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BOARD OF SUPERVISORS COUNTY OF MONO

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Shannon Kendall, Clerk of the Board

August 8, 2017

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

Re: Response to the Mono County Grand Jury 2016-2017 Report

Dear Judge Magit:

Please consider this letter and accompanying Attachment "A" as the official response to the 2016–2017 Mono County Grand Jury Report, and place this document on file as the Mono County Board of Supervisors' response. The Attachment includes specific responses to Investigation # 1 involving the Elections/Registrar of Voters office within the County's jurisdiction. The statutory inspection of the Bridgeport Jail did not generate findings nor recommendations, so no response was prepared.

The Board of Supervisors and County staff recognize 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,

Stacy Corless, Chair
Mono County Board of Supervisors

Enclosure: Attachment A: 2016-2017 Mono County Grand Jury Response

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Investigation #1 (Elections/Registrar of Voters)

The Board of Supervisors has reviewed the findings and recommendations and provides the following response:

Findings:

F1 - The Mono County Registrar of Voters Office was generally unprepared, due to the lack of experience of its leadership, for dealing with the complexities of the June 2016 primary, and November 2016 general elections.

Board Response: the Board agrees with the finding.

F2 - The Mono County Clerk/Recorder/Registrar of Voters who was in charge of conducting the June 2016 primary and November 2016 general elections, while being an honest, experienced, dedicated, and reflective county administrator, did not have the skill set - organization, delegation of duties, careful attention to detail - that a complex and multi-faceted department requires for accurately conducting its business, especially during primary and general elections.

Board Response: the Board agrees with the finding.

F3 - Mono County could lobby the state for voting legislation in California which could expand the number of citizens able to cast absentee ballots during primary or general elections from 1,000 to 10,000. Mono County could also choose to opt-in by 2020 to new legislation which provides for two general voting centers within the county with extended voting days. The adoption of either of these measures would allow for greater voting opportunities and fewer costs to Mono County.

Board Response: the Board agrees with the finding.

F4 - Mono County's voting machines are obsolete and need to be replaced. There should be enough voting machines so that each precinct in Mammoth Lakes has a dedicated voting machine.

Board Response: the Board agrees with the finding.

F5 - Mono County's Registrar of Voters Office needs to conduct additional voter education and outreach to eliminate confusion during elections. Mono County's Registrar of Voters Office also needs to ensure that clearly written and accurate sample and absentee ballots are prepared, distributed, and received by the county's voters in a timely manner. The Mono County Registrar of Voters Office needs to be in close contact with the Mammoth Lakes Town Clerk, and any other pertinent local officials to ensure that candidates for office submit petitions of office in a timely manner with enough opportunity for voter signatures to be verified prior to the deadline.



Board Response: the Board agrees with the finding.

Recommendations:

R1 - Staff within the office of the Registrar of Voters should receive continuing training and education in the efficient use of new state voting software. Ongoing staff development should be conducted regarding election protocol and procedures. Mono County's internal election procedure manuals should be updated and distributed to relevant staff as needed. The office should hire additional skilled personnel to help them conduct each election. Additional staff levels during election periods should be determined by the nature and demands of each particular election.

Action: Clerk/Recorder/Registrar of Voters

Timeframe: 6 months

Board Response: The Registrar intends to reach out to the Secretary of State to obtain additional VoteCal training. Election protocols and procedures are in the process of being updated and will be complete prior to next election. New poll worker machine instructions are being written for the new machines just purchased. The County intends to double the number of temporary election workers, for a total of two, instead of only one in November 2016. All of the above items will be completed prior to next election.

R2 - Mono County should appoint an administrator to be Clerk/Recorder/ Registrar of Voters who has experience in conducting elections, and who also has a skill set with high levels of organization, delegation, and careful attention to details. This individual should also strive to maintain long-term stability and morale within the department and to employ and train such skilled staff as are necessary to conduct the many diverse duties and functions of the Clerk/Recorder/Registrar of Voters offices.

The initial action of appointing a new Clerk/Recorder/Registrar of Voters was taken by the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) of Mono County in early 2017. The Mono County CAO should monitor the offices of the Clerk/Recorder/Registrar of Voters to verify that a reorganization and updating of files, and policy/procedure manuals has been undertaken, and that newly hired personal receive the training they need to be effective in their multi-departmental setting.

Timeframe: 9 months

Board Response: As stated in the Report, Shannon Kendall was appointed to Clerk-Recorder-Registrar-Clerk of the Board temporarily in December 2016 and permanently in February 2017. Shannon has the required skill set and experience to perform the job efficiently. There have been additional staff members added to the Department, bringing



the office to full staffing levels. New staff is currently training on elections duties and all staff will acquire additional training in VoteCal, EMS (election management system), and on new voting machines during 2017. Reorganization of files, manuals, etc., is occurring at this time and is ongoing.

R3 - The Mono County Board of Supervisors and the Registrar of Voters should carefully research new state legislation and voting initiatives to determine whether Mono County might take advantage of more flexible regulations regarding the number of voters in an area who may cast their ballots via absentee ballot and/or create several general election centers which are open for extended days to maximize voting opportunities and reduce costs.

Action: Mono County Board of Supervisors, Mono County Chief Administrative Officer, Registrar of Voters
Timeframe: 6 months

Board Response: The Registrar's office is monitoring SB 450 as well as Inyo County's pilot program. Under Mono County's current legislative platform, we continue to lobby for vote by mail elections. The consideration of legislation and initiatives that may present solutions for Mono County is current, and ongoing.

R4 - After carefully researching and reviewing new voting legislation and initiatives, the Board of Supervisors of Mono County should budget sufficient funds to purchase new voting machines - consistent with projected future needs and election methods.

Action: Mono County Board of Supervisors, Mono County Chief Administrative Officer
Timeframe: 6 months

Board Response: This has been completed. New voting machines have been purchased, consistent with current election methods and projected needs, and are SB 450 compliant should the County pursue that direction in the future.

R5 - The Mono County Registrar of Voters needs to clearly communicate to Mono County voters information regarding State of California Voter registration requirements, online voter signature requirements, and prospective elected-official voter petition rules. All sample and absentee ballots, along with measure/initiative arguments, need to be accurate and accompanied by clear instructions. These documents should never be proofread by only one person. Mono County's online Elections Office website needs to be updated and have accurate information. Instructions on absentee and sample ballots should match the information provided on the Mono County Elections Office website and should be in accordance with state law. There should be clear and ongoing communication between satellite offices, such as the Town of Mammoth



Lakes Town Clerk, and the Registrar of Voters office regarding timelines for the submission of candidate petitions, the certification of voter signatures, and the precise number of candidates who can be voted for on a given election.

Action: Registrar of Voters

Timeframe: 6 months

Board Response: The Registrar is developing plans for extensive voter outreach and education in future election cycles, including additional advertising/radio spots, additional poll worker training, presentations to RPACS and other community groups, an updated and more informative website with FAQs. There have also been plans developed to ensure accuracy of election details, including consistency between voter information in guides, sample ballots, etc. The timelines for the filing of candidate, petition and/or other paperwork will be coordinated very closely with Town Clerk. These plans and approaches are currently being developed, and will be in place prior to the June 2018 primary.