

SHASTA AREA SAFETY COMMUNICATIONS AGENCY

REASON FOR INQUIRY:

California Penal Code section 925a empowers the Grand Jury to investigate and report on the operations and records of any joint powers agency within the County

Shasta Area Safety Communications Agency
3101 South Street
Redding, Ca. 96001
(530) 225-6505

BACKGROUND:

The Shasta Area Safety Communications Agency (SHASCOM), a joint powers agency, was created in 1990 by way of a Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) between Shasta County and the cities of Anderson and Redding. Under the JPA, the public entities assigned SHASCOM the responsibility for dispatch and communication for public safety and emergencies in all incorporated and unincorporated areas of Shasta County under the jurisdiction of any of the participating entities.

SHASCOM was initially funded by a grant of \$750,000 from Leah McConnell. The Redding Joint Powers Financing Authority Lease Revenue Bonds of 1993 generated an additional \$1,825,000, which was used for construction of the facility. Currently, SHASCOM's operations are funded by \$1.5 million from the City of Redding, \$750,000 from Shasta County, \$401,000 from emergency medical services companies and \$9,000 from the City of Anderson.

The City of Anderson withdrew its dispatch operations from SHASCOM in July 1996. The reasons given were: the expense per call, slow 911-response time and the lack of voice recognition between Anderson Police officers and dispatchers. The City of Anderson still makes an annual contribution to fulfill its commitment under the JPA. This money is for maintenance of the building, of which the City of Anderson is part owner.

The original JPA provided for a board of "elected officials" and a Management Council of law enforcement officials. In 1995 an Executive Committee was added to include executive staff from Shasta County and the Cities of Anderson and Redding. The 1995/96 Grand Jury recommendation that the general manager of SHASCOM be directly responsible to only one administrative body was implemented on December 9, 1996. Currently, the General Manager reports to the Board of Directors (Redding City Manager, Shasta County Administrative officer, Shasta County Sheriff or Undersheriff, and the Redding Police Chief or Redding Fire Chief).

The SHASCOM staff includes:

- The General Manager
- The Operations Manager
- The Training Manager
- The Systems Manager
- Five Supervisors
- Thirty four Dispatchers
- Four Call Takers
- An Administrative Assistant

METHOD OF INQUIRY:

The Grand Jury interviewed:

- The General Manager
- The Operations Manager
- The Training Manager
- The Systems Manager
- Several Dispatchers and Call Takers
- The Shasta County Administrative Officer
- The Redding City Manager
- The Shasta County Undersheriff
- The Anderson Police Chief
- The Redding Police Chief
- One Redding Police Captain
- Two Redding Police Officers

The Grand Jury reviewed:

- Budget for fiscal years 2003/2005 (one budget covering two years)
- Hiring contract between the General Manager and SHASCOM
- Memoranda from the General Manager to the SHASCOM Board of Directors
- Memorandum of Understanding between SHASCOM and Shasta Interagency Communications Employees Association, dated November 9, 2003
- Memoranda from the General Manager to dispatchers
- Minutes from eight SHASCOM Board of Directors meetings
- Overtime bidding forms
- Personnel evaluation forms

The Grand Jury attended the January 12, 2004, SHASCOM Board Meeting.

FINDINGS:

1. The Ralph M. Brown Act is California's open meeting law for local governmental bodies. The Act is found in sections 54950, et seq., of the Government Code and requires, in general terms, that governing bodies of local public entities, including joint powers agencies, must maximize public access to and involvement in the governing bodies' meetings by posting their agendas and holding their meetings in locations freely accessible to the public. The Brown Act further prohibits the governing body from placing conditions on attendance at the board's meetings, including a prohibition against requiring attendees to register.

The Grand Jury attended the January 12, 2004 meeting of the SHASCOM Board of Directors. This meeting was held in SHASCOM's facility, which is surrounded by gated security fencing. In order to enter the facility, the public must request permission to enter the locked parking lot by speaker box. Access to the building itself is gained by requesting the door be unlocked. In order to attend the meeting, a visitor is required to sign a visitor's log. The SHASCOM Board of Director's posts its agendas inside its facility, a location that is not freely accessible to the general public.

As part of its investigation, the Grand Jury confirmed by interviews that since 2002, SHASCOM's Board of Directors meetings have been held in the secured building, that their agendas were posted inside the building and that persons were required to sign a visitor's log. These practices are still on going.

2. SHASCOM has implemented Reverse 911 as recommended by the 2000/2001 Grand Jury. Reverse 911 allows SHASCOM to notify citizens by telephone in a specific geographic area of an existing or impending emergency.
3. There are only 19 active dispatchers out of the 34 allocated positions. The reasons for this shortage are an inability to obtain qualified trainees, stress, mandatory overtime, on-call requirements and salaries that are not high enough to attract lateral transfers from other 911 dispatch centers.
4. Mandatory overtime is a condition of employment.
5. SHASCOM has a budget surplus of approximately \$280,000 for the 2003/2004 fiscal year and an estimated \$80,000 surplus for the 2004/2005 fiscal year. These surpluses are scheduled to be refunded to the user agencies at the end of each fiscal year.
6. SHASCOM uses five radio channels: Redding Police, Shasta County Sheriff, Services Channel, Fire and Emergency Medical Services. All dispatchers are required to be proficient on either the Redding Police or Shasta County Sheriff Office channel, plus the Services Channel, the Fire Channel and the Emergency Medical Services Channel. Six dispatchers are cross-trained on both RPD and SCSO Channels and receive a 5 % pay increase for being proficient on both.
7. SHASCOM Board of Directors has four voting members. This means there is no tie-breaking vote.
8. SHASCOM offers a \$500 hiring bonus to potential lateral transfers.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Post SHASCOM Board meeting agendas in a freely accessible public location. Hold the SHASCOM Board meetings at a location which is freely accessible to the public and which does not require attendees to sign in.
2. Use part of the budget surplus to offer at least a \$5,000 signing bonus to attract lateral transfers.
3. Amend the JPA to permit a fifth voting SHASCOM Board position selected by the SHASCOM Board from the general public. This will avoid the possibility of a tie vote.

RESPONSES REQUIRED:

The SHASCOM Board of Directors

SHASCOM

SHASTA AREA SAFETY COMMUNICATIONS AGENCY

3101 South Street, Redding, CA 96001-2379

(530) 245-6500 FAX (530) 245-6530

September 14, 2004

The Honorable Monica Marlow, Presiding Judge
Shasta County Superior Court
Shasta County Courthouse, Room 205
1500 Court St.
Redding, CA 96001

FILED

SEP 22 2004

CATHY DARLING, COUNTY CLERK
BY: S. GREENHAW, *[Signature]*
DEPUTY CLERK

Dear Judge Marlow:

The SHASCOM Board of Directors wants to thank the recent Grand Jury for its professional review of SHASCOM's current policies and procedures. We have reviewed each of the recommendations and have prepared the following response:

1. **Post SHASCOM Board of Directors meeting agendas in a freely accessible public location. Hold the SHASCOM Board meeting at a location which is freely accessible to the public and which does not require attendees to sign in.**

The Board of Directors agrees with all agenda and location recommendations. It is SHASCOM's intent to follow all aspects of the Brown Act. Posting requirements had already been implemented. The SHASCOM agenda is currently posted on the exterior gate/fence area, as well as inside the entry door of the facility. Each user agency is provided an agenda copy which they may post in the public areas of their facilities. This was a suggestion from County Counsel's office. Agendas are currently sent to local media via fax. All agendas are posted well in advance of the required 72-hour requirement. SHASCOM is placing the agenda on our new website, www.shascom911.com.

Since 9/11, SHASCOM has been a highly secured facility due to it being a critical public safety communications facility. The public has attended past meetings but SHASCOM understands the need to promote a more receptive meeting environment. Shasta County and the City of Redding have offered to hold future SHASCOM Board of Directors meetings in their facilities. Initially, Board meetings will be held at City Hall.

2. **Use part of the budget surplus to offer at least a \$5,000 signing bonus to attract lateral transfers.**

The recommendation will not be implemented as proposed because it is not warranted at this time as recruitment has been stabilized. During the last labor negotiations, conducted during this Grand Jury review, the SHASCOM Board of Directors indicated they wanted a contract that helped attract new employees, whether they were "laterals" or not. Starting pay was increased and a signing bonus system was devised. We also initiated a redesigned recruiting program that included much of northern California. We have seen a dramatic increase in the number of quality applicants since enacting these changes. The Board of Directors has committed itself to a qualified professional staff at SHASCOM. The recently enacted changes will be monitored for their impact. Should further recruitment incentives be needed, the Board will act accordingly.

3. **Amend the JPA to permit a fifth voting SHASCOM Board position selected by the SHASCOM Board from the general public. This will avoid the possibility of a tie vote.**

This recommendation will not be implemented at this time. The SHASCOM Board of Directors disagrees with this recommendation because in the history of SHASCOM there has never been a tie vote.

The recommendation is based on the common perception that a "tie breaker" is inherently needed. A fifth board member would create an imbalance that would work against our history of mutual equity. Having equal votes, the City and County Board members are now required to design a common solution that meets the requirements of their respective agencies. Under the current system different sides of each issue realize positive results.

Thank you for your professional services.

Respectively Submitted

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "LARRY SCHALLER". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial "L" and "S".

Larry Schaller, Chairman
SHASCOM Board of Directors