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SANTA CRUZ COUNTY
Civil Grand Jury

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June 30, 2025

Honorable Katherine Hansen, Grand Jury Supervising Judge
Superior Court of California, County of Santa Cruz
701 Ocean St.
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Dear Judge Hansen,

On behalf of the 2024-2025 Santa Cruz County Civil Grand Jury, it is with great pride that we present our Consolidated Final Report to the residents of Santa Cruz County. Our grand jury saw its role as trying to shine a light on opportunities to make local government run better.

As I summarize our work in this letter, I am reminded of some of your initial instructions. I feel we have honored your instructions throughout our term. Some of these included:

- Working together with patience, tolerance and respect.
- Seeking advice from the Assistant County Counsel where appropriate.
- Being mindful of the various statutory provisions mentioned in your instructions, which we believe we have complied with.
- In our role in the evaluation of the operations of local government, ensuring that our reports demonstrate a strong understanding of the facts.
- Selecting topics without prejudice, political or private motivations.

At the beginning of our term, there were many topics that the jury considered. Unfortunately there are not unlimited resources, and our selection of reports was based on many factors, such as the severity of the issue, potential health impacts, public safety benefits, cost savings, or improvement in government transparency. Our topic selection was also informed by the correspondence we received, public documents, local news, and prior grand jury reports.

One of our mandated responsibilities is to inquire into the condition and management of the public prisons within the county. Our statement on this item is enclosed after this letter.

Many hours were devoted to our work by the jurors. As we complete our term, I am gratified that an overwhelming majority of the surveyed jurors felt that the work was “very satisfying” or “extremely satisfying”. The jurors represent people with significant experience in professional, volunteer, and community service roles. Collectively, these experiences made our work better.

In addition to the work of the grand jury, many agencies are also overseen by accreditation organizations, auditors, and others charged with ensuring compliance with regulations. The grand jury is not intended to replace those functions.

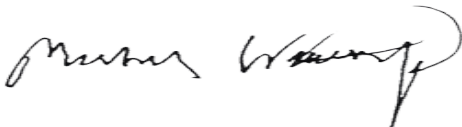
The findings and recommendations contained in our reports are based on the facts gathered in our investigations. The jurors hold themselves accountable to a very high standard in checking the facts to develop the findings and recommendations. While we are an oversight body composed of citizens, our work is respectful of the complexities involved in managing local government. As agencies respond to the findings and recommendations, it is our hope that they do so with the same level of respect and diligence. We hope that the findings and recommendations are not dismissed as if “they don’t know what they are talking about”. In the case of the grand jury, “they” are citizens of the county.

Throughout our work, we saw many instances of local government staff who come to work every day with the best of intentions to support the community. We want to acknowledge this work and thank them for their service.

Finally, we need to thank our support team, which includes the County Counsel and former jurors who voluntarily manage our systems. Without the work of Ann Jackson, Lorie Goudie, Kevin Dempsey, John Rible, David Heintz, Eric Decker, Suzanne Mann and many others, our work would not have been possible.

It has been an honor and privilege to be the foreperson this year. I come away with a deeper understanding of the complexities and challenges facing local government. I am also humbled by the tremendous support I received from the other jurors, particularly Tanya Champagne who served as Pro-Tem.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Weatherford". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized initial "M" and a long, sweeping underline.

Michael Weatherford, Foreperson
2024–2025 Santa Cruz County Civil Grand Jury
