

## **Foreman's Report**

The 2000-2001 Placer County Grand Jury completes its year of service with a strong sense of accomplishment, and yet with the knowledge that much work remains to be done in the monitoring of agencies within Placer County. Grand Juries are created to serve as the eyes and ears of citizens of the county, to assure that tax dollars are used wisely and that the public's business is conducted openly and honestly. In meeting these mandates, Grand Jurors work for a full year - July to July, usually for 20 to 30 hours per week. The commitment and dedication they bring to the task deserves commendation.

Clearly, such tasks as these are never finished, and this Foreman's Report will reflect, along with the accompanying Final Reports contained in this document, matters we have addressed and matters that remain to be investigated during the term of the 2001-2002 Grand Jury.

The 2000-2001 Grand Jury began its term with seven citizen complaints carried over from the previous year. Forty-two new complaints were received and investigated. In addition, inspections of jails and police holding facilities and the juvenile detention center were conducted as required by law. Over 30 complaints and requests for Grand Jury action were resolved or did not result in formal action; thus, much of the time and efforts of the Jury are not reflected in the Final Reports. Members of the Grand Jury attended countless meetings of Boards of Directors of Special Districts, City Councils, the Placer County Board of Supervisors, Commissions, and Boards of Trustees of school districts.

In many instances the Grand Jury found that business was being conducted openly and conscientiously. However, there continue to be numerous complaints of Brown Act and Public Records Act violations by these publicly elected boards. Many of these complaints proved to be well founded.

### **Ralph M. Brown Open Meeting Act**

This Grand Jury's investigations, as have those of many previous Placer County Grand Juries, have indicated that many elected boards engage, knowingly or unknowingly, in Brown Act violations, many through failure to publish meeting agendas which are clear about matters to be discussed in meetings. Many try to uphold not only the spirit but also the letter of law. Some elected boards engage in "serial meetings," where agendaized business is discussed privately by two or more board members. Closed sessions, which are strictly limited under the law as to subject matter, are frequently used to discuss items which should have been discussed in the open portion of the meeting. Closed session agendas must, by law, clearly state the topics to be covered in that part of the meeting and there must be a public report of action taken in closed session. The Grand Jury found that these requirements were often omitted.

The 2000-2001 Placer County Grand Jury urges the Placer County Special Districts Association to continue to provide Brown Act training sessions for all elected officials. Unfortunately, few of these officials find time to attend the training. With more than 200 Special Districts in existence throughout the county, this lack of training and understanding of the law results in often egregious violations. School districts, fire districts, recreation districts, public utility districts, water districts and all the other myriad districts in the county need to insist on Brown Act training for their directors. The public should be vigilant and take a proactive role in preserving the provisions of the Brown Act.

## **Juvenile Justice/Delinquency Prevention Commission**

The Juvenile Justice Commission exists, as required by State law (Welfare and Institutions Code [W&I Code § 225-236]), to provide monitoring of the administration of justice for juveniles who become involved with the legal system. Law does not require the Delinquency Prevention Commission or the Juvenile Justice Commission, but each County in the State is encouraged to maintain one. In Placer County, the Board of Supervisors has chosen to combine the two into one large commission consisting of 15 citizens, two of whom are between the ages of 14 and 21.

The Commission meets once a month in the early evening, with time, place, and date noted with proper public notice. Placer County Probation staff also attend the meeting to provide information as needed.

The 2000-2001 Placer County Grand Jury found the Commission to be a group made up of dedicated individuals concerned with the well being of the County's youth. The members appear informed and interested in the emerging issues of youth at risk in the County and as a challenge to the senior management of the Probation Department.

The Grand Jury commends the Commission leaders for their contributions in the community and their tireless work with the Probation Department in addressing concerns, which affect the youth.

## **Sierra College Board of Trustees**

Activities of the Board of Trustees of the Sierra Community College District have been investigated at considerable length by both the 1999-2000 and 2000-2001 Placer County Grand Juries, and the results of these investigations are published elsewhere in this document and in the 1999-2000 Placer County Grand Jury Final Reports.

It should be noted that citizens are still concerned with the administration and actions of the Board of Trustees in the administration of the Post Medical Retirement Fund and the future plans for that Fund and its administration. Continued monitoring and investigation of the Sierra College Board of Trustees by the 2001-2002 Grand Jury is recommended.

## **School Traffic Congestion**

The 2000-2001 Grand Jury, during its investigation of Mid-Placer Schools Transportation Agency, noted with concern the heavy congestive traffic at various school sites during “drop-off” and “pick-up” time of the students, particularly in the pick-up times. The cost of paying for school bus transportation has led many parents to transport their own children, resulting in too many vehicles, including school buses, parents, school employees, etc., all converging on the schools during the peak hours.

The Grand Jury noted the injury of a young girl on school grounds during one of these congested periods. Some action has been taken to correct this problem. However, while some schools are physically arranged to handle the problem, many are not. It appears that little or no law enforcement is utilized to ease the existing problem.

The 2000-2001 Placer County Grand Jury recommends that the 2001-2002 Grand Jury consider investigating this problem.

## **Rocklin Police Department**

The 2000-2001 Placer County Grand Jury conducted a preliminary investigation on two complaints received regarding the Rocklin Police Department. These complaints were broad in nature, but had elements concerning the following: (1) drugs on the school campuses in Rocklin and (2) alleged illegal activities and misuse of police equipment by officers.

Due to changes in personnel and leadership of the Rocklin Police Department, it is recommended that the 2001-2002 Grand Jury continue monitoring the Department.

## **Sexual Harassment Policy**

The 2000-2001 Grand Jury notes that on June 20, 2000, Placer County Board of Supervisors adopted a new and stronger sexual harassment and other sensitive workplace issues policy. The Grand Jury expresses a strong desire that these new policies are implemented in a fair and equitable manner countywide.

## **Publication of the Grand Jury Final Report**

Grand Juries are required by law to distribute copies of the Final Report to schools and libraries throughout the county. The Placer County Grand Jury has for several years also chosen to publish a summary of its Final Report in tabloid format for distribution to newspaper readers countywide. During the 1999-2000 term, the Grand Jury decided to hold publication of the tabloid until after the legally required responses were received from the agencies. In this way, the public is able to follow not only the substance of the Final Report, but also the response and reaction of the public agency to that report. Since the responses are due 60-90 days after the Final Report is published in late June,

the tabloid was published in the fall of 1999. Public response to this publication was positive. The 2000-2001 Grand Jury continued the practice and the Jury recommends that the practice of publishing both Final Report and responses in the tabloid be continued.