

July 18, 2001

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

RE: SANTA BARBARA COUNTY GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT ON DETENTION FACILITIES AND SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT ISSUES IN SANTA BARBARA COUNTY

The purpose of this letter is to transmit the City of Santa Maria's formal response to subject report dated June 4, 2001. According to Penal Code section 933, the City has 90 days to reply to the Grand Jury Report. This letter is intended to satisfy that reporting requirement.

The Grand Jury Report made one finding and two recommendations regarding the City of Santa Maria's Police Department. The following is the City's formal response to the Finding:

RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY FINDING AND RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING DETENTION FACILITIES IN SANTA BARBARA COUNTY

FINDING 26: The needs of an expanding city (population more than 77,000) will eventually require a new structure.

CITY RESPONSE: We agree with the finding.

RECOMMENDATION 26a: An automatic sprinkler system should be installed in the Property Room.

CITY RESPONSE: The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not reasonable; consequently, we respectfully disagree with the recommendation. The concern stated is for the protection of evidence stored in this room and the impact of its loss on the criminal justice system. Much of the evidence would be damaged, or its evidentiary value diminished, as much by water as it would be by smoke or fire, thereby negating any benefit envisioned.

RECOMMENDATION 26b: Funding and planning for a new facility should be pursued.

CITY RESPONSE: The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future. The construction of a new police facility is a long-term goal of the City and a site has been identified on City-owned property on West Cook Street where the Fire Department is already planning a building. In the current 2000-2002 budget, funds have been earmarked for planning the retrofit of the existing Fire Station #1 for Police Department use after completion of a new fire facility on West Cook Street. This facility is directly adjoining the current Police Department facility. This should occur in the next several years.

The City of Santa Maria welcomes this opportunity to respond to the Grand Jury Report.

JOE CENTENO
Mayor

c: Santa Barbara County Grand Jury Foreperson
Santa Maria City Clerk

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JOHN I. STERLING
Chief of Police

c: Santa Barbara County Grand Jury Foreperson
Tim Ness, City Manager