

May 25, 2005

The Honorable Judge Anderson
Santa Barbara Superior Court
1100 Anacapa Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

Re: Response to Grand Jury Report – “A Sobering Thought”

Dear Judge Anderson:

In response to the Grand Jury Report entitled “A Sobering Thought,” the City of Buellton provides the following comments:

Finding 1

The Sobering Center has four major benefits:

- Saves booking fees and other jail-related costs
- Reduces overcrowding in the County jail
- Improves public safety by promptly returning police officers to patrol duties
- Provides a humane alternative for those temporarily under the influence of alcohol

Recommendation 1

Other Santa Barbara County communities should establish similar sobering centers.

Response to Finding and Recommendation

Although the City of Buellton agrees that sobering centers in some communities may reduce overcrowding in the County jail, may improve public safety by promptly returning police officers to patrol duties, and may provide a humane alternative for those temporarily under the influence of alcohol, this type of program does not appear to be warranted or economically feasible for the City of Buellton. As a contract city with the Santa Barbara County Sheriff’s Department for law enforcement services, Buellton does not pay booking fees.

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There has been an average of 22 arrests *per year* for public intoxication within the city limits over the last three calendar years. Using the cost figures provided in the Grand Jury Report, the implementation of a similar program in Buellton would be prohibitively expensive. Considering the number of arrests per year in the neighboring City of Solvang, the costs of operating a joint facility would still be financially prohibitive in view of the number of persons the facility would serve.

For the reasons stated above, the City of Buellton is of the opinion that while sobering centers may be beneficial for the larger communities within the County, a similar program in Buellton is not feasible due to the costs involved and not warranted due to the number of arrests.

The City appreciates the opportunity to respond to the Grand Jury Report.

Sincerely,

Steven L. Thompson
City Manager

cc: Foreperson, Santa Barbara County Grand Jury
Buellton City Council
Sheriff Jim Anderson