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**2004 Madera County Grand Jury**

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**The 2004 Madera County Grand Jury  
Final Report  
On the City of Chowchilla Police Department and Jail**

**INTRODUCTION**

Members of the Madera County Grand Jury toured the Chowchilla Police Department at 122 Trinity Avenue, Chowchilla California, on July 14, 2004, pursuant to §919(a) of the California Penal Code to, "...inquire as to county prisons."

**FINDINGS**

The Chief of Police in Chowchilla has a staff of 17 full time sworn officers. Among them is a sergeant who assists with administration and manages information technology ("911" software, and hardware). Also included on the staff are four Community Service Officers, one Officer who performs the functions of animal control and evidence technician, and one School Resources Officer. The Officers are organized into four teams that staff the Police Department and jail and patrol the city 24 hours per day, 7 days a week on twelve hour shifts that change at 6 am and 6 pm. In addition to the full time staff, there are four relief Community Service Officers who work part time (approximately 20 hours per week).

The Police Chief reports that, on average, the jail processes one inmate per day, but rarely more than two. The jail performs preliminary booking and then either cites and releases the inmate, or transports them to the Madera County Department of Corrections.

The Chowchilla Jail is a temporary holding facility with one two-person holding cell and one "cage" type cell. A camera monitors the holding cell. The State of California Board of Corrections audited the facility in 2003 at which time the "cage" cell was deemed substandard. In response to the audit, funds were earmarked in the 2004-2005 City of Chowchilla General Operating Budget for removal and replacement of the cage cell.

On the date of the Grand Jury's visit, the jail was undergoing a process of renovation and expansion to double its area. The modernized facility now has an interview room, dispatch area, report writing area, investigations office, Sergeants' office, lunchroom/kitchen, conference room, and evidence room with a vault. The jail now has two cells, rather than one, plus the 'cage cell'.

The Grand Jury was very favorably impressed with the renovation. The Grand Jury commends the contractor and construction workers who performed the work. The City of Chowchilla is fortunate to have a contractor and construction workers as city employees who have performed such an excellent job in an expeditious manner.

The Grand Jury notes that the jail is one of the few agencies remaining that still takes fingerprints manually using the ink-and-roll method rather than by digital scan of the fingers on the LiveScan system. Inked fingerprints are sent to the California Department of Justice for identification, and receipt of the results may take from 90 days to a year. Alternately, the Chowchilla jail may avail itself of Madera County's LiveScan system at a cost of \$75 per scan with results available within 30 minutes.

**CONCLUSION**

The Grand Jury found the condition of the jail to be excellent and the management to be professional. The now completed renovation to the jail is clean and well organized with efficient use of space. The Jury is especially impressed that such a small city with limited resources has performed so well. With so many cities reducing city services due to budgetary constraints exacerbated by State budget issues, it is important to note the City of Chowchilla's commitment to providing for its long-term needs while still providing the basic services that have been cut or reduced by other cities and communities.

**RECOMMENDATION**

1. The Grand Jury recommends that the Chowchilla Police Department procure a LiveScan fingerprint system. The Jury is concerned that the City of Chowchilla is not taking advantage of current technology and may miss opportunities to contribute to the safety of the community at this time of heightened security awareness. The LiveScan system may in the long-term provide additional savings by reducing the cost to the Police Department for the processing of fingerprints manually.

**ENTITIES TO RESPOND**

1. Madera County Board of Supervisors
2. City of Chowchilla Chief of Police
3. Chowchilla City Council