

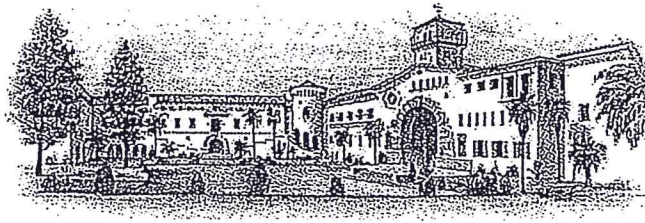
**SALUD CARBAJAL**  
First District

**JANET WOLF**  
Second District, Chair

**DOREEN FARR**  
Third District

**PETER ADAM**  
Fourth District, Vice Chair

**STEVE LAVAGNINO**  
Fifth District



**COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA**

**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**  
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May 12, 2015

Honorable Arthur A. Garcia  
Presiding Judge  
Santa Barbara Superior Court  
Santa Maria Juvenile Court  
4263 California Blvd  
Santa Maria, CA 93455

Reference: Response to Santa Barbara Civil Grand Jury report titled, "*Santa Barbara Sheriff-Coroner's Bureau - Still an Unhealthy Environment*", (Published February 10, 2015, Grand Jury Website).

Judge Garcia:

Please find attached the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors (Board) response to the above-referenced Civil Grand Jury Report. As directed by the Grand Jury, all responses are provided in accordance with Section 933.05 of the California Penal Code.

The Board appreciates the critical investigative work conducted by the staff of the Sheriff-Coroner's Bureau. County residents deserve sensitive, thorough and accurate cause of deaths determinations. We are gratified the Grand Jury found Bureau staff to be cooperative and collegial.

Lastly, the Board acknowledges the Grand Jury's continued concerns about the Sheriff-Coroner's facility and appreciates their investigation in this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Janet Wolf". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Janet Wolf, Chair  
Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors

CC: Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors  
Sandi Miller, Foreman, 2014-15 Santa Barbara Civil Grand Jury

Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors  
Response to the Santa Barbara County Grand Jury 2014-2015 Report  
*“Santa Barbara Sheriff-Coroner Bureau- Still an Unhealthy Environment”*

**Finding 1**

*The Sheriff-Coroner's Bureau facility does not comply with California Code Regulations; Title 8, Sections 5144, 5193 and 5199.*

The Board partially disagrees with the finding.

Mechanical Engineering Consultants (MEC) performed a study of the Sheriff-Coroner's Bureau facility in October 2013 (MEC Report). Regarding the ventilation in the autopsy lab area, the MEC Report indicated a negative pressure in the lab area of -0.29" WC and reported the exhaust air flow at 28 air changes per hour, which is more than adequate to meet the requirement of 12 air changes per hour. The MEC Report did identify several deficiencies in the ventilation system including a disabled make-up air unit, an undersized air conditioning unit and exterior exhaust ducting which does not comply with current code for this type of facility. Additional deficiencies were identified in the office and locker room areas of the facility.

Despite the systems condition, the Coroner's Unit personnel are able to temporarily mitigate the deficiencies and increase their comfort while working in the facility. The work-around creates airflow within the autopsy lab by opening an exterior door, while simultaneously running the autopsy lab exhaust fan. In addition, the Sheriff's office has purchased Powered Air Purified Respirators. The *California Code Regulations* (CCR) referenced in Finding 1 cover a wide range of operational, personal safety and facility related issues. The Board partially disagrees with Finding 1 because 8 CCR §5144 makes clear that the County can comply, through use of appropriate respirators, when protecting County employees from occupational diseases that might be caused by breathing contaminated air.

Nevertheless, we understand these are short-term mitigations, and will be making ventilation improvements as outlined in the MEC Report. General Services (GS) has recently contacted MEC to obtain an up to date cost estimate for the work scope identified in the MEC Report and expect that estimate to be in the \$100,000-\$125,000 range. With anticipated, new maintenance funding appropriations in the Fiscal Year 2015-2016 Budget, General Services will complete the work scope identified in the MEC Report in Fiscal Year 2015-2016, with an estimated start date of summer of 2015, subject to MEC revisions.



## Recommendation 1a

*That the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors fund the construction of a new coroner's facility under the "health and safety prioritization" directive of the Board of Supervisors Facility Condition Assessment Reports to become compliant with infectious disease control regulations .*

The recommendation requires further analysis.

As stated above, the initial plan is to implement the recommended ventilation improvements as outlined in the MEC Report. After these capital improvements are made, the facility and work environment can be re-assessed. In the meantime, GS will work with the CEO and Sheriff's departments to develop a Capital Improvement Project (CIP) for the refurbishment of an existing facility or the construction of a new facility. A project will be added to the FY 2015-2000 CIP and will be further refined in the coming year. The CIP description will address the Coroner's needs, recommend a location and estimate the construction and ongoing maintenance costs. This project can then be evaluated by the Board of Supervisors for consideration of its necessity and ultimate funding.

## Recommendation 1b

*That the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors identify and fund an existing building that could be used to perform the functions of the Coroner's Bureau in a manner compliant with infectious disease control regulations.*

The recommendation requires further analysis.

See Board response above to Recommendation 1a above.

## Finding 2

*The Sheriff-Coroner's Bureau facility does not have the mechanical and structural systems including negative air pressure which are necessary for the control of infectious diseases, removal of noxious odors and dilution and expulsion of contaminants from the entire facility.*

The Board partially disagrees with the finding.

Although the MEC Report found several deficiencies in the ventilation system at the Coroner facility, the critical elements of negative pressure and adequate air exchange rates were found to be in compliance with current standards. Coroner's Unit personnel have implemented mitigating measures to increase their comfort level while working in the facility; however, the Board and the Sheriff's Office agree these mitigations are not a viable mid-to-long term solution to address the current condition of the ventilation system. The County will proceed with making the recommended ventilation improvements as outlined in the MEC Report to improve these mechanical systems.

## Recommendation 2

*That the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors make funds available to upgrade the structural and mechanical systems of the existing coroner's facility to become compliant with infectious disease control regulations to protect the health and safety of County employees and the public.*

The recommendation has not been implemented, but will be implemented in the future.

The County will proceed with making funds available for the recommended ventilation improvements as outlined in the MEC Report to improve these mechanical systems. The estimated cost is \$100,000-\$125,000. After these capital improvements are made, the facility and work environment can be re-assessed. In the meantime, GS will work with the CEO and Sheriff's departments to develop a Capital Improvement Project (CIP) for the refurbishment of an existing facility or the construction of a new facility. A project will be added to the FY 2015-2000 CIP and will be further refined in the coming year. The CIP description will address the Coroner's needs, recommend a location and estimate the construction and ongoing maintenance costs. This project can then be evaluated by the Board of Supervisors for consideration of its necessity and ultimate funding.