

This document is an extract of a larger publication.

civilgrandjury.org is a project of UnGovr.org, a US-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to government transparency and public accountability.



Fort Bragg Police Department and Holding Cells (January 26, 2005)

Summary

In accordance with duties required, the Grand Jury visited the Fort Bragg Police Department, the department office, and the holding cells on the adjoining property of the Mendocino County Sheriff's Department.

Background

California Penal Code § 919 (b) states "The Grand Jury shall inquire into the condition and management of the public prisons within the county." The Grand Jury also has a general authority to review city affairs under Penal Code § 925 (a). The 2004-2005 Mendocino County Grand Jury undertook their charge with a visit to the Fort Bragg Police Department and Holding Cells.

Methodology

On two occasions the Grand Jury interviewed members of the Fort Bragg Police Department and made an on-site visitation of the Department. A visit to their Cypress Street station and the adjoining holding cell situated immediately next door at the facility managed by the Mendocino County Sheriff's Department was performed.

Findings

1. The City of Fort Bragg budget authorizes 21 full-time positions in the Police Department.
2. 77% of the 2004 budget goes to salaries.
3. The high incidence of staff turnover in the Department is due primarily to the high cost of available housing.
4. Taser weapons were introduced in 2003, replacing stun guns.
5. The rate of police officer injuries has been reduced since the introduction of the Taser.
6. The K-9 unit has been in service for ten years.
7. The average length of stay in the holding cells is two hours.
8. The Department has a policy of book and release when appropriate.
9. Prisoners are transported to Mendocino County Jail by Community Service Officers (CSO).
10. The Fort Bragg Police Department web site is not up to date.

Recommendations

1. The Grand Jury recommends that every effort be made to staff the Fort Bragg Police Department from community residents. (Finding 3).
2. The Grand Jury recommends that the web site be updated. (Finding 10).

Comments

The Fort Bragg Police Department continues to perform well in the face of financial adversity. The Department is able to provide the necessary services and protection for their community. The Department would like to be able to do more with education and prevention within the local school systems. The Fort Bragg Police Department is also trying to find grant funding to carry out special projects and is making special efforts to find affordable housing for police personnel.

Response Required

Fort Bragg City Council

Response Requested

Fort Bragg Police Chief

Mendocino County Jail, Courthouse Holding Cells, and Fort Bragg Sheriff's Holding Cells (January 26, 2005)

Summary

In accordance with duties required, the Grand Jury visited the Mendocino County Jail (MCJ), the Mendocino County Courthouse Holding Cells, and the Fort Bragg Sheriff's Holding Cells.

Background

California Penal Code Section § 919 (b) states that "The Grand Jury shall inquire into the condition and management of the public prisons within the county." The 2004-2005 Mendocino County Grand Jury undertook their charge with visits to the Mendocino County Jail, the Mendocino County Courthouse Holding Cells, and the Fort Bragg Sheriff's Holding Cells.

Methodology

The Grand Jury toured the Mendocino County Jail Facility, including the Sally Port (inmate delivery) and Booking Area, and the Holding Cells in the Courthouse and Fort Bragg. The Grand Jury interviewed Jail personnel: officers, medical personnel, education instructors, and kitchen staff.

Findings

1. The MCJ is currently understaffed at 39 Corrections Deputies, although the County Budget provides funding for 44.

Response (Sheriff): The Department disagrees in part with this finding. At the time of the Grand Jury's investigation, only 39 of the 44 funded Corrections Deputy positions were filled. As of February 4, 2005, only 36 of the 44 positions are filled, and 7 of these 36 are off work due to injury. The Sheriff's Office continues to recruit and test applicants, but the attrition rate during the background investigation process has been very high.

In 1995 the Board of Corrections conducted a comprehensive staffing analysis at the Mendocino County Jail. The resulting report recommended a staffing level of 57 corrections deputies. A 2002 analysis commissioned by the Sheriff's Office and conducted by Steven Reader & Associates recommended 54 corrections deputies. The Board of Corrections subsequently accepted this latter study. Jail understaffing is also discussed in Grand Jury reports for the years 1997-1998, 1998-1999, 1999-2000 2000-2001, and 2002-2003 (the 2001-2002 report did not investigate the jail).

Response (Buildings and Grounds): The Department can neither agree nor disagree with this finding. However, the Department has no reason to doubt the Sheriff's response to this finding.

Response (Board of Supervisors): The BOS agrees with the response represented by the Sheriff's Department.

2. The MCJ can currently accommodate 302 inmates.

Response (Sheriff): The Department disagrees in part with this finding. The Board of Corrections' rated capacity for the Mendocino County Jail is 295 inmates. In addition, the jail has seven specialty/isolation cells, bringing the total capacity to 302.

Response (Buildings and Grounds): The Department can neither agree nor disagree with this finding. However, the Department agrees with the Sheriff's response to this finding.

Response (Board of Supervisors): The BOS agrees with the response represented by the Sheriff's Department.

3. A new 64-bed addition to the MCJ is expected to open in July 2006.

Response (Sheriff): The Department agrees with this finding, but there are significant challenges. Skyrocketing construction costs, in particular the prices for steel and concrete, have forced the County to reject two rounds of construction bids. The Sheriff's Office and General Services/Buildings and Grounds have been working with a local architect on a redesign that meets Board of Corrections' standards within the amount of available funding.

Response (Buildings and Grounds): The Department agrees in part with this finding. A new 64-bed addition to the Jail is currently in the design phase. If adequate funds are available to proceed with the project and it is allowed to stay on schedule, the Department's commitment to the State Board of Corrections is that the addition will be open by September 2006.

Response (Board of Supervisors): The BOS agrees with the response represented by the Buildings and Grounds Department.

4. The MCJ has two padded Safety Cells in the men's wing.

Response (Sheriff): The Department agrees with this finding.

Response (Buildings and Grounds): The Department agrees with this finding.

Response (Board of Supervisors): The BOS agrees with the response represented by the Sheriff's Department.

5. A doorframe in one of the men's Safety Cells is missing padding and poses a safety concern.

Response (Sheriff): The Department disagrees with this finding. The condition was present at the time of the Grand Jury's inspection but has since been repaired. A temporary repair was completed on January 24, 2005. Permanent repairs will be performed by a private company under arrangements made by County Buildings & Grounds.

Response (Buildings and Grounds): The Department disagrees with this finding. As the Sheriff states in his response, the condition has been repaired since the Grand Jury's inspection. A temporary repair was completed on January 24, 2005, to be followed by a permanent repair performed in the near future by a private company under arrangements made by Buildings and Grounds.

Response (Board of Supervisors): The BOS agrees with the response represented by the Buildings and Grounds Department.

6. The MCJ has one padded Safety Cell in the women's wing.

Response (Sheriff): The Department agrees with this finding.

Response (Buildings and Grounds): The Department agrees with this finding.

Response (Board of Supervisors): The BOS agrees with the response represented by the Sheriff's Department.

7. The MCJ Holding Cells do not contain television or any other means of occupying inmate time.

Response (Sheriff): The Department agrees with this finding.

Response (Buildings and Grounds): The Department neither agrees nor disagrees with this finding; however, it has no reason to doubt either the Grand Jury's finding nor the Sheriff's response in agreement.

Response (Board of Supervisors): The BOS can neither agree nor disagree with this finding, but has no reason to doubt the response represented by the Sheriff's Department or the Buildings and Grounds Department.

8. There is continuing staff turnover at the MCJ because the patrol division is considered more desirable work.

Response (Sheriff): The Department disagrees with this finding only because it singles out losses to the patrol division. Turnover also results from failure to pass probation, dismissal, resignations to accept employment with other agencies, and resignations for personal reasons. For those corrections deputies whose goal is to become a patrol officer, it is clearly in the best interests of the Sheriff's Office to "lose" them to our own patrol division rather than to another department.

Response (Buildings and Grounds): The Department can neither agree nor disagree with this finding. The information required to verify this finding is outside the purview of Buildings and Grounds.

Response (Board of Supervisors): The BOS can neither agree nor disagree with this finding without further information.

9. The Booking Area lacks adequate organizational space for efficient use.

Response (Sheriff): The Department agrees with this finding.

Response (Buildings and Grounds): The Department neither agrees nor disagrees with this finding; however, it has no reason to doubt either the Grand Jury's finding nor the Sheriff's response in agreement.

Response (Board of Supervisors): The BOS can neither agree nor disagree with this finding without further information.

10. There is only one MCJ Booking Officer per shift.

Response (Sheriff): The Department disagrees with this finding. There are two booking officers per shift in the men's jail. There is one booking officer per shift in the women's jail.

Response (Buildings and Grounds): The Department can neither agree nor disagree with this finding. However, the Department has no reason to doubt the Sheriff's response to this finding.

Response (Board of Supervisors): The BOS can neither agree nor disagree with this finding without further information.

11. A new electronic control board for monitoring and controlling inmate activity was recently installed.

Response (Sheriff): The Department agrees with this finding.

Response (Buildings and Grounds): The Department agrees with this finding.

Response (Board of Supervisors): The BOS agrees with this finding.

12. The remote video monitoring station has a digital video recorder to monitor inmate behavior and provide staff liability protection.

Response (Sheriff): The Department disagrees in part with this finding. Video surveillance is used inside and outside the jail to monitor inmate behavior, and maintain facility safety and security. The digital video recording system provides a visual record of incidents occurring within the field of view of the attached surveillance cameras. This record can be used to investigate incidents, identify misconduct and protect staff from false allegations of misconduct.

Response (Buildings and Grounds): The Department agrees in part with this finding. While it is the case that the remote video monitoring station has a digital video recorder, we are not aware of its specific purpose(s).

Response (Board of Supervisors): The BOS can neither agree nor disagree with this finding without further information.

13. In the coming year, MCJ will provide video conferencing for remote attorney/client consultation and family visitation.

Response (Sheriff): The Department disagrees in part with this finding. Attorney/client video conferencing is available now. The Sheriff's Office and County Information Services continue to work on implementing video visitation. Completion will depend on available funding.

Response (Buildings and Grounds): The Department can neither agree nor disagree with this finding. However, the Department has no reason to doubt the Sheriff's response to this finding.

Response (Board of Supervisors): The BOS can neither agree nor disagree with this finding without further information.

14. A renovation of the laundry room has not been completed.

Response (Sheriff): The Department disagrees with this finding. Renovation of the laundry room was not complete at the time of the Grand Jury's inspection. Work was completed on January 7, 2005.

Response (Buildings and Grounds): The Department disagrees with this finding, and agrees with the Sheriff's response that renovation of the laundry room was completed on January 7, 2005.

Response (Board of Supervisors): The BOS can neither agree nor disagree with this finding, but has no reason to doubt the response represented by the Sheriff's Department or the Buildings and Grounds Department.

15. Classroom education and computer lab instruction under the direction of the Ukiah Adult School are offered to inmates.

Response (Sheriff): The Department agrees with this finding.

Response (Buildings and Grounds): The Department neither agrees nor disagrees with this finding. This issue is not within the purview of Buildings and Grounds.

Response (Board of Supervisors): The BOS agrees with the response represented by the Sheriff's Department.

16. A Life Skills class, offered through the Ford Street Project, includes instruction in anger management, health, and abusive behavior reduction.

Response (Sheriff): The Department agrees with this finding.

Response (Buildings and Grounds): The Department neither agrees nor disagrees with this finding. This issue is not within the purview of Buildings and Grounds.

Response (Board of Supervisors): The BOS agrees with the response represented by the Sheriff's Department.

17. Inmates may attend on site meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous.

Response (Sheriff): The Department agrees with this finding.

Response (Buildings and Grounds): The Department neither agrees nor disagrees with this finding. This issue is not within the purview of Buildings and Grounds.

Response (Board of Supervisors): The BOS agrees with the response represented by the Sheriff's Department.

18. Religious services are available to the inmates.

Response (Sheriff): The Department agrees with this finding.

Response (Buildings and Grounds): The Department neither agrees nor disagrees with this finding. This issue is not within the purview of Buildings and Grounds.

Response (Board of Supervisors): The BOS agrees with the response represented by the Sheriff's Department.

19. The money generated from MCJ pay phones, through a service provider contract, defrays the cost of Inmate Services.

Response (Sheriff): The Department agrees with this finding. Inmate phone and commissary commissions provide the funding for Inmate Services.

Response (Buildings and Grounds): The Department neither agrees nor disagrees with this finding. This issue is not within the purview of Buildings and Grounds.

Response (Board of Supervisors): The BOS agrees with this finding.

20. There is a significant number of outstanding maintenance issues.

Response (Sheriff): The Department agrees with this finding.

Response (Buildings and Grounds): The Department agrees with this finding.

Response (Board of Supervisors): The BOS agrees with this finding

21. The Courthouse Holding Cells now provide space for attorney/client consultation.

Response (Sheriff): The Department agrees with this finding.

Response (Buildings and Grounds): The Department neither agrees nor disagrees with this finding; however, it has no reason to doubt neither the Grand Jury's finding nor the Sheriff's response in agreement.

Response (Board of Supervisors): The BOS agrees with the response represented by the Sheriff's Department.