

# 2024-2025 KERN COUNTY GRAND JURY



**WELCOME TO THE CITY OF SHAFTER**  
*"Where Everything Grows"*

**Release Date**  
**June 17, 2025**

# Welcome to the City of Shafter "Where Everything Grows"



Image Courtesy of Kem Council of Governments

## **SUMMARY:**

The City of Shafter (Shafter) in Kern County, CA is located eighteen miles west-northwest of Bakersfield, CA. With a population of nearly 23,000, it is the fastest growing city in Kern County and the fifth fastest growing city in California. The population is expected to double within ten years. Shafter also prides itself as being one of the safest cities in the San Joaquin Valley.

Shafter has evolved into a diverse economic engine. It went from farming cotton and potatoes to almonds and grapes. Shafter has also branched out into the warehousing and logistics sector in an industrial park that includes many technically advanced companies. Some of the largest industries in Shafter include agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, retail trade, and educational services.

The community is the backbone behind the city's growth. The people of Shafter are always looking out for one another. They uphold their sense of community through schools, libraries, service clubs and churches. Some of the community events include holiday celebrations as well as First Fridays, which include food, crafts, entertainment, and community recognition.

## **PURPOSE OF INQUIRY:**

Pursuant to California Penal Code §§925 and 925(a), the 2024-2025 Kem County Grand Jury (Grand Jury) conducted an investigation into the operations and management of the City of Shafter.

## **METHODOLOGY:**

The Grand Jury conducted interviews with City Council Members and City employees, toured law enforcement facilities, and conducted internet research.

## **DISCUSSION OF FACTS:**

### **Shafter City Council**

Incorporated on January 11, 1938, the City of Shafter is a Charter City and operates according to the Charter which was approved by the voters in 1995. Shafter is a City Council-City Manager form of government. The City Council consists of five members, with one of those members appointed Mayor by the Council. It serves as the legislative and policy making body of the City of Shafter. Council members are elected at-large, are responsible to all residents, and devote their decision making for the best interests of the public.

Meetings are held at 6:00 pm on the first and third Tuesday of each month at the Shafter Council Chamber. The City Clerk prepares and maintains the agendas of each meeting. Agendas for regular meetings are posted at least 72 hours in advance, and agendas for special meetings are posted at least 24 hours in advance. Postings can be located at:

- Shafter City Hall
- The City Council Chamber
- Shafter Police Department
- City of Shafter website

Residents may also sign up to receive notifications when agendas are posted. During a meeting, members of the public have an opportunity to address the City Council either before or during the Board's consideration of each item of business to be discussed at regular or special council meetings.

Council Members are required to take Sexual Harassment and Prevention Training (AB1825), Conflict of Interest and Ethics Training, and Ralph M. Brown Act Training. In addition to adhering to the City Charter, council members are also expected to follow a code of conduct referred to as the "Council Norms."

### **The Shafter City Charter**

The Shafter City Charter (Appendix A), a thirty-eight page document, can be found on the City website. Some key sections are:

- General Powers of the Council
- Duties of Mayor
- Prohibitions on Council
- Powers and Duties of City Manager

## The City Manager

The City Manager is appointed by the City Council and is responsible for enforcing municipal laws, directing the daily operations of the City, and supervising and administering the programs and services provided by all City departments. Some of the divisions included under the City Manager include:

- The City Clerk
- Human Resources Department
- Business Development
- Education Partnership
- IT Department

## The Shafter Police Department



Image Courtesy of the Shafter Police Department

The Shafter Police Department is responsible for all municipal law enforcement functions as well as traffic safety-and animal control services within Shafter City limits. The recently remodeled police department is located at 201 Central Valley Highway, Shafter, CA. The department also has a temporary substation located at 8946 Forest Village Drive, which is in the Gossamer Grove community. The substation, where officers are able to take breaks, write reports, and conduct interviews, is staffed with a full-time sergeant and two officers. The department is hoping to have the permanent 5,000 square foot facility completed by the second quarter of 2026.

The Shafter Police Department is fully staffed with 56 full-time employees, which includes 41 sworn officers and 15 non-sworn support personnel. The Shafter Police Department is the highest paid law enforcement agency in Kem County. The Police Department recently acquired body cameras for officers on duty as well as two electric bicycles to patrol areas that are not easily accessible by car. The Department plans to upgrade the officers' radios and computers, monitors, and screens for the 911 dispatch center.

## Shafter Animal Control

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Images Courtesy of the Shafter Animal Control

The Shafter Animal Shelter works to uphold public safety and animal welfare. It operates a 37- kennel facility and has open intake. The animal intake must be from Shafter residents. One advantage of this facility is that it will also shelter stray cats, which helps minimize overpopulation. The shelter strives to find homes for all intakes as quickly as possible to avoid overcrowding and potential spread of disease among the pets. In 2024, the shelter took in 3,000 animals, and the overwhelming majority were happily adopted. They collaborate with rescues and other allies to facilitate adoptions outside of city limits, provide community outreach, low-cost vaccines, and spay and neuter clinics. Spay and neuter procedures performed elsewhere can cost up to \$800; however, the Shafter Animal Shelter offers the procedure for as little as \$25. Vaccines cost about \$15 each.

Some of the services Shafter Animal Control provides are:

- Pickup, impoundment, and disposal of stray animals
- Cat trap rental and pickup for stray cats
- Enforcement of animal laws
- Bite reports and rabies control
- Transportation of stray, injured animals
- Investigations of animal cruelty, neglect and/or abandonment
- Investigations of animal nuisance complaints
- Investigation assistance to other law enforcement agencies
- Adoptions of shelter animals
- Lost and found reports
- Public education programs and materials

During the Grand Jury's visit to the shelter, the staff explained the importance of rabies vaccines and dog licensing. Failure to comply is a misdemeanor. Rabies is a serious disease, and if not treated immediately after exposure, can be fatal.

## **FINDINGS:**

- F1. Although Council Members are familiar with the City Charter, there have been violations of City Charter §4.07 B (Appendix A) which have caused concern among City employees.
- F2. Council Members state there are "Council Norms," but Council Members could not give an accurate definition of these "Norms" causing lack of accountability.
- F3. The Shafter Animal Control Unit is clean and well-maintained. This unit continues to be a valuable resource for the community.
- F4. During a visit to the Shafter Police Department, the Grand Jury observed staff members and officers to be professional and fully engaged. This reflects their commitment to the community.
- F5. The jail located at the Department was clean and unoccupied. It passes compliance and inspection every year. This demonstrates the high level of accountability and performance within the department.
- F6. Through grant funding, the Shafter Police Department was able to build a gym inside the main headquarters. This gives staff members and officers the opportunity to work out and relieve stress.
- F7. Due to lack of visible signage, some members of the community may find it difficult to locate the Police Department building.

## **COMMENTS:**

The 2024-2025 Kern County Grand Jury would like to thank the City of Shafter Council Members, Police Department, and Animal Control, which is under the jurisdiction of the Police Department, for their contributions to the investigation. The City takes a proactive management approach, which is reflected in economic growth and community atmosphere.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The 2024-2025 Kern County Grand Jury recommends that:

- R1. The Shafter City Council review the City Charter and establish accountability measures for adherence by October 1, 2025. (Finding #1)
- R2. The Shafter City Council provide a definition of "Council Norms" and publish them on the City's website by October 1, 2025. (Finding #2)

- R3. By November 1, 2025, the Shafter City Council allocate funds for signage at the Shafter Police Department that will give the building a higher street visibility.  
(Finding #7)

**NOTES:**

The City of Shafter City Council should post a copy of this report where it will be available for public review.

- Persons wishing to receive an email notification of newly released reports may sign up at: <https://www.kemcounty.com/govenunent/other-agencies/grand-jury>
- Present and past Kem County Grand Jury Final Reports and Responses can be accessed on the Kem County Grand Jury website <https://www.kemcounty.com/government/other-agencies/grand-juty>

**RESPONSE DEADLINE:**

- **REQUIRED WITIDN 90 DAYS FROM:**

Shafter City Council  
Findings #1 through #7  
Recommendations #1 through #3

**RESPONSES ARE REQUIRED PURSUANT TO PENAL CODE §§933(c) AND 933.05:**

- **PRESIDING JUDGE  
SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA  
COUNTY OF KERN  
.1415 TRUXTUN AVENUE, SUITE 212  
BAKERSFIELD, CA 93301**
- **FOREPERSON  
KERN COUNTY GRAND JURY  
1415 TRUXTUN AVENUE, SUITE 600  
BAKERSFIELD, CA 93301**

Reports issued by the Grand Jury do not identify individuals interviewed. Cal. Penal Code §929 requires that reports of the Grand Jury not contain the name of any person or facts leading to the identity of any person who provides information to the Grand Jury.

## **APPENDIX A: Excerpts from the Shafter City Charter**

### **Section 4.02. General Powers of the Council:**

All powers of the City shall be vested in the Council, except as otherwise provided by this Charter, and the Council shall provide for the exercise thereof and for the performance of all duties and obligations imposed on the City by this Charter and by law.

A. Duties of the Council: The Council shall make policy for the City. In addition, the Council shall be responsible to the people of Shafter for, but not limited to the following duties and responsibilities:

1. Considering ordinances and resolutions and adopting those which it determines to be necessary for the governance, proper administration and adequate financing of the City.
2. Providing oversight of the City Manager and all City activities under his/her purview and at least annually evaluate the performance of the City Manager.
3. Insure all provisions of this Charter, ordinances, and applicable State and federal laws are carried out.

### **Section 4.04. Duties of Mayor:**

The duties of the Mayor shall be assigned by the Council by ordinance. These duties shall include but not be limited to the duties listed in this Section.

The Mayor shall be the chief representative of the City and shall:

- A. Represent the City for ceremonial purposes.
- B. Preside at meetings of the Council.
- C. Represent the City in intergovernmental relations, personally or by a representative designated by him/her with the concurrence of the Council.
- D. Possess the authority and attributes of a Council Member.

### **Section 4.07. Prohibitions on Council:**

No Council Member shall hold any other City office or City employment during the term for which elected or appointed to the Council for two years thereafter.

Nothing in this Section shall be construed to prohibit the Council from selecting any current or former Council Member to represent the City on the governing board of any regional or intergovernmental agency.

A. Personnel Restriction. Neither the Council nor any of its members may in any manner control or require the appointment or removal of any City department head or employee whom the City Manager or any subordinate of the City Manager is empowered to appoint.

B. Restriction on Interference With City Manager. Neither the Mayor nor any Council Member shall interfere with the execution of the powers and duties of the City Manager. Except for purposes of inquiry, the Mayor and Council Members shall deal with the administrative service solely through the City Manager. Neither the Mayor nor

any Council Member shall give orders to, discipline or threaten any subordinate of the City Manager, either publicly or privately. The Council may express its views and fully and freely discuss with the City Manager anything pertaining to appointment and removal of City officers, department heads, and employees.

**Section 5.03. Powers and Duties of City Manager:**

The City Manager shall be responsible to the Council for the proper administration of all affairs of the City and shall:

A. Appointment at Employees. Appoint, remove and discipline all employees of the City pursuant to requirements set out in this Charter and an ordinance establishing a merit system of appointment and employment.

B. Delegation of Authority. Have the power to delegate the appointment, removal, and discipline of subordinate employees to the department heads to which those employees are assigned.

C Supervision of Departments. Direct and supervise the administration of all departments, offices and agencies of the City.

D. Annual Budget. Prepare annually, submit, and administer the budget, capital improvement plan and other plans and programs of the City as required by this Charter or as required by the Council.

E. Keeping Council Informed. Keep the Council advised of the financial condition, current and future needs of the City. The City Manager shall make such recommendations to the Council concerning the affairs of the City as he/she shall deem necessary or desirable.

F. Enforcing Laws and Contracts. Provide for enforcement and faithful execution of all laws, regulations and rules of the City, all Charter provisions, all acts of the Council, and administration at all contracts to which the City is a party.

G. Annual Report. Submit to the Council and make available to the public a comprehensive annual financial and administrative report on the finances and activities of all City departments and agencies.

H. Initiating Reports. Make such other reports to the Council as it may require or the City Manager may desire, concerning the needs and operations at City programs, departments, offices and agencies.

I. Restrictions. Engage in no incompatible business, occupation or activities.

J. Receive Notices. Receive notice of all meetings of the Council, and all City boards, committees, and commissions.

K. Participating in Meetings. Be entitled to participate in the deliberations of any City board, committee, and commission, but shall have no vote therein.

L. Attending Meetings. The City Manager shall be entitled to attend all Council meetings, both public and closed, and shall have the right to take part in all discussions held at all such meetings but shall have no vote. The City Manager shall not be entitled to attend any closed session of the Council when dismissal of or other disciplinary actions involving the City Manager are discussed.

M. Other Duties. Perform such other duties consistent with this Charter as may be required by the Council.

**DISCLAIMER:**

This report was issued by the Grand Jury with the exception of one Juror pursuant to Penal Code §916.2(a). The Juror was excluded from all parts of the inquiry/investigation, including interviews, deliberations, and the writing and approval of this report.



336 Pacific Avenue • Shafter, California 93263

September 16, 2025

Hon. John W. Lua  
Presiding Judge  
Superior Court of California  
County of Kern  
1415 Truxtun Avenue, Suite 212  
Bakersfield, CA 93301

Foreperson  
Kern County Grand Jury  
1415 Truxtun Avenue, Suite 600  
Bakersfield, CA 93301

**SUBJECT: RESPONSE TO 2024-2025 GRAND JURY REPORT ON THE CITY OF  
SHAFTER**

Dear Judge Lua:

On June 17, 2025, the City of Shafter (“City”) received a report from the 2024-2025 Kern County Grand Jury (“Grand Jury Report”) regarding the operations of the City of Shafter. Pursuant to California Penal Code Section 933, “[N]o 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...” (See Penal Code, Section 933(c)).

The attached response is drafted in compliance with Penal Code sections 933 and 933.05 on behalf of the Shafter City Council, pursuant to their unanimous adoption of Resolution No. 3043 (attached) adopted at the September 16, 2025 City Council meeting.

City Manager  
(661) 746-5000  
Fax (661) 746-0607

Finance  
(661) 746-5001  
Fax (661) 746-1002

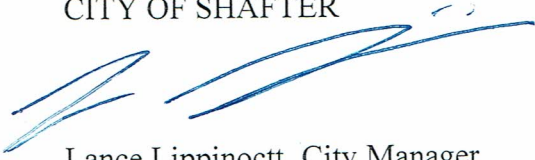
Human Resources  
(661) 746-5003  
Fax (661) 746-2645

Planning/Building  
(661) 746-5002  
Fax (661) 746-9125

Public Works/Engineering  
(661) 746-5004  
Fax (661) 746-9125

On behalf of the City Council, I want to express our sincere appreciation for the diligent review conducted by the Grand Jury and will remain available to discuss any follow-up matters.

Sincerely,  
CITY OF SHAFTER



Lance Lippinocct, City Manager

Attachment: Resolution No. 3043

CC: Mayor & City Council  
City Auditor

**RESOLUTION NO. 3043**

**A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SHAFTER  
APPROVING A RESPONSE TO THE 2024-2025 KERN COUNTY GRAND JURY  
REPORT ON THE OPERATION AND MANAGEMENT OF THE CITY OF SHAFTER  
AND DIRECTING A RESPONSE TO THE PRESIDING JUDGE AND GRAND JURY  
FOREPERSON**

**WHEREAS**, on June 17, 2025, the City Council of the City of Shafter ("City Council") received the 2024-2025 Grand Jury Report ("Report") on the operations and management of the City of Shafter; and

**WHEREAS**, the Report investigated the operations and management of the City of Shafter and made certain findings and recommendations related to the establishment of Council norms and protocols, accountability measures for Council members and the identification of City facilities; and

**WHEREAS**, the City Council reviewed the findings and recommendations contained in the Report and approved a response in accordance with California Penal Code, Section 933(c); and

**WHEREAS**, the response has been prepared in accordance with the guidelines established in the Report and California Penal Code, Section 933.5; and

**WHEREAS**, the City Council is appreciative of the efforts of the Kern County Grand Jury and resolves to comply with the recommendation contained in the Report.

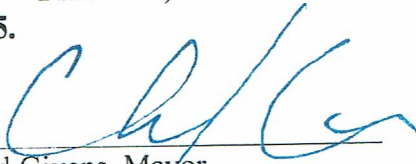
**NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SHAFTER AS FOLLOWS:**

**SECTION 1.** The City Council of the City of Shafter hereby approves the response to the Kern County Grand Jury on the operation of the City of Shafter as shown in the attached Exhibit "A" to this Resolution.

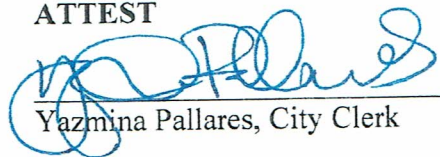
**SECTION 2.** The City Council of the City of Shafter hereby authorizes the Mayor to sign this Resolution and provide a copy to the presiding judge of the Kern County Superior Court and the foreperson of the Kern County Grand Jury pursuant to California Penal Code, Section 933(c). In addition, the City Council hereby authorizes the City Manager to prepare a letter of transmittal to be signed by the Mayor transmitting the Resolution and its attachment.

**SECTION 3. Effective Date.** This Resolution shall become effective immediately following its adoption.

**PASSED, APPROVED AND ADOPTED ON THIS 16<sup>th</sup> DAY OF SEPTEMBER,  
2025.**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Chad Givens, Mayor

**ATTEST**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Yazmina Pallares, City Clerk

**APPROVED AS TO FORM:**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Marco A. Martinez, City Attorney

**EXHIBIT "A"**

**CITY OF SHAFTER**

**RESPONSES TO 2024-2025 KERN COUNTY GRAND JURY REPORT ON THE  
OPERATIONS & MANAGEMENT OF THE CITY OF SHAFTER**

RESPONSE TO FINDINGS (ITALICIZED)

F1 Although Council Members are familiar with the City Charter, there have been violations of City Charter §4.07 B (Appendix A) which have caused concern among City employees.

*RESPONSE: The City is without sufficient information to determine whether specific violations of Section 4.07(B) of the City Charter have occurred and the Report provides no specific examples upon which the City can agree or disagree (with the finding). Nevertheless, the City Council, at the request of Councilmember Pete Espinoza, recently ordered a review and discussion of Council governance norms and protocols. These public discussions were held at the May 6, 2025 regular City Council meeting and the June 12, 2025 special City Council meeting. The City Council Governance Protocols and Enforcement Measures were adopted by the City Council at their meeting held on July 16, 2025. As part of these discussions, all councilmembers have been reminded and counseled concerning their obligations as councilmembers, as these are described in the Charter and have adopted certain norms and expectations .*

F2. Council Members state there are "Council Norms," but Council Members could not give an accurate definition of these "Norms" causing lack of accountability.

*RESPONSE: The City agrees with this finding. The City Council recently ordered a review and discussion of Council governance norms and protocols. These public discussions were held at the May 6, 2025 regular City Council meeting and the June 12, 2025 special City Council meeting. Draft City Council Governance Protocols and Enforcement Measures have been developed and are scheduled for consideration and adoption on July 16, 2025.*

F3. The Shafter Animal Control Unit is clean and well-maintained. This unit continues to be a valuable resource for the community.

*RESPONSE: The City agrees with this finding.*

F4. During a visit to the Shafter Police Department, the Grand Jury observed staff members and officers to be professional and fully engaged. This reflects their commitment to the community.

*RESPONSE: The City agrees with this finding.*

F5. The jail located at the Department was clean and unoccupied. It passes compliance

and inspection every year. This demonstrates the high level of accountability and performance within the department.

*RESPONSE: The City agrees with this finding.*

F6. Through grant funding, the Shafter Police Department was able to build a gym inside the main headquarters. This gives staff members and officers the opportunity to work out and relieve stress.

*RESPONSE: The City agrees with this finding.*

F7. Due to lack of visible signage, some members of the community may find it difficult to locate the Police Department building

*RESPONSE: The City agrees with this finding.*

#### RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS (ITALICIZED)

R1. The Shafter City Council review the City Charter and establish accountability measures for adherence by October 1, 2025. (Finding #1)

*Agreed. The City Council recently ordered a review and discussion of Council governance norms and protocols. These public discussions were held at the May 6, 2025 regular City Council meeting and the June 12, 2025 special City Council meeting. Draft City Council Governance Protocols and Enforcement Measures have been developed and are scheduled for consideration and adoption on July 16, 2025.*

R2. The Shafter City Council provide a definition of "Council Norms" and publish them on the City's website by October 1, 2025. (Finding #2)

*Agreed. The City Council recently ordered a review and discussion of Council governance norms and protocols. These public discussions were held at the May 6, 2025 regular City Council meeting and the June 12, 2025 special City Council meeting. Draft City Council Governance Protocols and Enforcement Measures have been developed and are scheduled for consideration and adoption on July 16, 2025. Once adopted, they will be published on the City website.*

R3. By November 1, 2025, the Shafter City Council allocate funds for signage at the Shafter Police Department that will give the building a higher street visibility.  
(Finding #7)

*Agreed. Immediately following the issuance of the Grand Jury's initial report, City Staff ordered new signage for the Police Station comprised of a monument style sign to provide clear identification.*

### Applicable Provisions

#### **Penal Code 933 (c)**

(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.

#### **Penal Code 933.5**

(a) For purposes of subdivision (b) of Section 933, as to each grand jury finding, the responding person or entity shall indicate one of the following:

(1) The respondent agrees with the finding.

(2) The respondent disagrees wholly or partially with the finding, in which case the response shall specify the portion of the finding that is disputed and shall include an explanation of the reasons therefor.

(b) For purposes of subdivision (b) of Section 933, as to each grand jury recommendation, the responding person or entity shall report one of the following actions:

(1) The recommendation has been implemented, with a summary regarding the implemented action.

(2) The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future, with a timeframe for implementation.

(3) The recommendation requires further analysis, with an explanation and the scope and parameters of an analysis or study, and a timeframe for the matter to be prepared for discussion by the officer or head of the agency or department being investigated or reviewed, including the governing body of the public agency when applicable. This timeframe shall not exceed six months from the date of publication of the grand jury report.

(4) The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable, with an explanation therefor.

(c) However, if a finding or recommendation of the grand jury addresses budgetary or personnel matters of a county agency or department headed by an elected officer, both the agency or department head and the board of supervisors shall respond if requested by the grand jury, but the response of the board of supervisors shall address only those budgetary or personnel matters over which it has some decision-making authority. The response of the elected agency or

department head shall address all aspects of the findings or recommendations affecting his or her agency or department.

(d) A grand jury may request a subject person or entity to come before the grand jury for the purpose of reading and discussing the findings of the grand jury report that relates to that person or entity in order to verify the accuracy of the findings prior to their release.

(e) During an investigation, the grand jury shall meet with the subject of that investigation regarding the investigation, unless the court, either on its own determination or upon request of the foreperson of the grand jury, determines that such a meeting would be detrimental.

(f) A grand jury shall provide to the affected agency a copy of the portion of the grand jury report relating to that person or entity two working days prior to its public release and after the approval of the presiding judge. No officer, agency, department, or governing body of a public agency shall disclose any contents of the report prior to the public release of the final report.

