

August 9, 2001

Hon. Rodney S. Melville
Presiding Judge
Santa Barbara Superior Court
312-C East Cook Street
Santa Maria, CA 93456-5369

Grand Jury Foreperson
1100 Anacapa Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

Dear Judge Melville and Grand Jury Foreperson:

This is the City of Lompoc's Department Head response to your 2000-2001 Grand Jury Report on "Detention Facilities and Sheriff's Department Issues." The Police Department is responsible for responding to two findings and one recommendation made by the Grand Jury in that report.

Finding 29.a. is a statement of fact that the construction of Santa Barbara Superior Court Holding Cells is underway in Lompoc. There is really nothing of substance for us to agree or disagree with. There have been a number of construction problems and delays which bring into question whether or not that facility will be completed in this calendar year.

Finding 29.b. is accurate in that it states the cells currently used by the County under our existing MOU with the County will no longer be available when the MOU expires. We agree.

Recommendation 29 suggests that the County enter into a new MOU with the City of Lompoc to continue to receive jail services for

- County Sheriff's Deputy local arrests (inmates who would otherwise be transported and housed at the Main Jail), and for
- Main Jail and Santa Maria inmates who would otherwise be early released when additional housing is needed at the Main Jail due to the cap.

This recommendation is somewhat misleading. It implies continuance of the above services, but neither is currently being provided under our MOU with the County.

By way of background, our Department did book Sheriff's Department and Highway Patrol pre-sentenced prisoners into our jail from at least 1984 to 1992. This service was provided under contract with the County, the revenue from which paid for additional jail staff. Contract amounts ranged from \$93,890.58 (plus food and medical costs) to \$174,633.00 annually. This arrangement continued until 1992, when it was cancelled by the Sheriff due to the County's severe financial problems. As a result of its loss of funding from the County, the City of Lompoc was forced to discontinue providing jail services to the Sheriff's Department and the Highway Patrol, and to lay off three of its dispatcher-jailers. A subsequent arrangement with the Court and the Sheriff's Department in 1993 provided for our Department maintaining custody of Lompoc Court prisoners only during regular court hours. That MOU (and limited funding from the County) remains in effect pending the completion of the Lompoc Superior Court holding facility.

While we are certainly willing to once again explore the possibility of providing booking services to the Sheriff's Department, those services would require an additional jailer on our staff 24 hours per day, 365 days per year. This would mean having to hire and train five additional employees to accommodate the additional workload. A minimum of six months would be necessary to accomplish recruiting, hiring, and training to provide a safe working environment (two people on duty), and to meet required standards prior to beginning the services. The current cost of providing the second jailer around the clock would be approximately \$260,000 annually. This cost would have to be passed on to the Sheriff's Department in some manner, perhaps as a booking fee. At a rate of \$135 per booking (approximately the County's current rate), we would have to increase our bookings by about 1,900 annually to offset employee costs alone.

Other challenges with this portion of the proposal exist. Our jail only has a rated capacity of 21 prisoners. Based upon anecdotal information provided by current jailers who worked here when outside agencies did book their prisoners into the City Jail, the facility frequently reached and sometimes exceeded its maximum capacity. Absent a regular weekend transfer of prisoners by the Sheriff's Transportation Division, all agencies (including our own) would be required to book prisoners at the Main Jail whenever the City Jail became full, effectively defeating the purpose of Lompoc having its own facility. Commensurate cost increases could also be expected in police officer overtime and vehicle/fuel usage to facilitate the transportation of prisoners south to the Main Jail, and to maintain adequate patrol staffing levels during those officers' absence from the City.

The second part of the Recommendation cannot be accomplished, simply because the Lompoc City Jail is a Type I jail facility. The law restricts our population to pre-arraignment (i.e. pre-sentenced) prisoners only, and they can be held for a maximum of 48 hours, excluding weekends and holidays. The only sentenced-inmate exception is for two inmate workers. They must go through a screening process and, by regulation, must volunteer to serve their time here.

While we salute the underlying thought process and have no disagreement with the philosophy of the Grand Jury's findings, we must nevertheless reject both parts of Recommendation #29. We believe the recommendation would not be cost effective, and that if inadequately funded it would strain our jail and patrol operations. The second part of the recommendation falls outside of Title 15 regulations and therefore cannot legally be accomplished.

We have attempted to be completely responsive to your findings and recommendations, as they apply to the City of Lompoc. Please contact us if you have any additional questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM F. BROWN, JR.
Chief of Police

c: Frank L. Priore, City Administrator
Sharon D. Stuart, City Attorney
John Walk, Management Services Director
Jim Thomas, Santa Barbara County Sheriff / Coroner