



June 13, 2005

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Mayor

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Mayor Pro Tempore

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Councilmember

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Councilmember

CITY MANAGER

Len Wood
Interim

Santa Barbara County Grand Jury
Attention: Mr. Charles Foley, Foreperson
1100 Anacapa Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

**RE: Response to Grand Jury's Report on the Community
Sobering Center**

Dear Mr. Foley:

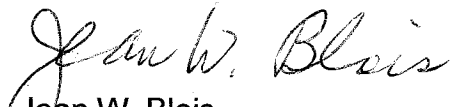
The City of Goleta is pleased to submit its response to the Santa Barbara County Grand Jury's recent report entitled "A Sobering Thought: The Santa Barbara Community Sobering Center – An Alternative to Jail." Attached, please find the City's response to the report from Interim City Manager Len Wood. As Mayor of the City of Goleta, I would also like to offer my thoughts on the establishment of a sobering center in Goleta.

While the Grand Jury finds that the Community Sobering Center has worked well for the City of Santa Barbara, the replication of such a center does not appear to be feasible or warranted in the City of Goleta at this time. As you may know, the City of Goleta contracts with the Santa Barbara Sheriff's Department for police services. Under the Sheriff contract, the City does not pay booking fees. As such, one of the sobering center's major advantages – that it reduces booking fees – would not be realized by the City of Goleta. In fact, the establishment of such a center would require additional funding from the City.

The attached letter from Mr. Wood addresses this issue as well as a number of other concerns regarding the creation of a community sobering center. While the City does not agree with the Grand Jury's recommendation, it appreciates the opportunity to review and respond to the Grand Jury's report.

If you have any questions or concerns, or if I may be of any assistance, please feel free to contact me at 805-961-7537.

Sincerely,


Jean W. Blois
Mayor

c: Judge Anderson
Goleta City Council
Len Wood, Interim City Manager
Lt. Chris Pappas, Goleta Chief of Police
County of Santa Barbara Board of Supervisors
Office of the County Clerk, County of Santa Barbara



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RE: Response to Grand Jury's Report on the Community Sobering Center

Dear Mr. Foley:

The City of Goleta recently received your letter providing a copy of the Santa Barbara County Grand Jury's report entitled "A Sobering Thought: The Santa Barbara Community Sobering Center – An Alternative to Jail." In accordance with the Grand Jury's instructions, the City has reviewed the report and is pleased to provide a response to the Grand Jury's recommendation.

The report finds that the Santa Barbara Community Sobering Center offers four benefits, including:

1. A savings on booking fees and other jail-related costs;
2. Reduces overcrowding in the County jail;
3. Improves public safety by promptly returning police officers to patrol duties; and
4. Provides a humane alternative for those temporarily under the influence of alcohol.

The report recommends that "other Santa Barbara County communities should establish similar sobering centers."

The City of Goleta contracts with the Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Department for law enforcement services. The City has consulted with Lt. Chris Pappas, Goleta Chief of Police, and other members of the Sheriff's Department in preparing our response to the Grand Jury. After reviewing and analyzing this issue, the City of Goleta respectfully disagrees with the Grand Jury's finding and does not

believe that the establishment of a sobering center in the City of Goleta is warranted or feasible at this time.

The City's concerns related to the establishment of a sobering center are outlined below in relation to the benefits identified in the Grand Jury's report.

Booking Fees

Under the terms of the City's law enforcement contract with the County, the City of Goleta is not charged booking fees. As such, the establishment of a sobering center would not provide a financial benefit to the City. In fact, the creation of such a center would require an additional commitment of City financial resources, and thus would have a negative financial impact on the City.

Jail Overcrowding

In accordance with Santa Barbara County jail policy, persons booked into the County jail for public intoxication are held for approximately 6-8 hours, or until they are in a condition to care for themselves. They are then released from custody on a promise to appear for their arraignment in court at a later time.

Intoxicated persons are not housed in the County jail, and therefore do not contribute to jail overcrowding. Only those persons arrested for public intoxication with outstanding warrants or other types of probation or parole holds are housed in the jail facility, and such persons would not qualify as candidates for a sobering center. As such, establishment of a sobering center in Goleta would not reduce population pressures at the jail.

Improvements to Public Safety

While booking an inebriant into jail may require more time than admitting an intoxicated person into a sobering center, the County has made provisions in the case of an exigency requiring a deputy to return to the field so as not to compromise public safety. Additionally, as sobering centers are not secure facilities, the time required to apprehend subjects that have walked away from a sobering center may increase the amount of time required by deputies to handle inebriants.

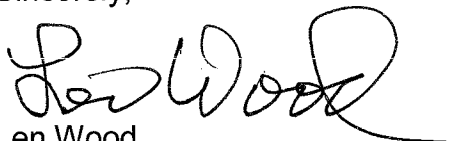
Humane Alternative for Inebriants

The County of Santa Barbara Sheriff's Department takes great pride in the safe and humane environment provided by the professional corrections and support staff at the jail. Inebriants are screened by in-house medical personnel prior to booking, and if there are any medical concerns identified in the screening process, the arrestee is transported to the hospital where they are examined and treated.

Finally, while not addressed in the Grand Jury's report, the City is concerned about the possible liability on the part of a city that chooses to establish a sobering center. These facilities are not secure, and there is the potential for inebriants to "walk away," potentially causing harm to others.

The City appreciates the opportunity to respond to the Grand Jury's report. For the aforementioned reasons, the City does not believe that the establishment of a sobering center in Goleta would be beneficial at this time. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at 805-961-7501.

Sincerely,



Len Wood
Interim City Manager

c: Judge Anderson
Goleta City Council
Lt. Chris Pappas, Goleta Chief of Police
County of Santa Barbara Board of Supervisors
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