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Grand Jury
of
Mendocino County
Final Report
2002 - 2003

June 30, 2003

Honorable Ronald Brown, Presiding Judge, Mendocino County Superior Court

In compliance with California Penal Code Section §933, the 2002-2003 Grand Jury submits its Final Report, presenting the Grand Jury's Findings and Recommendations.

This report should provide insight for the citizens of Mendocino County into the workings of some of the departments, agencies, and districts in their county. We hope that this report will prove useful to the citizens of Mendocino County, and that it will help our elected officials and those in charge of the various departments, agencies, and districts covered by the report better perform their duties.

Oath of Grand Jurors

"I do solemnly swear (affirm) that I will support the Constitution of the United States and of the State of California and all laws made pursuant to and in conformity therewith, will diligently inquire into, and true presentment make, of all public offenses against the people of this state, committed or triable within this county, of which the grand jury shall have or can obtain legal evidence. Further, I will not disclose any evidence brought before the grand jury, nor anything which I or any other grand juror may say, nor the manner in which I or any other grand juror may have voted on any matter before the grand jury. I will keep the charge that will be given to me by the court." (California Penal Code §911)

Note: Minor corrections, now included, were made to this on-line version of the Grand Jury Final Report on 10 August 2003.

2002–2003 Mendocino County Grand Jurors

Leonard Bader
Redwood Valley

Boyd Mathias
Willits

Jack Boone
Fort Bragg

Lillian Pacini
Ukiah

Michael Bouris
Mendocino

Ava Peterson
Redwood Valley

Allan Carlson
Fort Bragg

Scott Peterson
Mendocino

Verleen Eidsmoe
Ukiah

Al Pierce
Talmage

Bruce Haldane
Potter Valley

Darwin Richardson
Ukiah

William Hughson
Potter Valley

Alvin Robinson
Willits

Joan Lamb
Ukiah

Robin Saia
Redwood Valley

James Lindsey
Boonville

David Severn
Philo

Tony Xavier (deceased)
Fort Bragg

Preface

The California Penal Code gives a Grand Jury the mandate to review the methods of operation of County departments, agencies and special districts, and to inquire into the needs of county officers. After such reviews and inquiries, the Grand Jury is required to submit to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court a final report of its findings and recommendations pertaining to county government matters.

The 2002-2003 Grand Jury, made up of 19 ordinary citizens, who act as a watchdog for the citizens of the County, have complied with that mandate and wishes to thank County staff, the staffs of entities reviewed and private citizens for their cooperation. The Grand Jury especially wishes to thank the staff of the County Administrator's Office for their cooperation and professionalism.

It is certainly the case that most County departments, agencies and special districts are well run, though there are problems with some. In particular, the Grand Jury found the County Library system, the Chamberlain Creek and Parlin Fork Conservation Camps and the County Jail to be functioning well, with minor problems. The Grand Jury did turn up some issues in the operations of the County Risk Management office and the County Employees Retirement System. We hope that the Grand Jury's recommendations will help clear up some of those problems.

By far the major study, in terms of time and energy and, we feel, of importance, has been the Grand Jury's study of the Ukiah Valley Water Districts. The water issue is one of long-standing fragmentation, duplication of effort and unauthorized use of a lot of water. While the Grand Jury recommendations are bound to be controversial, public discussion of the report should, we hope, lead to positive changes in the distribution of the water resource throughout the Ukiah Valley

A major issue for County government and other agencies is the paucity of funding available for the work they have to do. We are in a time of budget stress in Mendocino County, indeed throughout the State of California, and while we applaud the ability of our County employees to make do and hold a thin line in the face of ever-deepening budget cuts, the fact remains that government is finding it necessary to diminish the quantity and quality of needed services to citizens. The Grand Jury appreciates the dilemma faced by managers, but notes that we as a community need to come up with innovative ways to obtain more funding and to direct existing funding more efficiently toward the services we expect from our government.

In Memoriam

Tony Xavier served as Foreperson Pro Tem of the 2002-2003 Grand Jury from its inception until his death in February 2003. In addition, he chaired two important committees. Tony was a very hard worker, who contributed significantly to the work of the Panel almost until the day of his death.

He was proud of his service in the Marine Corps. He was proud of his Portuguese heritage. He was proud of his career as a building contractor. And the Grand Jury is proud to have known and worked with Tony.