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2024-2025

CONSOLIDATED FINAL REPORT

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY



Rainbow

THE REPORTS

“Climate Action” Demands Outreach
Honoring Commitments to the Public
Navigating the Building Permit Process AGAIN
Handcuffing and Transport
Human Trafficking in Santa Cruz County
If You Can’t Measure It, You Can’t Manage It.



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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.

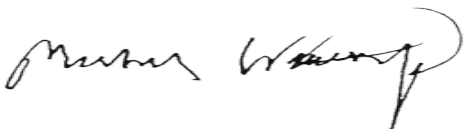
The findings and recommendations contained in our reports are based on the facts gathered in our investigations. The jurors hold themselves accountable to a very high standard in checking the facts to develop the findings and recommendations. While we are an oversight body composed of citizens, our work 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

DETENTION FACILITY INQUIRIES 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.” In 2022, the California Attorney General issued an opinion (No. 18-103) stating the term “public prisons” includes “local detention facilities,” and that a county or city jail is a typical example of such a local detention facility.

The purpose of this document is to provide information about how the Santa Cruz County 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 local detention facilities. In fact, a report cannot be written based solely upon an inquiry. To write a report, a full investigation is required and all the facts in the report must be verified. (See Penal Code section 939.9.)

LOCAL DETENTION FACILITIES WITHIN SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

There are six local detention facilities within Santa Cruz County, five of which are operated by the county:

1. Juvenile Detention Center (Probation Department), 3650 Graham Hill Road, Felton, CA
2. Santa Cruz Main Jail, 259 Water Street, Santa Cruz, CA
3. Blaine Street Women's Jail, 141 Blaine Street, Santa Cruz, CA
4. Rountree Detention Center (Medium Security), 90 Rountree Lane, Watsonville, CA
5. Rountree Detention Center (Minimum Security), 100 Rountree Lane, Watsonville, CA

The grand jury fulfilled its duty to inquire into these facilities through a variety of methods.

- On January 10, 2025 the Santa Cruz County Probation staff gave an overview and tour of the Juvenile Detention Center to members of the Grand Jury.
- On February 4, 2025 the Santa Cruz County Sheriff Corrections staff gave an overview and tour of the Santa Cruz Main Jail, Blaine Street Women's Jail, and the Rountree Detention Center to members of the Grand Jury.

The grand jury reviewed documents requested from the Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Department and a Board of State and Community Corrections report “2023-2024 TARGETED INSPECTION, PENAL CODE SECTION 6031, WELFARE & INSTITUTIONS CODE SECTION 209, SANTA CRUZ DETENTION FACILITIES” dated January 7, 2025.

The other local detention facility within Santa Cruz County is the Ben Lomond Conservation Camp, which is operated jointly by the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation and Cal Fire. The Grand Jury took no actions concerning the Ben Lomond Conservation Camp.

CONCLUSION

The grand jury's legal obligation to inquire into the condition and management of each local detention facility within the county was fulfilled by touring the facilities, making general inquiries to the staff, and reviewing recent regulatory reports.



2024-2025

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY

*Photo Credits: Cover picture by Shmuel Thaler / Santa Cruz Sentinel,
Picture of Jurors is a personal photo.*
