

November 23, 2004

Honorable Clifford R. Anderson, III
Presiding Judge
Santa Barbara County Superior Court
P.O. Box 21107
Santa Barbara, California 93121-1107

**Board of Supervisors' Response to the 2003-04 Grand Jury Report on:
*"Criminal Justice and Detention Facilities"***

Dear Judge Anderson:

During its regular meeting of Tuesday, August 23, 2004, the Board of Supervisors adopted the following responses to the three recommendations requiring further analysis in the 2003-04 Grand Jury's report on "Criminal Justice and Detention Facilities". The Board of Supervisors thanks the Grand Jury for its recommendations.

Special Report: Video Arraignment

RECOMMENDATION 1: The Grand Jury recommends that a video arraignment system be installed in both North and South Santa Barbara County.

Response: The Board adopted the Sheriff Department's response as its response, summarized as follows (Sheriff's complete response attached):

This recommendation will not be implemented, because it does not appear to be cost effective at this time.

The Sheriff's Department formed a committee of representatives from the Sheriff's Department, Public Defender's Office, District Attorney's Office, and Superior Court to further analyze this recommendation.

The committee found that a video arraignment system would not reduce the number of jail bus transportation runs during a day. Although the number of inmates that would be required to be transported to and from court would be reduced, this minimal decrease in vehicle occupants would not be enough to eliminate an entire transportation vehicle. If a video arraignment system or even an arraignment court were to be established at the main jail campus, additional staff would be required to provide security and inmate escorts for these proceedings. The logistics of delivering discovery and court files to the jail within the specified amount of time for arraignment would be problematic as well.

Additionally, the Public Defender, District Attorney, and Superior Court also concluded that existing staff would either have to be reassigned with increased workload or additional staff would have to be hired in order to operate a video arraignment system.

The committee recommended that a video arraignment system could have success if the logistics of information sharing could be solved. As technology develops, reports and files could be transmitted on a shared network.

In addition, building a north county jail would also help solve these logistical concerns. A north county jail that had the capacity for an arraignment court on its property would eliminate the need for transportation to and from the north county courts for arraignment purposes.

It is the desire of the affected departments to continue to scrutinize the concept of video arraignment and/or an on-site arraignment court. If technological and staffing issues could be minimized, the program would have its advantages.

Coroner's Bureau

RECOMMENDATION 2: All autopsies should be performed at the Coroner's Bureau.

Response: The Board adopted the Sheriff Department's response as its response, summarized as follows (Sheriff's complete response attached):

The recommendation will not be implemented, as it does not appear to be cost effective to make this change at this time.

The current contract to use Cottage Hospital Morgue facilities includes a Morgue Technician to assist at autopsy, histology, and all necessary equipment and expendable supplies.

Moving the location of autopsies to the Sheriff's Coroner's Facility would require an initial outlay of costs for expendable supplies. Additional service contracts would be required to supply hospital type scrubs, towels and other reusable supplies. There would also be a need to create a new Coroner's Forensic Assistant position. This position would have to cover the duties performed by the Morgue Technician currently supplied by Cottage Hospital.

RECOMMENDATION 3: All laboratory testing can be outsourced to a contracted facility at a savings to the county.

Response: The Board adopted the Sheriff Department's response as its response, summarized as follows (Sheriff's complete response attached):

This recommendation will be implemented as part of the annual 2005-06 budget process beginning July 1st 2005.

Implementing this recommendation would be a significant cost savings to the Sheriff's Department. However, there are impacts on other departments in the County as well as current Sheriff's Department employees. It is the Sheriff's Department's intent to permanently close the Toxicology Lab; however, prior to taking this action, the Sheriff's staff will meet with the impacted departments and employee organizations to discuss the ramifications of closing the lab.

Sincerely,

Joseph Centeno
Chair, Board of Supervisors

cc: David Clous, Grand Jury Foreperson 2003-04, Grand Jury room, County Courthouse, Santa Barbara, Ca 93101

Jim Anderson, Sheriff
Sue Gionfriddo, Chief Probation Officer
Jim Egar, Public Defender
Tom Sneddon, District Attorney
Gary Blair, Executive Officer Superior Court
Dennis Kirby, Assistant General Services Director