

**2007-2008 Shasta County Grand Jury Report**  
**Report submitted to the agency on: July 7, 2008**

## **City and County Websites**

### ***Citizen Access***

#### **Summary:**

The healthy functioning of democracy depends upon a well-informed voting citizenry. Responsive government is transparent and makes available to the public in easily understandable form information regarding its policies and operations so that citizens may make educated decisions about how to participate in government. It is in the interest of open government to make sure that the information is current.

Responsive government provides easy access to public record information. With today's technology the Internet is the fastest and least expensive way to keep citizens informed; therefore, the Grand Jury chose to investigate the content, ease of use and internal consistency of local government websites. When the website is not simple to use, the fall-back is telephone calls or trips to government offices and personal interaction with government employees. With personal contact the cost of providing information escalates.

This report examines the websites of Shasta County ([www.co.shasta.ca.us/](http://www.co.shasta.ca.us/)), the City of Redding ([www.ci.redding.ca.us/](http://www.ci.redding.ca.us/)), the City of Anderson ([www.ci.anderson.ca.us/](http://www.ci.anderson.ca.us/)) and the City of Shasta Lake ([www.ci.shasta-lake.ca.us/](http://www.ci.shasta-lake.ca.us/)) in comparison to other cities' and counties' websites.

Our analysis shows that much good work has been done to make information available to our citizens. However, when comparing the websites of this county and its cities with websites of other counties and cities in California, the Grand Jury found that the sites of Shasta's local governmental entities could use improvements in content, ease of use and consistency in form. (See Note 1 for a list of websites used for reference.)

The Grand Jury reviewed numerous California local governments and federal websites to see what was available on those websites, in particular financial information, meeting agendas and minutes. Based on this review, the Grand Jury created a list of items deemed most important and necessary for keeping the citizens informed. Those items are listed in the table in the Findings below.

One of the websites reviewed, the Government Finance Officers Association's "Recommended Practices," offered the following suggested standards for local governmental websites:

- Any web document should be identical to the printed version of the document.
- The website should notify users prominently when the information was last updated.
- The website should prominently inform users whether the budget document presented represents the preliminary budget or the approved budget.
- If a government elects to present the budget documents and reports of prior years, the websites should clearly identify those documents and reports as "dated information for historical reference only" and clearly segregate them from current information. A "library" or "archive" section of the website could be used for this purpose.

- The security of the website should be evaluated to protect it from manipulation by external or unauthorized persons.

As we described in this report, the Grand Jury found within the county and the three city webpages a lack of minimum standards for specific content. The displays of information available from department to department within a website are inconsistent in both the content and format.

Ease of use was one criterion the Grand Jury applied in analyzing the city/county websites, that is, how easy it is for the average person to obtain the information that he/she wants, such as meeting agendas, minutes, financial data and budget records. Our analysis shows that in some cases the information is on the website and can be found if one is persistent in searching. However, not all of the websites are easy to use.

Ease of use also means not having to return to a site repeatedly searching for the current version of routinely updated content like agendas or meeting minutes. Newer developments in web browsers and technology make this an easily correctible situation with Really Simple Syndication (RSS). RSS is a family of web feed formats used to publish frequently updated content, such as blog entries, news headlines and stories. These RSS feeds enable users to avoid the conventional methods of browsing or searching for information on websites. New content can be forwarded by e-mail automatically. An October 2005 Yahoo study reported that 12 percent of Internet users are aware of RSS and 27 percent receive RSS syndicated content without knowing it via personalized homepages (for example My Yahoo). Although this is a relatively small number of users, it is expected to grow rapidly. Since RSS feeds are part of Microsoft Internet Explorer Version 7 and other browsers, it requires little effort by the user to obtain information. An increasing number of government agencies use RSS to increase awareness of government information. According to [www.webcontent.gov](http://www.webcontent.gov) (an official U.S. Government Website), "...the process for developing RSS feeds is relatively simple and inexpensive."

When Shasta County began to place information onto the Internet, individual departments set up their own sites. Later the county leadership created an Information Technology (I.T.) department to bring together all of the county's electronic communications, including computers, e-mail, telephones, FAX, Internet, cell phones, etc. The county established standards for presentation of its image to the public (that is logos, stationery, business cards and signage), although it currently has no standard for presentation across its website.

The following are provided as examples of the lack of content and standardization:

- The drop-down list of the county departments on the county's homepage includes a department titled "Personnel"; yet the name of the displayed page is "Shasta County Human Resources, a Division of the Department of Support Services." The title "Human Resources" does not appear as a department. Differing names for the same service are confusing.
- There is a link on the Human Resources' webpage through which one can connect to the webpage of the Department of Support Services. The Department of Support Services' webpage displays only the name of the department head and contact information. There is no information about the Department of Support Services or its divisions.
- The Auditor/Controller's webpage shows nothing but contact information, that is address and telephone number.

**Note 1:** List of comparison websites.

Sacramento County [www.saccounty.net](http://www.saccounty.net)

Santa Clara County [www.sccgov.org/portal/site/scc](http://www.sccgov.org/portal/site/scc)

Tehama County [www.co.tehama.ca.us](http://www.co.tehama.ca.us)

Placer County [www.placer.ca.gov](http://www.placer.ca.gov)

City of Red Bluff [www.ci.red-bluff.ca.us](http://www.ci.red-bluff.ca.us)  
 City of Sacramento [www.cityofsacramento.org](http://www.cityofsacramento.org)  
 City of San Jose [www.sanjoseca.gov](http://www.sanjoseca.gov)  
 City of Santa Clara [www.santaclaraca.gov](http://www.santaclaraca.gov)

<b>Findings and Recommendations</b>	<b>Agency Responses</b>
<p><b>Findings 1:</b>            The Grand Jury found that the overall operations of the City appear to be well run in all the areas reviewed.</p>	<p>No response required</p>
<p><b>Finding 2:</b>            The table below shows what is available at present on the various websites. The Grand Jury recommends that the web content described in the following table be included on all civic websites within the County.</p>	<p>Response required</p>
<p><b>Finding 3:</b>            In November 2007 the City of Redding’s “Surplus Property” webpage displayed 2004 data (out-of-date information.). The records on the webpage were brought current in 2008 with the date of the last update listed on the webpage.</p>	<p>No response required</p>
<p><b>Finding 4:</b>            In the November 2006 election the present Auditor/Controller made campaign promises that she would establish an Auditor/Controller webpage. This webpage would make available to the public “... property tax [rate information] and financial information ...” As of the writing of this report (16 months later) the only thing that appears on the Auditor/Controller website is contact information. When queried, the Auditor/Controller stated that she was “working on it.</p>	<p>No response required</p>
<p><b>Finding 5:</b>            Shasta County’s Audited Annual Financial Report and the Federal ‘Single Audit’ are not available on the Internet. When I.T. personnel were asked how much time it would</p>	<p>No response required</p>

<p>take to post a 400-page PDF document to the website, they said it could be completed in one hour or less.</p>	
<p><b>Finding 6:</b> The County and City websites lack RSS capabilities, which, if available, would make it easier for citizens to obtain copies of newly created government documents.</p>	<p>No response required</p>
<p><b>Finding 7:</b> Not all of the counties departments' pages are consistent across the website. Although the county I.T. department is working toward a more consistent standard across the website, some department heads are resisting the change, according to the I.T. staff we interviewed.</p>	<p>No response required</p>
<p><b>Finding 8:</b> All websites reviewed used "drop down" list selections, which work well for many things but have one drawback for users. On some of the county and Redding department sites, clicking the "drop down" displays a list of items, but those items cannot be printed out. This drawback can be addressed with a good sitemap. Webpage designers should be aware the public relies on the ability to print desired information for future use and thus techniques which make printing difficult or impossible are to be avoided.</p>	<p>No response required</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 1:</b> The Grand Jury recommends that the Board of Supervisors direct the County Administrative Officer to require that the Information Technology department establish and implement a Web Standard which addresses required webpage content, ease of use and consistency in form. In order to enhance government transparency, the website should be designed for ease of use by the average citizen.</p>	<p><b>Shasta County:</b> The Board of Supervisors concurs with the recommendation. The recommendation is in the process of being implemented. The remaining work will take six months to one year to complete. In February 2006, an Information Technology (IT) Web/Graphic Designer was hired to implement a standard web format for Shasta County's site. The primary task was to implement a new standard template for developing County web pages. Once this standard was adopted, the IT Web/Graphic Designer has been concentrating on the migration of all County departments to the new standard. Six departments remain to be completed and all but one of the six has been started. Required web page content, ease of use by the average citizen, and consistency were basic requirements for the new design. All of this activity has taken place with the</p>

	involvement and approval of the County Administrative Officer.
<p><b>Recommendation 2:</b> Each government entity should implement the following items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each governmental entity’s portal (homepage) should have a comprehensive sitemap.</li> <li>• Minimum website content should include all public meeting notices, agendas, minutes, financial reports, budgets, etc.</li> <li>• Printable material should be in PDF format so it can be printed on any platform. If PDF is not available, the user should be instructed how to print the item.</li> <li>• Printable agendas, financial data and budget documents should be obtainable within two or three clicks of the mouse.</li> <li>• Each item should have a print option, giving the user the ability to print one page, several pages, or all pages. Large PDF reports composed of several sections should have an option to “print all” with one click.</li> <li>• Minimum department page content should include the name of the department head, contact information, a list of department functions and frequently requested public documents relevant to those functions.</li> <li>• The website should include common words instead of industry buzzwords.</li> <li>• Titles should be spelled out the first time they are used, with acronyms defined in parentheses for subsequent use. For example: Portable</li> </ul>	<p><b>Shasta County:</b> The Board of Supervisors agrees with the recommendation that a comprehensive sitemap should be available for the website. The recommendation has been implemented. A sitemap was developed and is currently available on the website as part of the standard template. County staff will continue to monitor the effectiveness of sitemaps as the use of the Internet continues to evolve. While sitemaps were a necessity for navigation in the early development of the Internet, their usefulness has diminished greatly in the past several years. Search engines, topical based web design, intuitive menu/navigation, and breadcrumbs are of much greater importance in making a website easy to use and easy to navigate. However, we can see some value in having a sitemap available on the website for those who have difficulty finding their way using the other tools available.</p> <p>The Board of Supervisors concurs with the recommendation. The recommendation is in process of being implemented. Although Shasta County currently provides many public notices, agendas, minutes, and budgets on its website, we welcome the suggestion to add financial reports and other specifically requested documents. The County Administrative Officer will request that department heads and elected officials, with the assistance of our IT Web/Graphic Designer, audit their web pages and post the suggested documents within the next two years.</p> <p>The Board of Supervisors concurs with the recommendation. The recommendation is in the process of being implemented. Although Shasta County currently provides many web documents in Portable Document Format (PDF), the County Administrative Officer will request that the department heads and elected officials, with the assistance of our IT Web/Graphic Designer, audit their web pages within the next two years to make any necessary changes.</p> <p>The Board of Supervisors concurs with the recommendation. The recommendation is in the process of being implemented. Although Shasta County currently provides many agendas, financial data, and budget documents within two or three mouse clicks, the County Administrative Officer will request that the department heads and elected officials, with the assistance of our IT Web/Graphic Designer, audit their web pages within the next two years to make ant necessary changes.</p> <p>The Board of Supervisors concurs with the recommendation. The recommendation is in the process of being implemented. Most print drivers and Adobe Reader allow the user to print selected text, one page, several pages, or all pages. The County Administrative Officer will request that department heads and elected officials, with the assistance of our IT Web/Graphic Designer, audit their web pages within the next two years to make sure there is an option for large PDF documents to be printed in their entirety without the user having to print each section separately.</p> <p>The Board of Supervisors concurs with the recommendation. The</p>

<p>Document Format (PDF), Redding Electric Utility (REU).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each government entity's homepage should have a current events calendar listing meetings of the councils, boards, commissions, supervisors, trustees or any meeting for which public notice is required by law.</li> </ul>	<p>recommendation is in the process of being implemented. Although many Shasta County department pages contain the name of the department head and contact information, the County Administrative Officer will request that the department heads and elected officials, with the assistance of our IT Web/Graphic Designer, audit their web pages within the next two years to add a list of department functions and frequently requested public documents relevant to those functions.</p> <p>The Board of Supervisors concurs with the recommendation. The recommendation is in the process of being implemented. The County Administrative Officer will request that the department heads and elected officials, with the assistance of our IT Web/Graphic Designer, audit their web pages within the next two years to eliminate buzzwords.</p> <p>The Board of Supervisors concurs with the recommendation. The recommendation is in the process of being implemented. The County Administrative Officer will request that department heads and elected officials, with the assistance of our IT Web/Graphic Designer, audit their web pages within the next two years to spell out titles the first time they are used, with acronyms defined in parentheses for subsequent use.</p> <p>The Board of Supervisors concurs with the recommendation. The recommendation can be implemented within the next two years. The County Administrative Officer will request that department heads and elected officials, with the assistance of our IT Web/Graphic Designer, determine a calendar format to use that can contain the recommended information, then provide a link to the calendar on Shasta County's homepage.</p> <p><b>City of Anderson:</b> The City concurs with the recommendation, and has already begun implementing several of the items.</p> <p><b>City of Shasta Lake:</b> A site map of the entire website will be available on the homepage of the City's planned new website. The City's existing website offers users access to agendas, both current and archived. Archived minutes of City Council and Redevelopment Agency meetings will be added to the current website. Financial reports are currently available on the City's existing website, as are annual budgets, and audited reports. Information on federal "single audit" of grants is available on our current website in Year End Financial Statements.</p> <p>Most printable material and documents on the current website are in Portable Document Format (PDF). Documents not in PDF format are in HTML format and are printable.</p> <p>For the most part these items are accessible within three clicks on the existing website. The new proposed website will be designed to provide maximum accessibility to users.</p> <p>All PDF documents on the existing website are automatically opened in Adobe Reader. This program offers the user the ability to print one or more pages of the document. A "print all" button is located on the program toolbar.</p>
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These items are offered on some of the Department pages of our existing websites. The proposed new website will contain detailed information regarding each department as well as downloadable documents, instructions, applications, and other data that will save the user a visit to City Hall.

We believe our website is readable and does not contain an over abundance of industry buzz words. However, a review of the site will be made to ensure all buzzwords are replaced with common words and phrases.

Again, we believe our existing website minimizes use of undefined acronyms, but a survey of the site will be conducted to correct any discrepancies.

A meetings calendar for City Council, Redevelopment Agency, Commissions, and public hearings will be added to the proposed new website.

**City of Redding:** The City Council agrees with this recommendation and intends to implement it. The City of Redding takes pride in providing a user-friendly interface, making navigation and access to desired information easy. However, it is true that some users may find a site map useful and one will be provided on the home page and on other pages where practical. The City Council agrees with this recommendation and implemented it prior to the Grand Jury's report. Public meeting notices, agendas, staff reports, minutes, financial reports and other related documents are included on the City's website. The City Council agrees with this recommendation and implemented it prior to the Grand Jury's report. Such information is available with three clicks of the mouse. The City Council agrees with this recommendation and implemented it prior to the Grand Jury's report. The City Council agrees with this recommendation and implemented it prior to the Grand Jury's report. The City Council agrees with this recommendation and implemented it prior to the Grand Jury's report. City staff in charge of content on the website endeavor to make it understandable to all members of the public. The City Council agrees with this recommendation and has implemented it wherever suitable. The City Council agrees with this recommendation and implemented it prior to the Grand Jury's report. The homepage has a clearly labeled section entitled Agendas/Staff Reports containing a listing of councils, boards, commissions and other bodies conducting meetings open to the public that contains meeting times, minutes, staff reports and other information.

**Responses invited from:**

Shasta County Administrative Officer

Shasta County Chief Information Technology Officer

<p><b>Recommendation 3:</b> That all agendas posted pursuant to the Brown Act also be published simultaneously on the entities website.</p>	<p><b>Shasta County:</b> The Board of Supervisors concurs with the recommendation. The Board of Supervisors agenda is posted on our website pursuant to the Brown Act 72-hour requirements; this is done as soon as reasonably possible after the agenda is posted outside our Chambers. The County Administrative Officer will request that the department heads and elected officials who are responsible for posting agendas pursuant to the Brown Act, publish them simultaneously, or as soon as reasonably possible, on their web page.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 4:</b> That the Shasta County Auditor/Controller create and maintain a webpage with the current and, to start, the previous three years' audited financial statements and single audit reports in PDF format for easy printing by the public.</p>	<p><b>Shasta County:</b> The Board of Supervisors concurs with the recommendation. The Auditor-Controller, an elected official, has advised that the information will be on the website by September 2008.</p> <p><b>Shasta County Auditor/Controller:</b> I agree with the recommendation. The webpage has been finalized and published. The previous three years' audited financial statements and single audit reports are provided, as well as additional information. The current year reports will be posted in December, after the completion of the audit.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 5:</b> That the Auditor/Controller include on the department's website property tax rate information.</p>	<p><b>Shasta County:</b> The Board of Supervisors concurs with the recommendation. The Auditor-Controller, an elected official, has advised that the information will be on the website by September 2008.</p> <p><b>Shasta County Auditor/Controller:</b> I agree with the recommendation. The webpage has been finalized and published. Property tax rate information is provided for public viewing.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 6:</b> None That each county or city department review its webpages annually. If the data is not current and accurate, an explanatory note should be included on the webpage as to why the data is not up to date.</p>	<p><b>Shasta County:</b> The Board of Supervisors concurs with the recommendation. The County Administrative Officer will request that the department heads and elected officials, with the assistance of our IT Web/Graphic Designer, review their web pages on an annual basis to determine that data is accurate and current or provide an explanation as to why the data is not up to date.</p> <p><b>City of Anderson:</b> The City concurs with the recommendation.</p> <p><b>City of Shasta Lake:</b> Our current website is constantly reviewed and updated by each department having responsibility for content. There should be no out of date information on the site.</p> <p><b>City of Redding:</b> The City Council agrees with the recommendation that it is important to keep data current and accurate and plans to implement it. Each department is directed to frequently review its web pages to ensure data is accurate and updated. This direction will be renewed and attention given to implementing additional methods of ensuring data is up to date.</p> <p><b>Responses invited from:</b> Shasta County Administrative Officer</p>

<p><b>Recommendation 7:</b>  That each government homepage have a comprehensive sitemap to aid the user in finding information. Other cities and counties can serve as easy to modify examples. In particular, the County of Santa Clara's site <a href="http://www.sccgov.org/portal/site/scc">www.sccgov.org/portal/site/scc</a> can serve as a good example.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Shasta County Chief Information Technology Officer</p> <p><b>Shasta County:</b> The Board of Supervisors agrees with the recommendation that a comprehensive sitemap should be available for the website. The recommendation has been implemented. A sitemap was developed and is currently available on the website as part of the standard template. We will continue to monitor the effectiveness of sitemaps as the use of the Internet continues to evolve. While sitemaps were a necessity for navigation in the early development of the Internet, their usefulness has diminished greatly in the past several years. Search engines, topical based web designs, intuitive menus/navigation, and breadcrumbs are of much greater importance in making a website easy to use and easy to navigate. However, we can see some value in having a sitemap available on the website for those who have difficulty finding their way using the other tools available.</p> <p><b>City of Anderson:</b> The City concurs with the recommendation.</p> <p><b>City of Shasta Lake:</b> There are no site maps on the existing website. Site maps will be included in the proposed new website.</p> <p><b>City of Redding:</b> The City Council agrees with this recommendation and intends to implemented it. The City of Redding takes pride in providing a user-friendly interface, making navigation and access to desired information easy.</p> <p><b>Responses invited from:</b>  Shasta County Administrative Officer  Shasta County Chief Information Technology Officer</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 8:</b>  That the designers/programmers of the webpages conduct periodic testing for usability for any major changes or updates to their websites.</p>	<p><b>Shasta County:</b> The Board of Supervisors disagrees with this recommendation because the testing described in the recommendation is something that has been in place for more than two years. Our Web/Graphic Designer regularly tests for usability for any major changes or updates to the website. Additionally, these changes are regularly reviewed by the Web Development Committee. The recommendation will not be implemented because it has been in place for more than two years.</p> <p><b>City of Anderson:</b> The City concurs with the recommendation.</p> <p><b>City of Shasta Lake:</b> The City of Shasta Lake does not have an IT department, nor does it employ web designers or programmers. Each department is responsible to ensure changes or updates are functional.</p> <p><b>City of Redding:</b> The City Council agrees that it is important to periodically test the City's web pages for continued usability. It implemented this recommendation prior to the Grand Jury's report in that each department is directed to frequently review its web pages to ensure continued functionality and proper navigability. This direction will be renewed and attention given to implementing</p>

	<p>additional methods of ensuring usability.</p> <p><b>Responses invited from:</b>          Shasta County Administrative Officer          Shasta County Chief Information Technology Officer</p>
<p><b>Recommendations: 9:</b>          That Shasta County and its cities move with all due speed to provide RSS capabilities. Make the sending of meeting notices, agendas and minutes a first priority.</p>	<p><b>Shasta County:</b> The Board of Supervisors partially disagrees with the recommendation. In looking at all 58 California counties only four currently have RSS feeds. In each of these four cases the RSS feeds are quite limited. Yet, given the nature of RSS feeds (see the Wikipedia excerpt below) and that they lend themselves well to relatively regular and frequent changes on a website, it is understandable why County RSS feeds might be useful to the public. Implementation of this recommendation may take place in the near future, as the IT Department is currently working with the County Administrative Office to determine the overall cost vs. the relative value of using RSS feeds.</p> <p>The following excerpt was taken from Wikipedia:          “RSS is a family of <u>Web feed</u> formats used to publish frequently updated content such as <u>blog</u> entries, news headlines, and <u>podcasts</u> in a standardized format. An RSS document (which is called a ‘feed’, ‘web feed’, or ‘channel’) contains either a summary of content from an associated website or the full text. RSS makes it possible for people to keep up with websites in an automated manner that can be piped into special programs or filtered displays.”          “The benefit of RSS is the aggregation of content from multiple Web sources in one place. RSS content can be read using <u>software</u> called an ‘RSS reader’, ‘feed reader’ or an ‘<u>aggregator</u>’, which can be <u>web-based</u> or <u>desktop-based</u>. A standardized <u>XML</u> file format allows the information to be published once and viewed by many different programs. The user subscribes to a feed by entering the feed’s link into the reader or by clicking an RSS icon in a browser that initiates the subscription process. The RSS reader checks the user’s subscribed feeds regularly for new content, downloads any updates that it finds, and provides a <u>user interface</u> to monitor and read the feeds.”          “The initials ‘RSS’ are used to refer to the following formats:          • Really Simple Syndication (RSS 2.0)          • <u>RDF</u> Site Summary (RSS 1.0 and RSS 0.09)          • Rich Site Summary (RSS 0.91).”          “RSS.” <i>Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia</i>. 25 Jul 2008, 06:04 UTC. Wikimedia Foundation, Inc. 25 Jul 2008  <a href="http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=RSS&amp;oldid=227780241">http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=RSS&amp;oldid=227780241</a>&gt;.</p> <p><b>City of Anderson:</b> The City concurs with the recommendation and believes RSS can be a valuable tool for disseminating information. However, staffing and budget limitations may inhibit our ability to implement this recommendation immediately. We will implement this recommendation as soon as resources allow.</p> <p><b>City of Shasta Lake:</b> Really Simple Syndication (RSS) capabilities will be made a part of the City’s proposed new website.</p>

	<p><b>City of Redding:</b> The City Council agrees in part with this recommendation and plans to implement Really Simple Syndication (RSS) capabilities for selected content. The City Council agrees that RSS capabilities may be of benefit to the City and its citizens. It respectfully suggests that the most valuable use for RSS feeds would be for unscheduled information, such as job or bid announcements, entertainment information and timely news, rather than routine information that follows a set schedule such as agenda or minute postings. City staff is currently exploring the technology and intends to begin making RSS feeds available in selected circumstances.</p> <p><b>Responses invited from:</b>  Shasta County Administrative Officer  Shasta County Chief Information Technology Officer</p>
<p><b>Recommendations 10:</b>  That each department have its own sitemap. The ability to print where one has been and/or where one should go on the Internet is probably second in importance only to the availability of information.</p>	<p><b>Shasta County:</b> The Board of Supervisors does not agree with this recommendation. The effort needed to create and maintain a useful sitemap at the department level would be prohibitive at this time. The recommendation will not be implemented because of the difficulty to maintain departmental sitemaps. However, the overall website sitemap includes information from each department’s website; the overall sitemap will be accessible from each department’s website.</p> <p><b>City of Anderson:</b> The City agrees that site maps can provide valuable tools to assist site users quickly access the information they need. However, the City provides information on its site in a very simple, uncomplicated fashion and believes that the creation of individual site maps for each department would cause more confusion than it would prevent. We believe that a comprehensive site map, implemented pursuant to Recommendation 7, will he easily guide users throughout the entire City Web site. The City agrees with the recommendation on the ability to print individual Web site pages.</p> <p><b>City of Shasta Lake:</b> There are no site maps on the existing website. Site maps, including one for each department, will be included in the proposed new website.</p> <p><b>City of Redding:</b> The City Council does not intend to implement this recommendation at this time. Sitemaps can prove useful if a user has difficulty finding the information for which he or she is looking. The City of Redding takes pride in providing a user friendly interface making navigation and access to desired information easy. As such, the City Council believes that a sitemap on each of the departments’ websites at this time would be of marginal utility and would not be worth the cost of implementing and maintaining it.</p> <p><b>Responses invited from:</b>  Shasta County Administrative Officer</p>

	Shasta County Chief Information Technology Officer
<p><b>Recommendations 11:</b> The Grand Jury recommends that all of the web content described in the table be included in the county and cities websites.</p>	<p><b>Shasta County:</b> The Board of Supervisors agrees with the recommendation that a comprehensive sitemap should be available for the website. The recommendation has been implemented. A sitemap was developed and is currently available on the website as part of the standard template. We will continue to monitor the effectiveness of sitemaps as the use of the Internet continues to evolve. While sitemaps were a necessity for navigation in the early development of the Internet, their usefulness has diminished greatly in the past several years. Search engines, topical based web designs, intuitive menus/navigation, and breadcrumbs are of much greater importance in making a website easy to use and easy to navigate. However, we can see some value in having a sitemap available on the website for those who have difficulty finding their way using the other tools available.</p> <p>The Board of Supervisors concurs with the recommendation. The recommendation can be implemented within the next two years. The County Administrative Officer will request that the Chief Deputy Clerk of the Board, with the assistance of our IT Web/Graphic Designer, determine a calendar format to use that can contain the recommended information, then provide a link to the calendar on Shasta County’s homepage.</p> <p>The Board of Supervisors concurs with the recommendation. The Auditor-Controller, an elected official, has advised that the information will be on the website by September 2008.</p> <p>The Board of Supervisors concurs with the recommendation. The Auditor-Controller, an elected official, has advised that the information will be on the website by September 2008.</p> <p>The Board of Supervisors concurs with the recommendation. The Auditor-Controller, an elected official, has advised that the information will be on the website by September 2008.</p> <p><b>City of Anderson:</b> The City concurs with the recommendation.</p> <p><b>City of Shasta Lake:</b> The Web site Content table identifies one item as being absent from the City’s website that is currently available on the site. As required by law, information on federal “single audit” of grants is contained in “Other Supplemental Information” of the Year Ending Financial Statements, which are posted on our website. All other items in the table are either implemented in the City’s existing website (as noted in the table), or planned for the proposed new websites.</p> <p><b>City of Redding:</b> The table lists the following three items as not currently included on the City of Redding website:  <b>Sitemap</b> The City Council agrees with this recommendation and intends to implement it. The City of Redding takes pride in providing a user-friendly interface, making navigation and access to desired information easy.  <b>Federal “Single Audit” of Grants</b> The City Council agrees with the recommendation to include the single audit reports, and will</p>

	<p>implement this recommendation in conjunction with the posting of the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report.</p> <p><b>Calendar of City/County Events</b> The City Council agrees with this recommendation and implemented it prior to the Grand Jury’s report. The City of Redding website contains an Events listing on its homepage and a link to VisitRedding.org, a website that contains an extensive calendar of regional events and activities.</p> <p><b>Responses invited from:</b>  Shasta County Administrative Officer  Shasta County Chief Information Technology Officer</p>
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*This table refers to Finding 2 above*

**Website Content**

<b>Description</b>	<b>Shasta County</b>	<b>City of Redding</b>	<b>City of Shasta Lake</b>	<b>City of Anderson</b>
<b>General Items</b>				
Sitemap	No	No	No	No
Department Lists	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Finance</b>				
Audited Reports (CAFR)*	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Annual Budgets	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Other Financial Data Note 2	No	Yes	Yes	No
Federal “Single Audit” of Grants	No	No	No	No
<b>City Council/County Supervisors</b>				
Current Agenda	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Previous Agendas	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Minutes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Archived Minutes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Calendar of City/County Events	No	No	No	No

\* CAFR (Comprehensive Annual Financial Report)

**Method of Inquiry:**

The Grand Jury interviewed:

- Shasta County Auditor/Controller
- Shasta County Chief Information Technology Officer
- Shasta County Information Technology Supervisor
- Shasta County Information Technology Web/Graphic Designer
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The Grand Jury reviewed the following:

- Government Accounting Standards Board (GASB): “GASB Issues Standards to Improve Post-Employment Benefit Plan Reporting.”

- Government Finance Officers Association: “Recommended Practice: Establishing of an Internal Audit function (February 28, 2003, 1997 and 2006)
- Government Finance Officers Association: Using Websites to Improve Access to Budget Documents and Financial Reports (2003).
- Government Finance Officers Association: “The GASB’s New Financial Reporting Model: An Overview for Finance Officers July 1999”
- [www.usa.gov/webcontent/](http://www.usa.gov/webcontent/) Webcontent.gov Requirements and Best Practices
- [www.usa.gov/webcontent/](http://www.usa.gov/webcontent/) Webcontent.gov RSS Feeds

**2007-2008 Shasta County Grand Jury Report  
Report submitted to the agency on: July 7, 2008**

## **Stillwater Business Park**

### ***All of our Eggs in one Basket***

City of Redding  
777 Cypress Street  
Redding, CA 96007  
Phone: 530 123-4567

#### **Summary:**

From the Stillwater Business Park Marketing Plan and Budget, September 2007: “In 1998, the Redding City Council convened an ad hoc committee to study the potential for the development of a large parcel industrial park. The consensus of the committee was that existing industrial parks were well-suited for small- and medium-sized companies and that local developers were developing this kind of product. The committee also noted however that market conditions in Shasta County were such that it was unlikely that a private developer would take the risks associated with the development of a park specifically oriented toward large users. The committee saw the opportunity to create a new large parcel business park that would make Redding and Shasta County more competitive.”

The ad hoc committee’s work led to the creation of the Stillwater Business Park by the City of Redding.

“The Stillwater Business Park is a 700 +/- acre Business Park located within the City of Redding east of Interstate 5 and 2 miles south of Highway 44. There are approximately 321+/- acres available for development with parcels ranging from 5-100 acres. The balance of the site is dedicated to open space and public improvements.” (City of Redding Economic Development website.)

The park, owned by the City of Redding, is designed to provide ready-to-go sites for manufacturers, distribution centers and corporate offices. However, at this time these parcels still lack infrastructure, i.e., roads, electricity, gas, water, sewer and fiber optic services. They are not “shovel ready,” according to industry standards.

When the City of Redding decided to develop a business park, Stillwater was seen as the ideal location for new development sites for firms wanting to relocate to northern California. The city staff estimated that approximately 1,500 new jobs would be created at a higher-than-average wage. At the start of the process it was thought that Stillwater could be completed for approximately \$11 million. However, current estimates of the costs for the completion of the park are as high as \$70 million.

In June 1999, the Economic Development Corporation (EDC)\* initiated negotiations to purchase the 700 privately owned acres which became the Stillwater Business Park site. In March 2000, the Redding City Council approved initiation of annexation of the site into city. During the next three years city staff prepared the “Purpose and Need” proposal and other preliminary paperwork for review by the land development governing agencies.

\*The Economic Development Corporation of Shasta County (EDC) is the nucleus of economic development for Shasta County and the cities within Shasta County. The EDC is funded by a consortium of local governments and private businesses that share a common interest in growing the economic base of Shasta County. Shasta County and the cities of Redding, Anderson and Shasta Lake City contract with the EDC to identify and recruit new business prospects to this area. Additionally, they work to assist existing businesses with expansion.

On November 6, 2003, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) sent a letter to the City of Redding in response to its "Purpose and Need" proposal pertaining to the need for a business park to help stimulate economic growth. In essence, the Environmental Protection Specialist criticized the city's proposal, citing significant disagreement with the choice of location of the park. He stated, "... EPA considers the vernal wetland complexes of Stillwater Plains to be Aquatic Resources of National Importance (AARNI), a fact underscored by our past commitment of financial assistance to the California Department of Fish and Game for pursuit of their protection in perpetuity."

The Environmental Protection Specialist was adamant that the city explore other alternative sites for business development away from the aquatic wetlands. He also stated that the City had not made a strong enough case for the need for a business park. The Environmental Protection Specialist said that he saw no evidence of business prospects seriously looking at Redding as a site for business expansion. Several years went by as the city defended its choice of location.

The wetland issue contributed to a five-year delay in the progress of building Stillwater. During that time the following actions occurred:

**Stillwater Project Timeline:**

Jun 99 - EDC Option with property owner Joe Sanders for 480 acres executed by EDC  
Mar 00 - Redding City Council approves initiation of annexation  
Apr 01 - Notice of Preparation of CEQA EIR  
Jul 03 - Re-Notice of EIR preparation due to changes to project. Wetlands issues and addressing of FAA surplus property to the South of Stillwater Park  
Apr 04 - Preliminary Draft EIS/EIR  
May 05 - EDC & COR agree to cooperate on the Sanders/EDC Option  
Sept 05 - Supplemental EIS/EIR Draft prepared  
Apr 06 - City Council approves Certified EIS/EIR  
Nov 06 - City closed the Sanders property sale  
Aug 07 - LAFCO approved annexation and U.S. Army Corps 404 Permit issued  
Nov 07 - Parcel Map and Planned Development Plan approved by the Planning Commission

In Spring 2006, the city council authorized the Redding Economic Development director to hire development consultant Al Gianini to provide it with a Stillwater Business Park Competitive Analysis and Pricing Summary. In his report, submitted to the city council on September 20, 2007, he indicated

that in the current market the city must compete aggressively with other demographically similar areas for job-producing industries. Locations in the counties of Madera, Stanislaus, Sacramento, Yolo, Solano, Placer, Nevada, Colusa, Tehama, Siskiyou, and the states of Nevada and Oregon are ahead of Shasta County in terms of established business parks and are competing against Shasta County for the same businesses.

Mr. Gianini’s report offered pricing suggestions. “To help stimulate activity in the Park, the city’s initial tenant(s) should obtain a price reduction based upon the quality of the tenant; including name recognition, credit, capital investment and employment. Another option is for the city to carry the note for the initial tenant(s). This provides the buyer an incentive without changing your price structure.”

The Grand Jury investigation revealed diverse opinions about the value of building the Stillwater Business Park. Some think that the escalating costs caused by delays have made the project no longer worth pursuing. Others think that the project is worthwhile because it will attract industry leading to better paying jobs. Although the project is controversial, at no time during its investigation did the Grand Jury find any evidence of Redding’s seeking widespread public input.

Officials representing the cities of Anderson and Shasta Lake (neither of which has a financial stake in the building of the business park) said that the development of Stillwater would be beneficial for the county and smaller cities because it showcases the whole county area. They think that continuation of the project should result in opportunities for those areas to promote their communities as well to potential businesses.

<b>Findings and Recommendations</b>	<b>City of Redding City Council Response</b>
<p><b>Findings #1:</b> 1. There are many differences of opinion about economic development. While the Redding City Council may not have intentionally excluded the general populace of Redding from involvement in the decision to pursue the taxpayer-funded, multi-million dollar Stillwater project, they did not deliberately promote public input.</p>	<p>No response required</p>
<p><b>Finding #2:</b> 2. Business parks such as Stillwater, if successful, contribute to diversifying the job market of Shasta County.</p>	<p>No response required</p>
<p><b>Recommendations:</b> 1. When planning projects of the magnitude and complexity of the Stillwater Business Park, Redding City Council should actively solicit citizen involvement beyond an ad hoc committee. Planning and steering committees should be formed ending in a voter non-binding referendum, a public opinion vote that allows all Redding voters to express their support or lack thereof for a project. In comparison to the overall cost of the project, the</p>	<p>The City Council does not intend to implement this recommendation relative to the non-binding referendum. The City Council makes all of its decisions in an open public forum, except those that are more appropriately done in closed sessions according to the rules established under the Brown Act. Generally, multiple opportunities for public input are made available for any item that is complex or has large community impact.</p>

<p>expense for an election would be minimal. Additionally, a positive result of the referendum would have further supported the “Purpose and Need” proposal.</p>	<p>The development of the Stillwater Business Park (Business Park) has been underway for nearly 10 years. During that span of time, numerous opportunities have existed for the public to comment, positive or negative. Business Park items have appeared on open agendas numerous times for approval of budgets, authority to secure bond financing, approval of the environmental document, and award of various contracts. In fact, on June 26, 2006, a special meeting was held specific to the development strategies for the Business Park. In addition to this, the Business Park was presented to the Planning Commission on several occasions, as well as presented to many service groups over the span of several years.</p> <p>Topics such as the Business Park take many hours, weeks, and years to fully understand and study. It is for this reason that the City Council respectfully suggests that the elected body is best suited for making necessary decisions for such large and complex issues. Under the City’s representative form of government, City Council members are elected by its citizens to carry out their wishes. Such elections, four of which occurred during the years the Business Park was under development, provide Redding citizens with an effective way to voice their concerns and preferences.</p>
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**Method of Inquiry:**

The Grand Jury interviewed:

- City of Redding City Manager
- City of Redding Director of Economic Development
- City of Redding City Council Members (3)
- Shasta County Administrative Officer
- Local Business Developer
- Local Business Development Consultant
- City of Anderson City Manager
- City of Shasta Lake Project Manager
- Shasta County Economic Development Corporation President

Grand Jury reviewed:

- Stillwater Business Park Competitive Analysis – August 31, 2007
- State of California Labor Market Information – January 18, 2008
- Stillwater Business Park marketing booklet – March, 2006
- Letter from a City of Redding Planning Commissioner to a Redding City Councilmember
- 2007 City of Redding State of the City

- City of Redding General Plan/Economic Development Element – October 3, 2000
- City of Redding Council Policy: Economic Development Program – Dec 8, 1998
- City of Shasta Lake Development Agency Agenda Item – January 15, 2008
- City of Shasta Lake Shasta Gateway Industrial Park Project Description
- City of Shasta Lake Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy – Sept 15, 2003
- Shasta County Economic Development Corporation (EDC) Scope of Services – May 1, 2007

Grand Jury visited:

The site of the future Stillwater Business Park

**2007-2008 Shasta County Grand Jury Report  
Report submitted to the agency on: July 7, 2008**

# **Shasta County Mental Health**

Shasta County Mental Health  
2640 Bretslauer Way  
Redding, CA 96001

## ***Change is seldom easy***

As Shasta County's Department of Mental Health/Drug and Alcohol Services attempts to institute change in its leadership and direction, there are voices of dissent and dissatisfaction. At the same time, many of its detractors point to positive accomplishments as the department reaches out to better provide service for the out lying communities of the county and previously underserved segments of the population.

The Grand Jury received six complaints about the Mental Health Department alleging: low employee morale, lack of confidence in the current leadership, attempts at de-professionalizing services, concerns about safety, and an atmosphere of opposition to dissenting opinions. This report outlines an investigation of a portion of this large and often maligned department.

### **Summary:**

Change in the delivery of services to the mentally ill is certainly nothing new. More than 30 years ago the California state government drastically cut back on the treatment of the mentally ill in state hospitals, causing thousands of individuals with mental illness to live on the streets or to seek care provided by county governments.

Shasta County began services for the severely and persistently mentally ill in 1965 at the county's general hospital. When the hospital was closed in the late 1980s, the county established an inpatient psychiatric hospital on the same site. However, as a cost saving measure, the County Board of Supervisors opted to close the 15-bed psychiatric hospital in July 2004. A Grand Jury report issued in 2005 questioned the fiscal wisdom of this decision. Regardless of the financial effects, the closure of the psychiatric hospital had other wide-ranging impacts. Local hospital emergency rooms, law enforcement personnel, the intake section of the county jail, and area physicians immediately felt increasing pressure to provide evaluation and/or temporary custody of persons suspected of with mental illness.

A recent change in the delivery of services to the mentally ill has come about with the passage by California voters of Proposition 63 in November 2004, which created the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA). Funded by an additional one percent tax on individuals with a taxable income more than \$1 million, the MHSA provides added funding for county mental health departments to create new programs. Stating the belief that "with effective treatment and support, recovery from mental illness is feasible for most people," the MHSA encourages counties to establish community-based programs centered around prevention and early intervention, education and training for those who treat mental illness, and services for previously underserved populations, such as traumatized youth and isolated seniors.

A central feature of the Mental Health Services Act is an approach to treating mental illness known as the "recovery" or "wellness" model, as opposed to the traditional or "medical" model. Although a thorough

explanation of the recovery model is beyond the scope of this report, it is important to understand a few of the tenets of its philosophy. The recovery model emphasizes a positive approach to treatment centered around identifying and developing the strengths of the client in order to empower the client to participate in treatment by developing strategies to deal with recurring problems and to monitor medication. Utilizing community resources, such as adequate housing, vocational skills training and support networks, the client operates as much as possible within a non-institutionalized setting. Key concepts cited for the recovery model are “hope, personal empowerment, respect, social connections, self-responsibility and self-determination.”

In March 2006 Shasta County submitted a three-year expenditure plan to the MHSA Oversight and Accountability Commission and received an initial allocation of \$5.2 million. The implementation report for the expenditure plan outlined two full-service partnerships. One is the SHIFT Plus (Shasta Housing Intervention for Transition) program to provide “whatever it takes” services for qualified clients (those who have not previously received services or those in the most dire need of services), including housing, transportation, employment resources, medical and mental health resources, and social activities. The second is the Shasta Rural Health Initiative to implement psychiatric services through existing medical facilities, such as the Hill Country Community Clinic in Round Mountain and the Shingletown Clinic. The funds available through the MHSA can be used only to support new programs, not to supplement those already in existence. Community-wide discussions are ongoing in preparation for the second phase of MHSA funding, which will concentrate on the development of prevention and early intervention strategies.

In recent years, Shasta County Mental Health has undergone a number of administrative and staff changes. In April 2006 Dr. Don Kingdon, the director of the department, resigned to assume another position. Marta McKenzie moved from Public Health to become the Interim Mental Health Director until assuming her current role as the Director of the Health and Human Services Agency in January 2007. At that time, Dr. Mark Montgomery was hired as the new Mental Health Director, in part because of his experience with the recovery model of care in Sacramento. Many employees in the Adult System of Care Division wanted the previous head of that division to be appointed as the new department director. Some assert that, since the current Mental Health Director is not licensed as a clinical therapist as previous directors had been, he is not as well qualified to make decisions concerning client treatment. Despite past hiring practices, the posted qualifications for the Director of Mental Health Service do not include the requirement of licensure.

Another serious concern is the irreplaceable loss of staff in the department due to layoffs, retirements and resignations. In 2004, Shasta County had six full-time senior psychiatrists. Currently, only one full-time and two half-time psychiatrists remain. To fill the void, the county has begun to rely on relatively expensive temporary (locum tenens) contracts and real time services through tele-psychiatry. Recruiting full-time replacements has been made increasingly difficult due in large part to the increased demand for psychiatrists in the state prison system, which is able to offer much higher compensation. As an interim measure, in November 2007, the Board of Supervisors approved the department’s proposal to delete two of the vacant psychiatrist positions and to replace them with Nurse Practitioner/Physician Assistant positions. These non-physician personnel may see patients, prescribe medications and provide client care.

In addition to the loss of psychiatrists, the Adult System of Care division of the department has experienced staff reductions in other professional positions, losing psychologists and licensed clinicians. Until recently the division employed nine psychologists. Five were laid off in a budget cutting measure and three were demoted. Only one psychologist currently remains. The division also lost a number of licensed clinicians. Some of the clinicians have only recently been replaced, although not all are yet fully qualified for a license. This loss of staff resulted in very high case loads for the two remaining clinicians. Licensed clinicians in the mental health department must have earned a license from the state Board of

Behavioral Sciences as a Clinical Social Worker or a Marriage and Family Therapist. Both licenses require a master's degree, in excess of 3,000 hours of professional experience, 104 weeks of supervision by a qualified clinician and the passage of the appropriate written examination. At one point in 2007 the clinicians were assigned to teams which served 151 clients and 243 clients, respectively. In addition, each clinician was responsible for processing client intake at the "Front Door" for 4.5 hours of their workday. This situation has now been mitigated by the addition of clinical staff.

Of course, as in many local government agencies, there are the limitations caused by dwindling funds to provide for an increasing population. The vast majority of revenue available to the Department of Mental Health comes from state sources, such as realignment revenues and reimbursement for Medi-Cal services. The Fiscal Year 2007-08 Mid-Year Report prepared by the Shasta County Administrative Office suggests that revenue for the Department of Mental Health are expected to be more than 9 percent below the original budget estimates, largely because of cuts in Medi-Cal programs and the loss of AB 2034 funding for the homeless mentally ill. Most of the savings realized by the department in this fiscal year have been achieved by maintaining staff vacancies to reduce projected expenditures for salaries and benefits. The department has also attempted to meet the budget crunch by reducing the need for client hospitalization, making it possible to sell three of its contracted beds in psychiatric inpatient hospitals, and by cutting expenditures for staff training and travel.

Despite the bleak financial picture, the department can boast of some significant positive accomplishments. The recently opened outpatient office in the Public Health/Teen Center building in Anderson and the services provided through the Hill Country Clinic in Round Mountain have been received warmly by those communities. The 23-hour crisis stabilization facility and the mobile crisis response team are innovations which have reduced the pressure placed on hospital emergency rooms and law enforcement after the closure of the county's psychiatric hospital. In January 2008 the Board of Supervisors authorized a contract with Northern Valley Catholic Social Service and Hill Country Community Clinic to establish Wellness Centers to provide support and assistance for Shasta County residents aged 16 years and older who with mental illness.

The main facility for county outpatient mental health services is located at 2640 Breslauer Way, Redding, and is open to the public on weekdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Department administration has made a concerted effort to make the facility appear welcoming to both prospective and continuing clients. To this end, the security guard station has been moved from the lobby and no locked doors separate the lobby from several wings of offices and treatment rooms. Some current and past staff members feel that the attempt to maintain an open and accessible building has reduced the safety of staff and clients. On a 9 a.m. visit to the building, Grand Jury members found no security guard at the duty station.

<b>Findings and Recommendations</b>	<b>Shasta County Board of Supervisors' Response</b>
<p><b>Findings #1:</b> Concerns about safety at the Mental Health building have been expressed to the department administration for a number of years. A letter to the Director of Mental Health in February 2002 identifying the need for additional work place security was signed by 43 staff members. Interviews with current staff reflected a continuing concern. Most mental health agencies in Northern California have, at a minimum, locked doors that separate the lobby from the rest of the building in</p>	<p>No response required.</p>

<p>order to protect both the staff and clients from potentially volatile behavior. Locking the doors has been resisted by Shasta County Mental Health officials as too costly or as an impediment to the maintenance of a welcoming atmosphere for potential clients.</p>	
<p><b>Finding #2:</b> The restrictions placed on MHSA funding which prevent it from being utilized for existing programs have caused an inevitable feeling of resentment by those trying to maintain services with fewer resources while at the same time observing the “whatever it takes” services available for those clients who qualify under MHSA guidelines.</p>	<p>No response required.</p>
<p><b>Finding #3:</b> Irregularities in the maintenance of client treatment plans have cost the department hundreds of thousands of dollars in revenue. Medi-Cal requires that treatment plans be updated at least annually in order to justify continued reimbursement for services. When it is discovered that Medi-Cal has been billed for services with out-of-compliance treatment plans, the state must be reimbursed. It has been estimated that prior to the current administration over 900 cases were lacking up-to-date treatment plans. The number presently exceeds 200. The problem has been going on for years. This department is addressing it in several ways: addition of a treatment plan to the intake document, the assignment of cases to individual staff rather than to teams, and improved quality assurance.</p>	<p>No response required.</p>
<p><b>Finding #4:</b> The lack of psychiatric inpatient beds in Shasta County continues to be an issue. Since the Board of Supervisors chose to close the county psychiatric hospital in 2004, the Mental Health Department has been forced to transport clients requiring inpatient care to contracted beds in facilities throughout the north state. Some argue that this practice costs more than maintaining a county facility, removes the patient from family and other community support, and eliminates local control of psychiatric care for these residents.</p>	<p>No response required.</p>
<p><b>Finding #5:</b> The Grand Jury has found that low employee morale exists in the Adult System of Care division. Although evidence indicates this is not a new phenomenon in the division, some of the</p>	<p>No response required.</p>

<p>dissatisfaction that currently exists and has caused staff members to leave the mental health department may have been exacerbated by the way in which changes have been initiated by the new department administration. Some staff members perceive a lack of respect for professional status and for the quality of care provided by staff in previous years. They believe that the new administration has not adequately heard their legitimate concerns about those issues.</p>	
<p><b>Finding #6:</b> One of the central aspects of the MHSA proposal, the STAR (Shasta Triumph And Recovery) program (previously SHIFT Plus), has attracted few clients. The program was designed to serve 82 clients, but at last report (April 2008) it had enrolled fewer than 50. The STAR program appears to be reaping limited benefits for the community.</p>	<p>No response required.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation #1:</b> The Department of Mental Health should implement means of increasing physical safety for staff and clients at the mental health facility while maintaining a positive atmosphere for incoming clients. Grants are available for providing increased security of public buildings.</p>	<p>The Board of Supervisors concurs with the finding and is pleased to report that SCMH is working to address these issues and is in the process of developing a plan for capital improvements to increase the physical safety of staff and clients at the mental health facility. This plan, once completed, will need to be submitted to the State Department of Mental Health for approval and as such it is anticipated that authorization to expand MHSA funds will not occur for six months with work beginning, if approved, sometime close to the end of this fiscal year. SCMH has already implemented staff training to increase safety in the workplace by having provided, or scheduled to provide, training to staff to address this issue. This training is mandatory for clinical staff and highly encouraged for support staff.</p> <p><b>Invited response:</b> For several years, SCMH has struggled with ways to create a warm, welcoming, and consumer-friendly environment, while simultaneously ensuring both the clients' and employees' safety. As a result of the many extended debates on how to remain as accessible open clinic that is not seen as a "locked" facility, SCMH is now in the process of developing a design for improving/upgrading the department's waiting area, building cleanliness, and safety that will be funded through the Capital Improvement section of the Mental Health Services Act. The proposal will include</p>

	<p>adding security doors in various hallways, relocating the receptionist window, and installing card lock systems where appropriate.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation #2:</b>  The Department of Mental Health should increase efforts to eliminate the loss of revenue from Medi-Cal resulting from the failure to update all treatment plans on an annual basis. This revenue loss is especially inexcusable in the current climate of decreasing state funds for mental health services. A thorough internal audit should be undertaken to reveal the true ongoing cost to the county.</p>	<p>The Board of Supervisors concurs that efforts should be increased to eliminate the loss of revenue from Medi-Cal. The Department of Mental Health continues to work to correct this deficiency to minimize loss of revenue from issues related to maintenance of client treatment plans. The Board of Supervisors, in conference with HHS and DMH administrative staff, will consider initiating an internal audit.</p> <p><b>Invited response:</b> Over the last twelve months, SCMH has worked diligently to reorganize our quality assurance/compliance, adult systems of care and fiscal departments. The goal of this reorganization is to develop efficient and accountable systems of care. As noted, irregularities in the maintenance of client treatment plans, caseload assignment, and poor documentation practices have existed. SCMH has implemented a transparent approach to rectify these challenges, including placing a heavy emphasis on improved quality assurance;; improving client/customer service; assigning cases to individual staff members who are part of a team rather than to the team as a whole, which has increased accountability; and, finally, increasing education/trainings on MediCal documentation standards.</p> <p>The department completed a State Department of Mental Health MediCal audit in June of 2008, which identified problem areas that needed corrective action. To ensure all staff had an opportunity to learn from this audit, arrangements were made with the state auditing team to have the staff invited to the exit interview to hear the preliminary results first hand. This action was taken to ensure that department employees, who may have perceived these necessary program changes as a lack of respect for their professional expertise and for the quality of care provided by staff in previous years, were given an opportunity to hear and discuss the issues directly with State Department of Mental Health auditors. The written final report, which is expected in early September 2008, will also be shared with staff.</p>

	<p>In order to ensure all client treatment plans are up-to-date, the department has implemented an internal audit of all client charts. Additionally, the tracking system has been improved to where the Clinical Division Chiefs and Clinical Program Coordinators are provided a roster of each direct services staff's caseload and status of required documentation. This information is used during supervisor sessions and is included in annual employee appraisal reports.</p>												
<p><b>Recommendation #3:</b> The Board of Supervisors should review the decision to close the psychiatric hospital in Shasta County. The primary justification for the closure was to reduce costs for the treatment of clients requiring inpatient care, but no recent studies have been done to demonstrate cost savings.</p>	<p>The Board of Supervisors continues to support the models of care currently in place in the Mental Health and the Mental Health Services Act funded systems of care with the goal to improve access and decrease the need for hospitalization. The Board of Supervisors, in conference with HHSA and DMH administrative staff, will consider initiating a cost study.</p>												
<p><b>Recommendation #4:</b> The Department of Mental Health should work with a consultant offering expertise in organizational change. A series of meetings should be held that will involve staff more fully in the reviewing the rationale for the changes that have been made and in developing action plans for future change.</p>	<p>The Board of Supervisors understands and appreciates the Grand Jury's recommendation. The director of mental health has made considerable efforts to keep staff informed and involved in the changes that have been made and in developing plans for future change. The Board of Supervisors maintains a high level of confidence in the competence of the director and his staff to provide solutions and strategies comparable to what a consultant might offer.</p> <p><b>Invited response:</b> Entering FY 2007-2008, SCMH recognized this need and organized a series of professional and departmental training opportunities focused on organizational change. The following is a list of the training offered on this subject.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="857 1436 1432 1879"> <thead> <tr> <th>Training Event</th> <th>Trainer</th> <th>Date</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Dual Diagnosis Treatment, a New Paradigm</td> <td>Dr. Kenneth Minkoff</td> <td>07-17-07</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Recovery and Employment: How Can I Help?</td> <td>Dr. Mark Ragins</td> <td>03-04-08</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Shifting to a Recovery Culture Including Mainstream</td> <td>Lynn Aronson</td> <td>04-10-08</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Training Event	Trainer	Date	Dual Diagnosis Treatment, a New Paradigm	Dr. Kenneth Minkoff	07-17-07	Recovery and Employment: How Can I Help?	Dr. Mark Ragins	03-04-08	Shifting to a Recovery Culture Including Mainstream	Lynn Aronson	04-10-08
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Employment Roles		
The Clients Perspective Supporting Education and Employment Goals	Crossroads Employment Services	05-01=08
Creating a Welcoming Environment	Bruce Anderson	05-15-08
Rituals of Resiliency: How Leaders Create and Sustain Positive, Hopeful Work Cultures	Bruce Anderson	06-12-08
Recovery Philosophy and History	Lynn Gurko	12-05-07

These professional training opportunities were open to department employees and the community. These programs were presented in an attempt to educate clients, family members, community-based organizations, professional, concerned citizens, and department staff on the philosophical shift in treatment modalities from providing mental health treatment in the locked hospital setting to more of a prevention community-based model.

As a result of these trainings, the Next Steps Committee was organized by employees in July of 2007. This committee was formulated to study issues related to the implementation of integrating mental health and substance abuse services within the department. This open committee has welcomed all department participants and has taken a critical look at the department's system of care. The committee is currently finalizing a mission statement and has actively consulted with Dr. Minkoff on issues such as integration challenges, the importance of staff and beneficiary input on the integration process, and how to better engage and educate staff on organizational change. The committee has developed and is responding to a survey assessing staff needs and organizational

	<p>strengths/ challenges, with the goal of developing a department strategic plan.</p> <p>To ensure staff has the opportunity to provide input into overall system changes at SCMH, several meetings have been implemented over the past year that occur on a regular basis. These include:</p> <p>The Mental Health Director or Deputy Director is available every Monday from 12:30 to 1:00 p.m. to discuss issues that are on the horizon and to answer questions that staff may have in a very informal setting. These meetings occur in the “Recovery Room” and are open to all staff.</p> <p>Morning Coffee meetings with the Director of Deputy Director are held on the first Thursday of each month, which is the morning after the Mental Health Board meeting takes place. These meetings are held to ensure that staff is aware if what was discussed with the Mental Health Board members. The meeting also provides an opportunity for each Division Chief to give an update on activities specific to their division, allows staff to ask questions and receive answers in an open forum, discuss rumors, and share any information they want with coworkers.</p> <p>Team leader meetings are held on a weekly basis. These meetings are attended by the respective Division Chiefs, Clinical Program Coordinators, and all Team Leads. Meetings are used to discuss pending changes, review clinical and administrative issues (eg. Providing information regarding staff treatment plan updates, billing issues, etc.), needed coverage for time off, and other pertinent issues.</p> <p>POWER Team meetings are attended by all Clinical Division Chiefs, Program Managers, and Program Coordinators. These meetings are without either the Mental Health Director or Deputy Director being present and provide the opportunity for leadership staff to openly brainstorm and discuss issues/problems- /opportunities that are presenting themselves.</p> <p>Weekly meetings are held with each of the clinical staff classifications. These include meetings specific to Clinicians and Service Coordinators (Case Managers). Again, these meetings give staff the opportunity to openly discuss issues with their peers.</p> <p>As a result of the actions taken by the Department to open communication between all levels of staff and to ensure staff has input into</p>
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	<p>system changes, it is felt that expenditure of funds to hire a consultant for this purpose is not needed at this time.</p>
<p><b>Recommendations: #5</b>  The Department of Mental Health should re-assess the value of the STAR program. The department should either restructure the program to attract more clients or utilize the considerable funds provided by the MHSA for other projects that will better serve the needs of the mentally ill in Shasta County.</p>	<p>The Board of Supervisors concurs and is pleased that an assessment of the Shasta Triumph and Recovery (STAR) program has already been done by the Department of Mental Health and changes have been made to the program. It is significant to note that at the time of the review by the Grand Jury, this program had only been operating for approximately six months and was not fully staffed. Much of the appearance of underutilization may be due to these factors. In response to the recommendation to shift the funds used for the STAR program to other projects that will better serve the needs of the mentally ill in Shasta County, the Board of Supervisors agrees in concept to utilizing these funding sources to best serve the needs of the mentally ill, however, funding is through an approved MHSA Community Services and Supports Plan (CSS) that was developed with considerable community input and fifty percent of these MHSA CSS funds must go to individuals who are “Full Service Partners.” This program is provided through a “Full Service Partnership,” of which there are no other programs similar to this in Shasta County at this time.</p> <p><b>Invited response:</b> The Department agrees with the Grand Jury recommendation and has conducted a thorough assessment of the STAR program. To date, several changes have been implemented in how this program provides services to “Full Service Partners” (the priority population identified in the Mental Health Services Act). Ongoing evaluation of this program will continue during FY 2008-2009. It should be noted that a minimum of 50% of the MHSA Community Services and Support funds must be spent on the provision of services to the population that the STAR program serves. Some of the changes that have occurred since the Grand Jury reviewed this program are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Placed supervision of the program under the Adult System of Care Division Chief and relocated the team’s offices to the Crisis Residential and Recovery Center.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Contracted with Hill Country Community Clinic and Shasta Community Health Clinic to ensure individuals suffering from mental illness receive integrated primary care and mental health care.</li> <li>● Contracted with Northern Valley Catholic Social Service/Second Home for the establishment and operation of a Wellness and Recovery Center in Redding.</li> <li>● Contracted with Hill Country Community Clinic for Wellness and Recovery Center Services in the intermountain region.</li> <li>● Contracted with Tri-County Community Network for employment and housing assistance in the intermountain region.</li> </ul> <p>Although the above contracted services are funded through MHSA, they are not limited to full service partners, and have increased the mental health services available to the community at large.</p> <p>Additionally, an MHSA Plan Update has been submitted to the State Department of Mental Health that will allow for the continued operation of the Crisis Stabilization Service and Crisis Residential and Recovery Center. Each of these programs provides critical services to individuals suffering from mental illness.</p>
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**Method of Inquiry**

The Grand Jury conducted the following interviews:

- Director, Shasta County Director of Mental Health, Drug and Alcohol Services
- Director, Shasta County Health and Human Services Agency
- Clinical Division Chief, Adult System of Care
- Clinical Division Chief, Local Interagency Network for Children and Family Services (LINCS) Program
- Two licensed mental health clinicians
- Clinical Program Coordinator, Adult Services
- Two Ph.D. Psychologists
- A registered nurse
- Former Clinical Division Chief, Adult System of Care
- Member of the Shasta County Mental Health Board
- President, Shasta County chapter of National Alliance on Mental Health (NAMI)
- Owner of a residential facility that provides housing for mental health clients

The Grand Jury reviewed the following documents:

- “Evaluation of State County MHSA Three Year Expenditure Plan”, by the Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission, May 12, 2006
- Shasta County Mental Health Department Organizational Chart 2007-08

- Mental Health Budget Unit 410, by Marta McKenzie, Interim Director of Mental Health (excerpt from Shasta County Final Budget, FY 2006-07)
- Shasta County Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) Community Services and Supports (CSS) Implementation Report, July 1 through December 31, 2006
- Text of the Mental Health Services Act
- Shasta County Mental Health Plan, Quality Improvement Work Plan, FY 2006/07
- Fiscal Year 2007-08 Mid-Year Report, Shasta County Administrative Office
- “Shasta County Mental Health System Failing”, a newspaper article by Tim Heardon, Redding.com, September 23, 2007
- Mental Health Department Budget, FY 2007-08
- County of Shasta Class Specification Bulletin for the Director of Mental Health Services
- Client Treatment Plan, Adult System of Care Policy and Procedure, Shasta County Mental Health
- Current and prior intake and evaluation forms used for Adult System of Care
- “Agreement with North Valley Catholic Social Services for Wellness and Recovery Program”, report to the Shasta County Board of Supervisors from Department of Mental Health, January 22, 2008
- “Consider options to improve recruitment of Mental Health Medical Professionals”, report to the Shasta County Board of Supervisors from Health and Human Services Agency—Mental Health, November 27, 2007
- Shasta County Grand Jury Final Report 2004/05
- “Recovery: Changing From a Medical Model to a Psychosocial Rehabilitation Mode” by Mark Ragins, M.D.

**2007-2008 Shasta County Grand Jury Report  
Report submitted to the agency on: July 7, 2008**

## **Shasta County Planning Division**

Shasta County Planning Division  
1855 Placer Street Suite 103  
Redding, CA 96001  
(530) 225-5532

### ***Planning and Politics—Do they mix?***

From a time when our forests were vast and seemed impenetrable: “What will the ax man do when they have cut their way from sea to sea?” --James Fennimore Cooper in The Last of the Mohicans.

Our cultural and societal traditions have undergone great change. Over thousands of years the values, beliefs and ways of life of the native peoples held sway in our area. With the influx of explorers and trappers in the early part of the nineteenth century and the later population growth caused by the gold rush miners and settlers, attitudes toward land ownership and land use began to change. Natural resources seemed to be limitless and often little thought was given to the long-range consequences of commercial enterprises on our environment. Even today we see the results of gold dredges, copper mining and smelting in Shasta County. Debate continues over the impact of modern logging techniques and concerns about urban sprawl. The desire to protect and expand our way of life in the county and changes in state law have led to more regulation over business and residential growth. Frequently decisions about the use of land are fraught with controversy.

Currently, planning in the unincorporated areas of the county is the responsibility of the Planning Division of the Shasta County Department of Resource Management, the county’s Planning Commission and, ultimately, the Board of Supervisors. (The cities of Anderson, Redding and Shasta Lake have their own planning departments and commissions.).

#### **Summary:**

The Shasta County Grand Jury investigated citizens’ concerns and a written complaint related to the processing of planning applications to the Shasta County Department of Resource Management Planning Division for housing tract developments with four or more residential units. The complaint pointed to perceived deficiencies in the application of the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), especially in the determination of Mitigated Negative Declarations (MND) and Negative Declarations (ND) in Environmental Initial Study, and problems in the notice procedure for Planning Commission hearings. Recent housing tract developments were the primary focus of this Grand Jury investigation.

The planning and application processes have evolved during the recent past. Shasta County’s General Plan and Zoning Plan have been developed and adopted by the Board of Supervisors with input from many citizens and other groups looking thoughtfully at current and future development.

At the planning office, applicants may ask for and receive professional staff assistance with the application process, which includes completing a Master Application Form and the appropriate supplemental forms. Planning Division personnel offer advice to help the applicant minimize costs, complications, and the time necessary to obtain project approval.

Applications for subdivision development projects require additional documents which may include:

- Tentative maps of the proposed subdivision and surrounding area.
- Other documents, such as a grading plan, geological studies, drainage and flood control information, a noise analysis, or a water availability study.
- Application copies being sent to other administrators. Copies of the map and related documents can be circulated to the County Fire Department, the Environmental Health Division, the Public Health Department and to other county departments and referral agencies including state Fish and Game, United States Forest Service, state Water Quality Control Board and others as the director determines appropriate.
- CEQA review. After the submission of the documents, an interdepartmental review is completed and a staff report is prepared.

The passage of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) brought significant changes to the process of Shasta County planning and development. CEQA was adopted in 1970 and was intended to inform governmental decision-makers and the public about potential environmental effects of a proposed project. CEQA required that Shasta County, identify ways to reduce adverse impacts, offer alternatives to the project, and disclose to the public why a project was approved.

CEQA applies to projects undertaken by, funded by, or requiring an issuance of a permit by a public agency.

Following the three Stages of the CEQA review process, the lead agency determines:

- If CEQA applies to a particular activity.
- If CEQA applies, does the activity have significant environmental effects? If so, then the agency must conduct an “Environmental Initial Study” to assist it in assessing environmental effects, and initiate consultation with other public agencies, such as the California Department of Fish and Game, and the Air Quality Review Board. If, based on the Initial Study, the agency finds no substantial evidence of environmental impact the agency may adopt a “Negative Declaration” indicating that the project will have no significant environmental effect. It may also opt for a “Mitigated Negative Declaration” which recognizes an environmental issue for which measures are proposed to lessen its adverse impact.
- If the administrative record before the agency contains substantial evidence that the project may have a significant effect on the environment, the agency cannot adopt a negative declaration or a mitigated negative declaration; it must go on to the third stage in the CEQA process, preparation and consideration of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR).

Beginning with the application, the county project planner works with the applicant to address CEQA criteria. The project planner helps the applicant resolve problems and avoid roadblocks which may occur with the completion of the Environmental Initial Study (EIS). The Initial Study Checklist rates a project as to whether it may have potentially significant environmental effects, negative impact with mitigation, or little or no environmental impact.

Each Initial Study Checklist indicates environmental impact in the following areas:

- **Aesthetics** e.g. scenic adverse effects, visual quality of the site, light or glare effecting day or nighttime views.
- **Agriculture Resources** e.g. loss of prime farmland, zoning conflicts or a Williamson Act contract, conversion of farmland to non agricultural use.
- **Air Quality** e.g. follows air quality plan, violates air quality standards, increases pollutants, or exposes sensitive receptors to pollutant concentrations and objectionable odors.
- **Biological Resources** e.g. habitat effects on specific species, riparian habitat, or designated wetlands defined by the Clean Water Act, interference with the movement of migratory fish or wildlife species or conflict with habitat conservation plans.
- **Cultural Resources** e.g. adverse changes in historical resource, adverse effect on archaeological or paleontological resources, disturb human remains.
- **Geology and Soils** e.g. adverse effects from faults, seismic dynamics, expansive soils, soils incapable of supporting septic systems.
- **Hazards and Hazardous Materials** e.g. transport, accident conditions causing release, site contains listed hazardous materials, airport safety zones, private airstrip hazards, interference with emergency response, wildland fires danger.
- **Hydrology and Water Quality** e.g. water quality or waste discharge requirements, ground water supply, erosion or siltation on or off site, flooding on or off site, storm water drainage pollution, flood hazard areas and exposure to risk, inundation by seiche, tsunami, or mudflow.
- **Land Use and Planning** e.g. divide a community, conflict with land use plan or policy, conflict with habitat conservation plan.
- **Mineral Resources** e.g. loss of mineral resource, loss of local mineral recovery site on a local plan.
- **Public Services** e.g. adverse impacts on fire and police protection, schools, parks or other facilities.
- **Noise** e.g. levels in excess of standards, ground borne noises or excessive vibrations, temporary or periodic increase in noise levels, airport or airstrip use noise.
- **Population and Housing** e.g. substantial population growth, displace large numbers of existing housing or substantial numbers of people.
- **Recreation** e.g. negative effect of increase use of parks, construction or expansion of parks or facilities with negative effects on surroundings.
- **Transportation/Traffic** e.g. congestion on roads, exceed level of road service standard, increase traffic hazards, negative changes in air traffic patterns, emergency access, adequate parking capacity, conflict with alternative transportation e.g. bus turn outs, bike racks.
- **Utilities and Service Systems** e.g. wastewater treatment, requires expansion of existing water and waste water facilities, requires new storm drain construction, sufficient water supplies, solid waste disposal and regulations.
- **Mandatory Findings of Significance** e.g. potential for degrading environment, effect fish or wildlife habitat and species, endangered plants, cumulative effects, adverse environmental effects on human beings.

The planning department determines the need for an EIR after the CEQA compliant Initial Study is completed. The EIR is an in-depth investigation and evaluation of current or future negative consequences to the health or sustainability of the physical environment that may result from proposed development projects. The EIR is developed by the lead agency or by an expert in the relevant field of

environmental science. Shasta County EIR regulations are in alignment with mandated Federal and State environmental protection statutes. The cost of producing an EIR is the financial responsibility of the developer of the proposed project.

Before an agency adopts either a Negative Declaration or a Mitigated Negative Declaration, it must give public notice of its intent to do so. It must make the proposed ND/MND available to the public and to certain other interested public agencies for a specified period of review and comment. CEQA requires that reasonable comments or concerns by citizens be considered in determining whether to adopt a negative declaration. At the end of the planning process, after a developer and the Planning Division have prepared the Environmental Initial Study public notice is provided. In the “legal notices section” of a newspaper, notice is given 20 days prior to Planning Commission’s public hearing on the ND/MND determination. Written notice is given to landowners within 300 feet of a proposed project. If there is a “fair or reasonable argument” contesting the findings, CEQA compels further study or an EIR.

After working with an applicant, sometimes up to four or five years with time extensions, the Planning Division determines whether the project conforms to the county General Plan and may or may not recommend approval. The Shasta County Planning Commission generally follows the recommendation of the Planning Division. The Board of Supervisors makes the final determination and may even approve a project which is likely to result in significant environmental effects in cases where they determine that the value of the project to the public outweighs the environmental impact (as with a hospital in a wetland area). However, County Board of Supervisor project decisions may be challenged in court by an individual or groups with the financial resources to pursue this avenue.

<b>Findings and Recommendations</b>	<b>Shasta County Board of Supervisors</b>
<p><b>Findings #1:</b> The Shasta County Resource Management Department has a lengthy, thorough and orderly process for the evaluation of proposed projects which relies on much scientific evidence. Although we found no apparent political bias, it must be recognized that ultimately planning decisions are a part of the political process since the Board of Supervisors holds the final decision-making authority.</p>	<p>No response required</p>
<p><b>Finding #2:</b> Based on information provided in interviews, the Grand Jury found that planners occasionally vary in their application of Environment Initial Study checklists. The variance is due in part to the subjective nature of some of the initial study categories (such as Aesthetics or Cultural Resources). Most items on the checklist tend to be very complex, and there are few definitive standards for determining significant impact. Planning agencies attempt to maintain consistency in subjective evaluations.</p>	<p>No response required</p>
<p><b>Finding #3:</b> Few development projects in Shasta County are</p>	<p>No response required</p>

<p>required to have a completed Environmental Impact Report. To some citizens this lack of an EIR requirement is an indication that the developers “always get what they want” and that little regulation actually takes place. To others, this lack indicates that the planning process works well, since most of the undesirable aspects of a proposed project are removed or lessened during the interaction between the planner and the developer, eliminating the need for an EIR.</p>	
<p><b>Finding #4:</b>  CEQA requires that “fair arguments” or concerns of citizens be considered in determining whether to adopt a negative declaration or mitigated negative declaration on a project. According to interviewees, the CEQA requirements which include written notification of property owners within 300 feet and the publishing of public notice in local newspapers 20 days prior to the Planning Commission hearing may not allow enough time and opportunity for citizens and interested public groups to study and comment on project proposals. Since most of the unincorporated area of the county is rural and often sparsely populated, the written notification often does not reach all of those who may be affected by a housing project in their area. And since a “fair argument” may require additional scientific study, the minimum time period might not be sufficient.</p>	<p>No response required</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 1:</b>  In order to improve consistency in the application of environmental standards the county should improve training for Planning Division staff on CEQA requirements and the EIS process.</p>	<p>The Board of Supervisors concurs with the recommendation and finds that the Department of Resource Management strives to achieve consistency in the application of environmental evaluation and mitigation standards for projects. Each initial study is reviewed by senior staff and the Assistant Director prior to publication to ensure that the analysis is thorough and scientifically sound, and that recommended mitigation measures are reasonable, feasible and consistent with measures applied to other projects with similar environmental effects. The Department has and will continue to provide training for planning staff, as the budget allows and as land use and environmental law evolves. Division Management will continue to monitor initial studies and final environmental documents for consistency.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 2:</b>  Due to the rural nature of much of Shasta County, the Planning Division and the Planning Commission should provide a lengthier and more</p>	<p>The Board of Supervisors partially disagrees with this recommendation as the Planning Division and Planning Commission must adhere</p>

<p>extensive notification process for public review and comment on Negative Declarations and Mitigated Negative Declarations and Environmental Impact Report determinations. The Planning Division and Planning Commission should extend the time allowed for response. They should also extend the geographic area of notification depending on the population density. An extended review process would allow concerned citizens adequate time to respond to proposed planning recommendations.</p>	<p>to mandated regulatory guidelines. The Board of Supervisors finds that the law requires that for most projects subject to public hearing, the approving agency must notify property owners within 300 feet of the project site by direct mail, and publish a brief public notice in the newspaper. The Planning Division may under certain circumstances, extend the boundary of the direct mail notice to properties beyond the 300-foot requirement (for example, to include properties along a proposed access road). The Division will give additional consideration to expanding the geographic area of notification for projects in the more rural portions of the unincorporated county. With regard to the time allotted for public review, the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the Permit Streamlining Act prescribe specific minimum and maximum time frames for project review, public comment and action by the approving agency. The lead agency must carefully balance the need for informed public participation with the requirement that projects be processed within the time limits established by law.</p>
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**Method of Inquiry:**

The Grand Jury interviewed:

- Citizen Complainant
- Shasta County Department of Resource Management Director
- Shasta County Department of Resource Management Assistant Director
- Shasta County Environmental Health Division Director
- City of Anderson Planning Director
- Shasta County Planning Commissioner
- Shasta County Planning Division Planner
- City of Shasta Lake Project Manager
- Independent Hydrologists
- Attorney-at-Law with knowledge of the CEQA process

The Grand Jury reviewed the following:

- Residential Subdivision Environmental Study Initial Study Checklists
- Hydrology Studies
- Correspondence to the Planning Commission and Department of Resource Management
- Well Surveys
- Well logs
- Planning Commission Minutes
- Legal briefs

- Title 14 California Code of Regulations, Chapter 3, (Guidelines for Implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act, 15064.7)
- <http://www.co.shasta.ca.us/departments/resourcegmt/drm/>
- Various CEQA and related searches on the Internet

The Grand Jury visited:

- Planning Division Office

## Shasta County Office of the Sheriff

### *Shasta County Sheriff's Boating Unit*

Shasta County Office of the Sheriff  
1525 Court Street  
Redding, CA 96001  
(530) 245-6075

#### Summary:

Locals and tourists alike enjoy North State waterways and, with over 400 miles of continual shoreline, Shasta Lake is one of the most popular lakes in the State of California for recreational boating, fishing, camping and swimming. Shasta County hosts more than 200,000 visitors who recreate on its lakes, rivers and reservoirs during the tourist season between May and September.

These visitors bring money into the local area. The U.S. Forest Service reports regarding overall activity on Shasta Lake for the year 2006 show that:

- federal campgrounds brought in roughly \$725,000
- marinas earned \$36 million
- the largest 25 fishing tournaments grossed fee receipts of \$428,760.

As the responsible agency, the U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Reclamation, delegates law enforcement on certain lakes and reservoirs to the Shasta County Sheriff's Office. The Shasta Trinity National Forest Unit of the U.S. Forest Service is responsible for law enforcement on federal lands surrounding the area's lakes. The National Park Service enforces the law, including boating safety, throughout the Whiskeytown Lake Recreational Area.

The Shasta County Sheriff's Boating Safety Unit is responsible for eight waterways: Shasta Lake, McCloud Reservoir, Lake Britton, Big Lake, Pit River, Fall River, Keswick Reservoir, and 28 miles of navigable water on the Sacramento River. The boating unit staff consists of a full-time sergeant, three full-time deputies, and 20 seasonal/extra help limited duty officers. These officers receive specialized training and education in boat handling and maritime laws. They are responsible for law enforcement on these waterways with the assistance of the Coast Guard Auxiliary and citizen volunteers. Shasta County has the only full-time boating mechanic in California who is a deputy sheriff working on law enforcement boats. This mechanic also provides emergency assistance to private boats. The boating season is in full-swing beginning in May and extends through the month of September.

The large number of visitors to Shasta County contributes to the dangers inherent in water recreation. Boating accidents include, but are not limited to, passengers falling overboard or being hit by motors/propellers, boats colliding with other vessels or underwater obstacles, and swamping/flooding.

- Six out of 330 accidents between the years of 2000 through 2006 were the result of operators or victims found to be “under the influence.”
- 12 deaths occurred during the years 2005, 2006 and 2007 on Shasta County waterways. Six deaths were at Shasta Lake (one death was attributed to suicide).

The Boating Safety Unit’s primary emphasis is to educate the public on boating safety and waterway laws. The unit stresses personal accountability and respect for safety around water environments. Public education on boating safety awareness begins with students in the local high schools and also in Oregon colleges, who rent houseboats beginning in May. Special consideration is given to reducing “boating under the influence” violations. The unit also educates swimmers and tubers who must understand the waterway laws and who must remain within 100 feet of the shoreline to reduce the probability of being hit by watercraft. Unit personnel believe strongly that their educational programs have had a positive impact in recent years.

Being a member of the Boating Safety Unit is a coveted position within the sheriff’s office. As one interviewed officer stated, “Who can complain? Riding around in a boat all day—enjoying the outdoors. Most of the time, it’s a pleasure going to work in the morning. Weather elements and out-of-control boaters sometimes hamper things, but all in all, it’s great.”

The construction on the Cypress Street Bridge in Redding has imposed a new responsibility on the Boating Safety Unit to enforce the closure restrictions required during the construction. Since fishing on the Sacramento River is a yearlong activity for recreational fishermen as well as professional fishing guides, the closure of the river to boating at the Cypress Bridge most likely will impact the income derived from river recreation. These restrictions demonstrate the ongoing conflict between water safety enforcement, public use and income for the community.

The unit provides public service announcements for local media on boating safety beginning in April before the start of the busy season. Brochures and pamphlets are available at most boat dealerships, marinas and area resorts. The public can obtain assistance from the Shasta County Sheriff’s Boating Safety Unit at 530-245-6075.

The Grand Jury noted that Shasta County Boating Safety Unit is maintaining safety on our waterways. It is vigilant in its efforts to reduce accidents, injuries and deaths. The Sheriff’s Office provided the following information:

- More than 1,338 citations were written for boating violations in fiscal year 2005/2006
- More than 19,346 verbal and written warnings were issued in fiscal year 2005/2006

**Findings:**

1. While no methodology exists to track the actual economic benefits derived from tourist spending, that amount is considered to be substantial during the months from May through September.

**Recommendation:**

None

## **Method of Inquiry**

The Grand Jury interviewed:

- Shasta County Sheriff-Coroner
- Shasta County Sheriff Lieutenant
- Shasta County Sheriff Sergeant

The Grand Jury reviewed the following documents:

- Response from Forest Accomplishment Report, Shasta-Trinity National Forest 2006
  - Shasta County Grand Jury Information Request Response from National Recreation Area – Shasta Unit Shasta-Trinity National Forest
  - Fiscal Year 2007 Salary Paid to Forest Service Employees within Shasta County
  - Examples of Fee Demo/REA Projects that Support Tourism, National Recreation Area – Shasta Unit (1999-2007)
  - NVUM Round 1 Output, Forest-Level Visitation and Confidence Interviews
  - Forest Service Boating Unit Memorandum
  - Three Shasta County Sheriff Memoranda
    - One Shasta County Sheriff Boating Safety Unit Fact Sheet (undated)
    - Interdepartmental memorandum RE: MADD proposal (undated)
    - Boating Safety Unit Memorandum Fact Sheet: Deaths for 2005-2007 All Waterways (undated)
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**2007-2008 Shasta County Grand Jury Report**  
**Report submitted to the agency on: July 7, 2008**

## **Burney Fire Protection District**

*“It’s a tough job but someone has to do it”*

Burney Fire Protection District 37072 Main Street Burney, CA. 96013-4126
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“We’re in a good deal of pain up here,” admitted the chairman of the Burney Fire Protection District (BFPD) Board during the September 19, 2007, board meeting as her eyes looked out steadily into the audience. The faces and postures of other board members reflected the feeling. What did she mean and why did these capable, well-intentioned people feel pain? This report summarizes the setting and events leading up to the board meeting.

**Summary:**

The Burney Fire Protection District was formed in 1939 to provide fire and ambulance services. In 1998 the irregularly shaped district annexed about 7,000 acres so that it now serves almost 23,000 acres or about 35-square miles. An estimated 4,000 residences and 100 commercial establishments lie within the district, and BFPD provides ambulance service outside of the district boundaries to an area of nearly 1,600 square miles. This is a sparsely populated area that would have limited ambulance service were it not for Burney’s informal agreement to provide it. Burney refers to this agreement as its “good neighbor policy.” The Burney District charges fees for ambulance services, but the fees collected do not, and probably never will, meet expenses. It is not fully reimbursed by the county or other agencies for ambulance calls.

In 2006 BFPD board members were satisfied with the present financial situation of their district but very concerned about population growth and the impact of that growth on the district’s financial future. For years the Burney area population changed little. However, the BFPD board believed that significant increases were now imminent. Three new subdivisions were planned, and at least two others were being actively discussed. Board members believed they needed to plan for the population growth and its attendant increase in costs for both their fire and ambulance services. Because most of the newcomers were expected to be retirees, the demand for the ambulance service would increase, adding a considerable financial burden for the district due to the discrepancy between costs and reimbursements.

The board began planning for the future by investigating funding possibilities. The BFPD board chairperson attended a seminar sponsored by the California Special Districts Alliance and presented by MuniFinancial, a for-profit corporation with expertise in forming Mello-Roos Community Facilities Districts (CFD). The Mello-Roos Community Facilities Act of 1982 was created to establish community facilities districts as an alternative means for local public agencies to finance needed improvements and services through assessments paid annually by property owners within the district. The need for Mello-Roos districts resulted from the enactment of Proposition 13, which limited the ability of local government to increase property taxes based on assessed value.

The chairperson left the seminar convinced that Burney should form a Mello-Roos Community Facilities District (CFD) to provide the funding required to meet the additional salary expenses expected as the

ambulance district began serving the anticipated larger and older population. She believed that formation of the Mello-Roos CFD was the optimal funding source available to mitigate the anticipated costs. Her belief was based on the California Attorney General's rendered opinion that fire districts could not levy impact fees and that impact fees could be used only for infrastructure, not for salaries.

The chairperson also explained to the board that fees collected under the Mello-Roos CFD would affect only new property owners of the community, those who would need the additional services to be provided in the future. The new fees would not affect the board's constituents, those who already owned developed property within the BFPD.

The board agreed with its chairperson, and in November 2006 a Mello-Roos CFD was formed with two parcels of land owned by real estate developers. Both developers voted to join the Mello-Roos and to waive right to public notice. It is significant that this CFD differed from the "classic" Mello-Roos CFD. Its formation did not give the district authority to raise bonds. It was formed within the existing boundaries of the Burney FPD, and it provided that only new developments within the Burney CFD must be annexed into the Mello-Roos Communities Facilities District. A map of the BFPD would reveal the community facilities district as non-contiguous properties. Eventually the map would look like the surface of Swiss cheese, the holes representing the CFD.

The BFPD did not discuss the formation of a Mello-Roos CFD with the Shasta County Resource Department or the County Planning Department prior to its formation. After its formation, the BFPD fire chief forwarded two plot plans to the Planning Department for approval. The BFPD stipulated on the plot plans the condition that the parcels must be a part of the Mello-Roos CFD.

Unfortunately, just before the Shasta County Resource Department received the plans, it had been devastated by the loss of one of its most capable and experienced personnel. In addition, the department was both understaffed and staffed by many relatively inexperienced people. Because of these unusual circumstances within the department, the plot plans were mistakenly approved, even though they contained what the planning department considered an important procedural irregularity: the stipulation that approval was conditioned by being within the Mello-Roos CFD.

Soon, a "perfect storm" developed, and a myriad of problems surrounding the newly formed Mello-Roos District began appearing. In attempting to annex a third parcel of land into the CDF, the Burney fire chief submitted yet another plot plan, again with the Mello-Roos stipulation, to the Shasta County Resource Planning Department. This time the department spotted the plot plan irregularities. The BFPD then submitted yet another plot plan with a procedural irregularity: a garage addition to a previously approved house plan. According to MuniFinancial, the garage addition plan required annexation to the CFD.

The County Resource-Planning Department denied approval of these plans. At about this time a fourth developer's attorney contacted the Burney Fire Protection fire chief and its attorney, objecting to the required annexation into the CFD. The developer's attorney claimed that the CFD had been illegally formed. Meanwhile a "buzz" about the "illegal" Mello-Roos CFD and attendant undesirable consequences to developers and landowners spread throughout Burney and the real estate community. Suspicions and talk about the board's allegedly unlawful and inappropriate actions increased.

In June 2007 the BFPD board, in an attempt to answer questions about the Mello-Roos CFD and to respond to complaints about their actions, had MuniFinancial attend its board meeting to present a "workshop" on the Mello-Roos CFD. MuniFinancial also published a written response to specific concerns that had been voiced. The meeting was poorly attended.

In July 2007 the Grand Jury received three formal complaints. The concerns discussed in the complaints

included:

- The district was formed without public knowledge in violation of provisions in the Brown Act requiring prior notification to the public.
- The Burney Fire Protection District Board didn't complete the California Environmental Quality Act requirements prior to establishing the Mello-Roos fee structure.
- The BFPD now requires new developments to annex into the CFD.
- The BFPD wanted the new CFD to fund a new firehouse.
- The Mello-Roos election was illegal because of disputed legitimacy of property owner authorization

Then in July 2007 the BFPD fire chief resigned, an interim chief was hired and recruiting for a new permanent chief began. In September the board hired an attorney to discuss with the county resource planning department the need for plot plan approvals. The attorney was tasked with trying to reach an agreement with the county allowing the use of the present Mello-Roos CFD. He was also tasked with researching possibilities for levying impact fees as an alternative to the Mello-Roos tax. The Burney board was reluctant to do away with the CFD and to levy impact fees on developers, because this action requires a study to determine the amount of the fees. The original study and the report used to establish the Mello-Roos CFD cost \$20,000. It is estimated that a new study will cost the district a similar amount. It should be noted that the Burney board doubts that the county can legally prevent a Mello-Roos tax. These were the actions and the developments leading to the pain expressed by the BFPD board chairperson.

As of the writing of this report, the County Planning Department has approved the plot plans which no longer specify a funding mechanism.

<b>Findings and Recommendations</b>	<b>BFPD Board of Directors' Response</b>
<p><b>Findings #1:</b> We have found no evidence of illegalities in the formation by the BFPD of a Mello-Roos CFD. It appears that in forming the CFD the Board was conscientiously planning ahead to fund anticipated expenses before they were incurred. However, they did not adequately explore viable alternative funding sources to mitigate these expenses.</p>	<p>Burney Fire Protection District (BFPD) did considerable research prior to determining that the Mello Roos was the most viable method of funding for future growth.</p>
<p><b>Finding #2:</b> The board exercised questionable judgment in choosing a Mello-Roos CFD as the funding source. As constituted, the Burney Mello-Roos CFD is not the usual or "classic" CFD. Alternative options for funding were available and probably would have been less open to criticism. Despite the California Attorney General's opinion, other local fire districts have used impact fees to fund new costs incurred in those districts.</p>	<p>The Attorney General for the State of California has a published opinion that Fire Districts in the State of California are not allowed to collect development impact fees for funding future growth. The Board was fully informed regarding the opinion from the Attorney General's published opinion.</p>
<p><b>Finding #3:</b></p>	

<p>The MuniFinancial cost estimates for “providing services created by new development within various areas of the district” are incomplete. The estimates do not present a comprehensive methodology based on history and concrete detailed facts. Consequently, the justification of the funding required to mitigate the cost of the services is unclear and lacks credibility.</p>	<p>Muni Financial provided us with the methodology for the collection of the annual fee for the Community Facilities District (CFD).</p>
<p><b>Finding #4:</b> The board did not discuss with the Shasta County Planning Department the growth projections, associated costs, or need for mitigating fees. If they had done so, it is likely that an alternative funding mechanism may have been suggested.</p>	<p>Burney Fire Protection District is an Independent Fire District. The District is working to establish a working relationship with Shasta County Planning.</p>
<p><b>Finding #5:</b> Not until they received many complaints did the board make adequate efforts to communicate the potential impact, associated costs, or possible funding sources. They then held a poorly attended session to explain and discuss the Mello-Roos CFD.</p>	<p>In the formation of the CFD, all public meetings were published in the local newspapers as required by law and follow-up articles were published by all the local newspapers.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation #1:</b> Explore the feasibility of alternative funding mechanisms, such as impact fees, with legal counsel and the Shasta County Planning Department.</p>	<p>Burney Fire Protection District is working with legal counsel and the Shasta County Planning Department to determine funding mechanisms.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation #2:</b> Determine more accurately projected costs and the consequent fees needed to mitigate those costs.</p>	<p>Projected costs must be determined by a consultant who specializes in the analysis of funding costs for Special Districts.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation #3:</b> Communicate clearly to the community the rationale behind the Mello-Roos CFD and the results of this unhappy effort. Communicate the projected costs of new development and the options available to meet those costs.</p>	<p>Burney Fire Protection District has declared a retroactive moratorium on the Mello Roos as alternative funding mechanisms are identified.</p>

**Method of Inquiry:**

The Grand Jury interviewed the following:

- Two members of the Board of Directors, BFPD
- Interim Fire Chief, BFPD
- Director, Shasta County Department of Resource Management.
- An Assistant Shasta County Counsel
- A complainant
- Executive Officer, Local Agency Formation Commission of Shasta County (LAFCO)
- Two MuniFinancial employees

The Grand Jury attended a BFPD Board meeting.

The Grand Jury examined the following:

June 2007 BFPD Municipal Services Review submitted to LAFCO

BFPD Board Meeting minutes November 29, 2006 and October 18, 2006

BFPD Resolutions 2006-15-16-17

Correspondence applicable to the issues discussed.

**2007-2008 Shasta County Grand Jury Report  
Report submitted to the agency on: July 7, 2008**

## Cottonwood Union School District

Cottonwood Union School District 20512 First Street Cottonwood, CA 96022 (530) 347-3136
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### *Suspicion and Distrust*

**Summary:**

The newly strained relationship between the Cottonwood Union School District and the Cottonwood Teachers Association has been the local buzz and the subject of several Letters to the Editors of the Record Searchlight. The difficulty surfaced at a July 2006 meeting between the district and the Teachers Association over the interpretation and application of language providing for salary increases during the second year of the two-year (2005-06, 2006-07) signed labor contract. Since then, disagreements and distrust have escalated, and positions have solidified as each side has attempted to demonstrate the correctness of its position. For the first time in the district's history, the Teachers Association has taken its case to the Public Employee Relations Board, charging unfair practices against the school district's superintendent and board of trustees.

In January 2007 the Grand Jury received complaints from members of the Cottonwood School District community. Some complaints were not investigated because they related to issues in litigation and personnel issues that are outside the purview of the Grand Jury. One complaint, however, stated that district staff had changed the date of a board meeting in June 2006 without proper notification to the public, thus not giving teachers and the public adequate access to the meeting. The district's budget and a somewhat controversial \$1 million lease were on the agenda and approved at that meeting.

Another complaint stated that the district refused to give, in a timely manner, a copy of the superintendent's employment contract to the lead negotiator of the Teachers Association, thus violating the California Public Records Act.

**Commendations:**

The Grand Jury commends both the teachers of the Cottonwood Union School District, who have not allowed the atmosphere of suspicion and distrust to affect the high quality of their teaching, and the district administration, for acknowledging that this is the case.

Findings and Recommendations	Board of Trustees Cottonwood Union Elementary School District
<b>Findings #1:</b> The district's monthly board meeting for June 2006 was changed from Tuesday, June 20, (the regularly scheduled third Tuesday of the month) to Wednesday, June 21, because the board was not going to have a quorum for June 20. The agenda	No response required.

<p>for the June 20 meeting was posted as usual on the door windows of the district office and on the main entrances to the Cottonwood schools on Friday, June 16. The same agenda, but with the meeting date changed to June 21, was reposted in the same places by no later than Tuesday, June 20.</p> <p>According to the Brown Act, while regular meetings require a 72-hour notice, special meetings require only 24-hour notice. Any meeting held at a time different from the time set for regular meetings is a special meeting. In this case, at least 24 hours notice was given of the June 21 special meeting. For this reason, the Grand Jury found no violation of the Brown Act.</p>	
<p><b>Finding #2:</b>  The second complaint dates back to July of 2007. In order to clear up rumors about the amount of the superintendent’s recent pay raise, the lead negotiator of the Teacher’s Association sent an e-mail on July 24 to the district office business manager asking, “What is the status of the superintendent’s 2007-2008 contract?” The lead negotiator did not receive an answer to this query, despite three follow up e-mails, until October 3, when she was informed by the District’s business manager that the contract was “under review” and thus unavailable.</p> <p>At a regularly scheduled board meeting on October 23, 2007, the District’s board by unanimous vote, “extended the contract of Superintendent Hansen through the 2008-2009 school year. An increase in compensation will be determined at a later date.” The superintendent and three of the members of the school board signed the contract. No copy of the contract was given to the lead negotiator and no explanation was given for the fact that two board members did not sign the contract.</p> <p>On November 20, 2007, at its regular meeting the board unanimously voted “to grant a 5.5 percent salary increase for the 2006-2007 year and a 3.2 percent salary increase for the 2007-2008 year to all...district administrators...”</p> <p>On December 1, 2007, the lead negotiator, citing the authority of the Public Records Act, requested from the Business Manager, “a copy of the original and complete 2007-2009 Superintendent’s</p>	<p>No response required.</p>

<p>Contract.” She stated, “If the contract is not signed, an unsigned copy will be satisfactory until the signed contract is available.” She received no reply to this written request. On December 13, the lead negotiator followed up on her request with e-mail to the Business Manager who replied by e-mail 15 minutes later, “I do not have a copy of the superintendent’s contract.”</p> <p>On January 22, 2008, the district finally gave a copy of the signed 2007-2009 contract and an addendum to the lead negotiator, who noted that the contract contained “no new or surprising information.”</p> <p>The Grand Jury finds that the district violated the Public Records Act when it failed to make the contract available for inspection and copying in December 2007. As of October 23, 2007, when the superintendent’s contract was voted on and accepted, it became a public record and the district was obligated to make it promptly available for inspection and copying upon request. It should be noted that governing boards act by quorum. The contract between the superintendent and the district board became effective, at the latest, when at least three members (a quorum) of the board voted on it. Signing the document was only ministerial because the board had voted already to accept all of its terms. The signatures of the other two board members were not relevant as to whether the document was a public record or relevant as to when the contract became enforceable as between the parties. Once a quorum signed it, the contract was effective.</p>	
<p><b>Recommendation #1:</b> Cottonwood Union School District staff should respond promptly to requests for records, as mandated by the California Public Records Act. The district should make sure that district staff is trained on the requirements of the act.</p>	<p>We have reviewed the Grand Jury recommendations and have scheduled Public Records Act training through the Shasta County Office of Education. All district staff will attend this training this fall.</p>

**Method of Inquiry:**

The Grand Jury interviewed:

- A complainant
- The Cottonwood Union School District Superintendent
- The Cottonwood Union School District Business Manager
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The Grand Jury reviewed:

- Cottonwood Union School District Agendas and Minutes for March 2006 through September 2006
- Copies of e-mails exchanged between the Cottonwood Teachers Association lead negotiator and the Cottonwood Union School District Business Manager.

The Grand Jury visited:

- The Cottonwood Union School District Business Office

*And . . .*

***Don't Just Gripe, - - -  
Get Involved***

Have you ever griped about local government – really vented your indignation to a friend and then later exhaled and vigorously shook your head in a feeling of helplessness because nothing happened? Many of us have.

There is a much more helpful and satisfying way of responding than griping. Get involved in a process of investigating and problem solving with the Shasta County Grand Jury. The Grand Jury functions as an arm of the Judicial Branch of the government and at the local level operates independently under the guidance of the presiding judge of the Superior Court of Shasta County. The Grand Jury offers you two possibilities: filing out a confidential complaint or serving. We, the members of the currently empanelled Grand Jury, strongly encourage you to get involved.

First, let's look at the complaint process. The Grand Jury has the authority to investigate local government. Noticing problems with city or county government agencies or special districts is part of being an informed, concerned citizen. Writing a letter to the Grand Jury or filling out a complaint form is a significant extension of that concern. Doing so means that you are responsible enough to write out your observations, explain the problem, sign the complaint and mail it. Either a letter or a complaint form will get you a response from the Grand Jury.

You should know that the Grand Jury exercises discretion with complaints. That is, your complaint will always be acknowledged and will remain confidential, but is investigated only when 12 of the 19 members believe it is warranted and falls within the purview of the Grand Jury's duty to investigate the operations of local government.

Second, let's consider the process of becoming involved in serving on the Grand Jury.

Serving is both demanding and rewarding. You volunteer by filling out a form that you can obtain from the website ([www.co.shasta.ca.us](http://www.co.shasta.ca.us)). The website also lists the qualifications needed to sit on the jury. During the month of May applications are accepted, and in June interviews are conducted. The new jury is sworn in during the first part of July. You must be willing to commit to a minimum of 20 hours a week for a full year if you are selected to serve.

How do Grand Jury members spend their time? Initially, jurors participate in training to learn about their new responsibilities and skills, including interviewing and report writing. Each juror works on one or more committees: Cities, County, Criminal Justice, and Local Districts and Agencies. Committees meet to recommend what issues the Grand Jury investigates.

Investigations involve interviewing local government officials, obtaining and carefully reviewing documents related to the investigation and discussing different juror perspectives. From this process

we draw conclusions, make recommendations and, finally, write and edit a final report. Serving on the Grand Jury is a lot of work, but it's a satisfying learning process. It's a chance to make new friends and feel good about our small part in the oversight of our local government.

But, you might ask, "Does the Grand Jury process do any good?" We think so. It has vindicated officials who were maligned for illegalities and improprieties but who, in fact, only made honest mistakes. In some cases, it has helped to bring about needed changes in local government.

For a complaint form you can contact the Shasta County Grand Jury at P.O. Box 992086, Redding, CA 96099, call 530-225-5098 or go to the website at [www.co.shasta.ca.us](http://www.co.shasta.ca.us). The Record Searchlight now repeats this information every Sunday in its Contact Your Lawmakers section of the paper. If you would like to volunteer for Grand Jury service, you can obtain an application from the website or by calling the Superior Court at 530-245-6761.

*From the members of the 2007/2008 Shasta County Grand Jury*

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## **Crystal Creek Regional Boys Camp**

The Shasta County Grand Jury made its annual tour of the Crystal Creek Regional Boys Camp on November 7, 2007. The facility, located near French Gulch, is operated by the Shasta County Probation Department and funded by Shasta County and the Regional Council of Rural Counties. The camp provides a five-phase behavior modification program for juvenile offenders 13 to 18 years old, from 14 different counties. Offenders, called cadets, serve sentences from two to five months.

Camp personnel said that nearly 70 percent of the cadets who complete their sentences never return to the juvenile justice system. Cadets attend school in a well-structured environment with emphasis on character development. Counseling is available for alcohol and drug issues, anger management, domestic violence and gang awareness. Other programs include training in parenting skills, leadership, job and life skills, and a Regional Occupational Program for culinary arts. Camp staff estimates that 60 percent of the cadets have drug-related offenses, 50 percent come from single-parent homes and 60 percent have gang affiliations.

Cadets not only attend class but also can acquire skills and a work ethic by performing community services with private, government and community organizations, such as Turtle Bay, Habitat for Humanity and the Redding Rodeo.

A nurse is on site for medical needs. There is a dental care program; however, it is limited to extractions only due to financial constraints. The Grand Jury suggested that the staff investigate the possibility of accessing the Shasta Community Health Center's Hope Van's dental program.

The Crystal Creek Regional Boys Camp provides a constructive and positive way of helping young men get their lives back on the right track.

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# SHASCOM

## *Help at Our Fingertips*

Whether witnessing an automotive collision, feeling panic because of an out-of-control kitchen fire, or walking into a home that has been burglarized, one gets a sense of security in dialing **911**. Rarely is the caller aware of the expertise available at the other end of the line. The people of Shasta County are fortunate to have a state-of-the-art emergency dispatch facility at their beck and call.

On August 6, 2007, the Grand Jury visited Shasta Area Safety Communications Agency (SHASCOM) facility, where **911** staff and equipment are located. We met with SHASCOM administrators and the Shasta County Sheriff and his command staff for an orientation of the facility and a tour.

Thirty-two dispatchers and five supervisors work various eight-hour and 12-hour shifts. Dispatchers receive 18 months of training to learn to handle the volume of emergency calls for:

- Crime: Redding City Police and Shasta County Sheriff
- Traffic: California Highway Patrol
- Medical and ambulance service
- Fire

In 2006, the annual call volume was 294,494.

Thanks to its resourcefulness and tenacity, SHASCOM has found funding for state-of-the-art mobile equipment that allows it to dispatch from the site of a major incident. Currently SHASCOM is improving its capability to determine the location of callers using cell phones, and is increasing the coverage of **Reverse 911**, the system for notifying people in a large area in case of emergency.

In the summer of 2007 the SHASCOM team was an integral part of the Operation Alesia, the interagency effort to eradicate marijuana gardens in Shasta County. Dispatchers worked long shifts to provide communication support for the law enforcement teams working in the field.

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## **Shasta County Jail**

The Shasta County Grand Jury toured the Shasta County Jail on September 4, 2007, and found that it is operating as mandated by Title 15 of the California Code of Regulations.

The high security facility, built in 1984, is clean, organized and well run. Although the jail was designed on a pod system to protect the staff by minimizing contact with inmates, procedures have evolved throughout the years, and currently the staff uses a more personal approach when interacting with inmates. The jail commander reported that this approach has reduced the number of conflicts between inmates themselves and with staff.

The jail is filled consistently to near capacity of 381 inmates. Each pod or ward holds 32 inmates, two to a cell. Several single cells, called safety cells, are set-aside for inmates experiencing difficulty adjusting to life in a closed society and for those who need constant monitoring. For monitoring suicidal individuals the staff is trained to use current practices and products such as suicide smocks, safety blankets and safety cells.

When the facility approaches its legal capacity, jail officials grant early release to nonviolent offenders based on the severity of their offenses and prior criminal histories; in other words, according to jail staff, “the watch commander picks the best of the worst to release early.” Some inmates are released under the home monitoring system, some to the work release program and others with no further restrictions on their freedom.

Grand Jury members interviewed five inmates. On the whole, the inmates through that everyone was treated equally. All agreed that the food was adequate though there were minor preference differences. Concerns expressed by the interviewed inmates involved blind spots in various areas of the jail, poor treatment by some guards and lack of religious materials for some groups. In response to inquiries from the Grand Jury, jail officials said that additional religious materials are made available upon request and that inmate complaints are reviewed by administrative staff.

While incarcerated, the inmates have access to a variety of services, including a program for obtaining a General Educational Development (GED) certificate, job search guidance through the Private Industry Council, spiritual guidance, and counseling from Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous. Inmates also receive two three-hour exercise periods a week, unless prevented by behavior or medical conditions.

County officials are currently considering plans for building a new, larger jail or an addition to the existing facility.

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## **Juvenile Hall Facility**

The Grand Jury toured the Shasta County Juvenile Hall on January 14, 2008. At that time there were 51 male and female juveniles in the 56-bed facility. The minors range from eight to 17 years old.

The Grand Jury toured the living quarters, school and physical fitness areas. The facility separates boys by age. Cells for boys 13 to 17 are in one wing, with younger boys sleeping in cells in the girls’ wing. A closed circuit television system allows duty officers and support personnel to observe the juveniles in public areas. A courtroom is located on the grounds, where a judge presides over juvenile court sessions.

Within the first 96 hours after arriving at the facility a health and medical history is completed on each minor. A registered nurse is on duty five days a week, and a physician is there one day a week or more. A nurse practitioner and psychiatrist also provide services when needed. When the nurse is off duty, the custody staff fields minor medical complaints, while medical staff is available on call for more serious problems.

Budget constraints limit dental care to emergency extractions by a local dentist who is under contract. For a wider range of care the Grand Jury suggested that the staff explore the feasibility of having the Shasta Community Health Center’s Hope Van’s dental program visit the facility.

The duration of stay at the facility depends upon the severity of the juvenile's infraction. Presently the average stay is about 20 days. The juveniles sentenced to the facility and waiting sentencing attend year round school. They also have access to a soccer field, basketball court, television and reading room.

Although the facility is old and undersized, the Grand Jury was impressed with the quality of supervision provided by the staff.

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## **Special Districts in Shasta County**

### ***We Asked, They Answered***

When we think of government, most of us in Shasta County think of federal, state, county and city administration. We tend not to think of the local districts and agencies that are an essential form of government. We take for granted the good water, fire protection, ambulance service, protection from West Nile Virus, and well-tended cemeteries they provide. For many rural residents these services would not exist without our special districts and the people who serve on the governing boards of these districts.

What are special districts? They are a form of government, governed by a board of directors with defined service boundaries established by the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO). These districts are autonomous, meaning they have no government entity above them.

A district governing board is required, like a city council or a board of supervisors, to comply with the state's government transparency laws, most notably the Brown Act, and the Public Records Act, as well as ethics laws, such as the Political Reform Act. The Brown Act outlines requirements to ensure that public policy decisions made by government bodies are undertaken in open meetings accessible to the public. The Public Records Act gives the public access to information in the possession of public agencies. In addition, elected or appointed district governing board members are obligated to take two hours of training on ethical principals and laws every two years, if those officials are entitled to compensation for their services as board members, or are reimbursed for their expenses.

During the years the Grand Jury has received complaints suggesting deficiencies in the governance of special districts. It appears that some board members lack sufficient knowledge and understanding of the laws governing district powers and duties, district operations, public meeting requirements and conflict-of-interest prohibitions.

We think special district board members want to do a good job serving their constituents and helping their districts to achieve their objectives. We speculated that boards make mistakes because they don't know what they don't know and may be unable to learn what they must because they lack resources to get the knowledge and training they need.

In order to find out about district needs, we sent questionnaires to the 33 Special Districts in Shasta County. We received 31 responses.

The mailing list of Shasta County Special Districts shows the diversity of services provided:

- 8 Cemetery Districts
- 10 Fire Protection Districts
- 3 Water Districts
- 1 Irrigation District
- 3 Mosquito Abatement Districts
- 6 Community Services Districts
- 2 Resource Conservation Districts

These districts also vary in the size of their populations, geographic areas and operating budgets. For example, the Clear Creek Water District has an operating budget of \$6,139,200; the small Fall River Mills Cemetery District has an annual budget of \$13, 525.

Here are the results from the Grand Jury’s questionnaires:

1. Over half of the districts (20/31) would like additional training. They requested training on (in order of frequency): the Brown Act, ethics, raising money and budgeting, board member responsibilities, and Robert’s Rules of Order. Several requested training be done locally.
2. Although most districts (24/31) say that board members know where to get training on the laws governing districts, out of the approximately 150 board members whose boards responded to our survey, 54 board members have not been trained on the Brown Act and 46 have not received state mandated ethics training. This is the situation despite the fact that any person who becomes an elected or appointed member of a governing board, is obligated to inform himself or herself of the legal obligations attendant to that public office.
3. Most districts (22/31) have not joined the California Special Districts Association (CSDA) nor have they attended the training it provides. One district stated that joining the association is too expensive.
4. A majority of boards (19/31) say they do not have trouble getting people to run for the board, despite many constituents’ lack of time and interest.
5. Members of most boards (20/31) have contacts with members of other boards, though often only because of the small size of the towns in which they live. Water district board members have most contacts because of conferences conducted by associations like the Association of California Water Agencies.
6. Many (22/31) districts will need increased revenue in the near future, most to “replace aging equipment and infrastructure.” Sixteen of these districts are concerned about how they will raise the needed money.
7. Most (18/31) of the districts are satisfied with public attendance at board meetings. However, as a rule, few people attend meetings. An interesting comment made was that “attendance is lowest when things are going smoothly.” All say they post agendas, although past Grand Jury reports show that in the past some districts have not posted them in a timely manner. Few of the districts publish newsletters (9/31). One district volunteered that information about meetings is available on its website.

## **Summary**

Some districts with large budgets and some with small budgets need increased revenues to “replace aging equipment and infrastructure.” It appears that these districts need help with learning about various options for raising these revenues. Collaborating, banding together to find and fund a training source for these options would be both possible and desirable.

As expected, districts with large operating budgets meet their training needs better than do districts with smaller budgets. Most district governing board members’ training needs can be met with information that is available to them on the Internet from the California Attorney General’s website, [www.ag.ca.gov](http://www.ag.ca.gov). The sidebar in this site titled “Government,” lists “Conflict of Interest,” “Open Meetings” (Brown Act), and “Public Records” and “Ethics Training Course, AB1234.”

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## **Shasta County Sheriff’s Work Release Facility**

The Shasta County Grand Jury toured the Shasta County Sheriff’s Work Release site at 4560 Veterans Lane, Redding on January 7, 2008, and discovered a money-saving program. Work Release is open every day from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. and closed on holidays. The program operates in conjunction with the Shasta County Probation Department Community Service Unit and the Sheriff’s Home Electronic Confinement program.

Work Release allows qualified offenders to complete their sentences while living at home, thus freeing up beds in the county jail. Some participants continue in their current employment. They all report to the Work Release facility or other work sites where they perform various public service jobs. In addition to saving the citizens the cost of providing in-custody housing for these offenders, the program provides for minimal fees (based on ability to pay) to be collected from offenders. One staff member said that the amount of money saved is significant if one were to multiply by the minimum wage the number of hours served. This savings helps support services that otherwise would be reduced by the county due to financial constraints.

At the same time, the offenders repay the community by doing public service work. Some of the services provided are road and cemetery cleanup, assisting the Redding Rodeo and growing fruits and vegetables in the seven-acre garden at the Work Release facility. The produce is used in the jail, and the surplus is donated to various nonprofit organizations for distribution to the needy. Among the other successful projects in the Work Release program are its bike repair program, which provided 408 bikes to needy members of the community during 2007, and the fabrication and placement of wreaths at the veterans’ cemetery in Igo.

For some of the participants in the program, this is the first time they have seen a positive result from their efforts.

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## **Our Visit to Sugar Pine Conservation Camp No. 9**

On January 22, 2008, the Shasta County Grand Jury toured the Sugar Pine Conservation Camp No. 9, located 25 miles east of Redding off State Highway 299 East. The facility is a joint venture between

the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Cal Fire) and the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR).

The camp opened June 24, 1988. Its primary mission is to provide inmate fire crews for fire suppression in the Shasta County area; however, crews from the camp are often called to assist fire suppression operations throughout the state, as they were last October and November in Southern California.

In addition to fire suppression, the inmate crews provide a work force in case of floods and for conservation projects and community services. While performing jobs for the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, the U.S. Forest Service, Cal-Trans, Redding Fire Department, Shasta Lake City, local schools, volunteer fire companies and other community organizations, the crews logged in 45,824 work hours in 2007.

The camp is designed to house under minimum security 120 male inmates. Most are serving the last of their sentences for alcohol- or drug-related offenses. There are six 17-member fire crews utilized for firefighting and other emergency activities under the supervision of a Cal Fire captain. Five of these crews are assigned daily to community services work projects around the county. The remaining fire crew is responsible primarily for project work performed at the camp as mechanics, welders, carpenters, maintenance workers and engravers. These inmates are given the opportunity to acquire job skills. Inmates not assigned to fire crews support the facility as clerks, cooks, porters, or utility workers but may be called to fire duty in an extreme emergency.

Inmates are selected by prison personnel for the camp, trained at a correctional center near Susanville, and then assigned to the camp. On average, inmates eligible for the camp serve the last nine months of their sentence at Sugar Pine. Selected inmates must have records free of charges for sex-related offenses, escapes, arson, or violent crimes or behaviors.

When asked about the long hours and hard work, one inmate crew member responded, "...we work hard to get here, and we work hard to stay here." Many expressed appreciation for being selected for the camp. Some commented on how often they are called upon to help, as they were for the Southern California fires. The result is a feeling of satisfaction when receiving the heartfelt thanks of the people they have helped.

The majority of the inmates receive \$1.45 per day. Skilled inmates, such as mechanics, clerks, cooks, plumbers, welders, carpenters and electricians, may earn up to \$2.56 per day. While fighting fires, inmates may earn an additional \$1 per hour. Often a portion of inmate earnings goes toward a state fund for restitution to victims of crime. When we consider the fire prevention, fire suppression, land conservation, and special community services that they provide, the inmates contribute a cost-avoidance to the taxpayers of California of about \$1.5 million per year.

During off-work hours inmates enjoy hobbies, crafts and other leisure time activities. Family members are welcome to visit during the weekends. Community volunteers provide religious services and recovery programs. One of the highlights of the year is the annual Sugar Pine Car, Bike and Truck Show. Inmates quickly learn that life in a conservation camp is preferable to life behind the walls of a prison and therefore conduct themselves accordingly.

Inmates at camp live in open dormitories with a dining hall staffed by inmate cooks and supervised by CDCR staff. The camp is sufficiently staffed by CDCR to provide around-the-clock supervision of the inmates. In addition, Cal Fire has assigned to the camp 12 crew captains, a heavy equipment

mechanic, water and sewer plant operator, an office technician, one battalion chief and one assistant chief (division chief).

The Grand Jury was impressed by the mutual respect between staff and inmates and by the operations and efficiency of Sugar Pine Conservation Camp.

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## **Your Vote Counts!**

Four Grand Jury members participated in the February 5, 2008 primary election in Shasta County. Three members served as poll workers, and one served as the Grand Jury Observer. An interview with the County Clerk/Registrar of Voters supported our observations:

### Pre-Election

- We were taken on a tour of two floors at the County Clerk/Registrar of Voters Office, completely filled with voting machines, ballot boxes, ballots, and other related voting equipment and materials.
- We participated in the poll workers' training, which included polling procedures, assembling voting booths and machines, and inspecting the seals on ballot boxes and machines. Poll workers learned procedures for reporting, repacking and returning voting materials after the election.
- We observed vote-by-mail ballot processing and counting, which begins one week prior to the election.
- We observed signature checking of mail ballots.

### Election Day

- Members of the Grand Jury either worked at or visited six polling places that covered eight precincts.
- We spoke with polling staff including poll workers, inspectors and rovers.
- We reviewed precinct voter lists and voter processing procedures.

The Grand Jury observers noted the following:

- Three locations had icy and slippery conditions at entrance approaches to the polling places.
- Polling places were organized, clean and well run.
- Electronic voting machines were available upon request and provided adaptive features to allow the visually impaired to vote.
- Electronic voting machines kept a paper record of each vote.
- Poll workers instructed voters on the proper use of paper ballots when they signed in on the registered voter precinct lists.
- Provisional ballots were available for any voter who requested a ballot and was not on the precinct list. These ballots were placed in individual pink envelopes for later validation.
- County employees designated as rovers were assigned to precincts within a certain area to resolve problems. Potential problems might include broken security seals, malfunctioning machines, or missing materials. If necessary, rovers could communicate with, or go to, the County Clerk's office.

### Post Election

Two days after the election the official canvas of the vote began. The Grand Jury participants:

- Visited the County Clerk/Registrar of Voters Office and observed county workers continuing to count vote-by-mail ballots.
- Reviewed with the assistant Registrar of Voters the ballot sampling procedures and data matrices.
- Watched the processing of remaining ballots, researching the authenticity of provisional ballots, auditing of the polls and manual sampling of one percent of all paper ballots.

#### Conclusion

The Grand Jury commends the election staff of the County Clerk/Registrar of Voters Office for the overall operation and efficiency of the February 5, 2008 election. No voting irregularities were observed.

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