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Madera County Grand Jury

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December 21, 2020

Honorable Michael Jurkovich
Supervising Judge of the Grand Jury
Madera County Superior Court

Dear Judge Jurkovich,

On behalf of the 2019-2020 Madera County Grand Jury, the 2019-2020 Final Reports are presented to you as required by California Penal Code, Section 933. This Final Report represents all reports completed by the 2019-2020 Madera County Grand Jury and those responses to the 2018-2019 Final Reports received during the term from July 1, 2019 through December 21, 2020.

For members of the 2019-2020 Madera County Grand Jury, Covid-19 impacted work. The Grand Jury experienced a suspension of the investigative momentum, a change from in-person to electronic communication, and an extension of the term to December 31, 2020. A Madera County Grand Jury was not empaneled for the 2020-2021 term with 'normal' activity slated to resume for a 2021-2022 Grand Jury term.

The Grand Jury would like to thank Jury Division Supervisor Erin Kinney, her staff, and the County staff members for their continued support of the Grand Jury on behalf of the residents of Madera County.

In California, the Grand Jury is an arm of the Superior Court and is subject to the court's general supervision. The Grand Jury's primary function as a 'watchdog' is to encourage local governments to be more efficient, effective, transparent, and accountable. To accomplish that goal, the Grand Jury studies the performance of county, city, district, and other local public entities within the county. The Grand Jury conducts online and print documents research, interviews officials, employees, consumers, and experts, attends governmental meetings, and tours facilities. The Grand Jury is a fact-finding body that makes findings and presents recommendations to bring about positive changes for the benefit of residents. In its role of 'watchdog', the Grand Jury is an independent voice for oversight of elected and appointed officials involved in governmental operations.

Finally, to my fellow Grand Jurors I wish to thank you. Recognition is due these jurors who served during this term. Collectively you endured, independently you voiced concerns, and united you spoke. You began a term working in close proximity and ended a term socially-distanced. The commitment that was made in June 2019 to serve is now completed in December 2020. It has been a learning experience, an enriching experience, and one in which each member shares their work, their endurance, and their combined strength.

Respectfully submitted,

Nina Zarucchi-Mize, Foreperson
2019-2020 Madera County Grand Jury



The Honorable Michael Jurkovich

Supervising Judge of the Madera County Grand Jury

Judge of the Madera County Superior Court

2019-2020 Madera County Grand Jury Members

(No photo available)

Andrea Beck, Michael Brune, Laura Burrow,
Marilyn Ervin, Kelley Gill, Deborah Jackson,
Franklin Johnston, Cynthia Lawrence,
Juanita Martinez, Sarah Persson,
Robin Stefanik, Caroline Williams,
and Nina Zarucchi-Mize, Foreperson

Duties, Purpose and Powers of the Grand Jury

In California today, the grand jury is required by provisions of the Penal Code to

- (1) make an annual examination of the operations, accounts and records of the officers, departments or functions of the county, including any special district for which officers of the county are serving as ex-officio officers of the district; and
- (2) inquire into the condition and management of prisons within the county.

The grand jury may investigate or inquire into county matters of civil concern, such as the needs of county officers, including the abolition or creation of offices and the equipment for, or the method or system of performing the duties of the several offices.

Other powers permitted to the grand jury include

- (1) free access, at reasonable times, to public prisons;
- (2) the right to examine all public records within the county;
- (3) the right to examine books and records of
 - (a) any incorporated city or joint powers agency located in the county;
 - (b) certain redevelopment agencies and housing authorities;
 - (c) special purpose assessing or taxing districts wholly or partly within the county; and
 - (d) nonprofit corporations established by or operated on behalf of a public entity;
- (4) the authority to investigate and report on operations and methods of performing duties of any such city or joint powers agency and to make recommendations as deemed proper;
- (5) the ability, with permission of the Superior Court, to hire such experts as auditors and accountants; and
- (6) the right to inquire into the sale, transfer and ownership of lands which might or should escheat to the state.

The grand jury is also likely to receive a number of citizen complaints, many of which involve operations of county, city or special districts. Whether the complaint is civil or criminal, rules of secrecy apply, and the grand jury may not divulge the subject or methods of inquiry.

Credit to Marianne Jameson, PhD

Grand Jury Contact Information

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