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# SUMMARY

This 2022-2023 Mono County Grand Jury Final Report consists of one investigation.

California Penal Code 933 requires elected officials or agency heads to respond within 60 days of the issuance of a Grand Jury report that requires their response and requires governing bodies to respond within 90 days. Elected officials and government agencies are required to respond to recommendations made in Grand Jury reports, indicating their agreement or disagreement with those recommendations with their reasons and actions taken pursuant to those recommendations. These responses are to be addressed to the presiding judge of the superior court.

**Investigation #1**
**Mono County Jail**
**Final Report by Grand Jury Investigative Committee**

**BACKGROUND:**
Penal Code Section 919 (b) requires that the Grand Jury annually inquire into the condition and management of the public prisons within the county. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic as well as the lack of a 2021-2022 Grand Jury, there have been no jail inspections since 2018-2019.

**METHODOLOGY:**
Members of the 2022-2023 Mono County Grand Jury (MCGJ) traveled to Bridgeport on Oct. 13, 2022 and participated in a tour of the jail facility. The tour and inspection was conducted by Lt. Mark Hansen. Documents that were reviewed included the Policy and Procedures Manual for the Jail.

**DISCUSSION:**
The Mono County Jail, located in Bridgeport, CA is within the jurisdiction of the MCGJ. The current jail facility was built in 1964, with further construction done in 1988. The jail is a Type II Facility which constitutes a maximum of 48 beds.
Note: Juvenile offenders may not be housed within sight of an adult, therefore, given the space restrictions at the current Mono County facility, juveniles are sent to other counties within California where they can be appropriately accommodated.

The current number of staff, including supervising officers and public safety officers (PSO) staffing the jail facility and 911 call center located at the jail is currently at the minimum of three on a shift plus a supervisor. One is in dispatch, two are monitoring the jail, and one is supervising. One of the staff must be a woman. At the time of inspection there were five candidates in background checks as part of their pipeline of employees. Their current staff consists of four women and seven men, 50% Hispanic

and two natives. Several speak Spanish, but they also provide the ability to bring in translators via video if needed.

The overall impression of the jail, inmate treatment, and attitude of deputies, is very positive. Upon arrival we were met by Lieutenant Hanson who escorted us through the locked lobby door. We were seated at an employee community table adjacent to the 911 dispatch room and began our interview/meeting. The dispatch room also serves as the jailor station and has visibility to all the cells, inside common area, and isolation cells. Take note this is a weapon-free zone and all deputies place their firearms in a lock box in the office area.

Our meeting was friendly and cordial as Lt. Hanson was very charismatic and spoke to us in easy-to-understand language as we are all laypersons charged with the inspection. One committee member asked specific questions with regards to suicides, attempted suicides, deaths from other causes, and escapes. Lt. Hanson informed us that there had been no such issues in the jail. Questions were also asked about fire safety and fire drills. Lt. Hanson explained that the jail has not conducted a fire drill “in quite some time” because they did not want to give inmates information about jail procedures and routines.

It is significant to note that none of the Grand Jury members were asked for ID or searched for weapons prior to or after entering the facility at the first defensible entry point (lobby door). Further, when we were escorted into the jail area for our tour and interview with an inmate who was contained in the “booking cell,” (past the second defensible entry point), Lt. Hanson casually mentioned that if we had any knives or sharp objects or anything that could be used as a weapon, we should leave them behind. At this point, none of the Grand Jury members were searched or scanned with a metal detector, and one of our members brought her purse on the tour.

On the tour of the kitchen, one committee member noticed all the knives were locked in a secure container. Lt. Hanson explained that all knives and sharp objects are inventoried, locked up and only accessible by the kitchen manager. Significant to note, the meat slicer, a common kitchen utility, was not secured and was open on a table next to the mixer. The meat slicer contains a circular knife which is easily removable with one thumb screw located behind the blade and/or one cross screw. Additionally, a committee member checked the fire extinguisher inspection tags on the fire extinguishers in the kitchen area. The fire extinguisher had an initial tag date of November 17, 2021. The monthly inspection section on the back of the tag did not have any signatures indicating the equipment had not been inspected monthly. The installation/test date of the ANSUL hood suppression system was not recorded and there were no monthly inspection signatures on the tag.

Our committee was given access to interview an inmate picked by Lt. Hanson. The inmate’s status was Inmate Trustee. A Trustee is an inmate that demonstrates compliance with the system and procedures and is given additional privileges within the

jail. Committee members conducted the interview with the Trustee. We asked him various questions about conditions in the jail including treatment, meals, ability to send mail, access to medical facilities, etc. The Trustee presented a picture-perfect account of his experience in jail, as Lt. Hansen stood just within ear shot. The Trustee said, “Jail sucks, but this is the best place to be. They treat us with respect. I’m sober and healthy and will be able to get on with my life when I get out.” The Trustee seemed in very good spirits and complimentary of the deputies.
Again, our overall impression with the jail is good, with the exception of the security issues
mentioned. However, it is dated, run down, and short staffed. We were told these areas will be remedied soon with construction of the new jail and more hiring. We did not notice anything remarkable that warrants further discussion.

As has been the case for many years, the MCGJ members were apprised of existing plans for a new jail to be built on County-owned land in Bridgeport on the site of the former Bridgeport Hospital. The plans for the new facility, for which the County has a $25 million grant from Board of State and Community Correction (BSCC), would replace the current jail facilities. Based on the plans for the new facility, it will provide potential benefits to the County and local population with an included health clinic. That clinic, to be housed in the new jail, would service both the public as well as prisoners; plans allow for the clinic and jail to be locked off depending on who is being seen by medical personnel.

NOTE: When an inmate is assigned to Mono County Jail, the County is responsible for their health, medical, dental, optometric, and psychiatric needs, as necessary. Staff is required to transport inmates to appointments as there is currently no access to health care providers in Bridgeport. The Toiyabe Health Center is used as much as is appropriate. Eye exams are scheduled in Gardnerville, which requires long periods of time for jail staff traveling with inmates off-site. Support for inmates at the jail facility includes multiple services to assist their reintegration into society and reduce recidivism, including but not limited to counseling, library access, and a GED program.

**FINDINGS:**
**F1.** Upon arrival at the facility, we rang the bell and announced our presence. At that time, we were let in through the door into the waiting area. We were not required to show ID, and we were not asked or searched for weapons.

**F2.** The staffing of officers assigned to the jail has been at a minimum since the last MCGJ inspected the jail back in 2018-2019. It continues to be a problem.

**F3.** We had the opportunity to interview one of the inmates that was considered an inmate Trustee, meaning he was hand-picked because he followed the rules. He felt that his treatment at the facility was good and had no issues with his safety, food, care, services, or hygiene.

**F4.** We toured the kitchen facility and found it to be very clean and well maintained. They have a full-time chef that prepares meals. The knives were locked up and secure. As mentioned previously, the meat slicer was open and accessible. Trustees were supervised and worked in the kitchen.

**F5.**We were informed by the officer on duty that they conduct an annual fire/emergency drill “maybe once a year,” but are reluctant to do so due to fears of the inmates knowing too much about the jail procedures.

**F6.** Paul Roten, from Mono County Public Works was contacted regarding the construction of the new jail and provided a rough schedule for completion. He explained that the jail is in year five of a delay due to COVID as well as the construction of the county building/court house/police department in Mammoth Lakes. He also explained that there could be issues with following the schedule, but gave this as a good-faith timeline to follow:

2022 Nov 1 - Item going to the board to authorize the hazardous material removal from the hospital site.
2022 Nov 8 - Finalizing negotiations to get into a contract for an engineering firm to support production of the site demolition package
2022 Nov 8 – Item to the board discussing schedule and finance
2022 Dec 1 – Expected date of start for Haz Mat removal
2023 Feb 01 – Approximate start of building demolition
2023 April 01 – Approximate start of utility relocation
2023 July 01 – Approximate time of rapid impact compaction
2023 Nov 01 – Approximate time of release of bid package for building construction
2024 Feb 01 – Approximate time of beginning of construction
2025 Aug 01 – Approximate time of building completion, commissioning, and transition from existing jail facility to the new jail facility
2025 Nov 30 – Approximate time new Jail fully operational

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**R1. Safety - Regarding the Entry Points.**

As officer safety is paramount, all visitors (civilian) should present identification and be questioned, scanned, or searched for weapons prior to passing the lobby door. As a secondary method of security, all visitors entering the jail proper should be questioned, scanned, or searched for weapons prior to entering the jail. In addition, visitors should not bring purses, backpacks, or anything that could conceal a potential weapon into the jail.

**R2. Jail Staffing**

The jail report from 2018-2019 addressed the open jail staff positions at that time. It addressed a funding issue with the Mono County Board of Supervisors. This issue seems to be on-going. The jail should be funded properly and staffing issues resolved.

**R3. Inmate treatment**
The Sheriff Department jail staff should continue with their current practices and procedures

**R4. Safety- Regarding Kitchen Meat Slicer**
As officer and inmate safety is paramount, the meat slicer in the kitchen should be in a secured area unavailable to inmates.

**R5. Safety- Regarding fire drills**
At minimum, an “employee” fire drill should be conducted on a regular basis. Inmates do not need to know that it is being conducted as they would not be evacuated during the drill. However, all personnel should have an understanding of what their specific role is during an actual fire emergency.

**R6. The New Jail**
The timeline submitted by the Director of Mono County Public Works should be followed and completed.