



WILLIAM "TEX" DOWDY
Sheriff - Coroner

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November 9, 2024

Modoc County Grand Jury
P.O. Box 78
Alturas, CA 96101

Re: Response to the 2023-2024 Grand Jury Report

Dear Members of the Grand Jury:

My responses to the 2023-2024 Grand Jury Report are as follows.

Clarifications:

- **Capacity:** The MCJ has a maximum capacity of 43 male and female inmates. On the dates of the tours, a total of 19 inmates were in custody on December 2, 2023; 22 inmates were in custody on December 6, 2023. **The inmates are housed in segregated areas with five inmates per bedding area.** There is an additional segregated area that is undergoing repairs and remodeling. The capacity of the facility is occasionally met, but most of the time it remains under capacity.

Sheriff Clarification: The facility only has one segregation cell which can house one incarcerated person. There are three dormitories, each equipped to house eight incarcerated people, one of which is not currently being utilized as it is under repair. There is one housing unit equipped to house twelve people that has six pods and a common area. Each pod can house two people. There are three additional cells with a common area containing two pods, in which each pod can house two people.

- **Condition of the Facility:** The facility was constructed in 1978: The kitchen has been updated with a new stove, refrigerator, dishwasher and outside walk-in freezer to increase the time food can be stored and kept fresh for inmates. The walk-in freezer is located outside away from the kitchen area, adjacent to the vehicle sally port. MCJ received a Pantry/Walk-in with the 2020 COVID funds. The Kitchen is a clean area, supervised by MCJ staff. **Inmates are responsible for the planning, cooking and cleanup of each meal, which is done on a voluntary basis.** Healthy food items and

supplies are purchased from local retail and grocery stores. Some items are donated through Training Employment and Community Help (T.E.A.C.H.).

Sheriff Clarification: The inmates are not responsible for meal planning. MCJ staff follows a menu approved by a licensed dietician from Sky Lakes Medical Center.

There are two sobering cells, one padded mental health cell, and an exercise yard that has 12-foot brick walls all around but no camera with audio, and a broken phone, at time of tour. In addition, there is a small library area that is also used for group meetings, a locked maintenance area where cleaning supplies are stored, and a laundry area equipped with newer washer and dryers. Laundry and cleaning of common areas is completed by inmates under the supervision of staff on a voluntary basis.

Sheriff Clarification: The facility only has one sobering cell not two.

- **Intake:** All inmates are evaluated at time of intake process and if medical assistance is needed, inmates are transported to the emergency room at Modoc Medical Center for initial evaluation and treatment. Sobering cells are monitored by staff. Inebriated inmates are evaluated every 15 minutes until they are sober. When mental health inmates are present, after their initial evaluation at the emergency room, **mental health from Modoc Medical Center must come to the jail to reevaluate the inmate every 12 hours.** One major concern for staff is that the ability to handle mentally challenged inmates can be of concern with no dedicated mental health staff on site. Taking inmates to the emergency room requires deputies to leave their regular assignments to accompany the inmate to the hospital.

Sheriff Clarification: Mental Health services for the jail are provided by Modoc County Behavioral Health. After the initial evaluation at the emergency room is conducted by a behavioral health specialist, Modoc County Behavioral Health, is asked to come to the jail to evaluate the inmate every 12 hours if required to be placed in the safety cell.

- **Programs:** The exercise yard is available for both men and women, each inmate is allotted 10 hours a week out of their cell. More time if they elect to cook or clean. There are religious services available. A number of educational programs are also available. The small library area has some books and seating to read and study but is also used for educational and religious services. All programs are limited to space available in the library. **There is no other common area available in the jail at this time for additional programs.**

Sheriff Clarification: The visiting area of the jail is also utilized for programs, such as religious services, behavioral health groups, Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, Narcotics Anonymous meetings and T.E.A.C.H. group counseling sessions.

- **Staffing:** There are typically two to three correctional officers on duty daily. Currently only two women are on staff with the expectation of hiring additional staff. As of December 2023, **two male deputies** had been hired to work the 12-hour shifts from 12

p.m. to 12 a.m., or from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m.. However, there is a shortage of **female deputies** throughout the state, and no additional **female deputies** have been hired for the Alturas facility. At present, the two current **female deputies** are asked to be on call when they are off-duty in the event a **female deputy** is needed at the jail.

Sheriff Clarification: We hired two male correctional deputies to cover shifts as we are having no success in hiring female correctional deputies.

FINDINGS

F1. On February 21, 2017, the Modoc County Board of Supervisors approved a resolution authorizing the County to participate in the SB 844, Adult Local Criminal Justice Facilities Construction Financing Program to build a new facility in Alturas. \$24,516,000 of taxpayer funds has been set aside to build the new facility. To date, construction has been delayed. In an interview with the Modoc County Sheriff, he hopes to have the facility completed by 2028.

R1. Money was allocated to build a new jail facility in 2017, seven years ago. MCGJ recommends that all efforts be made to move the building of the new facility forward by October 2024, so that the Sheriff's efforts to have the new facility completed by 2028 will become a reality. It is recommended that the 2024-2025 MCGJ follow up with R1 to monitor the progress of the building of the new jail in Alturas, and to provide a progress report for the Board of Supervisors and County Administrative Officer for the timeline of commencement and completion of construction of the new facility.

Sheriff Response: I will continue to work closely with the County Administrator to obtain an updated jail needs assessment as it has changed significantly from when it was first completed in 2016. Additionally, the Sheriff's Office will assist the County Administrator and Board of Supervisors with advocating to revise legislation to allow for unused funds from other agencies to be reallocated to counties with active grants. The struggle currently is the inflated cost of construction and not being able to build a jail that meets our needs based on what is required by the state with our current allocation.

F2. The camera system currently being used by deputies to monitor inmates was installed in 1978. It is dated, has no audio, and does not cover all areas of the facility. Updated cameras are needed throughout the building. The current camera monitoring system is centrally located in the squad room.

R2. It is recommended that installation of more cameras with audio capabilities, including a 360-degree camera system that covers all areas of the building be installed by January 2025, for the safety of both the staff and the inmates. The Board of Supervisors are asked to include this in the 2024-2025 budget and every year forward until the new facility is built. MCJ and MCSO leadership should ensure current security systems are fully operational and upgraded to the extent possible within current budgetary constraints.

Sheriff Response: I am working on bringing a proposal for an upgraded camera system before the Board of Supervisors. I am also seeking a funding source to support the proposal. It is important to note that the system has to be compatible with our County Cyber Security Policy to prevent from being hacked by outside sources.

F3. As with any old building, the old jail has issues. Plumbing and electrical throughout the building is 50 years old and in need of being updated. Leaks and clogs create a health and safety hazard for both staff and inmates. Overhead lighting is not working in some areas with wires have been pulled out by inmates. Wiring for the lighting in the common areas needs to be more secure in the walls, to eliminate inmates pulling on and breaking the wires.

R3. It is recommended that the Board of Supervisors approve additional funding to provide a budget for maintaining and updating the plumbing and electrical of the current jail building so as to minimize leaks and clogging of the old water pipes and to eliminate the issue of inmates manipulating exposed wiring, creating a safety hazard for inmates and staff. This funding can be added to the 2024-2025 budget and every year forward until the new facility is built.

Sheriff Response: The County is and has been funding improvements to the jail. This has been incorporated into the recommended roll-over 2024-2025 budget. We have already begun purchasing items to improve the jail using resiliency funding and the Criminal Justice Temporary Construction funds to complete the improvements.

F4. The jail needs additional female deputy staff. As of December 2023, the jail was understaffed for both male and female deputies and especially female deputies.

R4. While the current staff does an outstanding job at maintaining the jail and meeting the needs of the inmates, it is inadequate to expect the two current female deputies to be available during their time off. It is recommended that programs be offered to the community and the county to encourage females to become deputies by January 2025. For example, it would be beneficial to the local high school. They have a program for students to become involved in law enforcement. A bonus or monthly stipend for female deputies would entice more women to join the force.

Sheriff Response: The Sheriff's Office has an on-going recruiting program for female correctional officers. We use social media platforms and staff to recruit, which includes participating in job fairs at our local high schools. Most recently our office has started a new education program at Modoc High School, teaching students about Search and Rescue, and Public Safety, with a heavy emphasis on public safety careers. We also participate in the high school internship program which allows students to see first-hand the many different careers in law enforcement including corrections. This

provides for another opportunity to recruit both male and females for entry level careers such as corrections.

F5. According to jail staff, at least a third of the population of the MCJ are deemed mentally incompetent by the jail staff interviewed, with no resources on site, and support from Modoc Medical Center and local programs coming only in urgent cases.

R5. It is understood that more resources for mental patients is a state-wide problem. However, several of Modoc's issues would be mitigated with the building of the new jail, providing more individualized rooms for medical treatment, mental health evaluation, and social programs. According to the California Legislature's Nonpartisan Fiscal and Policy Advisor, psychologists determined that inmates with special mental health needs spend three times the number of days in jail per booking and three times the number of times booked as inmates without special mental health needs. Mental health inmates cost three times more to house compared to inmates with no mental health issues. Deputies are not fully equipped or trained to work with mental health issues. A full-time mental health staff person would better service inmates with mental health needs.

Sheriff Response: The building of a new jail will not fix this statewide problem. Locally our behavioral health specialist work hard to support the needs of the jail. This issue has more to do with current legislation, and the court systems' ability to process and move incarcerated people who suffer from behavioral health problems through the criminal justice system in a timely manner. This is directly due to the courts having to follow the lengthy statutory requirements. Modoc County Behavioral Health is and has been a great partner as it relates to providing behavioral health services to our incarcerated population. Correctional staff work closely with behavioral health to meet the needs of incarcerated people with mental health needs. In addition, all of our correctional staff are required to receive 4 hours of behavioral health training annually, per Bureau of State and Community Corrections.

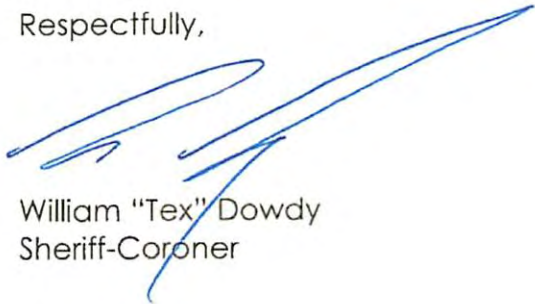
F6. Multiple windows in the facility are cracked in the doors, windows, and walls from inmates throwing or banging items against them.

R6. Immediate repairs/replacement are needed for all the cracked windows in the doors, especially the mental health and sobering cell doors, windows, and walls from inmates throwing or banging items against them. Inmates can be cut or injured from the cracks and broken glass.

Sheriff Response: The Sheriff's Office is working diligently with County Maintenance to make repairs to the broken windows throughout the jail facility. We have also hired an extra-help employee to assist with repairs.

If you should have any questions or concerns, please feel free to reach out to me here at the Modoc County Sheriff's Office at (530) 233-4416.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'W. Dowdy', with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

William "Tex" Dowdy
Sheriff-Coroner