291**

**Or Fax to: (559) 737-4290**

**Or email to: [administration@tulare.courts.ca.gov](mailto:administration@tulare.courts.ca.gov)**

**NOTE:** Applicants for nomination as a member of the Tulare County Civil Grand Jury are subject to investigation by an appropriate law enforcement agency as to the statutory qualifications for service and the applicant's ability and suitability for service.

In support of my application for selection as a member of the Tulare County Civil Grand Jury, I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing information is true and correct.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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# TULARE COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT 2023-2024

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Return this form to:  
Tulare County Civil Grand Jury  
5963 S Mooney Blvd, Visalia, CA 93277  
559-624-7295 Fax 559-733-6078 • Grnd\_jury@tularecounty.ca.gov

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# TULARE COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT 2023-2024

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## TULARE COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY CITIZEN COMPLAINT FORM

The Civil Grand Jury of Tulare County, in an attempt to carry out its duties, encourages Tulare County residents to report concerns relating to local and county government and the conduct of public officials. Please note: Tulare County Civil Grand Jury has no jurisdiction over State or Federal Agencies, Courts, Judicial Officers or private companies and organizations.

We recognize that many citizens are reluctant to put details of their concerns in writing. Please bear in mind that your name will never be used by the Civil Grand Jury. All Civil Grand Jury members are bound by an oath of secrecy. Civil Grand Jury documents, including this form, are never available to anyone outside the Civil Grand Jury and cannot be subpoenaed.

For an investigation to be initiated, the Civil Grand Jury must consider the validity of each request. Therefore, please include any pertinent correspondence, documents, dates, names and facts. If necessary, you may be asked to participate in an absolutely confidential interview with members of the Civil Grand Jury.

Name	
Address	
Telephone Number	
Email	

Give a brief summary of the problem (i.e., agency involved, person(s) to be questioned, dates, etc.). If necessary, attach additional pages. All documents submitted become the property of the Civil Grand Jury and will not be returned.

Your signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Return this form to:  
Tulare County Civil Grand Jury  
5963 S Mooney Blvd, Visalia, CA 93277  
559-624-7295 Fax 559-733-6078 • Grnd\_jury@tularecounty.ca.gov





Tulare County Civil Grand Jury  
Government Plaza  
5963 South Mooney Blvd.  
Visalia, California 93277  
Phone: (559) 624-7295  
Fax: (559) 615-3039  
Email: [grnd\\_jury@tularecounty.ca.gov](mailto:grnd_jury@tularecounty.ca.gov)  
Website: [tularecounty.ca.gov/grandjury](http://tularecounty.ca.gov/grandjury)