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BOARD OF SUPERVISORS COUNTY OF MONO

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Shannon Kendall, Clerk of the Board

February 2, 2021

Honorable Judge Mark Magit
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court
100 Thompsons Way
P.O. Box 1037
Mammoth Lakes, California 93546

Re: Response to request for input on the Mono County Grand Jury 2019-2020 Final Report

Dear Judge Magit:

The Grand Jury has asked for Board of Supervisors' input on several items contained in its 2019-20 report, including the County's solid waste program, operations at the Bridgeport jail, and emergency radio and response. While outside of the normal response process set forth in Penal Code section 933, the Board is happy to provide the below information in the hopes that it provides the information the Grand Jury requires.¹

CONTINUITY COMMITTEE - MONO COUNTY SOLID WASTE

The Grand Jury revisited the Grand Jury Final Report from 2018-2019 regarding the solid waste programs of both the Town of Mammoth Lakes and Mono County. The purpose of the review was to indicate if there was a response to the Grand Jury report and to report on what progress is being made to comply with their stated proposals in response to the recommendations of the Grand Jury.

Finding and Recommendation:

"F2: The 18-19 Grand Jury recommended that TOML and Mono County partner to make necessary improvements to the Pumice Valley site so it could be a viable location for a biomass reactor, associated waste programs, and recycling operations. Timeline: Completed no later than January 1, 2023.

¹ One set of findings in the 2019-20 report related to emergency and radio operations within the Sheriff's Department. The Sheriff, as an independently-elected official, provided the required response. The other set of findings related to solid waste issues identified in the 2018-19 Grand Jury report. Those findings were responded to in 2018-19 and remained unchanged in the 2019-20 report. No additional response was therefore required.

TOML responded to the 18-19 Report that a biomass facility will not be a condition of the Agreement, but the Agreement will allow for diversion of certain types of waste to such a facility should it be developed in the future. Impacts to the residents of Mammoth Lakes and Mono County will be better known once the Agreement is in place. Mono County had some questions about the economic, political, and environmental ramifications of a biomass reactor.

Mono County's response to the 18-19 Grand Jury also cited the need for further analysis and a better understanding of what the upcoming solid waste program will look like in Mammoth Lakes and Mono County overall.

TOML and Mono County agreed that while Pumice Valley was under consideration for such a site, it was not the only site under consideration."

"R2: The Grand Jury recommends that Mono County continue to move forward with planning for the Benton Crossing Landfill closure. We also recommend they continue to collaborate with other regional entities as they develop the infrastructure and expertise needed for Mono County to successfully move to a future transition without Benton Crossing Landfill."

County Response:

The Grand Jury's finding and recommendation related to the County's solid waste program is currently being implemented. At its December 15 meeting, the Board of Supervisors approved the distribution of a Request for Proposals (RFP) for Countywide Transfer Services, Materials Re-Use and Recycling Services, Satellite Transfer Station Operations, and Facilities Waste Hauling Services. The exhibits to that RFP are being finalized and the RFP should be released in February. The RFP is intended to identify proposals for replacement infrastructure and systems to follow the closure of Benton Crossing Landfill and includes options for the successful proposer(s) to establish operations at the Pumice Valley Landfill site and to serve the Town of Mammoth Lakes in addition to the unincorporated areas of the County.

Finding and Recommendation:

"F3: The 18-19 Grand Jury recommended that TOML and Mono County develop a plan for complying with the amounts of recycling and organic waste going to landfills in the likely event that State of California rural exemptions are changed by July 1, 2020.

Mono County informed the 19-20 Grand Jury that they have applied for an extension of the low population waiver of mandates concerning organic waste and methane emissions in SB1383. No changes to rural exemptions were being considered during the comment period. The waiver would expire in 2025, or later if the State were to meet organic waste reduction targets. Mono County will also be applying for an Elevation Waiver under section 18984.13(d) which is applicable indefinitely. In addition, Mono County has taken significant steps in improving capacity and efficiency of processing green material, more specifically, wood material. Wood material can be processed into several beneficial products including biomass feedstock, alternative cover, mulch and erosion control media. Specialized equipment has been acquired and implemented. Additionally, Benton Crossing Landfill has

implemented a composting pilot program. Testing is under way to identify an appropriate recipe of ingredients based on incoming waste streams.

Mono County further stated that they are actively involved in regional efforts to address green waste diversion. Collaboration and planning on upcoming forest health improvement and water quality projects include entities such as the Town of Mammoth Lakes, Sierra Institute, Inyo-Mono Integrated Regional Water Management Program, Eastern California Water Association, Plumas Corporation, Inyo National Forest and CalTrout. Mono County has agreed to allow siting of TOML's proposed biomass infrastructure at Pumice Valley Landfill and assisted with production of the Town's RFP (request for proposal) for equipment and technology which would remove organic material from the waste stream and out of landfills which may be used in the production of valuable products such as biochar, energy, compost, or similar type products."

County Response:

The Board agrees with this finding (there was no corresponding recommendation), with one clarification: The County has not *applied for* a low population waiver of mandates concerning organic waste and methane emissions in SB1383, but *will* apply following the issuance of the final regulations.

MONO COUNTY SHERIFF

Bridgeport Jail

Finding and Recommendation:

"F1: The Grand Jury finds that Mono County continues to maintain a well-run jail facility and has responded to the Coronavirus pandemic in an appropriate manner."

"R1: The Grand Jury finds that the Mono County Jail continues to be a well-run facility. The Grand Jury has no recommendations at this time."

County Response:

In her September 3, 2020 response, the Sheriff's Office indicated agreement with the finding and recommendation. The Board concurs with this response. We appreciate the time the Grand Jury took to conduct the mandated inquiry during this time of COVID.

Continuity Committee Mono County Jail Report

The Grand Jury revisited the Grand Jury Final Report from 2018-2019 regarding the Mono County Jail. The purpose of the review was to indicate if there was a response to the Grand Jury report and to report on what progress is being made to comply with their stated proposals in response to the recommendations of the Grand Jury.

Finding and Recommendation (1-4):

“F1: The 18-19 Grand Jury recommended that the Mono County Board of Supervisors and Department of Public Works should make every effort to progress the final planning and construction phases of the New Jail building to avoid cost overruns, provide the best possible long-term facility and be able to incorporate the health clinic for locals. Timeline: End of 2019.

In their response the Mono County Sheriff’s Office agreed with the recommendation. According to Mono County staff the jail project was delayed due to the construction of the new County Building in Mammoth Lakes. That is still the case as of this writing.”

“F2: The 18-19 Grand Jury recommended that the Mono County Board of Supervisors should fund all open jail staff positions. Timeline: The next Fiscal Budget.

In their response The Sheriff’s Office agreed with the recommendation. Sheriff Braun requested the funding of all positions during the budget process, and the 2019-2020 Mono County Budget funded 18 out of 20 positions in the Jail, leaving two Public Safety Officer positions unfunded. The Sheriff’s Office is currently in the hiring process for three funded positions: one current vacancy and two anticipated vacancies.”

The 19-20 Grand Jury verified with the Mono County Jail that the situation is still as the Sheriff’s Office described in their response.

“F3: The 18-19 Grand Jury recommended the Sheriff’s department to provide additional camera coverage for any potential blind spots within the current jail facility. Timeline: Within the next six months.”

In their response, the Sheriff’s Office agreed with the recommendation and stated that they were assessing the positioning of the current cameras to ensure that all aspects of Jail operations are covered. It should be noted that some aspects that are not covered by cameras are in the constant line of sight of the control center. We will also work with Public Works staff in the planning of the New Jail to install cameras to cover all aspects of Jail operations.

The 19-20 Grand Jury found the cameras have yet to be installed.

“F4: The 18-19 Grand Jury recommended that Mono County continue discussions of a possible Joint Powers Authority to manage a new 911 system shared by Mono and Inyo Counties and their appropriate emergency agencies (Police, Fire, Etc.) to provide improved and consistent services to the community.”

The Sheriff’s Office agreed with the recommendation and is actively engaging with partner agencies in Mono and Inyo Counties on the potential for a regional dispatch center. On August 13, 2019, the Mono County Board of Supervisors approved an expenditure of up to \$25,000 toward a Feasibility Study and Implementation Plan for a regional dispatch center. The Town of Mammoth Lakes also approved a \$25,000 expenditure, and requests are pending with the Bishop City Council and Inyo County Board of Supervisors.

Mono County Jail staff indicated to the 19-20 Grand Jury that Mono County's efforts to create a regional emergency dispatch center in partnership with Inyo County are ongoing.

"F5: The Mono County Board of Supervisors is recommended to make an annual visit/tour of the Mono County Jail. Timeline: Annual."

The Sheriff's Office agreed with the recommendation and said they would welcome a visit by the Mono County Board of Supervisors.

The 19-20 Grand Jury finds that no Mono County Supervisors have paid a visit to the Jail Facility.

"R1-4: The Grand Jury finds that Mono County and Mono Sheriff's Office have made every effort to comply with the recommendations of the 18-19 Grand Jury."

"R5: The Grand Jury finds that, given current circumstances, a visit to the Jail would not be appropriate at this time."

County Response:

R1-4: In her September 3, 2020 response, the Sheriff agreed with the Grand Jury's findings and recommendations. The Board also agrees. In addition, the Board provides the following update on jail construction -- throughout the last six months of 2020, staff negotiated the terms of a contract with the architectural firm of Lionakis for design of the new jail facility. Lionakis has agreed to the final terms and approved the contract. As a final step, the agreement is agendaized for approval by the Board of Supervisors on February 2, 2021. Once executed, Lionakis will begin designing the facility.

R5: In her September 3, 2020 response, the Sheriff agreed with the Grand Jury's recommendation. The Board also agrees that a visit to the jail should not be conducted until the current COVID-19 situation has subsided.

Emergency Preparedness Final Report

Finding and Recommendation:

"F1: The radio system currently being used by MLFD and much of Mono County is fast becoming obsolete and unreliable. The TOML, Mono County, and other agencies within the County have begun the process of upgrading internal communications. They also have a unique opportunity to participate in the "FirstNet" nationwide communications system, they have been asked to participate in a pilot project which would bring this system to Mono County to provide a proof of concept."

"R1: The Grand Jury recommends that Mono County and the TOML continue to support Mono County's participation in the FirstNet communications system and/or any appropriate improvements to the system as resources allow. The Grand Jury further recommends that these improvements be made within the scope of a unified plan for the entire County."

County Response:

In her September 3, 2020, response the Sheriff (who has solicited the assistance of the Information Technology Department to address emergency radio communications) agreed with the Grand Jury’s finding and recommendation. The Sheriff explained that the Mono County Information Technology Department is driving the effort to improve the communications system in Mono County. All stakeholders are involved in the process, and regular meetings are held to keep the project moving forward and ensure all partners are informed on the status of the project. Stakeholders are considering a variety of technical solutions including incorporation of the FirstNet system. Work on improving the system is ongoing with a number of incremental technical improvements slated to happen by December, 2020. It is anticipated that substantive system improvements will take several years to complete and likely not be fully operational until 2025.

Since the Sheriff’s response was written, Mono County and the Town of Mammoth Lakes have continued working collaboratively to develop reasonable short-term strategies to address immediate radio issues while also looking toward long-term solutions to upgrade or replace the system. In support of this, a Radio Governance Group consisting of the Mono County Sheriff and representatives from the Town of Mammoth Lakes and local fire districts, has been meeting weekly to review both immediate needs and long-term solutions. The Governance Group is actively working to improve the existing radio network and resolve audio quality problems by adding two new ‘link’ sites at valley floor locations. Additionally, the Governance Group has had a number of conversations with the State of California and other local agency partners and potential vendors who could work with us to resolve longer-term issues that have been identified.

In conclusion, the Board of Supervisors recognizes the critical role the Grand Jury provides to the community and the County by ensuring the legal and financial adequacy of government services. The Grand Jury provides a sense of openness, transparency and accountability that are crucial to our democracy, and the County appreciates the work performed and the guidance offered. The County thanks the members of the Grand Jury for their public service and encourages the Court to continue to ensure broad representation from all communities of Mono County.

Sincerely,


Jennifer Kreitz (Feb 5, 2021 15:05 PST)

Jennifer Kreitz, Chair
Mono County Board of Supervisors