

November 23, 2004

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

Dear Judge Anderson,

RE: Addendum to the Sheriff's Department Response 2003-2004 Santa Barbara County Grand Jury Report, Criminal Justice Committee Detention Facilities.

In reference to the "2003-2004 Santa Barbara County Grand Jury Report, Criminal Justice Committee Detention Facilities," three recommendations offered by the Grand Jury required further analysis by the Sheriff's Department. These recommendations were in regards to outsourcing lab testing, performing autopsies at the Sheriff's Coroner Facility, and video arraignment. The following information summarizes the analysis completed by the Sheriff's Department and is an addendum to the department response.

#### **CORONER'S OFFICE**

##### RECOMMENDATION 2:

*All autopsies should be performed at the Coroner's Bureau.*

##### **Response to Recommendation 2**

The 2003 County Grand Jury recommended that Coroner's Autopsies be performed at the Sheriff's Department Coroner's Facility.

Our study indicates that implementing this recommendation would not be cost effective for the Sheriff's Department and the County. Our current fee 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. The most significant necessity for the performance of autopsies at the Coroner's Facility is the need to create a new position. This position would be titled Coroner's Forensic Assistant. This position would have to cover the duties performed by the Morgue Technician currently supplied by Cottage Hospital. This would likely be a part-time extra-help position due to the number of autopsies performed weekly. To ensure their availability, we would likely need a minimum of two employees filling these positions.

Using raw figures, it does not appear to be cost effective to make this change at this time.

**RECOMMENDATION 3:**

*All laboratory testing can be outsourced to a contracted facility at a savings to the county.*

**Response to Recommendation 3**

The 2003 County Grand Jury has recommended that all lab testing be outsourced to a contracted facility at a savings to the county.

Our study indicates that 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 intent to permanently close our Toxicology Lab but we believe it is in everyone's best interest that prior to taking this action we should meet with those departments and employee unions to discuss the ramifications of this closure.

## **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 to Recommendation 1**

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 benefits of implementing a video arraignment system were believed to be a reduction in costs due to decreased transportation costs and staffing requirements. In addition, safety and security would be enhanced due to a decrease in inmate movements to and from court.

The committee personally observed an established video arraignment system in southern California to determine the feasibility of such a system for Santa Barbara County. This committee also researched other systems in the region. The results of this study did not realize any significant cost savings and noted several obstacles to overcome if a video arraignment system were implemented in Santa Barbara County.

In regards to a decrease in transportation costs, a video arraignment system in the North and South County would not reduce the number of 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. The result would be more open seats on a vehicle that is still required to travel to and from court for purposes other than arraignments. 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 geographical make-up of Santa Barbara County also contributes to the obstacles in implementing such a system. Because the courtrooms in Santa Maria, Lompoc, and Santa Barbara are from seven to seventy miles from the jail, the logistics of delivering discovery and court files to the jail within the specified amount of time for arraignment would be problematic. One such video arraignment system that the committee researched revealed that the system was not workable due to the distance between the courtroom and jail. The program had to be discontinued.

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 recommends that a video arraignment system could have a likelihood of success if the logistics of information sharing could be solved. As technology develops, reports and files could be transmitted on a shared network. This would be of great benefit in regards to discovery and filing deadlines.

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 has its advantages.

Sincerely,

Jim Anderson  
SHERIFF  
JA:lb