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RESPONDENTS

Yolo County Board of Supervisors

METHODOLOGY

The Grand Jury conducted a daylong tour and review of the facilities, including a seminar by Sheriff Ed Prieto.

Documents Examined

Annual Report 1999–2000 Sheriff Coroner

Yolo County Animal Shelter

REASON FOR REVIEW

As part of its mandated annual review of the Sheriff's Department, the Grand Jury inspected the Yolo County Animal Shelter.

BACKGROUND

The Yolo County Grand Jury toured the Animal Shelter on August 8, 2000. Part of the Administrative and Special Services Division of the Sheriff's Department, the shelter has the capacity to hold 100 dogs and 75 cats. In addition to domestic animals, the shelter can (and at times does) house exotic animals, livestock, and wildlife. The Animal Shelter employs one manager, one supervisor, nine animal control officers, and one kennel technician. Inmates of the Walter L. Leinberger center help construct, clean, and maintain the cages.

Upon entering the shelter, animals are vaccinated and observed to ensure that only healthy animals will be offered for adoption. The Yolo County Animal Shelter finds homes for over 7,000 animals each year, or more than half of all the animals that enter the shelter.

Animal control officers assist other local and state law enforcement agencies when animals are involved, enforce pertinent code sections, assist postal employees threatened by loose dogs, and respond to complaints about stray animals or animal abuse.

Although it occupies a large site, the facility itself is small and cramped. Half of the main building houses the front office, ASPCA office (the ASPCA works with shelter staff to promote adoptions), staff offices, and a public bathroom which is also used by staff who have no other place to change clothes (after certain "animal events," officers need to shower and change). The other half houses—in separate rooms—cats, adoptable dogs,

quarantined animals, and dogs not eligible for adoption. During "cat season," when cats are breeding, the cat room quickly reaches capacity. There is also a barn on site, as well as trailers and storage areas.

Most of the shelter's operating costs are paid by cities within the county that use Animal Control services, supplemented by pet-licensing fees (raised in 2000 for the first time since 1989) and donations, including pallets full of pet food given by various stores within the county.

Yolo County Coroner's Office and Morgue

REASON FOR REVIEW

As part of its mandated annual review of the Sheriff's Department, the Grand Jury inquired into the operations of the Yolo County Coroner's Office and Morgue.

BACKGROUND

A division of the Yolo County Sheriff's Department, the Coroner's Office investigates sudden, violent, or unusual deaths to determine their cause. The office also is responsible for positively identifying any corpse; generally this is done through fingerprints and dental records.

FINDINGS

1. The number of homicides, suspicious deaths, and suicides in the county is increasing. The Coroner's case load varies seasonally, but typically ranges from 30–60 cases a month. In 2000, the office investigated 600 deaths.
2. To perform the work, there are three full-time staff members, one part-time staff member, and up to three interns who work two eight-hour days a week. At the time of our review, the office was ready to hire an additional full-time staff person.
3. Deputy coroners investigate the scene of death; serious crimes may take weeks to fully investigate.
4. The average cost to investigate a death in Yolo County is \$3,000. To save time as well as money,

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the office increasingly performs tasks in-house that had previously been contracted out. All personnel are trained in positive fingerprinting, whole body and dental x-rays, some drug testing, and film development.

5. Officers are allowed time off without pay when the stress of a difficult job becomes unmanageable. Low staff turnover is attributable to the interesting nature of the work and the extra training available.
6. The Sheriff is trying to find reliable transportation for deputies who travel to death scenes at night in isolated or unsafe areas.

CONCLUSIONS

1. We found the staff enthusiastic and dedicated.
2. We support the Sheriff's efforts to secure reliable transportation for his staff. No county employee should be put at greater risk than necessary.

Appendix

Responses to the 1999-2000 Grand Jury Report

In accordance with Section 933(c) of the California Penal Code, the governing body of a public agency or its designated administrator must respond to Grand Jury recommendations within 90 days. Elected officials must respond within 60 days. If respondents disagree with Grand Jury recommendations, they must explain why.

The 2000-2001 Grand Jury reviewed the responses to the 1999-2000 report and found most of them adequate. We did request more information from the Winters Police Department and Child Protective Services, and the information those departments provided follows.

The Winters Police Department's response to recommendation 00-07 is that the city hopes to increase the number of sworn personnel by gaining state and federal funding. The city has signed a multi-year contract providing a 10 percent salary increase retroactive to July 1, 2000, and a 7.5 percent salary increase effective July 1, 2001 (00-08).

Child Protective Services expanded its response to recommendations 00-18 and 00-19 by sending the Grand Jury its complete Policy and Procedures Manual.

Below are the recommendations from the 1999-2000 report. Each recommendation, with its reference number in parentheses, is followed by a summary of the official response. The complete report is available at public libraries in Yolo County and on the Grand Jury's web site (<http://home8.gotnet.net/ycgj>). The complete set of responses is available for public review at the office of the clerk of the Board of Supervisors.

Davis Police Department

The Davis Police Department should develop a clear-cut mission statement as soon as possible (00-01).

The Davis Police Department's Mission Statement is: "Our mission is to provide a safe and secure environment to everyone in the City of Davis. We will maintain order and protect all members of the public, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion or gender. We are 'peace officers' and will fulfill our duty to keep the peace. This will be achieved by working in partnership with the community based on mutual respect, understanding and sensitivity."

The Davis City Council should conduct a study of the safety issues related to the new I-80 bicycle undercrossing and determine and meet the law-enforcement needs before a serious accident occurs (00-02).

The Putah Creek bicycle undercrossing is a well-lit, modern facility designed and built to current standards. The undercrossing will incorporate three emergency phone boxes. The construction accommodates vehicular traffic, allowing for periodic police patrol.

The Davis Police Department should provide formal, periodic training to sworn officers on racial tolerance and cultural awareness (00-03).

The Davis Police Department is continuing to expand efforts to improve racial harmony between the community and Davis police employees by:

- working with the University of California at Davis (UCD) and the UCD Police Department to promote safe and neutral exchange of ideas between police employees and students of varied ethnicity;
- scheduling a police manager to attend a "Racial Profiling and Traffic Stops" symposium, who will then conduct department-wide training and implement updated department policies on this topic;
- inviting speakers from prominent organizations that can help us recognize how to be aware of intolerance, hate crimes, and racial or gender bias;
- revising department policies and developing a manual to guide our response to hate crime reporting and investigations;
- circulating a Department of Justice video on Response and Investigation of Hate Crimes to all police officers and investigators, dispatchers, and police service specialists.

The Davis City Council should seriously study issues relating to proper firearms training needs and facilities to make sure that the police force does not fall behind in firearms training and meets or exceeds mandated standards (00-04).

Firearm training is a high priority, and the Davis Police

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Department has never fallen behind in our firearms training. We have mandated quarterly firearm training and qualifications for all employees using firearms. There have been occasions when employees have missed the quarterly sessions, but they have been ordered to make up the quarterly qualifications.

An employee must shoot two qualifying scores at the same qualifying session before being released back to duty. This mandated standard has been exercised for both officers and managers. When an administrator returned from the firing range without qualifying because of equipment failure, he did not carry a weapon until he successfully qualified.

Range instructors had discontinued training with the standard shotgun carried by officers because of complaints from supervisors about the time on-duty officers were away from work. Shotgun training has now resumed.

The department had to discontinue active use of our firing range on County Road 102 north of the city limits because of residential growth pressures. After considerable research, we have successfully contracted with the Yolo Sportsmen's Club for firing range use. This is an interim solution. The Davis Police Department plans to purchase a state-of-the-art automated indoor firing system that will be located in the rear parking lot of our new building. The system will enhance training in firearms decision-making situations. The cost is estimated to be \$70,000.

The Davis City Council should study the practicality and fairness of parking enforcement in private lots, especially shopping plaza lots, and make sure that ordinances are enforceable in a fair and just manner (00-05).

Parking, particularly in shopping plaza lots, has traditionally been difficult to fairly enforce. The University Mall shopping plaza is particularly difficult to enforce because it is not posted for two-hour parking. We recommended to the University Mall property owners that they post the lot as a two-hour lot, but the owners chose not to implement our recommendation and continue using private security to report offending vehicles to the department. This system is flawed and results in citation dismissal when vehicle owners have receipts from Mall businesses.

Yolo County will benefit when the Davis Police Department adopts the new 800 megahertz communication frequency (00-06).

Currently, the majority of law enforcement agencies along the I-80 corridor are using the 800 MHz system. Unfortunately, some jurisdictions in Yolo County (Woodland, Davis, and Winters police departments and the Sheriff Department) are not on the 800 MHz system, and the cost of converting is deterring their switching.

The City is working with a local vendor to build a city 800

MHz system, and cost estimates are pending. The City of Davis has set aside \$1.1 million dollars for this project. In the event the implementation cost exceeds this amount, the City is willing to explore reasonable funding alternatives.

Winters Police Department

The Winters City Council and the city manager's office should study the situation of its police force and find ways to increase the number of sworn officers (00-07).

The City Council should study pay scales and benefits packages for its sworn officers, and pay scales and benefits should be brought up to a level comparable with other law enforcement agencies in Yolo County (00-08).

Yolo County will benefit when the Winters Police Department adopts the new 800 megahertz communication frequency (00-09).

We will be looking into and meeting the Federal Communications Commission mandate.

Woodland Police Department

To achieve better racial harmony in the community and to deal with race-related matters more effectively, the Woodland Police Department should provide periodic formal training to sworn officers on racial tolerance and cultural awareness (00-10).

The Woodland Police Department does provide an effective training plan which addresses racial tolerance and cultural awareness. Department managers attended the Western Regional Hate Crimes Symposium in 1999. All personnel will attend training sponsored by the Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles, funded by a grant from the museum. In addition, each new employee undergoes two hours of department training that focuses on the cultural demographics of the community, a tour of various neighborhoods, and meetings with members of the community. We will continue to explore and implement effective training methods to address these issues.

Yolo County will benefit when the Woodland Police Department adopts the new 800 megahertz communication frequency (00-11).

Congress has mandated all government radio operations in the radio bands be narrowbanded by 2005 (for VHF) or 2007 (for UHF). Until recently, only one or two manufacturers were offering 800 MHz trunking systems. Now, more and more vendors are close to producing equipment that operates

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in a digital/narrowband environment. The Woodland Police Department will work with other members of the Yolo County Communications and Emergency Services Agency to develop a strategy for this potential communications change.

Yolo County Sheriff's Department

The county administrator's office should conduct a independent study to determine the root cause of higher than normal turnover of sworn officers and, in cooperation with the Sheriff's Department, find ways to remedy the situation (00-12).

The Human Resources Division is working to develop options to retain staff and improve recruitment of new staff. Plans are nearly complete to conduct an employee survey to gather information on the needs of employees. We will also be conducting a total compensation salary survey to benchmark our compensation package with other agencies.

The Sheriff's Department should evaluate the potential of moving sworn officers, including deputies and correctional officers, out of the Monroe Detention Center into the county at large. If correctional officers are asked to take over sworn officers's functions inside the jail, they should receive additional training and benefits, including safety retirement (00-13).

The department was reorganized to free up deputies for field operations, specifically patrol. The correctional staff have been well prepared and received the additional training required to assume some of the duties and responsibilities of the deputies and sergeants. Additional benefits and safety retirement for correctional officers should be addressed during contract negotiations.

Yolo County Juvenile Hall

In the short term, all monitors should be fixed and on line; all surveillance cameras should be working and focused on relevant areas, with new cameras installed as needed; all locks should work, with minimal downtime; a metal detector should be installed at the main entrance; and the director of the facility should have the authority (up to a predetermined monetary limit) to maintain any security-related items without having to go through normal bureaucratic channels (00-14).

All monitors are fixed and operational; all cameras are working and have been installed, relocated, or adjusted; all locks have been repaired, and a more responsive maintenance company found; a portable (wand) metal detector will be used to scan unknown visitors; and the director has the authority to maintain any equipment identified as an emergency need.

In the intermediate term, pay scales should be investigated and adjusted to more accurately reflect the going rate for comparable positions in neighboring counties; some form of safety retirement should be offered to all probation department employees classified as peace officers; and a more detailed method of prioritizing and tracking repairs should be initiated (00-15).

A salary and benefit survey is being conducted and will address safety retirement; repairs get a quicker response from General Services, and electronics are maintained by a more responsive company.

In the long term, the county should consider replacing the present juvenile hall with a new facility (00-16).

The Board of Supervisors and the county administrator's office are pursuing construction of a new juvenile hall.

Yolo County Y2K Strategy Plan

The Grand Jury commends all the people who worked on the Y2K strategy, especially the Information Technology Division which provided leadership and direction to all departments (00-17).

The Board of Supervisors accepts the commendations of the 1999-2000 Grand Jury and will forward it to all departments and divisions involved.

Child Protective Services

The director should verify that there are written protocols and objective assessment instruments in place to guide the placement decisions of caseworkers according to accepted standards (00-18).

The department relies upon the specific statutes governing placement that are contained in California State Department of Social Services Regulations, Best Practices Guidelines issued by the state, and written Relative/Kinship Care Assessment Guidelines. A local policies and procedures manual will be completed by December 30, 2000.

The director should periodically review the written protocols for the department to assure that the department is in compliance with accepted standards (00-19).

The State provides oversight of county Child Welfare Services in the context of federal and state law and state policies and procedures. This oversight is conducted through compliance reviews.

The director should enlist the services of the Human

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Resources Department and the county administrator's office to develop a comprehensive recruitment and retention plan. This should include a formal employee orientation and training program that will fast track the new staff to be fully functional within 90 days of hire (00-20).

The department will continue to work with the county administrator's office and Human Resources to explore and develop ongoing ways to address recruitment and retention.

The department will continue to utilize the training programs provided through the Northern California Children and Family Services Training Academy under the auspices of the Center for Human Services, University Extension, University of California, Davis. Yolo County would expect Child Welfare staff to be functional in the core competency areas of their program assignment at the end of 12 months.

Esparto Community Services District

The Esparto Community Services District (ECSD) should institute a formal policy of initial and annual refresher training for its board members on the requirements of the Brown Act (00-21).

The ECSD presently has a policy that strongly encourages training, especially training related to the Brown Act. The Yolo County Counsel's Office has indicated that it will provide the sort of training called for in this recommendation. This board looks forward to that training.

The ECSD should coordinate with the County Counsel, District Attorney, or other local agencies that provide Brown Act training in which ECSD members can participate (00-22).

The County Counsel's office will include the ECSD in a training session devoted entirely to the Brown Act that is open to all special districts in the county.

The District Attorney's office recommends that any actions previously taken by the ECSD board that lacked proper notice or inclusion in the formal agenda be vacated to minimize any potential legal liability. The District Attorney's office would not be the appropriate agency for training as it would be this office's responsibility to prosecute offenders or intervene in the event there were a violation of the Brown Act. In addition, the county should provide the ECSD a copy of the Attorney General's pamphlet on the Brown Act.

The ECSD board should take personal responsibility to assure that the public's business is conducted in public as required by the law (00-23).

The board wholeheartedly and enthusiastically acknowledges its responsibility to ensure that the public's business is

conducted in public as required by law.

The ECSD should review the findings and recommendations from the 1997-1998 Yolo County Grand Jury and institute that report's recommendations immediately (00-24).

Those recommendations have already been implemented.

The 2000-2001 Grand Jury should continue to monitor the ECSD (00-25).

Esparto Unified School District

The Esparto Unified School District (EUSD) should institute a formal policy of initial and annual refresher training for its members on the requirements of the Brown Act (00-26).

An in-service program for board members on Brown Act compliance will be conducted by legal counsel with specialized training and experience. Plans for annual in-service programs on Brown Act compliance are currently under consideration.

The EUSD should coordinate with the County Counsel, District Attorney, and other local agencies that provide Brown Act training in which EUSD members can participate (00-27).

The County Counsel's office will include the school district in a training session devoted entirely to the Brown Act that is open to all special districts in the county.

EUSD board members should take personal responsibility to assure that the public's business is conducted in public as required by law (00-28).

The EUSD is in the process of reviewing and updating its bylaws, board policies, and administrative regulations to ensure that the standards followed by the district are current and in compliance with the laws governing school districts.

Board members should evaluate their own commitment of time since absences from the community or board meetings may detract from a member's effectiveness and deprive the community of the full talents and skills of the member (00-29).

The absences referred to in the Grand Jury report occur as a result of a board member's military service obligations. The public policy of both this state and the federal government preclude any criticism or discrimination based upon that service.

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