

This document is an extract of a larger publication.

civilgrandjury.org is a project of UnGovr.org, a US-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to government transparency and public accountability.



Yolo Wayfarer Center

REASON FOR VISIT

Section 933.6 of the California Penal Code authorizes the Grand Jury to investigate and report on any non-profit corporation operated on behalf of a public entity. Pursuant to that statute, members of the Yolo County Grand Jury visited Walter’s House (a residential drug treatment facility) and the Yolo Wayfarer Center (which provides emergency food and shelter for those in need). The facilities are located on Fourth Street in Woodland.

ACTIONS TAKEN

Members of the Grand Jury conducted a walk-through tour of both facilities on October 23, 2008, hosted by their respective directors. At Walter’s House, the tour included living accommodations, counseling rooms, and administrative areas. The Yolo Wayfarer Center tour included the dining and sleeping areas, as well as administrative offices.

A follow-up interview with the Executive Director was conducted, and a copy of the 2008 Annual Report of the Yolo Wayfarer Center was reviewed.

WHAT THE JURY DETERMINED

The Yolo Wayfarer Center provides a wide array of services for individuals and families with immediate and/or long-term needs. These services include a substance abuse treatment center, emergency shelter, family transitional housing, and daily meals.

In 2008, 736 individuals were provided assistance through these programs at a cost of just under \$10 per person per day. The annual budget for Wayfarer Center programs in 2008 was \$1,315,400. Of this amount, 45% came from the state, 14% from federal grants, and 23% from county and city revenues. Additionally, private donations accounted for 17% of the total.

Substance abuse treatment center

Walter’s House, named after Rev. Walter Zeck, the founder of the Yolo Wayfarer Center, was started in 2002. It is a major drug and alcohol abuse residential treatment program in Yolo County and provides 14 transitional beds and 30 beds for residential treatment. Transitional beds are reserved for those residents who have successfully completed the 3-month treatment program and are making the move to employment and residence outside the center. At least 53 individuals made the transition in 2008. The facility also serves individuals who are homeless, including those who struggle with mental illness and substance abuse.

In 2008 the Walter’s House program served 177 individuals in the substance abuse treatment program.

The treatment center depends largely on public funds, and currently has grants/contracts for all spaces. A contract with the California Department of Corrections pays the costs of referrals made by the Court.

Emergency shelter

The shelter provides 28 beds (equally divided between men and women) and 22 additional spaces for families. Families sleep on mattresses in a general-purpose room, which also serves as the dining room. Residents can shower, do laundry, and receive mail at the facility. The shelter also provides each client with referrals and “life-plans” to assist in their transition out of shelter housing.

Initially the emergency shelter, which opened in 2006, provided up to 73 beds, but this capacity was reduced to 50 after the loss of \$200,000 of federal money. In 2008, the emergency shelter served 393 individuals, 12% of whom were children.

Family transitional housing

The Yolo Wayfarer Center manages 14 housing units throughout Woodland for indigent families, who can reside there for up to six months under strict guidelines. In 2008, 36 families, including 70 children and 43 adults, were provided shelter while they transitioned to employment and permanent residences.

Daily meals

The Yolo Wayfarer Center provides breakfast, lunch, and a hot dinner. In 2008, community volunteers prepared and served 23,210 evening dinners and a combined total of 21,657 breakfasts and lunches. In support of this effort, community businesses contributed 238,025 pounds of food, thus reducing the Center’s cost to less than \$2.00 per meal. Over 100 county residents volunteered at the Yolo Wayfarer Center.

Oversight

A Board of Directors, comprised of 13 community members, oversees the operation of the Yolo Wayfarer Center. At least one seat on the Board is reserved for a representative of the faith community and two seats are reserved for formerly homeless individuals. The remaining seats are filled with approval of the seated board members. The Board meets once a month.

COMMENTS

The Yolo Wayfarer Center is one of only three emergency centers in the county. In West Sacramento, Broderick has a day-use shelter, which provides food and

showers, and a place to receive mail. The Davis Community Center can accommodate 12 overnight clients.

The Yolo County Grand Jury commends the efforts of the dedicated individuals who staff the Wayfarer Center and Walter's House. Decreased funding and increased demand for their services have taxed their ingenuity to do more with less.

The Walter's House staff is concerned that demand for their program will increase while funding sources will become more difficult to obtain as all levels of government suffer significant revenue decreases. The Grand Jury encourages the County to continue funding this essential service to our community.

Winters Joint Unified School District

SUMMARY

Despite a declining enrollment, the Winters Joint Unified School District administration has been able to maintain classroom size and services. High school graduation examination passage rate is over 80% in the 10th grade, and 99% by the end of 12th grade. There were only four expulsions in the last academic year.

The district, in collaboration with the city and county is building a new library next to the high school. The library will be available to the entire community and become part of the Yolo County Library system.

REASON FOR VISIT

Section 925 of the California Penal Code authorizes the Grand Jury to investigate and report upon the operations of any agency or district within the county. Pursuant to the statute, on December 17, 2008, the Grand Jury visited the Winters Joint Unified School District office at 909 W. Grant Ave., Winters, CA 95694.

ACTIONS TAKEN

Members of the Grand Jury met with the Interim Superintendent and the Chief Business Officer. They also reviewed the following documents:

- General Fund Summary for the period ending Nov. 30, 2008
- Graduation requirements
- Suspension and expulsion/due process policy document
- School Accountability Report Card (required by the state) for Winters High School, 2006-7

- Statistics on Academic Performance Index (API) and California High School Exit Exam (CaHSEE) passage rates
- Statistics on expulsions and suspensions

WHAT THE JURY DETERMINED

According to the Interim Superintendent, the district has experienced a declining enrollment in eight of the last nine years totaling 16%, with a resulting loss in income. The current student population is about 1,700.

Thus far the district has been able to maintain small class size – a ratio of 27 to 1 in grades 4 through 12, and a ratio of 20 to 1 in grades K through 3. The average class size is 25.

A review of the budget showed that since 2002-2003, the District has made annual reductions in expenditures (e.g., eliminating positions, setting aside funds). They have certified to the County that they are able to meet current year and next two budgetary year obligations.

With regard to academic performance, the high school exit exam (CaHSEE) is given in the 10th grade. District passage rates in language and math are 80%. The passage rate is 99% by end of 12th grade.

In the 2007-2008 school year there were two expulsions from Winters High School: 1) possession of a controlled substance and a weapon; 2) use of threat, force, and possession of a weapon. There were two expulsions from Wolfskill Continuation High School: 1) disruption, 2) obscenity and disruption. The total number of expulsions (4) was down from the previous year's district total of 15.

To solve the problem of inadequate library services for the high school and the community, the School District and County entered into a joint powers agreement to construct a library and community center. The facility will be located on the high school campus. The building is expected to be completed by August 2009. The District's contribution to the agreement is the land and \$400,000 for construction. The majority of the construction costs are borne by the County, which will own the facility. The library will become a part of the Yolo County Library system.

COMMENTS

The district appears to have made prudent fiscal decisions in anticipation of decreasing revenues.

The creation of a library community center by the School District, City, and County is a laudatory example of pooling resources to meet the needs of a multiple constituency.