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Superior Court of the State of California
County of Kings

Melissa D'Morias
Superior Court Judge

June 17, 2025

To: Kings County Grand Jury and Affected Governmental
Agencies and Officers

The 2024-2025 Kings County Grand Jury has submitted the enclosed reports to the Presiding Judge and/or his designee of the Superior Court in accordance with Section 933 of the California Penal Code. The enclosed reports were submitted and are hereby accepted as the final reports of the Grand Jury concerning these areas of inquiry.

The agencies and elected officials who are affected by the enclosed reports are each hereby notified that they are required to comment to the Presiding Judge and/or his designee concerning these findings and recommendations as they pertain to the subject agency or elected official. Comments are due on behalf of each elected county officer or agency head that has responsibility for the agencies and functions described in these reports within 60 days from this date. The governing bodies of the public agencies affected by the reports have a 90-day time limit within which to submit comments pursuant to Penal Code Section 933 (c). In addition, a copy of each response shall be placed on file with the clerk of the public agency on whose behalf the response is made.

Those having questions concerning their responsibilities to respond to the Grand Jury's recommendations should contact County Counsel or their agency's general counsel.

The Judges of the Superior Court wish to express our sincere appreciation for the long hours of service given by members of the 2024-2025 Grand Jury, with special thanks to their Foreperson, Kathy Bare. Selfless dedication to public service such as that demonstrated by this Grand Jury is crucial to the survival of the institution of the Grand Jury, which is itself an important part of the checks and balances necessary for our democracy to function.

Melissa D'Morias
Judge of the Superior Court

1640 Kings County Drive
Hanford, CA 93230
(559) 582-1010 ext. 6002



**County of Kings
Civil Grand Jury**

**P. O. Box 1562 Hanford, CA 93232
330 Campus Drive, CA 93230
grand.jury@co.kings.ca.us
559-852-2892**

June 18, 2025

The Honorable Melissa D'Morias
Advising Judge Superior Court of the State of California
1640 Kings County Drive
Hanford, Ca 93230

Judge D'Morias,

The 2024-2025 Kings County Civil Grand Jury hereby submits the final report to the Kings County Superior Court and the citizens of Kings County. Without the sound council of the Advising Judge of the Superior Court of the State of California, the Office of County Council, and the Office of the Jury Commissioner, this report would not have been possible. We also thank the court staff for the many instances where they aided in administrative matters.

Being given the opportunity to serve as a grand jury member is both rewarding and educational. Grand juries are given the responsibility to protect the interests of a county's citizens. Countless hours go into interviews and research necessary to complete each report. I extend my sincere thanks to the members of the 2024-2025 Kings County Civil Grand Jury. The many hours spent by these dedicated people are reflected in this final report book. The work done shows a commitment to serving the needs of the people of Kings County. It is a great responsibility, but also a great honor to serve as a member of the Kings County Civil Grand Jury.

All work done by the Civil Grand Jury is dependent on the individual members both in committee and in full body. It is important to work together for the good of all citizens of Kings County. My congratulations to the committee chairs who coordinated the work in each committee and to the general membership for supporting the work being done.

Sincerely,

Kathy Bare, Foreperson

It was truly my honor to serve as Foreperson of the 2024-2025 Kings County Civil Grand Jury.

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The Honorable Superior Court Judges
And The
2024 – 2025 Kings County Civil Grand Jury



First Row

			Judge Gilbert	Judge Burns	Judge Reinhart	Commissioner Skinner	Judge D'Morias	Commissioner Donlon		
Joe Koutny	Gary Leasure Committee Chair	Kevin Scott Pro Tem							Greg Martinez Committee Chair	John DeNicola

Second Row

Kevin Jenkins	Joe Curry	Sue Gavini Snack/Social	Foreperson Kathy Bare Committee Chair	Jose Macias	Karen Ormsby	Nya Whitmore Recording Secretary		
Shirley Rowe	Dick Hoffmaster Committee Chair	Arnie Garza Sgt. @ Arms	Ronney Wong Treasurer	David Thomas	Brenda Fredrick	Bill Watson Correspondence Secretary		

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Corcoran Cemetery Compliance Report

December 2024

Summary

The Kings County Civil Grand Jury completed reports regarding the Corcoran Cemetery on February 28, 2022, March 17, 2023, and March 24, 2024. Each report contains a section entitled “Required Responses” as mandated by Penal Code Sections §933 and §933.05. The named entities have 90 days to respond to the Grand Jury’s findings and recommendations. Responses must be sent to both the Presiding Judge of the Kings County Superior Court and the Kings County Civil Grand Jury. To date, no responses have been received by the Kings County Superior Court or by the Kings County Civil Grand Jury regarding the February 28, 2022, March 17, 2023, and March 24, 2024, issued final reports.

Background

The Corcoran Cemetery District is a special district authorized by California statutes (Appendix A). Special districts serve as local government agencies with limited purposes. They operate independently from cities and counties, providing focused public services such as fire protection, sewers, water supply, electricity, parks, recreation, sanitation, cemeteries, and libraries. Special districts share four common characteristics:

- 1) They are a form of government
- 2) They are governed by a board
- 3) They provide services and facilities
- 4) They have defined boundaries

The Corcoran Cemetery is administered by the Corcoran Cemetery District and is governed by the Corcoran Cemetery District Board of Directors.

The Kings County Civil Grand Jury completed final reports regarding the Corcoran Cemetery on February 28, 2022, March 17, 2023, and March 24, 2024. As of November 2024, no responses have been received from the Corcoran Cemetery District Board of Directors by either the Superior Court or the Kings County Civil Grand Jury regarding these three final reports. The Kings County Civil Grand Jury determined that this noncompliance report was necessary to solicit responses to the aforementioned final reports.

Methodology

The 2024-2025 Kings County Civil Grand Jury reviewed the Corcoran Cemetery District reports in which the Corcoran Cemetery District Board of Directors was named as a Required Respondent on February 28, 2022, March 17, 2023, and March 24, 2024.

The Kings County Civil Grand Jury reviewed its records to determine if it had received responses to the February 28, 2022, March 17, 2023, and March 24, 2024 reports.

The Grand Jury contacted the Kings County Superior Court to inquire whether they had received responses as required by law to the February 28, 2022, March 17, 2023, and March 24, 2024 final reports.

Discussion

As stated in the California Government Code: Section 17520 defines a Special district as follows: “Special district” means any agency of the state that performs governmental or proprietary functions within limited boundaries. “Special district” includes a county service area, a maintenance district or area, an improvement district or improvement zone, or any other zone or area. “Special district” does not include a city, a county, a school district, or a community college district.

When named as a Required Respondent in a Kings County Civil Grand Jury report, the respondent must submit their responses regarding the findings and recommendations listed in the final report within 90 days of publication. These responses must be sent to the Kings County Superior Court with a copy to the Kings County Civil Grand Jury.

Penal Code Section §933(c) (Please see Appendix B) provides in pertinent part: “No later than 90 days after the Grand Jury submits a final report on the operations of any public agency subject to its reviewing authority, the governing body of the public agency shall comment to the presiding judge of the superior court on the findings and recommendations pertaining to matters under the control of the governing body and every elected county officer or agency head for which the Grand Jury had responsibility pursuant to Section §914.1 shall comment within 60 days to the presiding judge of the superior court . . .”

The Kings County Civil Grand Jury completed a report regarding the Corcoran Cemetery on February 28, 2022, in which the Corcoran Cemetery District Board of Directors was named as a Required Respondent. Per Penal Code section §933, the Corcoran Cemetery Board of Directors was required to respond with agreement or disagreement regarding the findings and recommendations to the Superior Court and the Kings County Civil Grand Jury within 90 days (Appendix B). Thus, a response was required by May 28, 2022. The Kings County Superior Court has reported that no response was received. No response was located in the Grand Jury’s records. As of November 2024, no response has been received by either the Superior Court or the Kings County Civil Grand Jury.

The Kings County Civil Grand Jury completed a report regarding the Corcoran Cemetery on March 17, 2023, in which they were named as a Required Respondent. Per Penal Code Section §933, the

Corcoran Cemetery Board of Directors was required to respond with agreement or disagreement regarding the findings and recommendations to the Superior Court and the Kings County Civil Grand Jury within 90 days. Thus, a response was required by June 17, 2023. The Kings County Superior Court has reported that no response was received. No response was located in the Grand Jury's records. As of November 2024, no response has been received by either the Superior Court or the Kings County Civil Grand Jury.

The Kings County Civil Grand Jury completed a report regarding the Corcoran Cemetery on March 24, 2024, in which they were named as a Required Respondent. Per Penal Code section §933, the Corcoran Cemetery Board of Directors was required to respond with agreement or disagreement regarding the findings and recommendations to the Superior Court and the Kings County Civil Grand Jury within 90 days. Thus, a response was required by June 24, 2024. The Kings County Superior Court has reported that no response was received. No response was located in the Grand Jury's records. As of November 2024, no response has been received by either the Superior Court or the Kings County Civil Grand Jury.

Findings

F1. The Corcoran Cemetery District Board of Directors was named as a Required Respondent to the Kings County Civil Grand Jury's reports dated February 28, 2022, March 17, 2023, and March 24, 2024.

F2. Neither the Kings County Superior Court nor the Kings County Civil Grand Jury has received a response from the Corcoran Cemetery Board of Directors regarding the February 28, 2022, March 17, 2023, and March 24, 2024 Grand Jury reports.

Recommendations

R1/2. The Corcoran Cemetery District Board of Directors must respond as per Penal Code sections §933 and §933.05 to the Kings County Civil Grand Jury's report dated February 28, 2022, by sending a response immediately upon receipt of this compliance report to the Presiding Judge of the Kings County Superior Court and the Kings County Civil Grand Jury.

R1/2. The Corcoran Cemetery District Board of Directors must respond as per Penal Code sections §933 and §933.05 to the Kings County Civil Grand Jury's report dated March 17, 2023, by sending a response immediately upon receipt of this compliance report to the Presiding Judge of the Kings County Superior Court and the Kings County Civil Grand Jury.

R1/2. The Corcoran Cemetery District Board of Directors must respond as per Penal Code sections §933 and §933.05 to the Kings County Civil Grand Jury's report dated March 24, 2024, by sending a response immediately upon receipt of this compliance report to the Presiding Judge of the Kings County Superior Court and the Kings County Civil Grand Jury.

REQUIRED RESPONSE

Penal Code Section §933(c) provides in pertinent part: “No later than 90 days after the Grand Jury submits a final report on the operations of any public agency subject to its reviewing authority, the governing body of the public agency shall comment to the presiding judge of the superior court on the findings and recommendations pertaining to matters under the control of the governing body and every elected county officer or agency head for which the Grand Jury had responsibility pursuant to Section §914.1 shall comment within 60 days to the presiding judge of the superior court . . .”

Corcoran Cemetery Board of Directors
P O Box 805
Corcoran, CA 93212

INVITED RESPONSES

Kings County Board of Supervisors
1400 Lacey Boulevard
Hanford, CA 93230

Troy Van Velson, President
Corcoran Cemetery Board of Directors
P O Box 805
Corcoran, CA 93212

SEND FINAL REPORT RESPONSES TO:

Original to:

Judge Jennifer Giuliani, Presiding Judge
Kings County Superior Court
1640 Kings Court Drive
Hanford, CA 93230

Copy to:

Kings County Civil Grand Jury
P O Box #1562
Hanford, CA 93230

Appendix A

Government Code – GOV
TITLE 2. GOVERNMENT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
DIVISION 4. FISCAL AFFAIRS
PART 7. STATE-MANDATED LOCAL COSTS
CHAPTER 2. General Provisions

California Government Code Section 17520

“Special district” means any agency of the state that performs governmental or proprietary functions within limited boundaries. “Special district” includes a county service area, a maintenance district or area, an improvement district or improvement zone, or any other zone or area. “Special district” does not include a city, a county, a school district, or a community college district.

County free libraries established pursuant to Chapter 6 (commencing with Section 19100 of Part 11 of the Education Code, areas receiving county fire protection services pursuant to Section 25643 of the Government Code, and county road districts established pursuant to Chapter 7 (commencing with Section 1550) of Division 2 of the Streets and Highways Code shall be considered “special districts: for all purposes of this part.

(Amended by Stats. 2006 Ch. 538. Sec. 277 Effective January 1, 2007.)

Appendix B

Penal Code – PEN
PART 2. OF CRIMINAL PROCEDURE
TITLE 4. GRAND JURY PROCEEDINGS
CHAPTER 3. Powers and Duties of Grand Jury
ARTICLE 2. Investigation of County, City, and District Affairs

California Penal Code Section 933

(Current as of January 01, 2023 | Updated by [FindLaw Staff](#))

(a) Each grand jury shall submit to the presiding judge of the superior court a final report of its findings and recommendations that pertain to county government matters during the fiscal or calendar

year. Final reports on any appropriate subject may be submitted to the presiding judge of the superior court at any time during the term of service of a grand jury. A final report may be submitted for comment to responsible officers, agencies, or departments, including the county board of supervisors, when applicable, upon finding of the presiding judge that the report is in compliance with this title. For 45 days after the end of the term, the foreperson and his or her designees shall, upon reasonable notice, be available to clarify the recommendations of the report.

(b) One copy of each final report, together with the responses thereto, found to be in compliance with this title shall be placed on file with the clerk of the court and remain on file in the office of the clerk. The clerk shall immediately forward a true copy of the report and the responses to the State Archivist who shall retain that report and all responses in perpetuity.

(c) No later than 90 days after the grand jury submits a final report on the operations of any public agency subject to its reviewing authority, the governing body of the public agency shall comment to the presiding judge of the superior court on the findings and recommendations pertaining to matters under the control of the governing body, and every elected county officer or agency head for which the grand jury has responsibility pursuant to [Section 914.1](#) shall comment within 60 days to the presiding judge of the superior court, with an information copy sent to the board of supervisors, on the findings and recommendations pertaining to matters under the control of that county officer or agency head and any agency or agencies which that officer or agency head supervises or controls. In any city and county, the mayor shall also comment on the findings and recommendations. All of these comments and reports shall forthwith be submitted to the presiding judge of the superior court who impaneled the grand jury. A copy of all responses to grand jury reports shall be placed on file with the clerk of the public agency and the office of the county clerk, or the mayor when applicable, and shall remain on file in those offices. One copy shall be placed on file with the applicable grand jury final report by, and in the control of the currently impaneled grand jury, where it shall be maintained for a minimum of five years.

(d) As used in this section “agency” includes a department.

(Amended by Stats. 2002, Ch, 784, Sec. 538. Effective January 1 2003.)

Compliance Report Corcoran High School Policy and Procedures Regarding Sexual Assault March 2025

Summary

The Kings County Civil Grand Jury investigated a complaint regarding an incident of bullying/sexual harassment/sexual assault/hazing at Corcoran High School that occurred during the 2022/2023 school year. On March 22, 2024, the Grand Jury issued its final report titled “Corcoran High School Policy and Procedures Regarding Sexual Assault/Hazing”. As mandated by California Penal Code sections 933 and 933.05, this report included a “Required Responses” section, designating the Corcoran Joint Unified School District Board of Trustees and the Corcoran Joint Unified School District Superintendent as Required Respondents with a legal obligation to respond within 90 days. As of February 2025, neither entity has submitted the required responses to the Kings County Superior Court or the Kings County Civil Grand Jury, despite the legal requirement to do so.

Background

In March 2024, the Kings County Civil Grand Jury completed its investigation into a serious incident at Corcoran High School. The investigation revealed that during the 2022/2023 school year an incident of sexual assault/hazing occurred but was not reported until a year later during the 2023/2024 school year. When the incident came to light, it was handled by the Corcoran School Administrative Staff, Interim Superintendent, Administrative Hearing Panel, and the Corcoran Joint Unified School Board of Trustees.

The Grand Jury’s investigation determined that while the school administration followed proper procedures and recommended expulsion of the involved students, the Administrative Hearing Panel and School Board ultimately decided to suspend the expulsion, allowing the accused students to return to school almost immediately. The original report noted concerns about this decision and found that the complainants were not fully informed about their right to appeal to the Kings County Board of Education.

The March 22, 2024, report required formal responses from both the School Board and Superintendent within 90 days (by July 1, 2024). Nearly eight months later, no responses have been received. This noncompliance report has been prepared to formally document this failure and to request immediate action.

Methodology

In preparing this noncompliance report, the 2024/2025 Kings County Civil Grand Jury

1. Reviewed the comprehensive March 22, 2024, final report on “Corcoran High School Policy and Procedures Regarding Sexual Assault/Hazing which detailed the Grand Jury’s investigation methodology, including:
 - a. Examination of the Corcoran Unified School Student and Parent Handbooks
 - b. Review of relevant sections of California Education Code, including provisions on sexual assault, hazing, and bullying
 - c. Multiple interviews with complainants, school personnel, police department staff, and other relevant parties
 - d. Analysis of district policy and procedures regarding disciplinary actions
2. Confirmed that the original report properly designated the Corcoran Joint Unified School District Board of Trustees and Superintendent as Required Respondents.
3. Examined Grand Jury records and confirmed that no responses had been received.
4. Contacted the Kings County Superior Court to verify they had not received the legally required responses.

Discussion

California Penal Code section 933(c) clearly establishes the requirement for public agencies to respond to Grand Jury reports: “No later than 90 days after the Grand Jury submits a final report on the operations of any public agency subject to its reviewing authority, the governing body of the public agency shall comment to the presiding judge of the superior court on the findings and recommendations pertaining to matters under the control of the governing body and every elected county officer of agency head for which the Grand Jury has responsibility pursuant to Section 914.1 shall comment within 60 days to the presiding judge of the superior court.”

The original Grand Jury report raised significant concerns regarding how the incident was handled, particularly noting that:

1. The Corcoran High School administration appropriately investigated the incident and recommended expulsion of the involved students.
2. The administrative Hearing Panel chose to recommend suspension of the expulsion instead, and the School Board followed this recommendation.

3. The decision may have been influenced by community pressure, as stated in the report: “It was stated to the Grand Jury that the Corcoran School Board was swayed by public opinion.”
4. The complainants were not properly informed about the appeals process, particularly that they could appeal to the Kings County Board of Education.

The original report included six specific findings and six recommendations, including that “The school board should follow the administrators and staff’s recommendations of their schools and not be swayed by the rumblings of the general public.” These findings and recommendations required formal responses addressing whether the respondent agreed or disagreed with each point, along with a timeline for implementation where applicable.

The failure to respond as required by law represents a serious lapse in accountability and oversight, particularly given the sensitive nature of the incident involving student safety and proper handling of sexual assault/hazing allegations.

Findings

F1. The Corcoran Joint Unified School District Board of Trustees was designated as a Required Respondent to the Kings County Civil Grand Jury’s March 22, 2024, report titled “Corcoran High School Policy and Procedures Regarding Sexual Assault/Hazing”.

F2. The Corcoran Joint Unified School District Superintendent was designated as a Required Respondent to the Kings County Civil Grand Jury’s March 22, 2024, report titled “Corcoran High School Policy and Procedures Regarding Sexual Assault/Hazing.”

F3. The Kings County Superior Court has not received any response from the Corcoran Joint Unified School District Board of Trustees regarding the March 22, 2024, report despite the 90-day legal deadline of July 1, 2024.

F4. The Kings County Civil Grand Jury has not received any response from the Corcoran Joint Unified School District Superintendent regarding the March 22, 2024, report despite the 90-day legal deadline of July 1, 2024.

Recommendations

R1/3. The Corcoran Joint Unified School District Board of Trustees must immediately submit its response to the March 22, 2024, Kings County Civil Grand Jury report titled, “Corcoran High School Policy and Procedures Regarding Sexual Assault/Hazing” as required by California Penal Code sections 933 and 933.05. This response must be sent to both the Presiding Judge of the Kings County Superior Court and the Kings County Civil Grand Jury upon receipt of this compliance report.

R2/4. The Corcoran Joint Unified School District Superintendent must immediately submit a response to the March 2, 2024, Kings County Civil Grand Jury report titled, “Corcoran High School Policy and Procedures Regarding Sexual Assault/Hazing” as required by California Penal Code sections 933 and 933.05. This response must be sent to both the Presiding Judge of the Kings County Superior Court and the Kings County Civil Grand Jury upon receipt of this compliance report.

REQUIRED RESPONSE

Penal Code section 933(c) provides in pertinent part: “No later than 90 days after the Grand Jury submits a final report on the operations of any public agency subject to its reviewing authority, the governing body of the public agency shall comment to the presiding judge of the superior court on the findings and recommendations pertaining to matters under the control of the governing body and every elected county officer or agency head for which the Grand Jury had responsibility pursuant to Section 914.1 shall comment within 60 days to the presiding judge of the superior court . . .”

Corcoran Joint Unified School District Board of Trustees
1520 Patterson Avenue
Corcoran, CA 93212

Corcoran Joint Unified School District Superintendent
1520 Patterson Avenue
Corcoran, CA 93212

INVITED RESPONSES

Kings County Board of Supervisors
1400 Lacey Boulevard
Hanford, CA 93230

SEND FINAL REPORT RESPONSES TO:

Original to:

Judge Jennifer Giuliani, Presiding Judge
Kings County Superior Court
1640 Kings Court Drive
Hanford, CA 93230

Copy to:

Kings County Civil Grand Jury
P O Box #1562
Hanford, CA 93230

Appendix A

Penal Code – PEN

PART 2. OF CRIMINAL PROCEDURE

TITLE 4. GRAND JURY PROCEEDINGS

CHAPTER 3. Powers and Duties of Grand Jury

ARTICLE 2. Investigation of County, City, and District Affairs

California Penal Code Section 933

(Current as of January 01, 2023, | Updated by [FindLaw Staff](#))

(a) Each grand jury shall submit to the presiding judge of the superior court a final report of its findings and recommendations that pertain to county government matters during the fiscal or calendar year. Final reports on any appropriate subject may be submitted to the presiding judge of the superior court at any time during the term of service of a grand jury. A final report may be submitted for comment to responsible officers, agencies, or departments, including the county board of supervisors, when applicable, upon finding of the presiding judge that the report is in compliance with this title. For 45 days after the end of the term, the foreperson and his or her designees shall, upon reasonable notice, be available to clarify the recommendations of the report.

(b) One copy of each final report, together with the responses thereto, found to be in compliance with this title shall be placed on file with the clerk of the court and remain on file in the office of the clerk. The clerk shall immediately forward a true copy of the report and the responses to the State Archivist who shall retain that report and all responses in perpetuity.

(c) No later than 90 days after the grand jury submits a final report on the operations of any public agency subject to its reviewing authority, the governing body of the public agency shall comment to the presiding judge of the superior court on the findings and recommendations pertaining to matters under the control of the governing body, and every elected county officer or agency head for which the grand jury has responsibility pursuant to [Section 914.1](#) shall comment within 60 days to the presiding judge of the superior court, with an information copy sent to the board of supervisors, on the findings and recommendations pertaining to matters under the control of that county officer or agency head and any agency or agencies which that officer or agency head supervises or controls. In any city and county, the mayor shall also comment on the findings and recommendations. All of these comments and reports shall forthwith be submitted to the presiding judge of the superior court who impaneled the grand jury. A copy of all responses to grand jury reports shall be placed on file with the clerk of the public agency and the office of the county clerk, or the mayor when applicable, and shall remain on file in those offices. One copy shall be placed on file with the applicable grand jury final report by, and in the control of the currently impaneled grand jury, where it shall be maintained for a minimum of five years.

(d) As used in this section “agency” includes a department.

(Amended by Stats. 2002, Ch. 784, Sec. 538. Effective January 1 2003.)

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Home Garden Community Services District Absence of Audits January 2025

Summary

The last audits for the Home Garden Community Services District (Home Garden) were completed for the years ending June 30, 2009, and June 30, 2013 (12 years ago). There has not been any oversight by Kings County to track the frequency of audits for Home Garden Community Services District or other special districts within Kings County for at least the last twelve years.

Many grantors require organizations to undergo audits as a condition for receiving funding. An audit helps uncover financial irregularities or fraud, ensures that the special district complies with laws and regulations, provides reassurance to stakeholders, and identifies areas of inefficiency. Financial audits are required by Government Code 26909 (See Appendix A).

Background

Home Garden Community Services District (Home Garden) is a special district in Kings County that provides its 1,469 residents with water service, as well as lighting and lighting maintenance. It is one of four unincorporated areas of Kings County. The Home Garden Community Services District relies on funds from water bills sent to its residents as well as property taxes. Sheriff and Fire protection are provided by Kings County. Sewer services are provided and assessed or billed by the City of Hanford.

Special districts act as local governments with limited purposes. They are separate from cities and counties, and they provide focused public services such as fire protection, sewers, water supply, electricity, parks, recreation, sanitation, cemeteries, and libraries. Special districts have four common characteristics:

- 1) A form of government
- 2) Governance by a board
- 3) Provision of services and facilities
- 4) Defined boundaries

The 2024-2025 Grand Jury discovered that the last two financial audits for Home Garden Community Services District were completed for the years ending June 30, 2009, and June 30, 2013 (12 years ago).

Regular audits of special districts are important for several reasons, including:

- 1) Demonstrating credibility of financial statements, indicating that accounts are accurate, and providing reassurance to stakeholders

- 2) Providing transparency and showing that best practices are being followed
- 3) Showing that the district is compliant with state and local regulations
- 4) Improving efficiency of a district's internal controls and systems.

In California, special districts are required to have annual audits conducted by a certified public accountant or the county auditor. The audit results are filed with the State Controller's Office. District boards can request multi-year audits instead of annual audits, which can save money, especially for districts with small budgets. The Grand Jury was unable to find evidence of any special agreement between Home Garden and the County of Kings that would exempt Home Garden from completing annual audits.

To help with the complex topic of special district mandatory financial reporting requirements and to establish accounting procedures, a manual is prepared and published by the California State Controller's Office. This manual is updated regularly and explains generally accepted accounting principles prescribed by the Governmental Accounting Standards Board while showing the minimum requirements for establishing a proper accounting system specifically for special districts. Small districts may find this resource beneficial as they generally have limited funds available to establish accounting systems that meet their specific needs.

The California State Controller's Office, County Auditor-Controller's Offices, and California State Treasurer's Office are responsible for reviewing, interpreting, and summarizing financial information for the public, California State Legislature, and other officials. Special districts are required to submit audited financial statements, annual financial transactions reports, bond reports, retirement system reports, and government compensation reports.

Methodology

The documents reviewed were as follows:

- 1) <https://worldpopulationreview.com/us-cities/california/home-garden>
- 2) <https://www.csda.net/blogs/kristin-withrow1/2024/02/26/financial-reports-for-special-districts>
- 3) Government Code 26909 <https://codes.findlaw.com/ca/government-code/gov-sect-26909>
- 4) https://www.sco.ca.gov/Files-ARD-Local/spd_manual_2023_edition.pdf
- 5) Financial Reports for Special Districts <https://csda.net>

The people interviewed were as follows:

- 1) Home Garden Community Service District Staff
- 2) Kings County Board of Supervisor members
- 3) Kings County Board of Supervisors Staff
- 4) Kings County Finance Department

Discussion

Cal. Gov. Code Section 17520 (A full copy of section 17520 may be found in Appendix B below) defines a Special District as follows:

A “special district” means any agency of the state that performs governmental or proprietary functions within limited boundaries. “A special district” includes a county service area, a maintenance district or area, an improvement district or improvement zone, or any other zone or area. “Special district” does not include a city, a county, a school district, or a community college district.

The Home Garden Community Services District meets the criteria required by Cal. Gov. Code Section 17520 to be classified as a special district and is governed by five Board Members.

Government Code 26909 requires that county auditors perform an audit or hire a certified public accountant to conduct the audit of special districts should the districts not perform the required audits themselves. The audits must follow generally accepted auditing standards, and a report must be filed within 12 months of the fiscal year’s end.

The following summarizes legally required financial reports:

Audited Financial Statements that comply with Government Code 26909 (which may be found at <https://codes.findlaw.com/ca/government-code/gov-sect-26909/>) may be required annually. If a special district meets specific requirements, it may request approval from the county board of supervisors to conduct limited financial reviews, biennial audits, or audits at an agreed-upon term. Generally, audits must be submitted to the State Controller’s Office, County Auditor, and local agency formation commission (LAFCO) of the county within 12 months of the fiscal year’s end.

The Special Districts Annual Financial Transactions Report (FTR) on the State Comptroller’s Office website summarizes complex information from over 3,300 special districts in California, provides instructions, and offers a place to enter data from a district’s audited financial statements. This report is required by Government Code 53891. Penalties for failure to report or falsification are significant.

Government Compensation Reports by local government agencies are required by Government Code 53890-53891 (<https://law.justia.com/codes/california/code-gov/title-5/division-2/part-1/chapter-4/article-9/section-53890/> and https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?lawCode=GOV§ionNum=53891) each year. The report includes positions, annual pay, salary ranges, and benefits.

A Public Retirement Systems Financial report must be submitted annually if a special district maintains a public retirement system. Most debt issuances have annual continuing disclosure requirements as well. (<https://www.csda.net/blogs/kristin-withrow1/2024/02/26/financial-reports-for-special-districts>)

Cal. Gov. Code Section 26909 states that a special district may, by unanimous request of the governing board of the special district and with unanimous approval of the board of supervisors, replace the

annual audit required by this section with one of the following, performed in accordance with professional standards, as determined by the county auditor:

- 1) A biennial audit covering a two-year period
- 2) An audit covering a five-year period if the special district's annual revenues do not exceed the amount specified by the board of supervisors
- 3) An audit conducted at specific intervals, as recommended by the county auditor, which shall be completed at least once every five years

On September 20, 2005, the Kings County Board of Supervisors passed Resolution No. 05-077 authorizing five-year audits for special purpose districts located in Kings County with annual budgets of one hundred thousand dollars or less.

- 1) On April 18, 2006, the Kings County Board of Supervisors approved the request of the North Central Consolidated Reclamation District No. 2071 to replace the biennial audit with a five-year audit.
- 2) On April 18, 2006, the Kings County Board of Supervisors approved the request of the Homeland Reclamation District No. 780 to replace the biennial audit with a five-year audit.
- 3) On August 12, 2008, the Kings County Board of Supervisors approved the request of the South-Central Reclamation District No. 2125 to replace the biennial audit with a five-year audit.

The Grand Jury, after a formal request, was unable to find or receive any evidence of a special agreement between Home Garden and the County of Kings. The lack of an agreement does not exempt Home Garden from completing audits at least annually. Therefore, Home Garden should be conducting annual audits. Kings County's Finance Director/Auditor is aware of this issue and acknowledges that the department has never made audit tracking a priority.

As the last Home Garden Community Services District Audited Financial Statement was for the year ending June 30, 2013, it exceeds the minimum requirement of an audit every year or, under special agreement, at least once every five years.

Many grantors require organizations to undergo audits as a condition for receiving funding. An audit helps uncover financial irregularities/fraud, ensures compliance with laws and regulations, provides reassurance to stakeholders, and identifies areas of inefficiency and cost-saving opportunities. Audits also help maintain positive relationships with grantors as they enhance a special district's credibility, which increases the chance of securing grants. This is especially important for small special districts as they face regular financial challenges.

Findings

F1. The Home Garden Community Services District meets the criteria required by Cal. Gov. Code Section 17520 to be classified as a special district and be held responsible for audit compliance.

F2. The last audited financial statement for Home Garden Community Services District was for the year ending June 30, 2013. This twelve-year gap makes it very difficult, if not impossible, to apply for grants and special funding.

F3. The Kings County Civil Grand Jury did not find evidence of any special agreement between Home Garden and the County of Kings that would exempt Home Garden from completing audits at least annually.

Recommendations

R1. The Home Garden Community Services District shall bring their financial statements up to date by completing or scheduling a financial audit by June 1, 2025, as any further delay affects the district's ability to apply for much-needed grant funds.

R2/R3. Special districts have the responsibility to seek guidance from the County Finance Director and Kings County Board of Supervisors when they are unable to meet the State of California's timeline regarding audits and their inability to financially perform an audit.

R2/R3. Kings County should accept the responsibility of overseeing that audits of special districts are completed in a timely fashion with financial support as necessary.

REQUIRED RESPONSE

Penal Code Section 933(c) provides in pertinent part: "No later than 90 days after the Grand Jury submits a final report on the operations of any public agency subject to its reviewing authority, the governing body of the public agency shall comment to the presiding judge of the superior court on the findings and recommendations pertaining to matters under the control of the governing body and every elected county officer or agency head for which the Grand Jury had responsibility pursuant to Section 914.1 shall comment within 60 days to the presiding judge of the superior court . . ."

Board of Trustees
Home Garden Community Services District
11677 2nd Place
Hanford, CA 93230

Kings County Board of Supervisors
1400 W. Lacey Boulevard
Hanford, CA 93230

INVITED RESPONSES

Erik Ureña, Director of Finance
County of Kings
1400 W. Lacey Blvd, Bldg. 7
Hanford, CA 93230

SEND FINAL REPORT RESPONSES TO:

Original to:

Judge Jennifer Giuliani, Presiding Judge
Kings County Superior Court
1640 Kings Court Drive
Hanford, CA 93230

Copy to:

Kings County Civil Grand Jury
P.O. Box #1562
Hanford, CA 93230

Appendix A

California Code, Government Code - GOV § 26909

Current as of January 01, 2023 | Updated by [FindLaw Staff](#)

<Section operative until Jan. 1, 2027. See, also, [§ 26909](#) operative Jan. 1, 2027.>

(a)(1) The county auditor shall either make or contract with a certified public accountant or public accountant to make an annual audit of the accounts and records of every special district within the county for which an audit by a certified public accountant or public accountant is not otherwise provided. In each case, the minimum requirements of the audit shall be prescribed by the Controller and shall conform to generally accepted auditing standards.

(2)(A) If an audit of a special district's accounts and records is made by a certified public accountant or public accountant, the minimum requirements of the audit shall be prescribed by the Controller and shall conform to generally accepted auditing standards.

(B) A report of the audit required pursuant to subparagraph (A) shall be filed within 12 months of the end of the fiscal year or years under examination as follows:

- (i) For a special district defined in [paragraph \(2\) of subdivision \(d\) of Section 12463](#), with the Controller.
- (ii) For a special district defined in [Section 56036](#), with the Controller, the county auditor, and the local agency formation commission of the county in which the special district is located, unless the special district is located in two or more counties, then with each local agency formation commission within each county in which the district is located.
- (3) Any costs incurred by the county auditor, including contracts with, or employment of, certified public accountants or public accountants, in making an audit of every special district pursuant to this section shall be borne by the special district and shall be a charge against any unencumbered funds of the district available for the purpose.
- (4) For a special district that is located in two or more counties, this subdivision shall apply to the auditor of the county in which the treasury is located.
- (5) The county controller, or ex officio county controller, shall effect this section in those counties having a county controller or ex officio county controller.
- (b) A special district may, by unanimous request of the governing board of the special district and with unanimous approval of the board of supervisors, replace the annual audit required by this section with one of the following, performed in accordance with professional standards, as determined by the county auditor:
- (1) A biennial audit covering a two-year period.
 - (2) An audit covering a five-year period if the special district's annual revenues do not exceed an amount specified by the board of supervisors.
 - (3) An audit conducted at specific intervals, as recommended by the county auditor, that shall be completed at least once every five years.
- (c)(1) A special district may, by unanimous request of the governing board of the special district and with unanimous approval of the board of supervisors, replace the annual audit required by this section with a financial review, or an agreed-upon procedures engagement, in accordance with the appropriate professional standards, as determined by the county auditor, if the following conditions are met:
- (A) All of the special district's revenues and expenditures are transacted through the county's financial system.
 - (B) The special district's annual revenues do not exceed one hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$150,000).
 - (C) The special district shall pay for any costs incurred by the county auditor in performing an agreed-upon procedures engagement. Those costs shall be charged against any unencumbered funds of the district available for that purpose.

(2) If the board of supervisors is the governing board of the special district, it may, upon unanimous approval, replace the annual audit of the special district required by this section with a financial review, or an agreed-upon procedures engagement, in accordance with the appropriate professional standards, as determined by the county auditor, if the special district satisfies the requirements of subparagraphs (A) and (B) of paragraph (1).

(d)(1) A special district may, by annual unanimous request of the governing board of the special district and with annual unanimous approval of the board of supervisors, replace the annual audit required by this section with an annual financial compilation of the special district to be performed by the county auditor in accordance with professional standards, if all of the following conditions are met:

(A) All of the special district's revenues and expenditures are transacted through the county's financial system.

(B) The special district's annual revenues do not exceed one hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$150,000).

(C) The special district shall pay for any costs incurred by the county auditor in performing a financial compilation. Those costs shall be a charge against any unencumbered funds of the district available for that purpose.

(2) A special district shall not replace an annual audit required by this section with an annual financial compilation of the special district pursuant to paragraph (1) for more than five consecutive years, after which a special district shall comply with subdivision (a).

(e) Notwithstanding this section, a special district shall be exempt from the requirement of an annual audit if the financial statements are audited by the Controller to satisfy federal audit requirements.

(f) Upon receipt of the financial review, agreed-upon procedures engagement, or financial compilation, the county auditor shall have the right to appoint, pursuant to subdivision (a), a certified public accountant or a public accountant to conduct an audit of the special district, with proper notice to the governing board of the special district and board of supervisors.

(g) Appendix B

TITLE 2 - GOVERNMENT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
DIVISION 4 - FISCAL AFFAIRS
PART 7 - STATE-MANDATED LOCAL COSTS
CHAPTER 2 - General Provisions
Section 17520.

CA Govt Code § 17520 (2023) “Special district” means any agency of the state that performs governmental or proprietary functions within limited boundaries. “Special district” includes a county

service area, a maintenance district or area, an improvement district or improvement zone, or any other zone or area. “Special district” does not include a city, a county, a school district, or a community college district.

County free libraries established pursuant to Chapter 6 (commencing with Section 19100 of Part 11 of the Education Code, areas receiving county fire protection services pursuant to Section 25643 of the Government Code, and county road districts established pursuant to Chapter 7 (commencing with Section 1550) of Division 2 of the Streets and Highways Code shall be considered “special districts” for all purposes of this part.

(Amended by Stats. 2006, Ch. 538, Sec. 277. Effective January 1, 2007.)

This section shall remain in effect only until January 1, 2027, and as of that date is repealed.

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There is a Need for A Mental Health Campus in Kings County

January 2025

Summary

The 2024-2025 Kings County Civil Grand Jury has identified a critical need for mental health services in Kings County. Currently, Kings County lacks an in-county facility of sufficient size to accommodate residents experiencing mental health crises or requiring 5150 holds. A 5150 hold permits involuntary psychiatric evaluation and temporary detention for 72 hours for individuals deemed to be a danger to themselves, to others, or who are gravely disabled. See Appendix A.

The Behavioral Health Department, through its contracted vendor Kings View, deployed three mobile crisis unit teams in late December 2024. Mental health crisis service calls will be directed to the behavioral health call center instead of law enforcement twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year.

Kings County Behavioral Health had intended to apply for a grant through the Behavioral Health Continuum Infrastructure Program. However, the application deadline closed at the end of December 2024 before sufficient details about a mental health campus could be gathered. The Kings County Behavioral Health Department may still apply for the second phase of the original grant, which will open for applications in 2025. Although this grant is smaller than the original, it may provide sufficient funding for the department to establish a scale-down version of their original mental health campus. This new facility could share space with existing departments rather than operating as a standalone campus. The facility could include a Crisis Stabilization Unit with two to four beds, a Psychiatric Health Facility with two to four beds, and a Crisis Residential Treatment facility serving as a voluntary crisis step-down/de-escalation facility.

To date, the Kings County Community Development Department, the Kings County Public Works Department, architects, and engineers have not been engaged to develop professional plans or complete financial analyses to determine the optimal location and specifications for a mental health crisis facility.

Background

In the 1880s, society began transitioning from a predominantly agricultural model with multigenerational households to an industrial society with single-family households. During this period, architecturally beautiful hospitals were constructed for those with mental illness, based on the assumption that fresh air and pleasant surroundings would cure their conditions. However, admission rates far exceeded discharge rates. The implementation of insulin shock therapy, electro-convulsant

therapy, and lobotomy procedures led to these hospitals developing negative associations. The 1950s marked a revolution in mental health care with the introduction of psychotropic medications. The Mental Health Study Act of 1955 established the Joint Commission on Mental Illness and Mental Health, which led to the Intellectual Disabilities and Community Health Centers Construction Act of 1963, signed by President Kennedy three weeks before his assassination. Unfortunately, only half of the proposed centers were ever constructed, and none received full short-term or long-term funding.

The passage of Medicaid in 1965 allowed states to shift a significant percentage of their expenditures for people with serious mental illness to the federal government by moving them into facilities with 16 or fewer beds. While this appeared to offer financial relief, new laws in the 1970s established minimum standards of care and staffing levels, while prohibiting patients (clients) from working. Facilities unable to comply were forced to close. In 1955, mental illness patients occupied 50% of all hospital beds; by 1970, this figure had dropped to 3%. Without adequate follow-up care, many mentally ill individuals discontinued their medication, possibly due to perceived or real side effects, or began self-medicating with street drugs. Today, the mentally ill constitute a significant percentage of prison, jail, and nursing home populations, as well as the homeless population. During the 1980s and 1990s, Kings County was impacted by the construction of five State Prisons in the area.

Since 2018, the Kings County Behavioral Health Department has undergone substantial reorganization. Most recently, the Further Consolidated Appropriations Act of March 23, 2024, provided funding for various programs:

- 1) \$385 million for Certified Community Behavioral Clinics
- 2) \$986 million for the Mental Health Block Grant (including crisis clinics)
- 3) \$153 million for the Behavioral Health Workforce Education and Training Program (including \$40 million for the Substance Use Disorder Treatment and Recovery Loan Repayment Program)
- 4) \$1,575,000,000 for State Opioid Response Grants
- 5) \$1,928,879,000 for Substance Use Prevention, Treatment, and Recovery Services Block Grants
- 6) Funding for the 988 Suicide and Prevention Crisis Lifeline, Behavioral Health Care Integration Grant, and other programs

Throughout numerous meetings, the 2024-2025 Kings County Civil Grand Jury received consistent feedback from interviewees regarding the substantial unmet need in Kings County for an in-county facility to serve residents experiencing mental health crises and those placed on 5150 holds.

The Behavioral Health Department deployed mobile crisis unit teams through their contracted vendor, Kings View, at the end of December 2024. These three mobile units provide mental health services at schools, homes, and places of work throughout the community. While this represents a significant improvement for Kings County, it still leaves an unfilled need in the community for accessible mental health crisis treatment.

When an individual is placed on an involuntary hold, the Lanterman-Petris-Short Act applies. Welfare and Institutions Code Section 5150 outlines the process for placing an individual who is deemed to be a danger to themselves or others on an involuntary psychiatric hold for evaluation and treatment for up

to 72 hours. This action may only be taken by mental health professionals, county-designated professionals, and law enforcement officers.

Currently, Kings County lacks a facility of sufficient size to accommodate the number of residents requiring mental health services or those placed on a 5150 hold. As a result, local individuals are sent to the local hospital where the staff:

- 1) Are not experts in dealing with individuals experiencing a mental health crisis
- 2) Must see patients in an unsecured room where patients can leave at will
- 3) Must send patients to other counties in the state to receive treatment at potentially increased cost

Having a mental health emergency hospital facility in Kings County would provide immediate and secure mental health services, including a designated place for 5150 holds. More funds could be retained in Kings County through more efficient use of staff time. Patient care would be more immediate and successful, and family members could more easily visit their loved ones. All of these factors would lead to more effective treatment of patients.

This facility would help relieve the strain on:

- 1) Dispatch services
- 2) Local law enforcement officers
- 3) Emergency room staff

Calls for mental health crisis services would be routed through a 24/7, 365-days-a-year behavioral health call center instead of law enforcement, allowing dispatch to manage other calls. A Behavioral Health mobile crisis team would respond to homes, schools, or businesses, where individuals suffering from a mental health crisis could receive specialized help immediately. If more specific treatment were needed, they would travel by personal vehicle (rather than police car or ambulance) to a specialized local mental health emergency room for further diagnosis and treatment.

Law enforcement officers would no longer need to respond, detain, transport, or stay with people experiencing a mental health crisis. This would allow law enforcement resources to focus on issues for which staff have received extensive training. Emergency room staff would have more time and beds available to address patients' physical health issues. Additionally, staff and the general public would face reduced risk of harm from individuals experiencing psychotic episodes while in the regular unsecured hospital emergency room. Currently, residents experiencing a mental health crisis who are brought to the emergency room cannot be forcibly held without their consent. Those determined to be a danger to themselves or others under 5150 holds have no secure place in the regular hospital for care and detention.

Currently, Good Samaritan Hospital of San Jose, which operates facilities in San Jose, Bakersfield, and Los Angeles, is applying for the Behavioral Health Continuum Infrastructure Grant to purchase land and build a mental health campus in Kings County. While this project would not be affiliated with Kings County, and while it represents a positive development that would significantly benefit the area, it would not guarantee available beds for Kings County Behavioral Health to use. If the beds were to reach capacity, Kings County residents might still need to seek treatment outside the county.

It is advisable to pursue a smaller second round of the Behavioral Health Continuum Infrastructure Program grant, as there remains a continuing need for a Crisis Stabilization Unit containing two to four beds, a Psychiatric Health Facility containing two to four beds, and a Crisis Residential Treatment facility that would serve as a voluntary crisis step-down facility. This would ensure access to at least a few beds for Kings County residents.

Methodology

The investigation included interviews with members of Kings County Behavioral Health and contracted agencies including Kings View, Champions, WestCare, and Aspiranet. These local agencies, contracted through Kings County Behavioral Health, currently assist with 5150 patients, mental health services, drug abuse clients, and homeless individuals.

Documents reviewed included:

- 1) “From Sanctuary to Snake Pit: The Rise and Fall of Asylums” (newscientist.com);
- 2) “Mental Health and SUD Funding Bill” (paproviders.org);
- 3) “Hindsight: The Community Mental Health Act of 1963” (cottonwooddetucson.com);
- 4) “Community Mental Health Act” (wikipedia.org);
- 5) “The Rise and Demise of America’s Psychiatric Hospitals: A Tale of Dollars Trumping Sense” (psychiatryonline.org); and
- 6) California Code, Welfare and Institutions Code - WIC §5150 (codes.findlaw.com)

Interviews were conducted with:

- 1) Members of the Hanford Police Department
- 2) Members of the Kings County Sheriff’s Department
- 3) Kings County Behavioral Health Department staff
- 4) Contracted service providers through Behavioral Health
- 5) Kings County Health and Human Services Department representatives
- 6) Kings County Board of Supervisor members.

Discussion

The Kings County Civil Grand Jury’s investigation into mental health crisis services revealed that dedicated professionals in the Behavioral Health Department and its contracted vendors work diligently to provide professional services to residents experiencing mental health crises. While the deployment of three mobile crisis units by Kings View in late December 2024 provides a valuable service, it will not fully address the community’s mental health crisis needs.

A 5150 hold, as defined by California Welfare and Institutions Code (WIC Code 5150-5155) and related sections, authorizes 72-hour involuntary psychiatric evaluation and temporary detention for individuals deemed dangerous to themselves or others, or who are gravely disabled. While this does not necessarily require admission to an acute psychiatric hospital, it does authorize holding an

individual against their will at a Lanterman Petris Short Act designated facility or Hospital Emergency Department. Kings County currently lacks adequate facilities and bed capacity for evaluating or detaining 5150 individuals. Due to this shortage and the absence of a Psychiatric Health Facility, approximately 45 5150 patients per month are sent out of the country. The monthly cost to Kings County for transporting and housing these patients averages \$124,960 (\$2,776.88 per person, excluding potential ancillary costs).

Behavioral Health has indicated that sixteen beds would be the optimal size for a Psychiatric Health Facility in Kings County, as this is the maximum number permitted by law. Facilities exceeding this limit cannot bill Medi-Cal for services and would need to rely on Behavioral Health's realignment funding, which is not financially feasible. According to the professionals interviewed, no county can sustain psychiatric hospitalizations solely through realignment funds.

As of November 2024, Kings County Behavioral Health Department had planned to repurpose the old Public Health campus buildings into a Psychiatric Health Facility and Crisis Stabilization Unit. However, when costs exceeded initial estimates, the Kings County Board of Supervisors decided to delay action until professional plans and financial analyses could be completed by the Community Development Department, Public Works Department, architects, and engineers. Consequently, the department missed the first round of the Behavioral Health Continuum Infrastructure Program grant deadline for the joint venture with Good Samaritan Hospital.

Good Samaritan Hospital is independently pursuing the Behavioral Health Continuum Infrastructure Program grant to establish a mental health campus in Kings County. Their proposed private facility would include:

- 1) An eight-bed Crisis Stabilization Unit (mental health emergency room) for adults over 18 years of age, with stays up to 23 hours
- 2) An eight-bed secure Psychiatric Health Facility (mental health emergency hospital unit)
- 3) A Crisis Residential Treatment facility for extended stabilization, offering voluntary stays of seven to nine days

Findings

F1. The launch of Behavioral Health's mobile crisis units will not fully address the lack of mental health crisis services in Kings County.

F2. The absence of a mental health Crisis Stabilization Unit negatively impacts Kings County citizens.

F3. The lack of a Psychiatric Health Facility adversely affects Kings County residents' lives.

F4. Kings County residents would benefit from a local Crisis Residential Treatment Facility.

F5. A local Mental Health Crisis campus would benefit Kings County taxpayers.

Recommendations

R1. Establish a mental health crisis facility while supporting mobile crisis units to address the mental health crisis needs of Kings County residents.

R2/3/4/5. Kings County Behavioral Health Department, separate from Good Samaritan Health Systems be encouraged and supported in its quest to obtain grant funding for a local Crisis Stabilization unit (Mental Health emergency room) only after an architectural plan, a financial plan, and timeline for construction/completion has been developed with the guidance of an architect, an engineer, Kings County Community Development Department and Kings County Public Works Department.

R2/3/4/5. Kings County Behavioral Health Department separate from Good Samaritan Health Systems be encouraged and supported in its quest to obtain grant funding for a local Psychiatric Health Facility with the intent to provide for the safe and secure treatment of persons undergoing a mental health crisis or a 5150 diagnosis only after an architectural plan, a financial plan, and timeline for construction/completion has been developed with the guidance of an architect, Kings County Community Development Department and Kings County Public Works Department.

R2/3/4/5. Kings County Behavioral Health Department, separate from Good Samaritan Health Systems be encouraged and supported in its quest to obtain grant funding for a voluntary step-down short term Crisis Residential Treatment Facility only after an architectural plan, a financial plan, and timeline for construction/completion has been developed with the guidance of an architect, an engineer, Kings County Community Development Department and Kings County Public Works Department.

REQUIRED RESPONSE

Pursuant to Penal Code Section § 933 (c), which provides in part: “No later than 90 days after the Grand Jury submits a final report on the operations of any public agency subject to its reviewing authority, the governing body of the public agency shall comment to the presiding judge of the superior court on the findings and recommendations pertaining to matters under the control of the governing body, and every elected county officer or agency head for which the Grand Jury had responsibility pursuant to Section § 914.1 shall comment within 60 days to the presiding judge of the superior court . . .”

Kings County Board of Supervisors
1400 W. Lacey Boulevard
Hanford, CA 93230

INVITED RESPONSES

Dr. Lisa Lewis, Director
Kings County Behavioral Health Department
1222 W. Lacey Boulevard
Hanford, Ca 93230

Kings County Community Development Department
1440 W. Lacey Boulevard
Hanford, CA 93230

Kings County Public Works Department
1400 W. Lacey Boulevard
Hanford, CA 93230

SEND FINAL REPORT RESPONSES TO:

Original to:

Judge Jennifer Giuliani, Presiding Judge
Kings County Superior Court
1640 Kings Court Drive
Hanford, CA 93230

Copy to:

Kings County Civil Grand Jury
P O Box #1562
Hanford, CA 93230

Appendix A

California Code, Welfare and Institutions Code - WIC § 5150

Current as of January 01, 2023 | Updated by [FindLaw Staff](#)

(a) When a person, as a result of a mental health disorder, is a danger to others, or to themselves, or gravely disabled, a peace officer, professional person in charge of a facility designated by the county for evaluation and treatment, member of the attending staff, as defined by regulation, of a facility designated by the county for evaluation and treatment, designated members of a mobile crisis team, or professional person designated by the county may, upon probable cause, take, or cause to be taken, the person into custody for a period of up to 72 hours for assessment, evaluation, and crisis intervention, or placement for evaluation and treatment in a facility designated by the county for evaluation and

treatment and approved by the State Department of Health Care Services. The 72-hour period begins at the time when the person is first detained. At a minimum, assessment, as defined in [Section 5150.4](#), and evaluation, as defined in [subdivision \(a\) of Section 5008](#), shall be conducted and provided on an ongoing basis. Crisis intervention, as defined in [subdivision \(e\) of Section 5008](#), may be provided concurrently with assessment, evaluation, or any other service.

(b) When determining if a person should be taken into custody pursuant to subdivision (a), the individual making that determination shall apply the provisions of [Section 5150.05](#), and shall not be limited to consideration of the danger of imminent harm.

(c) The professional person in charge of a facility designated by the county for evaluation and treatment, member of the attending staff, or professional person designated by the county shall assess the person to determine whether the person can be properly served without being detained. If, in the judgment of the professional person in charge of the facility designated by the county for evaluation and treatment, member of the attending staff, or professional person designated by the county, the person can be properly served without being detained, the person shall be provided evaluation, crisis intervention, or other inpatient or outpatient services on a voluntary basis. This subdivision does not prevent a peace officer from delivering an individual to a designated facility for assessment under this section. Furthermore, the assessment requirement of this subdivision does not require a peace officer to perform any additional duties other than those specified in [Sections 5150.1](#) and [5150.2](#).

(d) If a person is evaluated by a professional person in charge of a facility designated by the county for evaluation or treatment, member of the attending staff, or professional person designated by the county and is found to be in need of mental health services, but is not admitted to the facility, all available alternative services provided pursuant to subdivision (c) shall be offered, as determined by the county mental health director.

(e) If, in the judgment of the professional person in charge of the facility designated by the county for evaluation and treatment, member of the attending staff, or the professional person designated by the county, the person cannot be properly served without being detained, the admitting facility shall require an application in writing stating the circumstances under which the person's condition was called to the attention of the peace officer, professional person in charge of the facility designated by the county for evaluation and treatment, member of the attending staff, or professional person designated by the county, and stating that the peace officer, professional person in charge of the facility designated by the county for evaluation and treatment, member of the attending staff, or professional person designated by the county has probable cause to believe that the person is, as a result of a mental health disorder, a danger to others, or to themselves, or gravely disabled. The application shall also record whether the historical course of the person's mental disorder was considered in the determination, pursuant to [Section 5150.05](#). If the probable cause is based on the statement of a person other than the peace officer, professional person in charge of the facility designated by the county for evaluation and treatment, member of the attending staff, or professional person designated by the county, the person shall be liable in a civil action for intentionally giving a statement that the person knows to be false. A copy of the application shall be treated as the original.

(f) At the time a person is taken into custody for evaluation, or within a reasonable time thereafter, unless a responsible relative or the guardian or conservator of the person is in possession of the

person's personal property, the person taking them into custody shall take reasonable precautions to preserve and safeguard the personal property in the possession of or on the premises occupied by the person. The person taking them into custody shall then furnish to the court a report generally describing the person's property so preserved and safeguarded and its disposition, in substantially the form set forth in [Section 5211](#), except that if a responsible relative or the guardian or conservator of the person is in possession of the person's property, the report shall include only the name of the relative or guardian or conservator and the location of the property, whereupon responsibility of the person taking them into custody for that property shall terminate. As used in this section, "responsible relative" includes the spouse, parent, adult child, domestic partner, grandparent, grandchild, or adult brother or sister of the person.

(g)(1) Each person, at the time the person is first taken into custody under this section, shall be provided, by the person who takes them into custody, with the following information orally in a language or modality accessible to the person. If the person cannot understand an oral advisement, the information shall be provided in writing. The information shall be in substantially the following form:

My name is

_____.

I am a

_____.

(peace officer/mental health professional)

with

_____.

(name of agency)

You are not under criminal arrest, but I am taking you for an examination by mental health professionals at.

_____.

(name of facility)

You will be told your rights by the mental health staff.

(2) If taken into custody at the person's own residence, the person shall also be provided the following information:

You may bring a few personal items with you, which I will have to approve. Please inform me if you need assistance turning off any appliance or water. You may make a phone call and leave a note to tell your friends or family where you have been taken.

(h) The designated facility shall keep, for each patient evaluated, a record of the advisement given pursuant to subdivision (g) which shall include all of the following:

- (1) The name of the person detained for evaluation.
- (2) The name and position of the peace officer or mental health professional taking the person into custody.
- (3) The date the advisement was completed.
- (4) Whether the advisement was completed.
- (5) The language or modality used to give the advisement.
- (6) If the advisement was not completed, a statement of good cause, as defined by regulations of the State Department of Health Care Services.

(i)(1) Each person admitted to a facility designated by the county for evaluation and treatment shall be given the following information by the admission staff of the facility. The information shall be given orally and in writing and in a language or modality accessible to the person. The written information shall be available to the person in English and in the language that is the person's primary means of communication. Accommodation for other disabilities that may affect communication shall also be provided. The information shall be in substantially the following form:

My name is

My position here is

You are being placed into this psychiatric facility because it is our professional opinion that, as a result of a mental health disorder, you are likely to (check applicable):

- Harm yourself.
- Harm someone else.
- Be unable to take care of your own food, clothing and housing needs

We believe this is true because

(list of the facts upon which the allegation of dangerous or gravely disabled due to mental health disorder is based, including pertinent facts arising from the admission interview).

You will be held for a period of up to 72 hours. During the 72 hours you may also be transferred to another facility. You may request to be evaluated or treated at a facility of your choice. You may request to be evaluated or treated by a mental health professional of your choice. We cannot guarantee the facility or mental health professional you choose will be available, but we will honor your choice if we can.

During these 72 hours you will be evaluated by the facility staff, and you may be given treatment, including medications. It is possible for you to be released before the end of the 72 hours. But if the staff decides that you need continued treatment you can be held for a longer period of time. If you are held for longer than 72 hours, you have the right to a lawyer and a qualified interpreter and a hearing before a judge. If you are unable to pay for the lawyer, then one will be provided to you free of charge.

If you have questions about your legal rights, you may contact the county Patients' Rights Advocate at

Phone number for the county Patients; Rights Advocacy office.

_____.

Your 72-hour period began _____.

(date/time)

(2) If the notice is given in a county where weekends and holidays are excluded from the 72-hour period, the person shall be informed of this fact.

(j) For each person admitted for evaluation and treatment, the facility shall keep with the person's medical record a record of the advisement given pursuant to subdivision (i), which shall include all of the following:

- (1) The name of the person performing the advisement.
- (2) The date of the advisement.
- (3) Whether the advisement was completed.
- (4) The language or modality used to communicate the advisement.
- (5) If the advisement was not completed, a statement of good cause.

(k) A facility to which a person who is involuntarily detained pursuant to this section is transported shall notify the county patients' rights advocate, as defined in [Section 5500](#), if a person has not been released within 72 hours of the involuntary detention.

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Kings County OES

February 2025

Summary

In Kings County, emergency announcements are made by one member of the County Board of Supervisors, who also supervises the Director/Manager of the Kings County Office of Emergency Services.

The Kings County Office of Emergency Services (OES) is a distinct entity with different training requirements than those of the Kings County Fire Department. The Office of Emergency Services is a specialized discipline responsible for Prevention, Protection, Mitigation, Response, and Recovery for all types of disasters, not just fires. Its primary responsibility is to provide general management and oversight for emergency services programs and supporting personnel to mitigate, plan, prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies that occur in Kings County. The Office of Emergency Services Manager provides program oversight, management, and training for disaster preparedness and emergency services programs for Kings County and its Cities. While discussion and tabletop training began in May of 2022, there has yet to be a full-scale exercise completed with county staff.

Kings County citizens would benefit from having the OES under the jurisdiction of the Kings County Sheriff's Office. The Grand Jury recommends this as a temporary placement until such time that money and space become available for the Kings County OES to become its own department. In Kings County, the Sheriff holds an elected position, unlike the Fire Department head, who holds an appointed position. The Sheriff's Department is a larger, more secure department that has better funding opportunities and available administrative support.

Kings County's Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) requires updating, as it was last revised in November 2015 (ten years ago).

Background

In California, a county's governing body or an official designated by local ordinance can declare an emergency. This is usually the Board of Supervisors or the Sheriff, as they are elected officials. In Kings County, one member of the Board of Supervisors has the task of declaring an emergency and oversight of OES. Why would one member be given this responsibility when the board consists of five elected members and OES is meant to have its own mission and independence? It is our opinion that to avoid any semblance of impropriety or inefficiency, the declaration of a county emergency should be handled by someone other than a single Board of Supervisor member.

When local governments face emergencies, the authorized local government official(s), such as a mayor or city manager, may formally declare an emergency.

Kings County OES is part of the State of California's OES Region 5, which also includes Fresno, Madera, Mariposa, Merced, Kern, and Tulare counties.

The Kings County OES is currently located within the Kings County Fire Department's area of control. <https://www.countyofkingsca.gov/departments/public-safety/fire-department/fire-administration-new>

Of the other six agencies that are part of OES Region 5, two member agencies fall under the sheriff's department, two under the health department, one under the fire department, and one reports directly to the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) of its county as follows:

- 1) The Fresno County OES is located within the Department of Public Health and coordinates planning, preparedness, response, and recovery efforts for disasters occurring within the unincorporated area of the County. (<https://www.fresnocountyca.gov/Departments/Public-Health/Emergency-Services/Office-of-Emergency-Services-OES>)
- 2) The Tulare County OES falls under the CAO in the Tulare County organizational chart. (<https://oes.tularecounty.ca.gov/sites/oes/assets/File/EOC%20Org%20Chart.pdf>)
- 3) The Kern County OES is under the Kern County Fire Department. (<https://www.kerncounty.com/home/showpublisheddocument/3712/637604714633270000>)
- 4) The Madera County Sheriff is the Director of Emergency Services pursuant to Madera County Code. The Sheriff's OES is the lead agency during any disaster or emergency. (<https://www.maderacounty.com/government/sheriff/office-of-emergency-services>)
- 5) The Mariposa County OES is housed under the Mariposa County Sheriff's Office. OES coordinates planning and preparedness, response, and recovery efforts for disasters occurring within the unincorporated area of the County. (<https://www.mariposacounty.org/1795/Office-of-Emergency-Services>)
- 6) The Merced County OES is under the Department of Public Health. (<https://www.countyofmerced.com/Directory.aspx?did=93>)

California and Federal Emergency Support Functions (ESFs) delineate the roles of fire services and emergency management. Fire is part of its own ESF (Fire and Rescue), while OES is integrated into the Management (California ESF 5) and the Information and Planning (Federal ESF 5) functions. This structure highlights the importance of OES having its own mission and independence, allowing it to operate as a separate discipline focused on broader coordination, resource management, and strategic planning, not as a sub-function of any fire response. As modern emergencies, including cyber threats, pandemics, and climate change issues, demand specialized leadership in emergency management that is distinct from fire services, this independence is critical for coordinating countywide responses across all hazards, not just fire emergencies.

A local emergency proclamation can be issued when hazardous conditions threaten people, property, or the environment, or have caused significant damage. The purpose of a local emergency proclamation is to activate and provide pre-established emergency provisions, authorize orders and regulations as well as extraordinary police powers, and request state or federal assistance. It allows the local government to quickly make emergency expenditures, bypassing normal procedural requirements related to budgeting and contracting, as well as potentially accessing state and federal reimbursement if such funds become available. A local emergency proclamation includes all cities, regions, and special districts within the Operational Area. Additionally, state and federal authorities can issue emergency declarations and orders that may impact local governments or trigger certain laws.

In Kings County, the Fire Chief's duties include the responsibility to direct and oversee the County's Emergency Operations Center (EOP), including County-wide emergency management training, operations, and plan development and implementation for fire services. His duties do not mention the role of oversight or direct supervision of OES. His role is to be the fire department head and provide support to OES.

The Kings County Fire Department does not supply administrative support for Kings County OES, nor does it have sufficient funds available to provide support for a vibrant OES agency and its needs, such as frequent and professional training. Broad coordination, resource management, and strategic planning for the entire County of Kings are important functions of OES. It has the responsibility to cover Prevention, Protection, Mitigation, Response, and Recovery for all types of disasters, not just fires. Hence, it has different training requirements from those of the Fire Department.

The support role comes from the State of California Governor's Office of Emergency Services' 18 distinct emergency support function document.

<https://www.caloes.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/Preparedness/Documents/05-CalOES-CA-ESF-05-Management-Annex-APR2021.pdf>

Both California and Federal Emergency Support Functions (ESFs) define the roles of fire services and emergency management. Fire is part of its own ESF (Fire and Rescue), while OES is integrated into the Management (California ESF 5) and Information and Planning (Federal ESF 6) functions. OES is a distinct discipline.

Currently, the Kings County OES handles its own clerical work, pays its own bills, and prepares its own agenda items for the Board of Supervisors. These tasks consume significant time that could be spent researching grants and planning for disasters. Professional training of OES staff and Kings County Department heads is slowly taking place. There have been six training courses since 2022 as follows:

- 1) May 2022 – discussion based
- 2) November 2022 – discussion based
- 3) June 2023 – discussion and tabletop components
- 4) July 2023 – discussion and tabletop components
- 5) June 2024 – tabletop
- 6) June 2024 – tabletop

"These discussions and tabletop exercises have allowed participants to explore scenarios, test decision-making, and refine response strategies in a controlled environment." However, no full-scale exercises have been conducted yet. Since there has been only minimal training and exercises, the training plan should be accelerated and given more importance by department heads. Additionally, there has not been an EOP update since 2015, making it difficult to know one's responsibilities and methods to follow without a current updated EOP.

Kings County would be better prepared to handle emergencies if the Kings County OES were to become its own department, thus allowing it to complete its own mission as an independent agency. However, Kings County is a small county and currently lacks the funds to support another independent department. Until Kings County prioritizes emergency preparedness, allowing OES to become its own department starting with one or two members as is currently being done, better support would come from the Sheriff's Office. This is a larger department with better funding opportunities and more personnel, so that the addition of support to the OES manager and staff could be shared by currently existing employees. Personnel duties could be shifted from their normal activities to handle OES duties as needed. An example of this would be a sheriff department's SWAT team, where normal duties are shifted or put on hold when staff are asked to participate in SWAT duties.

Methodology

Site visits were conducted of the OES centers in Kings County and Tulare County.

Interviews were conducted with the OES management teams of Fresno, Kern and Kings Counties.

Internet research was conducted on the Madera, Mariposa, and Merced OES departments.

State of California Planning Best Practices for County Emergency <https://www.caloes.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/Preparedness/Documents/Planning-Best-Practices-for-County-Emergency-Plans-draft.pdf>

Governor's Office of Emergency Services <https://www.caloes.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/Law-Enforcement/Documents/Red-Book-ADA-Compliant.pdf>

Kings County Emergency Services Manager
<http://www.governmentjobs.com/careers/kingscounty/classspecs/newprint/1445036>

Government Jobs <https://governmentjobs.com/careers/kingscounty/classspecs/newprint/65601>

Emergency Support Function Management Annex to the California State Emergency Plan
<https://www.caloes.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/Preparedness/Documents/05-CalOES-CA-ESF-05-Management-Annex-APR2021.pdf>

Kings County OES Basic Operations Plan
<https://www.countyofkingsca.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/15207/636165315566800000>
Or <https://www.kingsoes.com/plans>

Discussion

Currently in Kings County one member of the Board of Supervisors has the task of declaring an emergency and oversight of OES. Depending on the specific needs of the incident the incident commander position could be the Sheriff, Fire Chief, CAO, or OES.

All 58 counties in California are subject to the State of California Governor's Office of Emergency Services best practices for county emergency plans as follows in Appendix A.

<https://www.caloes.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/Preparedness/Documents/Planning-Best-Practices-for-County-Emergency-Plans-draft.pdf>

According to the State of California Governor's Office of Emergency Services there are 18 distinct emergency support functions (ESFs) provided by different agencies. The complete list may be found in Appendix A.

The following are the seven that apply directly to OES:

ESF #2 Communications – (Communications) provides resources, support, and restoration of government emergency telecommunication, including voice and data systems.

Lead agency CA Governor's Office of Emergency Services

ESF #4 Fire and Rescue (Firefighting) – Monitors the status of fire mutual aid activities. Coordinates support activities related to the detection and suppression of urban, rural, and wildland fires, urban search and rescue activities, and provide personnel, equipment, and supplies to support local jurisdiction.

Lead agency California Governor's Office of Emergency Services

ESF #5 Management (Information and Planning) – Coordinates and resolves issues among the CA-ESFs in the four phases of emergency management to ensure consistency in the development and maintenance of the SEP annexes. During emergencies serves as an advisor to the SOC Director.

Lead agency California Governor's Office of Emergency Services

ESF #13 Law Enforcement (Public Safety and Security) – Coordinates state law enforcement personnel and equipment to support responsible law enforcement agencies, coroner activities, Wildland Search and Rescue activities, in accordance with Law Enforcement and Coroner's Mutual Aid Plans.

Lead agency California Governor's Office of Emergency Services

ESF #14 Recovery (Cross-sector Business and Infrastructure) – Supports and enables the recovery of communities affected by extraordinary emergencies or disasters.

Lead agency California Governor's Office of Emergency Services

ESF #15 **Public Information (External Affairs)** – Supports the accurate, coordinated, timely and accessible information to affected audiences, including governments, media, the private sector, and the local populace, including those with access and functional needs.

Lead agency California Governor’s Office of Emergency Services

ESF #18 **Cyber Security (NA)** – Coordinates resources to prepare for, mitigate against, respond to, and recover from a significant cybersecurity event.

Lead agency California Governor’s Office of Emergency Services

Per the State of California Governor’s Office, the following are support functions that fall under the jurisdiction of the OES and do not take a lead role by themselves.

- 1) Communications
- 2) Fire and Rescue (Firefighting)
- 3) Management (Information and Planning)
- 4) Law Enforcement (Public Safety and Security)
- 5) Recovery (Cross-sector Business and Infrastructure)
- 6) Public Information (External Affairs)
- 7) Cyber Security

In Kings County the Fire Chief’s current job description states he has the responsibility to direct multi-unit emergency operations, may serve as Incident Commander, conduct pre-incident planning and deploys assigned resources consistent with incident need, directs firefighting operations to ensure all response activities are conducted in a manner consistent with prescribed policies and procedures. He/she also has the responsibility to direct and oversee the County’s EOP including County-wide emergency management training, operations, and plan development and implementation. It does not mention the roll of the Chief to include oversight or the direct supervision of OES only to be a department head and provide support to OES.

Currently the Kings County OES does its own administrative and clerical duties all the while determining new concept operation plans, data plans and searching for available funding such as grants that might be available.

“Kings County Office of Emergency Services is responsible for developing plans and supporting the development of annexes to the EOP. These plans include the Emergency Operations Plan, Local Hazard Mitigation Plan, and Heating and Cooling Plan”.

Per the Kings County Specification Bulletin, the definition of the Emergency Services Manager is to provide program oversight and management to the disaster preparedness and emergency services programs for Kings County and its Cities, and to perform related duties as required. The primary responsibility is to provide general management for the emergency services programs and supporting personnel to mitigate, plan, prepare, respond, and recover from emergencies for the County.

Per the Kings County Specification Bulletin, the duties of the Emergency Services Manager are many and varied. The complete list may be found in Appendix C.

- 1) Manages and oversees the emergency services program and supporting personnel as assigned.
 - a. Develop program policies, disaster program, procedures and protocols.
 - b. Utilizes data management systems.
 - c. Research and monitor federal, state, and county requirements for new and revised programs.
 - d. Prepares applications, written plans, and formally identifies grant funding opportunities and proposals.
 - e. Monitors and evaluates program performance against projected outcomes,
 - f. Organizes and analyzes data related to the division's goals and objectives.
 - g. Provides technical and professional consultation on complex program matters.
 - h. Prepares and/or directs the preparation of statistical and other reports.
 - i. Oversee the development and procurement of programs and services utilizing request for proposals, request for application, or other procurement tools.
 - j. Evaluates and reports on program and service proposals.
 - k. Prepare contracts, agreements, and other documents.
 - l. Oversee updates of plans to mitigate, respond, and recover from disasters outside the scope of military responsibilities.
 - m. Collaborates in the provision of shelter for disaster victims in Kings County.
 - n. Interprets the program to the public through various media, including newspaper, radio and personal appearances.

Serves as operational coordinator.

- a. Confers with County and City officials on emergency services/disaster preparedness matters.
- b. Serves on state, regional, and/or local government and community agencies as a representative for emergency services.
- c. Conduct research.
- d. Evaluates information.
- e. Prepares correspondence, presentations and maintains records.
- f. Develops, prepares and presents training and educational programs for regular and volunteer personnel and the public.
- g. Develops, prepares and maintains a variety of records, forms and notices.
- h. Develops, administers and monitors budget for emergency services/disaster preparedness programs.
- i. Attends meeting and training within and outside of County.
- j. Develops, implements, evaluates and revises clerical and office systems, procedures and policies for the emergency services program.
- k. Establishes standards of performance for subordinate staff.
- l. Supervises and/or performs the preparation and maintenance of personnel operation, statistical and financial records and reports.
- m. Plans, assigns and reviews work.
- n. Establishes workflow priorities and ensures that deadlines are met.
- o. May supervise non-emergency or clerical employees.

- p. Performs special administrative projects, reports or duties.
- q. May perform other duties as assigned.

Emergency preparedness exercises are typically conducted in a progressive manner,

- 1) starting with discussion-based exercises to introduce concepts and roles
- 2) tabletop exercises to test operational capabilities in a realistic environment
- 3) full-scale exercises to test operational capabilities in a realistic environment.

Our current OES manager began in April of 2022. Since that time the following training has taken place.

- 1) May 2022 – FEMA Public Information in an All-Hazards Incident (discussion-based)
- 2) November 2022 – FEMA Senior Officials Workshop for All-Hazards Preparedness (discussion based)

These initial sessions brought together representatives from County departments, City officials, and community partners, with the intention of fostering an understanding of roles and responsibilities.

- 3) June 2023 – FEMA Crisis Leadership Training (tabletop components included)
- 4) July 2023 – FEMA Emergency Operations Center (EOC) Operations and Planning for All-Hazards (tabletop components included).
- 5) June 2024 – FEMA Whole Community Emergency Management Planning (tabletop)
- 6) June 2024 – FEMA Crisis Leadership Training (tabletop)

“These training courses took place with the intent to allow participants to explore scenarios, test decision-making, and refine response strategies in a controlled environment. With these trainings completed and lessons learned from our flood response efforts, we are prepared to take the next step—conducting a full-scale exercise. This exercise is planned as part of our Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) update which began in December of 2024, and will take place in 2025.” (The last plan was in 2015, ten years ago). The complete OES plan may be found at: <https://www.kingsoes.com/plans>

“This will be a critical milestone in our preparedness efforts. It is essential for County and City leadership to recognize the value of OES and actively engage in these exercises. Their participation is vital not only to understand their roles but also to set an example by requiring full engagement from county departments and stakeholders. Such involvement will ensure that our collective response capabilities are strengthened and that our communities are well-prepared for emergencies.”

Funding for Kings County OES is as follows:

- 1) The primary funding for Kings County OES is through the Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG). The grant provides 50% of the funding, with the other 50% matched by Kings County through the general fund. Currently \$310,175 comes from the grant and \$310,175 from the Kings County general fund.
This funding covers:

- Salaries for the Emergency Services Manager and the Accounting Technician
 - Technology and office supplies
 - Training for staff and emergency response personnel
 - Special projects, such as the ongoing update of our EOP.
- 2) Homeland Security Grant Program (HSGP). This grant supports countywide equipment, training, and logistics for public safety agencies. OES retains 5% for administrative purposes, which amounts to \$11,000.60 from this last year’s allocation. The remaining funds are distributed to:
- County public safety agencies for state-approved projects
 - Initiatives such as Radios, Bomb squad equipment
 - Cybersecurity projects,
 - Elections security projects,
 - Fire, Sheriff and Police equipment
- 3) Jumpstart Grant. This grant totals \$625,000 and funds the salaries of the Emergency Services Coordinator and the Emergency Services Specialist. With each year projected at \$200,000 in expenditure, this funding is anticipated to last until 2027. The plan is for the County of Kings to assume responsibility for these salaries at that time however no concrete plan is yet in place.

During a disaster or emergency, Kings County Emergency Management Organization supports field response operations within the unincorporated areas of the County. When a major emergency or disaster strikes, the EOC is the location where centralized emergency management is performed. It facilitates a coordinated response and provides a central location for information collection and decision-making. It also allows for face-to-face coordination among the decision makers.

“Local Emergency Operations Center (EOC) Activation: Local jurisdictions activate their local EOC based on the magnitude or need for more coordinated management of the emergency. When activated, local EOCs help form a common operating picture (COP) of the incident by collecting, analyzing and disseminating emergency information. The local EOC can also improve the effectiveness of the response by reducing the amount of external coordination of resources by the Incident Command (IC) by providing a single point of contact to support multiagency coordination. When activated the local EOC notifies the OA lead that the local EOC has been activated.”

3.2.1 Director of Emergency Services

As defined by the County Government Code, Chapter 6 – Emergency Services, the member of the Board of Supervisors selected to serve on the Kings County Disaster Council shall be the Director of Emergency Services. The Assistant Director of Emergency Services shall be appointed by the Board of Supervisors.

https://www.municode.com/library/ca/kings_county/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=COOR_CH6EMSE_S6-6DIASDIEMSE

Within the County of Kings government organization, the Kings County Fire Department is responsible to the County Board of Supervisors for the County’s Office of Emergency Management program and has the authority to implement the program goals. The County has

taken the necessary steps and has a grant funded full-time Office of Emergency Management Coordinator that performs the overall emergency management coordination and day-to-day emergency management functions and activities.

The County of Kings emergency management organization is consistent with Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS) and is modeled in a modular fashion based upon the type and size of the incident. As the need arises during an incident, five separate SEMS sections can be activated, each with several sub-units.

- Management
- Operations
- Planning/Intelligence
- Logistics
- Finance/Administration

The following (on page 51) is a chart showing the modules and management organization.

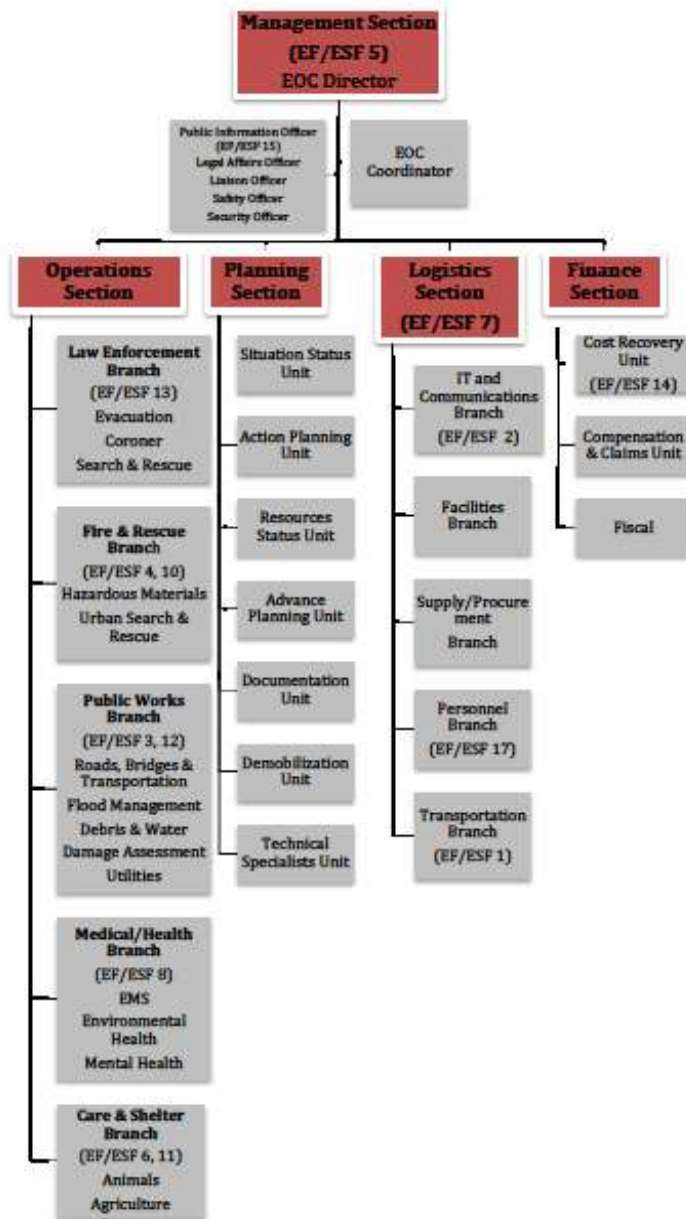


Figure 1 - County of Kings Emergency Operations Center Organization

“During the last emergency declaration in Kings County, the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) was appointed as incident commander because they have the authority to allocate County resources, making them well suited for the role. It is common for the Emergency Services Director, currently an individual Supervisor, to delegate the Incident Commander position based on the specific needs of the incident. It can range from the Sheriff, Fire Chief, CAO or OES. For the flood response, given the involvement of multiple County departments, the CAO was the most logical choice. This structure may change as the Kings County Emergency Operations Plan is updated this year.”

Findings:

F1. In Kings County, emergency declarations are declared by one member of the County Board of Supervisors.

F2. The citizens of Kings County and the Kings County Office of Emergency Services would benefit from being under the Kings County Sheriff’s Office.

F3. Currently there is not adequate or speedy professional training taking place.

F4. The last Emergency Operations Plan was updated in November 2015.

Recommendations:

R1. To avoid any semblance of impropriety or inefficiency, and to define the rolls of county officials, the declaration of a county emergency should be handled by someone other than a single Board of Supervisor member.

R2. The Kings County Office of Emergency Services should be a separate department in the county when the Board of Supervisors makes it a priority and funding becomes available. The Kings County Office of Emergency Services and staff should be under the jurisdiction of the Kings County Sheriff’s Department until such time that funding and space become available for the agency to exist as a stand-alone County department.

R3. The Office of Emergency Services conduct a full-scale training exercise to include the Board of Supervisors, before September 1, 2025, to be followed up by a detailed evaluation and review.

R4. The Kings County Emergency Operations Plan should be given priority and updated by September 1, 2025.

REQUIRED RESPONSE

Pursuant to Penal Code Section § 933 (c), provided in part: “No later than 90 days after the Grand Jury submits a final report on the operations of any public agency subject to its reviewing authority, the governing body of the public agency shall comment to the presiding judge of the superior court on the findings and recommendations pertaining to matters under the control of the governing body and every elected county officer or agency head for which the Grand Jury had responsibility pursuant to Section § 914.1 shall comment within 60 days to the presiding judge of the superior court...”

Board of Supervisors
Kings County Government Center
1400 W. Lacey Blvd.
Hanford, Ca 93230

Kyria Martinez, County Administrative Officer
Kings County Government Center
1400 W. Lacey Blvd.
Hanford, CA 93230

INVITED RESPONSES

Dave Robinson, Sheriff
Coroner-Public Administrator
1550 Kings County Drive
Hanford, Ca 93230

Kings County Fire Chief
280 Campus Drive
Hanford, Ca 93230

SEND FINAL REPORT RESPONSES TO:

Original to:

Judge Jennifer Giuliani, Presiding Judge
Kings County Superior Court
1640 Kings Court Drive
Hanford, CA 93230

Copy to:

Kings County Civil Grand Jury
P O Box #1562
Hanford, CA 93230

Appendix A

According to the State of California Governor's Office of Emergency Services there are 18 distinct emergency support functions (ESFs) provided by different agencies:

ESF #1 Transportation – (Transportations) assists in the management of transportation systems and infrastructure in response to an incident.

Lead agency CA transportation Agency-Caltrans

ESF #2 Communications – (Communications) provides resources, support, and restoration of government emergency telecommunication, including voice and data systems.

Lead agency CA Governor's Office of Emergency Services

ESF #3 Construction and Engineering (Public Works and Engineering) – Organizes the capabilities and resources of the state government to facilitate the delivery of services, technical assistance, engineering expertise, construction management, and other support to local jurisdiction.

Lead agency CA government Operations Agency Department of General Services

ESF #4 Fire and Rescue (Firefighting) – Monitors the status of fire mutual aid activities. Coordinates support activities related to the detection and suppression of urban, rural, and wildland fires, urban search and rescue activities, and provide personnel, equipment, and supplies to support local jurisdiction.

Lead agency California Governor's Office of Emergency Services

ESF #5 Management (Information and Planning) – Coordinates and resolves issues among the CA-ESFs in the four phases of emergency management to ensure consistency in the development and maintenance of the SEP annexes. During emergencies serves as an advisor to the SOC Director.

Lead agency California Governor's Office of Emergency Services

ESF #6 Care and Shelter (Mass Care, Emergency Assistance, Housing and Human Services) – Coordinates actions to assist responsible jurisdictions to meet the needs of victims displaced during an incident including food assistance, clothing, non-medical care and sheltering, family reunification, and victim recovery.

Lead agency California Health and Human Services Agency-Department of Social Services

ESF #7 Resources (Logistics) – Coordinates plans and activities to locate, procure, and pre-position resources to support emergency operations.

Lead agency California Government Operations Agency – Department of General Services

ESF #8 Public Health and Medical (Public Health and Medical Services) – Coordinates Public Health, Environmental Health, and Emergency Medical Services activities in support of local jurisdiction resource needs.

Lead agency California Health and Human Services Agency – Department of Public Health and Emergency Medical Services Authority

ESF #9 Search and Rescue (Search and Rescue) – This emergency support function was merged into CA-ESF 4 Fire and Rescue for Urban Search and Rescue requests and CA-ESF 13 Law Enforcement for Wildland Search and Rescue requests.

Lead agency n/a

ESF #10 Hazardous Materials – Coordinates state resources and supports local jurisdictions in the event of a current or potential threat to public and/or environmental health as a result of a hazardous material release.

Lead agency California Environmental Protection Agency

ESF #11 Food and Agriculture (Agriculture and Natural Resources) -Supports local jurisdictions and coordinates activities in response to an incident that adversely impacts agriculture and food supply, including recovery of impacted industries and resources.

Lead agency California Department of Food and Agriculture

ESF #12 Utilities (Energy) – Provide resources and support to responsible jurisdictions and in partnership with the private sector to restore gas, electric, water, wastewater, and telecommunication systems.

Lead agency California Natural Resources Agency-California Energy Commission and California Utilities Emergency Association

ESF #13 Law Enforcement (Public Safety and Security) – Coordinates state law enforcement personnel and equipment to support responsible law enforcement agencies, coroner activities, Wildland Search and Rescue activities, in accordance with Law Enforcement and Coroner’s Mutual Aid Plans.

Lead agency California Governor’s Office of Emergency Services

ESF #14 Recovery (Cross-sector Business and Infrastructure) – Supports and enables the recovery of communities affected by extraordinary emergencies or disasters.

Lead agency California Governor’s Office of Emergency Services

ESF #15 Public Information (External Affairs) – Supports the accurate, coordinated, timely and accessible information to affected audiences, including governments, media, the private sector, and the local populace, including those with access and functional needs.

Lead agency California Governor’s Office of Emergency Services

ESF #16 Evacuation (NA) – This Emergency Support Function merged into CA-ESF 13 Law Enforcement in August 2013.

ESF #17 Volunteer and Donations Management (Governor’s Office of Planning and Research-California Volunteers) – Supports local jurisdictions to ensure the most efficient and effective use of affiliated and unaffiliated volunteers, organizations, and monetary or in-kind donated resources.

Lead agency Governor’s Office of Planning and Research-California Volunteers

ESF #18 Cyber Security (NA) – Coordinates resources to prepare for, mitigate against, respond to, and recover from a significant cybersecurity event.

Lead agency California Governor’s Office of Emergency Services

Appendix B

California Governor’s Office of Emergency Services State of California Planning Best Practices for County Emergency Plans November 2021

On September 29, 2020, Governor Gavin Newsom signed AB-2968 – County Emergency Plans: Best Practices (Rodriguez) into California law. This amendment to California Government Code section 8593.9 requires Cal OES to develop best practices for counties developing and updating a county emergency plan, by January 1, 2022. This document aims to meet the requirements of that law.

1.1 – The County has a current, approved base emergency plan.

It is a California best practice for each county to have a current emergency plan for the county’s response to emergencies and disasters. This plan should be capable of execution during both emergency and non-emergency situations, such as pre-planned special events, with inter-agency coordination.

1.5 – The County identifies how the emergency plan intersects with other emergency plans in the County.

FEMA’s CPG 101 states that “planners achieve unity of purpose by coordinating and integrating plans across all levels of government, nonprofit organizations, the private sector, and individuals and families.” This coordination supports the fundamental principle that, in many situations, emergency management and homeland security operations start locally and expand to include other government and private sector resources as the affected jurisdiction requires additional support.

The Emergency Plan Definition

An emergency plan is a document that defines the scope of preparedness and emergency management activities necessary for that jurisdiction to effectively respond to a large-scale incident or disaster. The government at each jurisdiction is responsible for ensuring that necessary and appropriate actions are taken to protect people, property, and the environment from the consequences of emergencies and disasters. An emergency plan formalizes how resources are to be used in diverse scenarios and which courses of action should be taken so that the community has a plan for several types of response operations.

Legal Requirements for an Emergency Plan Government Code section 8610 of the Emergency Services Act (ESA) permits cities and counties to form Local Disaster Councils (LDCs). If established, these councils are required to approve the development of emergency plans and send a copy of these plans to the State Office of Emergency Services. Pursuant to Government Code section 8593.9, the

California Governor’s Office of Emergency Services (CalOES) is required to review ten (10) county emergency plans each year and confirm:

1. Whether the plan is consistent with Cal OES’ proposed best practices.
2. Whether the plan protects and accommodates vulnerable populations during natural disasters.
3. Whether the plan has established procedures for alerting, evacuating, and sheltering individuals during an emergency.
4. Any other necessary and appropriate element, as determined by Cal OES.

An emergency plan is the base plan for the response operations that occur in a county. Emergency plans describing response operations may also be called:

- Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP)
- Emergency Operations Plan (EOP)
- Facility Emergency Response Plan
- General Plan – Safety Element
- County Emergency Management Plan (EMP)

Assembly Bill 2311 (Brown, Chapter 520, 2016), which added California Government Code section 8593.3, requires each county and city to integrate access and functional needs upon the next update to its emergency response plan. Assembly Bill 477 (Cervantes, Chapter 218, 2019), further amends California Government Code section 8593.3, requiring each county and city to include representatives from access and functional needs populations in the next regular update to its emergency plan. Specifically, jurisdictions must include internal and external stakeholders throughout each phase of the emergency planning process in:

- Emergency communications
- Emergency evacuations
- Emergency sheltering.

The Definition of “Best Practice”

Best practices for county emergency plans are methods or techniques which have generally been accepted by diverse groups of professionals and practitioners well-versed in emergency management as superior to any alternatives because it produces results that are prescribed as being correct or most effective or has become a standard way of doing things. Following the Camp Fire in 2018, experts agreed that there is a need to socialize best practices from those agencies that respond to major incidents with other public safety and emergency management agencies so that other jurisdictions may benefit from their expertise and best practices can become better known.

1.5.1 – Detail intersection with General Plan

California Government Code section 65300 requires every county to adopt a comprehensive, long-term general plan for the physical development of that jurisdiction. The general plan is the jurisdiction’s blueprint of the future. It expresses community goals and embodies public policy that is the basis for all land-use decisions.

The goal of the safety element within the General Plan is to reduce the potential short and long-term risk of death, injuries, property damage, and economic and social dislocation resulting from fires, floods, droughts, earthquakes, landslides, climate change, and other hazards. Other locally relevant safety issues, such as airport land use, emergency response, hazardous materials spills, and crime reduction, may also be included. Some local jurisdictions have chosen to incorporate their emergency management plans into their safety elements.

Best Practice Examples for Operational Coordination 3.1 – County identified EOC activation criteria
Incidents that impact an entire county will also affect multiple departments within the county’s government. This means that the EOC should be activated. The purpose of a fully activated EOC is to manage large-scale and complex unusual occurrences.

Each department in the county should consider establishing a Department Operations Center (DOC) to maintain operational oversight of events and request resources through the county’s EOC. This will ensure proper request and approval processes are followed and limit the span of control of any one organization.

3.4.5 – Detail interface between county EOC and Volunteer and Non-Governmental Organizations

It is a California best practice for counties to consider incorporating a dedicated non-governmental organization (NGO) role into the EOC. This provides an opportunity for the county EOCs to leverage input from VOAD or Community Organizations Active during Disaster.

Ensure that volunteer organizations are represented in EOCs and ensure field organizations are aware of their deployment. During the 2008 Mid-Year California Fires, there was a lack of knowledge and coordination between emergency managers, volunteer programs, and resources available to assist during disasters.

Plans should address the use of a Volunteer Management Unit in the unified command structure. In training, reinforce the Disaster Service Worker (DSW) responsibility of staff to serve when needed. Additionally, plans should address processes for receiving and managing spontaneous volunteers.

7.5 – County has current Volunteer and Donations Management Plan

Counties should identify the strategy for volunteer management overall, create a working group of partners, and develop a Spontaneous Volunteer Management Plan and/or Annex to the EOP and incorporate these findings from the Camp Fire.¹ It is a California best practice for counties to have a current Volunteer and Donations Management Plan. The plan should be trained to and then validated through a planned exercise.

7.5.1 – Detail the county’s volunteer engagement program

Counties should plan, prepare to deal with, and use spontaneous volunteer resources early in an incident.¹³ Counties should implement and update a plan that will enable local and state government agencies to effectively utilize volunteers in a timely and safe manner, even during potentially hazardous incidents (i.e., an oil spill response).

Scalable

It is a California best practice for counties to ensure the Spontaneous Volunteer Management Plan which identifies multiple strategies flexible enough to scale up or down depending on the size of the incident and allows for a robust volunteer system. Counties should pre-identify specific documentation and form requirements for Emergency Volunteer Centers (EVCs), including badging/credentialing, and volunteer tracking. Counties should ensure that messaging regarding the volunteer deployment process is clear and persistent across multiple mediums.

Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Volunteer groups provided invaluable support and assistance in non-suppression, support roles, freeing fire suppression personnel to focus on firefighting activities during the 2007 Orange County Santiago Fire. Formal structures for volunteer engagement are effective to support response and recovery efforts. There are many variations of

CERTs (e.g., Neighbor Emergency Response Team (NERT), etc.). Counties should consider developing training programs for residents and employers in emergency response techniques.

During the North Complex Fire, Butte County activated its CERT as a call center to provide information to those impacted by the fire. They had up-to-date GIS maps from the Sheriff's Office as well as the county's information services office. CERT teams can support the first responders during wildland fires but need appropriate training. Through county plan development and other forums, counties can provide training to local first responders on the capacity and proper involvement of volunteer resource teams, such as CERTs, Medical Reserve Corps, Volunteers in Police Service, and others.

8.3 – County Shelter Plan includes pets and large animals

Counties should work with county agricultural commissioners and the local office of emergency services to identify the best methods of supporting pet populations and at what SEMS level during emergency activations. Counties need to develop and practice their animal plans. This should include linkage with law enforcement and fire agencies. Emergency plans also need to address possible co-location of human and animal shelters, including support of service animals who may accompany people with disabilities. More work with non-profit animal care groups should be considered to ensure they integrate into disaster response. Emergency animal sheltering may incorporate the needs of all major categories: search and rescue, shelter locations, and veterinarian care. Pre-incident planning is needed to identify resources: people, places, populations, and types of animals per jurisdiction.

10.3.1 – Detail the county's program for amateur radio communications

It is recommended that every county develop and implement a plan for the use of radio amateurs. The system should provide for self-activated, automatic response coverage at all major points in the community, complete system redundancy, adequate training in the emergency role, and acceptance and integration into the emergency organization structure.

Amateur "ham" radio operators have proved valuable in many disasters. In many cases, amateur radio communications are the first system in operation after a disaster, and often the most extensive system utilized.⁴⁸

Many ham radio operators meet regularly via radio on a net to check in using their FCC-licensed call sign. These experienced communications individuals may also be members of organized groups such as Auxiliary Communications Service (ACS), Amateur Radio Relay League (ARRL), Amateur Radio Emergency Services (ARES), or Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (RACES). These groups can exponentially increase situational awareness during an incident.

10.3.2 – Detail region's program for amateur radio communications

It is further recommended that each regional office of emergency services develop an amateur radio capability, including radio equipment, antenna, stand-by volunteer organization, training, and recognition. If the regions are to have a true amateur radio capability, then their organization must also be self-

activating and must provide for complete system redundancy.

For more information on best practices please visit:

<https://www.caloes.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/Preparedness/Documents/Planning-Best-Practices-for-County-Emergency-Plans-draft.pdf>

Appendix C

Per the Kings County Specification Bulletin, the duties of the Emergency Services Manager are as follows:

- 2) Manages and oversees the emergency services program and supporting personnel as assigned.
 - o. Develop program policies, disaster program, procedures and protocols.
 - p. Utilizes data management systems.
 - q. Research and monitor federal, state, and county requirements for new and revised programs.
 - r. Prepares applications, written plans, and formally identifies grant funding opportunities and proposals.
 - s. Monitors and evaluates program performance against projected outcomes,
 - t. Organizes and analyzes data related to the division's goals and objectives.
 - u. Provides technical and professional consultation on complex programming matters.
 - v. Prepares and/or directs the preparation of statistical and other reports.
 - w. Oversee the development and procurement of programs and services utilizing request for proposals, request for application, or other procurement tools.
 - x. Evaluates and reports on program and service proposals.
 - y. Prepare contracts, agreements, and other documents.
 - z. Oversee updates of plans to mitigate, respond, and recover from disasters outside the scope of military responsibilities.
 - aa. Collaborates in the provision of shelter for disaster victims in Kings County.
 - bb. Interprets the program to the public through various media, including newspaper, radio and personal appearances.
- 3) Serves as operational coordinator.
 - r. Confers with County and city officials on emergency services/disaster preparedness matters.
 - s. Serves on state, regional, and/or local government and community agencies as a representative for emergency services.
 - t. Conduct research.
 - u. Evaluates information.
 - v. Prepares correspondence, presentations and maintains records.

- w. Develops, prepares and presents training and educational programs for regular and volunteer personnel and the public.
- x. Develops, prepares and maintains a variety of records, forms and notices.
- y. Develops, administers and monitors budget for emergency services/disaster preparedness programs.
- z. Attends meeting and training within and outside of County.
- aa. Develops, implements, evaluates and revises clerical and office systems, procedures and policies for the emergency services program.
- bb. Establishes standards of performance for subordinate staff.
- cc. Supervises and/or performs the preparation and maintenance of personnel operation, statistical and financial records and reports.
- dd. Plans, assigns and reviews work.
- ee. Establishes workflow priorities and ensures that deadlines are met.
- ff. May supervise non-emergency or clerical employees.
- gg. Performs special administrative projects, reports or duties.
- hh. May perform other duties as assigned.

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Kings County Policy and Procedure Manual

Special District Disbursements

May 2025

Summary

Kings County currently lacks any written manual detailing policies and procedures for disbursing funds to special districts including but not limited to Cemetery Districts and Community Service Districts. The citizens of Kings County have a right to know where their money goes. For transparency, Kings County should create a manual to track and regulate any fund disbursements.

Background

Special districts (see Appendix A) are public corporations formed to perform particular governmental functions within a specific territory. Such districts first appeared in California after the legislature passed the Wright Act of 1887 to establish a system of irrigation districts. Special districts provide focused public services such as fire protection, sewers, water supply, electricity, parks, recreation, sanitation, cemeteries and libraries. They are a form of government, governed by a board, providing specific services and facilities, have defined boundaries and are funded by property taxes, service fees, special assessments, bonds and grants. Special districts may be created under general law, or under appropriate circumstances, a special act and they can only exercise those powers conferred on them by the legislature.

During the COVID-19 pandemic (“covid”), special districts in Kings County faced significant hardships, with cemetery districts and community service districts being particularly affected. Cemetery districts struggled with the increased number of deaths, while community service districts dealt with numerous residents falling behind on water bill payments. In response to these challenges, the Kings County Board of Supervisors disbursed American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to assist these special districts. The Board allocated varying amounts to three (3) Cemetery Districts and four (4) Community Service Districts, with each district receiving a different amount. Notably, the special districts did not formally request this financial assistance.

The disbursement process lacked several standard accountability measures. No written requests were required from the districts demonstrating their need for funds. The agreements did not stipulate that the money would need to be repaid to the County. Additionally, the districts were not required to provide receipts documenting how the funds were spent, nor was any formal auditing process implemented to track this use of public funds.

The Kings County Civil Grand Jury contacted the County Board of Supervisors, the County Counsel, the County Finance Department and other County Staff to obtain a manual of policy and procedures regarding the disbursement of county funds to special districts including Cemetery Districts and Community Service Districts in Kings County. No policy and procedures written manual could be

found on the private departmental intranet, or the public internet regarding disbursement of funds to special districts such as Cemetery Districts or Community Service Districts within Kings County.

There are currently no rules, requirements or procedures to follow for a special district to ask for funds, show the need, purpose, or amount of those funds or any requirement to produce receipts. How does one track and account for the disbursement of public funds? Again, where is the accountability?

The citizens of Kings County have a right to know where their money goes. There should be transparency and accountability when dealing with taxpayer funds. This could be accomplished by having a written published Policy and Procedures Manual which includes all regulations regarding public funds available for reference.

Methodology

The documents reviewed were as follows:

Institute for Local Government <https://www.ca-ilg.org/post/about-special-districts>

The Kings County General Website
<https://www.countyofkingsca.gov/about-us>

The Kings County Financial Department Website
<https://www.countyofkingsca.gov/departments/administration/finance-department>

The Kings County Administrative Department Website
<https://www.countyofkingsca.gov/departments/administration/county-administration>

The people interviewed were as follows:

- Kings County Board of Supervisor members
- Kings County Board of Supervisors Staff
- Kings County Administrative Staff
- Kings County Finance Department Staff
- Kings County County Counsel

Discussion

California Government Code section 56036 defines a Special District as follows:

“‘ District’ or ‘special district’ are synonymous and mean an agency of the state, formed pursuant to general law or special act, for the local performance of governmental or proprietary functions within limited boundaries.”

“‘District’ or ‘special district’ includes a county service area but excludes all of the following: (1) The state. (2) A county. (3) A city. (4) A school district or community college district. (5) An assessment district or special assessment district. (6) An improvement district. (7) A community facilities district formed pursuant to the Mello-Roos Community Facilities Act of 1982. (8) A permanent road division. (9) An air pollution control district or an air quality maintenance district. (10) A zone of any special district.”

Special districts have only those powers conferred on them by the legislature. (Los Angeles County Flood Control Dist. V Southern Cal Edison Co. (1958 51 C2d 331, 336; In re Bonds of Madera Irrig. Dist. (1891) 92 C 296, 315; Turlock Irrig. Dist. V Hetrick (1999) 71 CA4th 948, 952.) Actions by a special district that exceed its statutory authority are void. (Water Replenishment Dist. Of S. Cal. V City of Cerritos (2012) 202 CA 4th 1063, 1072.)

Special districts have been variously characterized as “public corporations,” “municipal corporations,” “quasi-municipal corporations,” “state agencies,” “public agencies,” “agencies or auxiliaries of the state,” and by a variety of other descriptions, depending on the purpose for which the classification is being made. Regardless of classification, such districts have only those limited powers specified by the legislature.

Special districts may be categorized by several characteristics:

1. Voters: A landowner-voter district is one whose principal act provides that owners of land within the district are entitled to vote on district matters. A registered-voter district is one whose principal act provides that registered voters residing within the district are entitled to vote on district matters.
2. Dependent or independent: Special districts may have their own governing board, or they may be governed by an existing general-purpose government (i.e., a city or county). Special districts governed by an existing county board of supervisors or city council are known as dependent districts. Those with their own elected or appointed governing boards are known as independent special districts.
3. Enterprise or non-enterprise: Special districts that rely primarily on the ability to charge fees for their services are known as enterprise districts. Those that rely primarily on general revenues, such as property taxes, are known as non-enterprise districts.
4. Single function or multifunction: Special districts that provide only one type of public service are known as single-function districts; those that provide more than one service are known as multifunction districts.

The Kings County Civil Grand Jury reached out to the staff of the Kings County Board of Supervisors, Kings County Finance Department, and Kings County Administrative Departments. Various Kings County websites were viewed to obtain a copy of existing policy and procedures regarding the disbursement of County funds to Kings County Special Districts such as Cemetery Districts and Community Service Districts.

No manual of policy and procedures regarding disbursement of funds (1) was provided by Staff, (2) could be found on any of the Kings County websites available to the public, or (3) could be found on the Kings County Administrative or Kings County Financial Intranet (a department’s in-house website).

The Kings County Administrative Staff did provide the Grand Jury with documentation that included contracts between the Kings County Board of Supervisors and the Corcoran, Hanford and Lemoore Cemetery Districts about disbursements of ARPA funds. The special districts in Kings County, such as the Cemetery Districts and Community Service Districts, did not apply or officially request funds from the Kings County Board of Supervisors.

The agreements regarding disbursement of ARPA Funds between the Kings County Board of Supervisors and the Cemetery Districts of Kings County were as follows:

**Corcoran Cemetery District
Disbursement of ARPA Funds**

“The County shall grant Recipient \$100,000.00 and the Recipient shall use the funds to cover increased operational costs caused by the substantial increase in deaths in Kings County due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This funding is a one (1) time lump sum payment, and Recipient shall not use the Grant Funds to supplant funding from any other sources. The County shall release \$100,000.00 of the Grant Funds to Recipient upon full execution of this Agreement. Recipient shall allow the County to audit Recipient’s records to determine if the funds have been used in accordance with this Agreement.”

Agreement #23-004 January 10, 2023 \$100,000.00

**Hanford Cemetery District
Disbursement of ARPA Funds**

“The County shall grant Recipient \$260,000.00 and the Recipient shall use the funds to cover increased operational costs caused by the substantial increase in deaths in Kings County due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This funding is a one (1) time lump sum payment, and Recipient shall not use the Grant Funds to supplant funding from any other sources. The County shall release \$260,000.00 of the Grant Funds to Recipient upon full execution of this Agreement. Recipient shall allow the County to audit Recipient’s records to determine if the funds have been used in accordance with this Agreement.”

Agreement #22-208 January 10, 2023 \$260,000.00

**Lemoore Cemetery District
Disbursement of ARPA Funds**

“The County shall grant Recipient \$140,000.00 and the Recipient shall use the funds to cover increased operational costs caused by the substantial increase in deaths in Kings County due to the

Home Garden Community Service District
Disbursement of ARPA Funds

	Round 1 Agreement #2021-08 April 5, 2022	Round 2 Agreement #2022-045 October 3, 2023	Total
Water	\$113,430.06	\$73,041.98	
Sewer	\$18,368.84	\$0.00	
Trash	\$19,039.80	\$20,632.56	
Total	\$150,838.70	\$93,674.54	\$244,513.24

Kettleman City Community Service District
Disbursement of ARPA Funds

	Round 1 Agreement #21-148 November 9, 2021	Round 2 Agreement #22-124 August 9, 2022	Total
Water	\$31,789.37	Breakdown N/A	
Sewer	\$19,889.35	Breakdown N/A	
Trash	\$13,019.45	Breakdown N/A	
Total	\$64,698.17	\$23,043.00	\$87,741.17

Stratford Community Service District
Disbursement of ARPA Funds

	Round 1 Agreement #21-147 November 9, 2021	Round 2 Agreement #21-147.1 October 18, 2022	Total
Water	\$17,119.88	\$8,401.13	
Sewer	\$18,191.80	\$8,760.51	
Trash	\$6,942.00	\$3,409.56	
Total	\$42,253.68	\$20,571.20	\$62,824.88

Total not to exceed \$500,000.00

Total Spent

\$461,808.92

The Kings County Civil Grand Jury could not find that any official requests were made for funds, nor were any audits of disbursements required or conducted of the Community Service Districts to determine how the funds had been used. The intent was for the funds to be allocated towards resident's utility bills in arrears specifically for water, sewer and trash. The funds were not to be used for late fees, overage charges, streetlights or commercial accounts in the community. There has not been any tracking and/or auditing completed.

Findings:

F1. No Policy and Procedures Manual could be found regarding the requirements to receive or disbursement and audits of County funds to Special Districts in Kings County.

F2. American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds were disbursed by request of the Kings County Board of Supervisors to the three Cemetery Districts (Special Districts) in Kings County between December of 2022 and January of 2023. Specifically, Corcoran Cemetery District received \$100,000.00, Hanford Cemetery District received \$260,000.00, and Lemoore Cemetery District received \$140,000.00. This was done without any formal requests or justification by the Cemetery Districts, and no tracking or auditing was done by Kings County to ensure funds were allocated in compliance with applicable agreements.

F3. American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds were disbursed by request of the Kings County Board of Supervisors to the four Community Service Districts (Special Districts) in Kings County between November of 2021 and October 2023. These funds were to be allocated towards residents' utility bills in arrears in the community. Specifically, Armona Community Services District received \$66,729.63, Home Garden Community Services District received \$244,513.24, Kettleman City Community Services District received \$87,741.17, and Stratford Public Utility District received \$62,824.88. This was done without any formal requests or written justification by the Community Service Districts, and no tracking or auditing has been done by Kings County to ensure funds were allocated and/or utilized in compliance with the applicable agreements.

Recommendations:

R1. A policy and procedures manual shall be developed and published regarding the requirements for disbursement of public funds to Special Districts in Kings County by September 1, 2025.

R2. Audits shall be conducted of American Rescue Plan Act funds that were disbursed to the Special Cemetery Districts of Corcoran, Hanford and Lemoore by August 1, 2025.

R3. Audits shall be conducted of American Rescue Plan Act funds that were disbursed to the Special Community Service Districts of Armona, Home Garden, Kettleman City and Stratford by August 1, 2025.

R1/2/3. Future disbursements to special districts should be subject to formal application processes, clearly defined eligibility criteria, and mandatory reporting requirements to ensure proper use of public funds.

REQUIRED RESPONSE

Penal Code Section 933 (c) provides in pertinent part: “No later than 90 days after the Grand Jury submits a final report on the operations of any public agency subject to its reviewing authority, the governing body of the public agency shall comment to the presiding judge of the Superior Court on the findings and recommendations pertaining to matters under the control of the governing body and every elected county officer or agency head for which the Grand Jury had responsibility pursuant to Section 914.1 shall comment within 60 days to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court...”

Kings County Board of Supervisors
1400 W. Lacey Boulevard
Hanford, Ca 93230

INVITED RESPONSES

Kyria Martinez, CAO
County of Kings
1400 W. Lacey Blvd, Bld. 7
Hanford, CA 93230

Erik Ureña, Director of Finance
County of Kings
1400 W. Lacey Blvd, Bld. 7
Hanford, Ca 93230

SEND FINAL REPORT RESPONSES TO:

Original to:

Judge Jennifer Giuliani, Presiding Judge
Kings County Superior Court
1640 Kings Court Drive
Hanford, CA 93230

Copy to:

Kings County Civil Grand Jury
P O Box #1562
Hanford, CA 93232

Appendix A

**TITLE 5 - LOCAL AGENCIES
DIVISION 3 - CORTESE-KNOX-HERTZBERG LOCAL GOVERNMENT
REORGANIZATION ACT OF 200
PART 1 - GENERAL
CHAPTER 2 - Definitions
Section 56036.**

(a) "District" or "special district" are synonymous and mean an agency of the state, formed pursuant to general law or special act, for the local performance of governmental or proprietary functions within limited boundaries and in areas outside district boundaries when authorized by the commission pursuant to Section 56133.

(b) "District" or "special district" includes a county service area, but excludes all of the following:

- (1) The state.
- (2) A county.
- (3) A city.
- (4) A school district or a community college district.
- (5) An assessment district or special assessment district.
- (6) An improvement district.
- (7) A community facilities district formed pursuant to the Mello-Roos Community Facilities Act of 1982 (Chapter 2.5 (commencing with Section 53311) of Part 1 of Division 2 of Title 5).
- (8) A permanent road division formed pursuant to Article 3 (commencing with Section 1160) of Chapter 4 of Division 2 of the Streets and Highways Code.
- (9) An air pollution control district or an air quality maintenance district.
- (10) A zone of any special district.

(Amended by Stats. 2011, Ch. 300, Sec. 23. (AB 1430) Effective January 1, 2012.)

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County Government Committee



Kathy Bare, Chairperson
Jose Macias, Co-Chair

Joe Curry
John DeNicola
Brenda Fredrick
Sue Gavini
Dick Hoffmaster
Kevin Jenkins
Joe Koutny
Gary Leasure

Greg Martinez
Karen Ormsby
Shirley Rowe
Kevin Scott
David Thomas
Bill Watson
Nya Whitmore

County Government Committee, Letters Sent

Kings County

Name	Position	Date
Lydia Ritchie	Home Garden Community Service District	7/25/2024
Abraham Valencia	Kings County OES	8/1/2024
Salvador Flores	Kings County Fire Chief	8/1/2024
Leonard Bakker	Chief Probation Officer	8/9/2024
Vikki Cervantes	Library Director	8/15/2024
David Robinson	Kings County Sheriff	8/16/2024
Joe Neves	Kings County Supervisor District 1	8/29/2024
Sarah Hacker	Kings County District Attorney	8/30/2024
Terri Meorado	Fresno County Dept of Public Health, OES	9/5/2024
Doug Verboon	Kings County Supervisor District 3	9/6/2024
Georginna Armstrong	Kern County Fire Dept, OES	9/26/2024
Rusty Robinson	Kings County Supervisor District 4	10/4/2024
Erik Urena	Kings County Finance Director	10/15/2024
Ashley Sodini	Kings County Animal Services Manager	10/17/2024
Carolyn Leist	Kings County Director Human Resources	11/7/2024
Shiela Cox-Lindsay		11/21/2024
Robert Thayer	Kings County Supervisor District 5	1/15/2025
Lupe Villa	Kings County Registrar of Voters	1/16/2025
Richard Valle	Kings County Supervisor District 2	1/17/2025
Erik Urena	Kings County Finance Director	1/23/2025
Catherine Venturella	Clerk of the Board of Supervisors	1/23/2025
Angie Dow	Director Kings County Area Public Transit Agency	3/27/2025
Parveen Sandhu	Director Kings Waste & Recycling Authority	4/3/2025
Chuck Kinney	Kings Community Development Agency & LAFCO	4/10/2025
Kyria Martinez	Kings County Chief Administrative Officer	4/10/2025
Terri King	Kings County Association of Government-KCAG	4/22/2025
Bob Henry	Senior District Manager Waste Management	4/24/2025

Health and Education Committee



Dick Hoffmaster, Chairperson
Karen Ormsby, Co-Chair

Kathy Bare
Joe Curry
John DeNicola
Brenda Fredrick
Arnie Garza
Sue Gavini
Kevin Jenkins

Joe Koutny
Jose Macias
Shirley Rowe
David Thomas
Bill Watson
Ronney Wong

Health and Education Committee, Letters Sent

Name	Position	Date
Dr. Lisa Lewis	Kings County Behavioral Health Director	8/13/2024
Rose Mary Rahn	Kings County Department of Public Health Director	8/20/2024
Todd Barlow	King County Office of Education Director	8/27/2024
Lisa Rogers	Kings View Director	9/3/2024
Frank Ruiz	Avenal School District Superintendent	9/17/2024
Paul Van Loon	Pioneer Elementary School Superintendent	10/15/2024
Sara Florez	Program Director Adolescent Services WestCare	10/29/2024
Cheryl Hunt	Lemoore Elementary School District Superintendent	11/19/2024
Jamison Whitting	Lemoore Middle College	2/18/2025
Paul Van Loon	Pioneer Elementary School	3/4/2025
Nicole Mora	Jamison High School	3/11/2025

Law and Public Safety Committee



Greg Martinez, Chairperson
Kevin Jenkins, Co-Chair

Kathy Bare
Joe Curry
Brenda Fredrick
Arnie Garza
Sue Gavini
Dick Hoffmaster
Gary Leasure

Jose Macias
Karen Ormsby
Shirley Rowe
Kevin Scott
David Thomas
Bill Watson
Ronney Wong

Law & Public Safety Committee, Letters Sent

Name	Position	Date
Andrew Mazza	County Sheriff Explorer Program	7/29/2024
David Roberson	Kings County Sheriff	7/29/2024
Travis Daniels	Corcoran Community Service Officer	8/19/2024
Steven Chee	Corcoran Police Department, Sergeant	8/19/2024
Margarita Ochoa	Chief Corcoran Police Department	8/23/2024
Leonard Bakker	Chief Probation Officer	
Cecilio Velasco	Chief Avenal Police Department	9/9/2024
Victor Medina	Hanford Police Explorer Program	9/9/2024
Salvador Flores	Kings County Fire Chief	9/23/2024
Dan Perkins	Hanford Fire Chief	10/7/2024
Ashley Schuller	Avenal State Prison	10/21/2024
Brent Urban	AA/PIO SATAF	11/4/2024
Leonard Bakker	Chief Probation Officer	1/27/2025
Stephenie Huddleston	Chief Hanford Police Department	1/13/2025
Michael Kendall	Chief Lemoore Police Department	1/13/2025
Margarita Ocha	Chief Corcoran Police Department	1/20/2025
	Corcoran Police Department	2/10/2025
Ramon Collier	Detentions LT.	2/24/2025
Kristina Morris	Detentions LT.	2/24/2025
Chris Barsteceanu	Assistant Sheriff Kings County Sheriff's Office	2/24/2025
David Robinson	Kings County Sheriff	2/24/2025
Monique Williams	Warden Chowchilla Women's Prison	3/3/2025
Anissa De La Cruz	Assistant Warden Chowchilla Women's Prison	3/3/2025
	Lemoore Police Department	3/24/2025
	Hanford Police Department	3/24/2025
Colten Verhoeven	Kings County Sheriff K-9 Handler	3/31/2025
David Robinson	Kings County Sheriff	3/31/2025
Kelsea Beaver	Kings County Sheriff K-9 Handler	3/31/2025
Wayne Brabant	Kings County Coroner and K-9	3/31/2025

Barbara Blackburn	Kings County Coroner Office Investigative Tech.	4/7/2025
Cecilio Velasco	Chief Avenal Police Department	4/12/2025
Carlos Santos	Senior Ag Detective, Kings County Sheriff's Office	6/2/2025
Matthew Washburn	Seargent, Kings County Sheriff's Office	6/13/2025

Detention Facility Statement

Overview

Penal Code section 919(b) obligates the Grand Jury to “inquire into the condition and management of the “public prisons within the county”. Per the California Attorney General’s opinion No. 18-103, a public prison includes “local detention facilities” which typically includes county or city jails as well as state prisons.

The purpose of this document is to provide information about how the Kings County Civil Grand Jury fulfilled this duty.

While Penal Code section 919(b) requires this inquiry, it does not require the grand jury to conduct an investigation or to write a report about the detention facilities.

Local Detention Facilities Within Kings County

The following are the detention facilities located within Kings County.

- Avenal State Prison. On October 21, 2024, grand jurors were given an overview and tour of the facility by the prison staff.
- California State Prison Corcoran. On November 18, 2024, grand jurors were given an overview and tour of the facility by
- Avenal Police Department. On April 14, 2025, grand jurors were given an overview and tour of the facility by
- Corcoran Police Department. On February 10, 2025, grand jurors were given an overview and tour of the facility by
- California Substance Abuse Treatment Facility State Prison. On November 4, 2024, grand jurors were given an overview and tour of the facility by the prison staff.
- Kings County Probation Department-Juvenile Hall. On January 27, 2025, grand jurors were given an overview and tour of the facility by the Probation Department.
- Kings County Jail. On February 24, 2025, grand jurors were given an overview and tour of the facility by the Sheriff’s Department staff.
- Hanford Police Department. On March 24, 2025, grand jurors were given an overview and tour of the department by staff.
- Lemoore Police Department. On March 24, 2025, grand jurors were given an overview and tour of the police department by staff.

Conclusion

The grand jury’s legal obligation to inquire into the condition and management of each local detention facility within the County of Kings was satisfied by touring all nine facilities, reviewing documents and interviewing each facilities staff.

Local Government Committee



Gary Leasure, Chairperson
Joe Koutny, Co-Chair

Kathy Bare
Joe Curry
Brenda Fredrick
Arnie Garza
Sue Gavini
Dick
Hoffmaster
Kevin Jenkins

Jose Macias
Greg Martinez
Shirley Rowe
Kevin Scott
David Thomas
Bill Watson
Nya Whitmore
Ronney Wong

Local Government Committee, Letters Sent

Name	Position	Date
Antony Lopez	Avenal City Manager	8/14/2024
Kevin Northcraft	Interim Lemoore City Manager	8/21/2024
Greg Gatzka	Corcoran City Manager	9/4/2024
Mario CiFuentez	Hanford City Manager	9/11/2024
Joshlynn Valdez	Lemoore Finance Director	10/2/2024
Chris Tavarez	Hanford Finance Director	10/9/2024
Sabrina Bustamonte	Tulare County Office of Emergency Services	10/19/2024
Terry Sayre	Tulare City Mayor	10/19/2024
Griesdla Price	Avenal Director of Admin Services	10/16/2024
Sandra Pineda	Corcoran Finance Director	10/23/2024
Marissa Trejo	Lemoore City Manager	1/8/2025
Brad Albert	Hanford Parks and Community Services Director	1/21/2025
Mario CiFuentez	Hanford City Manager	1/22/2025
Louis Martinez	Mayor Hanford City Council	2/19/2025
Patricia Matthews	Mayor Lemoore City Council	3/5/2025
Alvara Precido	Mayor Avenal City Council	3/19/2025
Kelly Granger	Armona District Water Manager	4/9/2025
Sid Palmerin	Mayor Corcoran City Council	4/16/2025

RESPONSES TO 2024-2025 FINAL REPORT



COUNTY OF KINGS BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

GOVERNMENT CENTER HANFORD, CALIFORNIA 93230 (559) 852-2362
Catherine Venturella, Clerk of the Board of Supervisors

AGENDA ITEM September 10, 2024

SUBMITTED BY: Administration – Kyria Martinez/Veronica Mello

SUBJECT: RESPONSES TO GRAND JURY REPORTS

SUMMARY:

Overview:

Pursuant to Section 933 of the California Penal Code, the Board and the Assessor/Clerk/Recorder are required to respond to the findings and recommendations of the Grand Jury report titled *Kings County Assessor/Clerk/Recorders Office: Issues with the Recording of Documents February 2024*. For the report titled *The Need for a Kings County Assessor Appeals Board February 2024*, the Board is a required respondent, and the Assessor/Clerk/Recorder is an invited respondent to the findings and recommendations of the Grand Jury report. The responses from the Assessor/Clerk/Recorder are prepared for the Board to consider using as its response.

Recommendation:

- a. Approve the Assessor/Clerk/Recorder’s response as the Board’s response to the Grand Jury report titled “Kings County Assessor/Clerk/Recorders Office: Issues with the Recording of Documents February 2024”;
- b. Approve the Assessor/Clerk/Recorder’s response as the Board’s response to the Grand Jury report titled “Need for a Kings County Assessor Appeals Board February 2024.”

Fiscal Impact:

There is no fiscal impact.

BACKGROUND:

On June 26, 2024, the Board received a copy of two Grand Jury reports; 1) *Kings County Assessor/Clerk/Recorders Office: Issues with the Recording of Documents February 2024*, and 2) *The Need for a Kings County Assessor Appeals Board February 2024*, which require a response from the Board. The Board must respond to these reports within 90-days of receipt, or by September 24, 2024.

(Cont’d)

BOARD ACTION:

APPROVED AS RECOMMENDED: OTHER:

**ROLL CALL: FAGUNDES, VALLE, NEVES, ROBINSON – AYE
VERBOON – ABSENT**

I hereby certify that the above order was passed
and adopted on September 10, 2024.

CATHERINE VENTURELLA, Clerk to the Board

By Catherine Venturella, Deputy.

In closing, since the population of this county is under 200,000, this choice is dependent on what is in the best interest of the County. Thank you for your consideration of this response to the Grand Jury report titled "The Need for a Kings County Assessor Appeals Board" February 2024.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Doug Verboon". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "D".

Doug Verboon, Chairman
Kings County Board of Supervisors



JOE NEVES – DISTRICT 1
LEMOORE & STRATFORD

RICHARD VALLE – DISTRICT 2
ANTENAL, CORTOGAN, HOME GARDEN
& KETTLEMAN CITY

DOUG VERBOON – DISTRICT 3
NORTHEAST HANFORD, EL AND DISTRICT
& NORTHLEMOORE

RISTY ROBINSON – DISTRICT 4
ARLONA & HANFORD

RICHARD FAGUNDES – DISTRICT 5
HANFORD & DUBUIS PARK

COUNTY OF KINGS BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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Web Site: <http://www.countyofkings.com>

August 27, 2024

Presiding Judge Giuliani
Superior Court of the State of California
1640 Kings County Drive
Hanford, CA 93230

RE: Invited Response to Kings County Civil Grand Jury 2023-2024 Report on "The Need for a Kings County Assessor Appeals Board" February 2024

Dear Judge Giuliani:

The Board of Supervisors has received and reviewed the report. There are five findings and a related recommendation that states: The Kings County Board of Supervisors should consider their available operational choices for the County of Kings when it comes to handling assessment appeals. These include:

- A. Create a professional assessment appeals board.
- B. Create a hearing officer program.
- C. Mandate the same training for the Kings County Board of Supervisors sitting as the Board of Equalization that is required by law of an assessment appeals board member.

This concern is of importance due to nature of each appeal hearing and the complexities of the issues that are brought before the Board of Supervisors sitting as the County Board of Equalization. In general, the County Board of Equalization uses thoughtful analysis to come to conclusions during appeals hearings. As the report stated, the Board members are often put into an unfortunate situation where they either support and uphold the assessed values that benefit the county services or support the position of their constituents. Both positions may have merit, but a determination must be made.

Areas such as appraisal techniques, methods of valuation and depreciation, case law, factors applied, certain terminology and classification are examples of topics common to the Assessor's Office and to tax agents, but normally not familiar to the board hearing and deciding appeals. Training or education would undoubtedly provide a foundational basis to aid with complex decision making. Thus, the reasoning for eligibility requirements and mandated training for assessment appeals boards. Training is not required but it is encouraged for members of boards of equalization to keep up to date of important changes in property tax laws.

The Grand Jury included a potential option of creating a hearing officer program. However, it is rare that appeals in Kings County involve residential property or assessments valued at less than \$500,000. Therefore, this option may not be a viable alternative.



KRISTINE LEE
COUNTY OF KINGS
ASSESSOR / CLERK / RECORDER

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CLERK/RECORDER'S OFFICE (559) 852-2470
FAX - CLERK/RECORDER (559) 582-6839

August 13, 2024

Presiding Judge Giuliani
Superior Court of the State of California
1640 Kings County Drive
Hanford, CA 93230

Subject: Invited Response to Kings County Civil Grand Jury 2023-2024 Report on "The Need for a Kings County Assessor Appeals Board" February 2024

Dear Judge Giuliani:

Pursuant to California Penal Code Section 933(c), I appreciate the opportunity to respond to the findings and recommendations contained in the Grand Jury Final Report on "The Need for a Kings County Assessor Appeals Board."

In the report, there are five findings and a related recommendation that states: The Kings County Board of Supervisors should consider their available operational choices for the County of Kings when it comes to handling assessment appeals. These include:

- A. Create a professional assessment appeals board.
- B. Create a hearing officer program.
- C. Mandate the same training for the Kings County Board of Supervisors sitting as the Board of Equalization that is required by law of an assessment appeals board member.

I believe that this issue is of importance due to the general fund dollars at risk during each appeals hearing and the complexities of the issues that are brought before the Board of Supervisors sitting as the county board of equalization. In general, it is my opinion that the county board of equalization uses thoughtful analysis to come to conclusions during appeals hearings. As the report stated, the board members are often put into an unfortunate situation where they either support and uphold the assessed values that benefit the county services or support the position of their constituents. Both positions may have merit, but a determination must be made.

At times, the complexity of the subject matter can be confusing, especially when skewed by attorneys and tax agents whose focus is to obtain a reduction for their client. Most appeals are for large business entities represented by agents whose motivation is monetary and who receive a percentage of reduced assessments. Whereas the Assessor's motivation is only fair and equitable assessments.

Presiding Judge Giuliani

August 13, 2024

Response to Report on The Need for a Kings County Assessor Appeals Board- Page 2

Areas such as appraisal techniques, methods of valuation and depreciation, case law, factors applied, certain terminology and classification are examples of topics common to the Assessor's Office and to tax agents, but normally not familiar to the board hearing and deciding appeals. Training or education would undoubtedly provide a foundational basis to aid with complex decision making. Thus, the reasoning for eligibility requirements and mandated training for assessment appeals boards. "While training is not required for members of boards of equalization, those members are encouraged to attend the training course to keep abreast of important changes in property tax laws."¹

The Grand Jury included a potential option of creating a hearing officer program. However, it is rare that appeals in Kings County involve residential property or assessments valued at less than \$500,000. Therefore, this option may not be a viable alternative.

In closing, since the population of this county is under 200,000, this choice is dependent on what is in the best interest of Kings County as decided by the Board of Supervisors. They are tasked with decisions of a similar nature on a regular basis and are fully capable of making a final determination.

Respectfully,



Kristine Lee
Assessor/Clerk/Recorder

CC: Kings County Grand Jury

¹ Assessment Appeals Manual, by the California State Board of Equalization May 2003, reprinted January 2015, page 7.



JOE NEVES - DISTRICT 1
LENDORE & STRATFORD

RICHARD VALLE - DISTRICT 2
AVENAL, CORCORAN, HOME GARDEN
& KETTLEMAN CITY

DOUG VERBOON - DISTRICT 3
NORTH HANFORD, ISLAND DISTRICT
& NORTH LENDORE

RUSTY ROBINSON - DISTRICT 4
ARSONA & HANFORD

RICHARD FAGUNDES - DISTRICT 5
HANFORD & BIGLES PARK

COUNTY OF KINGS BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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August 27, 2024

Presiding Judge Giuliani
Superior Court of the State of California
1640 Kings County Drive
Hanford, CA 93230

RE: Response to Kings County Civil Grand Jury 2023-2024 Report on "Issues With The Recording of Documents" February 2024

Dear Judge Giuliani:

The Board of Supervisors has received and reviewed the report. Pursuant to California Penal Code Section 933(c), the Board is a required respondent to the findings and recommendations contained in the Grand Jury Final Report on "Issues With Recorded Documents."

There are four findings and recommendations in the Grand Jury report:

Finding 1: The Kings County Assessor/Clerk/Recorder's Office online presence lacks examples of documents used by County and City departments, and the requirements to record those legal documents are not available.

Recommendation 1: Include on the Kings County Assessor/Clerk/Recorder's Office website, templates and examples of documents frequently used by City and County departments and the requirements that need to be met to record those legal documents.

Response 1: General recording requirements are included on the County's website and staff has routinely provided specific requirements when an issue arises with documents that may be filed. Pursuant to Section 6125 of the Business and Professions Code, the staff are prohibited from providing legal advice or assisting in document preparation.

Recorders' offices do not provide forms or templates. Forms and templates are often provided by local law libraries. The duty of the Recorder is to record items presented if they meet recording requirements. There are general recording instructions on the County's website.

Finding 2: County departments in Kings County and cities in Kings County do not have a physical inhouse manual of examples and requirements showing how to record legal documents specific to their department.

Recommendation 2: Each department should produce its own manual of commonly used documents, templates, examples of those documents, what information is required, and how it

should be presented to be acceptable for recording in the Kings County Assessor/Clerk/Recorder's Office.

Response 2: The Board supports this recommendation.

Finding 3: Communication between the Kings County Assessor/Clerk/Recorder's Office, County departments, and the departments of the four incorporated cities in Kings County could be improved as to the recording of documents because the requirements seemingly change frequently.

Recommendation 3: An emphasis should be placed on the importance of frequent communication by both County of Kings departments, City departments, and the Assessor/Clerk/Recorder's Office.

Response 3: This is a good recommendation regarding communication. There are laws and rules that are updated annually, but many requirements remain consistent.

Finding 4: Documents presented for recording are treated inconsistently.

Recommendation 4: The Kings County Assessor/Clerk/Recorder's Office should conduct more frequent training of personnel to provide consistent, uniform information and service to County and City departments in Kings County.

Response 4: Staff in the Clerk/Recorder's Office receive ongoing training. Each employee receives several months of one-on-one training when hired and there are continuing weekly training sessions to discuss any unusual occurrences. They also receive weekly updates and discussions from the County Recorders' Association of California. In addition, up to two members of the office are sent to "New Law" training in Sacramento each year. The education they receive is brought back and reviewed with the rest of the Clerk/Recorder staff.

When a document is rejected by staff, a yellow form is given that states the recording requirement that caused the rejection. The most common reason for a recording rejection is lack of a required signature on a document or map. The inconvenience is unfortunate, but staff cannot record without an original signature.

The Board supports the hard work and dedication of the Clerk/Recorder staff and thanks them for their commitment to excellence in serving the citizens of Kings County. Thank you for your consideration of this response to the Grand Jury report titled "Issues With The Recording of Documents" February 2024

Sincerely,



Doug Verboon, Chairman
Kings County Board of Supervisors



KRISTINE LEE
COUNTY OF KINGS
ASSESSOR / CLERK / RECORDER

KINGS COUNTY GOVERNMENT CENTER
540 WEST LACEY BLVD
HANFORD, CALIFORNIA 93233-6806

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CLERK/RECORDERS OFFICE (559) 563-2470
FAX - CLERK/RECORDER (559) 563-4809

August 13, 2024

Presiding Judge Giuliani
Superior Court of the State of California
1640 Kings County Drive
Hanford, CA 93230

Subject: Response to Kings County Civil Grand Jury 2023-2024 Report on "Issues With The Recording of Documents" February 2024

Dear Judge Giuliani:

Pursuant to California Penal Code Section 933(c), I am pleased to have an opportunity to respond to the findings and recommendations contained in the Grand Jury Final Report on "Issues With Recorded Documents."

I have reviewed the final report and fully appreciate the time and effort that was put into developing the findings. Unfortunately, it seems that there is not a delineation in the report between the Clerk/Recorder's Office and the Assessor's Office. While under the same departmental umbrella, the distinction between the two is critical, given they perform separate governmental functions. The title of the Grand Jury report is "Issues With Recording of Documents," which is a function of the Recorder division, yet much information and documentation included in the findings is specifically related to the Assessor's division and has nothing to do with Recording of Documents.

The Grand Jury further noted that the forms (Assessor forms) are "all general public documents." This is correct since county departments and city agencies are excluded from assessment and, therefore, would not have a need for Assessor forms. It is important to realize that the Assessor duties and Recorder duties are not the same or combined.

The report further states that "California Law establishes what documents may be filed with a County's Assessor/Clerk/Recorder." This statement may be misleading as Government Code §27320, which was listed in this particular reference, never mentions Assessor, nor County Clerk.

I believe it would have been beneficial to the Grand Jury and the public, in accordance with Penal Code Section 933.05(d), if the Grand Jury would have requested that I come before them for the purpose of reading and discussing the findings included in the report to clarify the accuracy of the findings prior to their release.

Presiding Judge Giuliani

August 13, 2024

Response to Report on Issues With The Recording of Documents- Page 2

There are four findings and recommendations in the Grand Jury report and my responses are as follows:

Finding 1: The Kings County Assessor/Clerk/Recorder's Office online presence lacks examples of documents used by County and City departments, and the requirements to record those legal documents are not available.

Recommendation 1: Include on the Kings County Assessor/Clerk/Recorder's Office website, templates and examples of documents frequently used by City and County departments and the requirements that need to be met to record those legal documents.

Response 1: I disagree with this finding and recommendation as I feel the Grand Jury's comparisons to other counties lack validity and merit. General recording requirements have always been included on our website and we have routinely provided specific requirements when an issue arises with one of the over 200 documents that may be filed. The struggle with most county departments and city agencies is that their employees are not always knowledgeable or experienced with the legal documents that are being presented for recording and they want assistance from my office with the actual preparation of documents. Pursuant to Section 6125 of the Business and Professions Code, the staff in my office are prohibited from providing legal advice or assisting in document preparation.

The Grand Jury has stated in their report that "several examples of websites that include sample documents are as follows:" and only two websites are listed. One for San Francisco and one for "Sacramento Assessor's Office," although Sacramento's actual website is not for that county's Assessor, as stated, but rather for the Recorder. Neither website has examples of documents other than one "Lead Page" example on Sacramento County's website.

Recorders' offices do not provide forms or templates. Forms and templates are often provided by local law libraries. The duty of the Recorder is to record items presented if they meet recording requirements. There are general recording instructions on our website and we have added a few additional points of clarification, as are included on San Francisco County's website, but nothing listed on the other counties' websites are specific to the types of documents filed by *county departments or city agencies*.

Finding 2: County departments in Kings County and cities in Kings County do not have a physical inhouse manual of examples and requirements showing how to record legal documents specific to their particular department.

Recommendation 2: Each department should produce its own manual of commonly used documents, templates, examples of those documents, what information is required, and how it should be presented to be acceptable for recording in the Kings County Assessor/Clerk/Recorder's Office.

Response 2: I believe this is a very good recommendation.

Presiding Judge Giuliani

August 13, 2024

Response to Report on Issues With The Recording of Documents- Page 3

Finding 3: Communication between the Kings County Assessor/Clerk/Recorder's Office, County departments, and the departments of the four incorporated cities in Kings County could be improved as to the recording of documents because the requirements seemingly change frequently.

Recommendation 3: An emphasis should be placed on the importance of frequent communication by both County of Kings departments, City departments, and the Assessor/Clerk/Recorder's Office.

Response 3: I agree with this recommendation regarding communication and disagree with requirements changing frequently. The Grand Jury report came as a surprise to me since I have never been contacted by anyone from the cities or from other county departments requesting assistance with how to record a document properly or informing me that they perceived the Clerk/Recorder's division as not in compliance with the duties of that office. I believe a simple conversation would have better managed this apparent situation. There are laws and rules that are updated annually, but many requirements remain consistent.

Finding 4: Documents presented for recording are treated inconsistently.

Recommendation 4: The Kings County Assessor/Clerk/Recorder's Office should conduct more frequent training of personnel to provide consistent, uniform information and service to County and City departments in Kings County.

Response 4: Staff in the Clerk/Recorder's Office receive ongoing training. Each employee receives several months of one-on-one training when hired and there are continuing weekly training sessions to discuss any unusual occurrences. They also receive weekly updates and discussions from the County Recorders' Association of California. In addition, up to two members of the office are sent to "New Law" training in Sacramento each year. The education they receive is brought back and reviewed with the rest of the Clerk/Recorder staff.

It is difficult to respond to the accusation of inconsistent treatment when there are not details or specific examples given. It is not unusual for documents to be rejected because they do not meet recording requirements. There is an article by the National Notary Association, that is titled, "CA Recorders Rejecting Up To 30% of Documents Due To Notary Certificate Errors."¹ In addition, Notary forms were changed by statute several years ago, occasionally leading to a rejection when an outdated form is used. The law requires that the notary seal must be clear, crisp, sharp and readable or else the document will be rejected.

The most common reason for a recording rejection, which has happened with the City of Corcoran, City of Hanford, and on occasion with other cities and county departments, is lack of a required signature on a document or map. The inconvenience is unfortunate, but we cannot record without an original signature.

¹National Notary Association. "CA Recorders Rejecting Up To 30% of Documents Due To Notary Certificate Errors" By: Michael Lewis February 23, 2015. https://www.nationalnotary.org/notary-bulletin/blog/2015/02/ca-recorders-rejecting-documents-certificate-errors?srsltid=AfmBOopMCh1vKkso@vmszjJ5Lx3Q_T1isAH2jDuGAKHjHg55ds01g

Presiding Judge Giuliani

August 13, 2024

Response to Report on Issues With The Recording of Documents- Page 4

Response 4 (continued): The City of Avenal has not recorded any documents with my office in over a year and there was not a rejection of their last recording in June of 2023. Consequently, I am unable to respond to any assertions they may have made without details.

The Grand Jury report made a claim that, "There have been instances where a document is submitted and rejected but the same document when resubmitted another day (with no changes being made to said document) and it is accepted. This information was shared with the Grand Jury by multiple people associated with County and City departments." While a human error may have occurred, it is highly unlikely for this sort of scenario to have happened repeatedly. Again, a response would require details as to the original rejection reason in order to come to a conclusion as to why the document missed rejection the second time. Perhaps a document, itself, was not changed, but a required signature or notary acknowledgement was added.

It should be noted that whenever a document is rejected by my office, a yellow form is given that states the recording requirement that caused the rejection. In accordance with Government Code Section 27204: Any person who receives a form from the recorder pursuant to subdivision (a) of Section 27203, stating that the proffered document is unrecordable, and who subsequently attempts to record the document without an order from the court requiring recordation of that document, is guilty of a misdemeanor, punishable by imprisonment in a county jail not exceeding six months, by a fine not exceeding one thousand dollars (\$1,000), or by both that imprisonment and fine, or of an infraction punishable pursuant to Section 19.8 of the Penal Code. Consequently, it is very concerning that city and county employees are claiming to intentionally violate Government Code Section 27204.

Although I do not agree with all findings and recommendations, I do value the work of the Grand Jury. The feedback and comments have allowed us to review processes and ensure that we continue to carry out our duties in the best manner possible.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of the Clerk/Recorder staff and thank them for their commitment to excellence in serving the citizens of Kings County and the employees of other government agencies.

Respectfully,



Kristine Lee
Assessor/Clerk/Recorder

CC: Kings County Grand Jury



COUNTY OF KINGS BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

GOVERNMENT CENTER HANFORD, CALIFORNIA 93230 (559) 852-2362
Catherine Venturella, Clerk of the Board of Supervisors

AGENDA ITEM May 20, 2025

SUBMITTED BY: Administration – Kyria Martinez

SUBJECT: RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY REPORT HOME GARDEN COMMUNITY SERVICES DISTRICT

SUMMARY:

Overview:

Pursuant to Section 933 of the California Penal Code, the County are required respondents to the findings and recommendations outlined in the Grand Jury’s report titled, “Home Garden Community Services District”. The response to the Grand Jury’s report on has been prepared for Board’s consideration.

Recommendation:

- a. Authorize the Chairman to sign the response to the Kings County Grand Jury Report entitled Home Garden Community Services District;
- b. Authorize the Clerk to the Board to submit the response to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court on or before June 12, 2025.

Fiscal Impact:

There is no fiscal impact with this action.

BACKGROUND:

On March 14, 2025, the County received a copy of a Grand Jury Report, Home Garden Community Services District, which requires a response from the Board. In order for a response to this report to be timely, the Board must issue it within 90 days, or by June 12, 2025. Attached is a proposed letter by staff, for review and approval.

BOARD ACTION:

APPROVED AS RECOMMENDED: OTHER: _____

ROLL CALL: NEVES, ROBINSON, THAYER, VERBOON – AYE
VALLE - ABSENT

I hereby certify that the above order was passed
and adopted on May 20, 2025.

CATHERINE VENTURELLA, Clerk to the Board

By Catherine Venturella, Deputy.



JOE NEVES – DISTRICT 1
LEMOORE & STRATFORD

RICHARD VALLE – DISTRICT 2
AVENAL, CORCORAN, HOME GARDEN
& KETTLEMAN CITY

DOUG VERBOON – DISTRICT 3
NORTH HANFORD, ISLAND DISTRICT
& NORTH LEMOORE

RUSTY ROBINSON – DISTRICT 4
ARMONA & HANFORD

ROBERT THAYER – DISTRICT 5
HANFORD & BURRIS PARK

COUNTY OF KINGS BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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Web Site: <https://www.countyofkingsca.gov/>

May 20, 2025

Superior County of California – County of Kings
Attn: Judge Jennifer Giuliani, Presiding Judge
1640 Kings Court Drive
Hanford, CA 93230

SUBJECT: Response to Grand Jury Report “Home Garden Community Services District”

Dear Judge Giuliani;

The Kings County Grand Jury recently completed a report on their investigation into the oversight of audits for the Home Garden Community Services District (Home Garden). The Board of Supervisors appreciates the Grand Jury’s findings regarding the lack of recent audits for Home Garden, with the last audits completed for the years ending June 30, 2009, and June 30, 2013. Additionally, the Board appreciates the Grand Jury’s acknowledgment of the importance of regular audits in ensuring financial transparency, uncovering irregularities, and meeting requirements for grant funding, as outlined in Government Code 26909. The Board provides the following invited response to the Grand Jury’s findings and recommendations.

Finding No. 1:

The Home Garden Community Services District meets the criteria required by Cal. Gov. Code Section 17520 to be classified as a special district and be held responsible for audit compliance.

Recommendation No. 1:

The Home Garden Community Services District shall bring their financial statements up to date by completing or scheduling a financial audit by June 1, 2025, as any further delay affects the district's ability to apply for much-needed grant funds.

Response No. 1:

The Home Garden Community Services District is aware of its responsibility to have an audit completed annually and in August of 2024, reached out to the Department of Finance for assistance in hiring a Certified Public Accountant (CPA) to complete their overdue audits. However, after several firm names were provided, Home Garden Community Services District was unable to successfully hire a firm due to lack of response. Since the Department of Finance currently does not have the capacity to perform the audit, the Department of Finance will issue a Request for Proposal (RFP) utilizing the County’s resources to engage an auditor. However,

Local Agency Formation Commission OF KINGS COUNTY

MAILING ADDRESS:
1400 W. LACEY BLVD. BLDG 6, HANFORD, CA 93230
(559) 852-2670, FAX: (559) 584-8989

July 24, 2024

Superior Court of California - County of Kings
Attn: Judge Jennifer Giuliani
1640 Kings Court Drive
Hanford, CA 93230

SUBJECT: Response to Grand Jury Report "Kings County Local Agency Formation Commission's Policies and Procedures Manual and Municipal Service Reviews for Cities and Community Districts"

Dear Judge Giuliani;

The Kings County Grand Jury recently completed a report on their investigation of the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo) of Kings County. We appreciate the Grand Jury's interest in LAFCo's activities as it is one of the lesser known agencies within the County. We additionally appreciate the information provided concerning areas where we can provide better public service. Kings LAFCo endeavors to provide the best possible public service to the citizens of Kings County. As required by California Penal Code Section 933(c), LAFCo provides the following response to the Grand Jury's findings and recommendations.

Finding No. 1:

The Kings County LAFCO Policies and Procedures Manual was last updated on March 22, 2006 (18 years ago).

Recommendation No. 1:

The Kings County LAFCO Policies and Procedures Manual should be reviewed and/or updated every five years.

Response No. 1: Agree.

Upon review of the LAFCo Policies and Procedures Manual it is recognized that the latest update was back in 2006. Staff will work to review and/or update the Policies and Procedures Manual within this fiscal year and at least every five years thereafter.

Finding No. 2:

The Kings County LAFCO MSR for Cities and Community Service Districts was last updated on October 24, 2007 (17 years ago).

Recommendation No. 2:

The Kings County LAFCO should be reviewed and/or updated every five years.

Response No. 2: Agree in part

Upon review of the Kings LAFCo MSRs it is acknowledged that in 2007 Kings LAFCo completed MSRs for each City and District within Kings County. Since that time Kings LAFCo completed a new MSR for the City of Lemoore in 2022 and a new MSR for the Tulare Lake Drainage District in 2023 to include the expansion of their Spheres of Influence. LAFCo is additionally currently in the process of conducting a MSR for the City of Hanford to include the expansion to its Sphere of Influence. Staff will work to have Kings LAFCo review and/or update the remaining City and Community Service District MSRs within Kings County this fiscal year and at least every five years thereafter.

If you have any questions concerning LAFCo's comments please contact me at your convenience.

**LOCAL AGENCY FORMATION COMMISSION
OF KINGS COUNTY**



Chuck Kinney, Executive Officer

Cc: Grand Jury
LAFCo Commission
Kings County Administration



COUNTY OF KINGS BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

GOVERNMENT CENTER HANFORD, CALIFORNIA 93230 (559) 852-2362
Catherine Venturella, Clerk of the Board of Supervisors

AGENDA ITEM April 29, 2025

SUBMITTED BY: Administration – Kyria Martinez
SUBJECT: RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY REPORT FOR THE KINGS COUNTY OFFICE OF EMERGENCY SERVICES

SUMMARY:

Overview:

Pursuant to Section 933 of the California Penal Code, the County are required respondents to the findings and recommendations outlined in the Grand Jury’s report titled, ‘Kings County OES.’ The response to the Grand Jury’s report on has been prepared for Board’s consideration.

Recommendation:

- a. Authorize the Chairman to sign the response to the Kings County Grand Jury Report entitled Kings County OES;
- b. Authorize the Clerk to the Board to submit the response to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court on or before May 15, 2025.

Fiscal Impact:

There is no fiscal impact with this action.

BACKGROUND:

On March 14, 2025, the County received a copy of a Grand Jury Report, Kings County OES which requires a response from the Board. In order for a response to this report to be timely, the Board must issue it within 90 days, or by May 15, 2025. Attached is a proposed letter by staff, for review and approval.

BOARD ACTION:

APPROVED AS RECOMMENDED: OTHER:

**ROLL CALL: NEVES, THAYER, ROBINSON, VERBOON – AYE
VALLE - ABSENT**

I hereby certify that the above order was passed
and adopted on April 29, 2025.

CATHERINE VENTURELLA, Clerk to the Board

By Catherine Venturella, Deputy.



JENNIFER GUILIANI - DISTRICT 1
 LINDSEY A. STOUTENBERG
 NICHOLAS YELLS - DISTRICT 2
 JEFFREY L. CHRISTOPHERSON
 JAMES W. BROWN - DISTRICT 3
 MARY B. HANCOCK, CLASH COUNTY
 SHARON L. LEONARD
 ROBERT KIRKPATRICK - DISTRICT 4
 ROSEMARY S. HANCOCK
 ROBERT TRAVIS - DISTRICT 5
 DAVID M. B. HANCOCK

COUNTY OF KINGS BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

MAILING ADDRESS: KINGS COUNTY GOVERNMENT CENTER, HANFORD, CA 93228
 OFFICES AT: 1400 W. LACEY BLVD., ADMINISTRATION BUILDING # 1, HANFORD
 (559) 852-1311
 Web Site: <http://www.countyofkings.com/>

April 29, 2025

Superior County of California – County of Kings
 Attn: Judge Jennifer Giuliani, Presiding Judge
 1640 Kings Court Drive
 Hanford, CA 93230

SUBJECT: Response to Grand Jury Report "Kings County OES"

Dear Judge Giuliani;

The Kings County Grand Jury recently completed a report on their investigation into the structure and oversight of the Kings County Office of Emergency Services (OES). The Board of Supervisors appreciates the Grand Jury's recommendations regarding the potential benefits of placing OES under the jurisdiction of the Kings County Sheriff's Office as a temporary measure. Additionally, the Board appreciates the Grand Jury's acknowledgment of the importance of updating the Kings County Emergency Operations Plan, which has not been revised since November 2015. The Board provides the following invited response to the Grand Jury's findings and recommendations.

Finding No. 1:

In Kings County, emergency declarations are declared by one member of the County Board of Supervisors.

Recommendation No. 1:

To avoid any semblance of impropriety or inefficiency, and to define the rolls of county officials, the declaration of a county emergency should be handled by someone other than a single Board of Supervisor member.

Response No. 1:

The County acknowledges the importance of transparency and accountability in emergency declarations. However, the current process provides a necessary and practical mechanism to ensure swift action when the Board is not in session. The authority is limited to initiating the declaration, which must be ratified by the full Board within seven days, per Government Code Section 8630(b). This requirement serves as a check and balance and ensures oversight by the full governing body.

The County will continue to ensure that all emergency declarations follow legal requirements and are promptly communicated to the Board and the public. Kings County Administration will explore the opportunity to designate another appropriate official to fulfill this role. This

consideration will be part of the ongoing update to the County's Emergency Operations Plan, with the goal of further clarifying roles and responsibilities and strengthening emergency response protocols.

County Administration will also initiate revisions to County Ordinance No. 361 to ensure it accurately reflects the current structure and operational alignment of the Office of Emergency Services (OES). This ordinance was adopted long before the Emergency Services Manager position was created in 2022, and as such, revisions are necessary to ensure the ordinance aligns with current roles and responsibilities and that no gaps exist between the ordinance and the County's operational structure.

In addition, staff has updated the Fire Chief job specification to formally include oversight of the Office of Emergency Services. While it is common for Department Heads to oversee various divisions not explicitly listed in their job specifications, this update provides added clarity and formalizes the relationship between the Fire Department and OES within the County's organizational framework.

Finding No. 2:

The citizens of Kings County and the Kings County Office of Emergency Services would benefit from being under the Kings County Sheriff's Office.

Recommendation No. 2:

The Kings County Office of Emergency Services should be a separate department in the county when the Board of Supervisors makes it a priority and funding becomes available. The Kings County Office of Emergency Services and staff should be under the jurisdiction of the Kings County Sheriff's Department until such time that funding and space become available for the agency to exist as a stand-alone County department.

Response No. 2:

At this time, the Board of Supervisors has not designated the establishment of a stand-alone OES department as a fiscal or operational priority, primarily due to current budget constraints and space limitations. As a designated rural county—Kings is one of 35 rural counties out of California's 58—Kings County faces unique challenges that limit the feasibility of establishing new departments, out of the 35 rural Counties only 1 has OES as a stand alone department, Siskiyou County. In practice, rural counties must often consolidate services to maximize efficiency and manage limited resources. Of the 35 counties that meet the rural designation, none currently operate OES as a stand-alone department. Instead, OES typically functions as a division within a larger department to promote coordination and cost-effectiveness. Specifically, 10 of these counties house OES within their Sheriff's Office, and 3 within their Fire Department.

Given this landscape and Kings County's own operational needs, the Office of Emergency Services will remain under the jurisdiction of the Fire Department. This structure has proven

effective in facilitating emergency response coordination and will continue to support community safety and compliance with federal and state emergency management requirements. The County will continue to monitor operational capacity and evaluate future opportunities.

Finding No. 3:

Currently there is not adequate or speedy professional training taking place.

Recommendation No. 3:

The Office of Emergency Services conduct a full-scale training exercise to include the Board of Supervisors, before September 1, 2025, to be followed up by a detailed evaluation and review.

Response No. 3:

Kings County acknowledges and agrees with the importance of conducting a full-scale training exercise involving the Board of Supervisors and key stakeholders. In 2024, the County initiated a comprehensive update to its Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) through a competitive Request for Proposals process. A contractor has been selected, and County staff anticipate receiving a draft EOP by late April 2025, with formal adoption targeted prior to September 1, 2025.

Following the completion of the draft, the Kings County Office of Emergency Services will coordinate a countywide training exercise involving all County departments, incorporated cities, and the Board of Supervisors. This exercise will serve as an opportunity to test the updated EOP in a simulated scenario, gather feedback, and identify areas for improvement prior to final adoption.

In support of ongoing preparedness efforts, the County's current Emergency Services Manager is in the process of obtaining CalOES Instructor Credentialing. This will enable the County to deliver Emergency Operations Center (EOC) training locally, reducing the need for extended staff absences due to travel—an issue that has previously impacted participation.

Additionally, Kings County Administration will roll out disaster preparedness courses via the County's online training portal, with the goal of having all required staff complete the courses within one year. These combined efforts will strengthen the County's overall readiness and ensure alignment with the updated EOP.

Finding No. 4:

The last Emergency Operations Plan was updated in November 2015.


Recommendation No. 4:

The Kings County Emergency Operations Plan should be given priority and updated by September 1, 2025.

Response No. 4:

Agreed. The Kings County Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) was last updated in November 2015. A formal update was initiated in 2024, and a contractor was selected through a competitive Request for Proposals process. County staff anticipate receiving a draft of the updated EOP by late April 2025, with final adoption targeted ahead of the September 1, 2025, deadline. This update is a high-priority initiative and is being developed in full alignment with applicable state standards and guidelines.

Sincerely,



Doug Verboon, Chairman
Kings County Board of Supervisor



COUNTY OF KINGS BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

GOVERNMENT CENTER HANFORD, CALIFORNIA 91230 (559) 852-2162
Catherine Venturella, Clerk of the Board of Supervisors

AGENDA ITEM May 20, 2025

SUBMITTED BY: Administration – Kyria Martinez

SUBJECT: RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY REPORT THERE IS A NEED FOR A MENTAL HEALTH CLINIC IN KINGS COUNTY

SUMMARY:

Overview:

Pursuant to Section 933 of the California Penal Code, the County are required respondents to the findings and recommendations outlined in the Grand Jury’s report titled, “There Is A Need For A Mental Health Clinic in Kings County”. The response to the Grand Jury’s report on has been prepared for Board’s consideration.

Recommendation:

- a. Authorize the Chairman to sign the response to the Kings County Grand Jury Report entitled **There Is A Need For A Mental Health Clinic in Kings County**;
- b. Authorize the Clerk to the Board to submit the response to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court on or before **June 12, 2025**.

Fiscal Impact:

There is no fiscal impact with this action.

BACKGROUND:

On March 14, 2025, the County received a copy of a Grand Jury Report, There Is A Need For A Mental Health Clinic in Kings County, which requires a response from the Board. In order for a response to this report to be timely, the Board must issue it within 90 days, or by June 12, 2025. Attached is a proposed letter by staff, for review and approval.

BOARD ACTION: APPROVED AS RECOMMENDED: OTHER:
ROLL CALL: ROBINSON, NEVES, THAYER, VERBOON – AYE
 VALLE - ABSENT

I hereby certify that the above order was passed
and adopted on May 20, 2025.
CATHERINE VENTURELLA, Clerk to the Board
By Catherine Venturella, Deputy.



JDE NEVES - DISTRICT 1
LEMOORE & STRATFORD
RICHARD VALLE - DISTRICT 2
ANTHONY, CECILIAN, HENRI GARDEN
& KETTLEMAN CITY
BOUC VERBOON - DISTRICT 3
NORTH HANFORD, ISLAND-DISTRICT
& NORTH LEMOORE
RUSTY ROBINSON - DISTRICT 4
ARSONA & HANFORD
ROBERT THAYER - DISTRICT 5
HANTHOLD & BURGES-PARK

COUNTY OF KINGS BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

MAILING ADDRESS: KINGS COUNTY GOVERNMENT CENTER, HANFORD, CA 93230
OFFICES AT: 1400 W. LACEY BLVD., ADMINISTRATION BUILDING # 1, HANFORD
(559) 852-2362

Web Site: <https://www.countyofkingsca.gov/>

May 20, 2025

Superior County of California – County of Kings
Attn: Judge Jennifer Giuliani, Presiding Judge
1640 Kings Court Drive
Hanford, CA 93230

SUBJECT: Response to Grand Jury Report “There Is A Need For A Mental Health Clinic in Kings County”

Dear Judge Giuliani;

The Kings County Grand Jury recently completed a report on their investigation into a critical need for mental health services in Kings County. The Board of Supervisors appreciates the Grand Jury’s interest in this issue the Board appreciates the Grand Jury’s recommendations for improving mental health services, including the potential funding through the Behavioral Health Continuum Infrastructure Program. The Board provides the following invited response to the Grand Jury’s findings and recommendations. Please note that Findings 2, 3, 4, and 5 have the same recommendation, and for clarity, are responded to in one combined answer (Response 2/3/4/5).

Finding No. 1:

The launch of Behavioral Health’s mobile crisis units will not fully address the lack of mental health crisis services in Kings County.

Recommendation No. 1:

Establish a mental health crisis facility while supporting mobile crisis units to address the mental health crisis needs of Kings County residents.

Response No. 1:

The County acknowledges the importance of mental health crisis facilities and mobile crisis units. The County has been successful in launching mobile crisis teams, which operate 24-hours-a-day/7-days-a-week/365-day-a-year. These teams were launched December 31, 2024, and residents may access services by calling 559-247-HELP (4357). The mobilization of the County’s behavioral health crisis teams responds to individuals in crisis in the community, alleviating the need for residents to rely on 911 emergency services when they are experiencing a crisis. Although the mobile crisis teams provide valuable services, approximately 30% of those in crisis require additional higher-level-of-care services than can be offered through mobile crisis services.

These higher-level-of-care services are typically crisis stabilization facilities wherein an individual on an involuntary (5150) or voluntary hold can stay up to 23 hours to receive intensive crisis services to assist in stabilization, which is similar to a medical emergency room. Those who cannot stabilize through mobile crisis services would go to a crisis stabilization unit rather than a local emergency room unless otherwise medically determined. For those individuals who need further crisis support beyond that of the 23-hours offered within the crisis stabilization unit, they typically receive these services through a psychiatric health facility/psychiatric hospital wherein they remain admitted for the time needed to stabilize (averages lengths of stay are typically 7-9 days) and discharge to community-based outpatient services or other services, as clinically needed.

Those who no longer require hospitalization but would benefit from intensive residential support while bridging to community-based outpatient services and those who may be in crisis and do not require hospitalization but would benefit from intensive residential support, could voluntarily enroll in a crisis residential treatment facility wherein they receive daily on-site support typically involving intensive group and individual therapy as they work to bridge into community-based outpatient services. An average length of time within a crisis residential treatment facility is approximately 14 to 21 days.

As announced on May 12, 2025, by California Governor Gavin Newsom's Office, Good Samaritan Hospital was awarded a Behavioral Health Continuum Infrastructure Program (BHCIP) grant for the construction of a crisis stabilization unit, psychiatric health facility, and crisis residential treatment facility within Kings County to serve adults 18 years of age and older. Administered by the California Department of Health Care Services, the grant monies will be given to Good Samaritan Hospital directly to construct the new facilities in Kings County, if awarded and the grant is accepted. These funds are state dollars and not of, or for the County. Good Samaritan Hospital's grant award will bring in services that the Grand Jury points to, as discussed further in Response 2/3/4/5, that will improve mental health crisis management in the County. These behavioral health focused services will significantly reduce the current impact to the 911 call center, law enforcement, and the Adventist Health Emergency Room. Paired with the County's mobile crisis teams, these services will ultimately create more effective intervention and meet the unique needs of each individual experiencing a crisis.

Finding No. 2:

The absence of a mental health Crisis Stabilization Unit negatively impacts Kings County citizens.

Finding No. 3:

The lack of a Psychiatric Health Facility adversely affects Kings County residents' lives.

Finding No. 4:

Kings County residents would benefit from a local Crisis Residential Treatment Facility.

Finding No. 5:

A local Mental Health Crisis campus would benefit Kings County taxpayers.

Recommendation No. 2/3/4/5:

Kings County Behavioral Health Department separate from Good Samaritan Health Systems be encouraged and supported in its quest to obtain grant funding for a local Psychiatric Health Facility with the intent to provide for the safe and secure treatment of persons undergoing a mental health crisis or a 5150 diagnosis only after an architectural plan, a financial plan, and timeline for construction/completion has been developed with the guidance of an architect, Kings County Community Development Department and Kings County Public Works Department.

Response No. 2/3/4/5:

The County acknowledges the important role that mental health services provide for the community and taxpayers alike. In this interest, the County pursued applying for the BHCIP grant with Good Samaritan Hospital; however, Good Samaritan Hospital ultimately applied for the BHCIP grant on their own. As announced by the Governor's Office on May 12, 2025, they were awarded a BHCIP grant. Per the awarded grant, the future site constructed and operated by Good Samaritan Hospital will offer the following within the County of Kings:

- Crisis Stabilization Unit (CSU): A 24-hour facility providing short-term (up to 23 hours) care for individuals in mental health or substance use crises—akin to a behavioral health emergency room.
- Psychiatric Health Facility (PHF): A short-term (7–9 days), 8 to 16-bed acute care facility for those in crisis who are on a 5150 hold—similar to a small behavioral health hospital unit.
- Crisis Residential Treatment (CRT): A short-term (14–21 days), 8 to 16-bed program for individuals transitioning from crisis to stability—think of it as a step-down unit from hospital to outpatient care.

The scheduled construction of this facility, if the grant is awarded and accepted, will serve adults including County residents by providing specialized care for those in crisis, while alleviating demands and lines at local emergency rooms. There is a timeline of when these scheduled monies will be available to Good Samaritan Hospital, as well as post-award requirements that need to be met before scheduled construction may begin. Access to awarded funds is contingent upon verification of grantee's eligibility, completion of award certification steps, and final execution of the Program Funding Agreement. This paired with the County's existing mobile crisis team helps facilitate a more robust system of care in the County.

Often, counties, especially small, rural, and medium-sized counties, do not construct and operate crisis stabilization units, psychiatric health facility/psychiatric hospitals, and crisis residential treatment facilities. Rather, counties often contract with entities who have the expertise and experience in constructing and operating these highly specialized settings. By contracting with an external entity, the county shifts financial risks associated with facility operations, such as fluctuations in patient volumes or reimbursement rates, and the partner entity assumes operational

risks, including staffing challenges and regulatory compliance issues. The County's Public Works Department and Community Development Agency were actively involved with the County's Behavioral Health Department in providing guidance and feedback for the initially considered joint BHCIP application with Good Samaritan Hospital. Given the unique requirements and deadlines of the BHCIP grant, ultimately Good Samaritan Hospital applied as a sole applicant, with letters of support from the County.

External partners can also bring additional resources or funding opportunities that can enhance service delivery and sustainability, as is the case with Good Samaritan Hospital. Through Good Samaritan Hospital applying for, being awarded, and tentatively completing the facility development, operation, and service delivery in line with their expertise, the Kings County Behavioral Health Department can focus on their core administrative responsibilities required by the State for the implementation and oversight of a County Mental Health Plan, Drug Medi-Cal Plan, Mental Health Services Act Plan, and Crisis Continuum. The County will continue to monitor its capacity and evaluate future opportunities and partnerships to benefit the residents of Kings County.

Sincerely,



Doug Verboon, Chairman
Kings County Board of Supervisor

RESPONSES TO 2023-2024
FINAL REPORT

Corcoran Cemetary
California Special District



RECEIVED

MAY 08 2025

April 19, 2025

Kings County Grand Jury

P.O. Box 1562

Hanford, Ca. 93232

Re: Response From Corcoran Cemetery **District**

Dear Kings County Grand Jury,

I am writing you this letter in response to your letters dated February 28, 2022, March 17, 2023, and March 12, 2024. On behalf of Corcoran Cemetery District past and current Board of Directors, I would first like to apologize on the lack of response to your letters.

I would like to give an explanation as to what has transpired over the last few years and hopefully this will give some insight as to why there has been no response until now. After speaking to previous board members, who were on the board at the time of your letters, they believed that they had responded at the time. We currently believe that a response was written, but not delivered by the previous Cemetery Manager. Since the response was not delivered, he did not inform the board of the subsequent letters that followed.

The current Board of Directors consists of Fred Holt, current Vice-President, appointed to the board in August 2023. Nancy LeMay, current Secretary, appointed in August 2023, and Andrew Hemans, current Sargent at Arms, appointed in September 2024. We currently have only 3 board members on a 5-member board because we had 2 resign in March 2025. We are waiting for the letters of resignation from the two member that have resigned. The Cemetery District hired myself, Ignacio Larios in May 2024 as the Cemetery District Manager. All that are mentioned were unaware of the current situation with the Grand Jury until your recent letter in March 2025, however I am writing this letter to respond to the concerns that were laid out in your letters and give an update of where we currently are with suggested changes.

Office: 559.992.3209 · P.O. Box 805 · 4170 Waukena Ave. · Corcoran, CA 93212 · corcorancemetery21@icloud.com

Corcoran Cemetary
California Special District



The most important job we have at the Cemetery District is to show respect for the loved ones that are resting at the Cemetery District and to the families. The unfortunate issue is that when community members visit the Cemetery and see lawns dying or being neglected, they don't feel like we are taking the job or our

responsibilities seriously. We are currently working hard to update the sprinkler system valves so that the sprinklers will be on a timer and that the lawns will remain green

year-round. Mr. Holt has also been able to get area vendors to donate fertilizer to the Cemetery District to help reduce watering time while continuing to beautify the lawns.

There has always been a policy for the cleanup of artificial and fresh flowers, even if the policy was not followed or enforced. The schedule for cleanup is the first Monday of February, May, August and November. There is a posted sign stating this schedule at every entrance to the cemetery and at the cemetery office. Since I started at the Cemetery District, we print a notice in the Corcoran Journal.

A brochure has been designed and printed. I have attached the current brochure which details all prices for burials and cremations.

Staff is scheduled to work from 7 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. Lawn mowing and ground maintenance starts on Monday and finishes on Tuesday. There are factors that could change this schedule such as weather, planned burials or holidays.

Since starting with the Cemetery District in May 2024, we have been raising the headstones that seem to have depressed into the ground and as pointed out in your letters was allowing water to flood those headstones. Unfortunately, this work wasn't started when the February 28, 2022 letter was sent to the District, however we are working as hard and as fast as we can to fix this issue.

A website has been developed and is in operation since 2024. <https://corcorancemetery.com/>

There are some other improvements that the current board would like to see come to fruition, however, we are working to complete current projects. We feel that as we continue to work through your list of improvements, and our own list of improvements, the grand jury will be excited to see how far the Corcoran Cemetery has

Office: 559.992.3209 · P.O. Box 805 · 4170 Waukena Ave. · Corcoran, CA 93212 · corcorancemetery21@icloud.com

Corcoran Cemetary
California Special District



come in a short amount of time. We take our responsibilities seriously for the Corcoran community, the loved ones laid to rest at the cemetery, and ourselves. The Corcoran Cemetery needs to be a place that the community is proud to have their family and friends laid to rest.

Should the Grand Jury like to visit the cemetery and meet with the board and myself, feel free to reach me at (559) 309-1462. We can schedule a time to meet and review current and future plans.

Thank you,

Ignacio Larios
District Manager

CC:

Judge Jennifer Giuliani, Presiding Judge
Kings County Superior Court
16400 Kings Court Drive
Hanford, CA. 93230