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Report No. 3: Merced County Planning Department Follow-up Review

Introduction:

The 2005-2006 Merced County Grand Jury identified several problems in the operation of the Merced County Planning Department. The current Grand Jury undertook to determine what actions had been taken to correct those deficiencies and how effective they have been. Among the problems noted last year were poor customer service and significant errors in the Department's database of property in Merced County.

Findings:

- The Department has employed a new Director since last year.
- Department personnel are now required to receive Customer Service training.
- A strong effort to correct the Department's database is ongoing and personnel make every effort to ensure its accuracy when dealing with customers.

To determine the effectiveness of the above actions, Grand Jury members observed customer/department personnel interactions and interviewed several customers as they were leaving.

Customers were asked if they had been greeted in a timely and cordial manner, and if their questions had been addressed in a straightforward and efficient manner. There was universal agreement that initial contact with department personnel was timely, professional and appropriately cordial. All those who were interviewed agreed that their questions had been answered directly and apparently correctly, even though it may not always been to their liking.

The customer service area is pleasantly appointed and well arranged to provide reasonable privacy between different customers while meeting with department representatives.

Recommendations:

None.