

Approved: R. Bullinger
Superior Court Judge

Date: 10.25.16

FILED
SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA
COUNTY OF SONOMA

OCT 25 2016

**Sonoma County Board of Supervisors Response to
The Law Library on the Brink: *Running On Empty* Grand Jury Report**

BY [Signature]
Deputy Clerk

FINDINGS

F1: The Law Library can no longer rely on court filing fees to meet expenses and must seek additional funding to sustain services.

We agree with this finding.

We agree that revenue from Court filing fees is a declining source of revenue and that the current levels of service cannot be maintained with the current levels of funding. A long-term sustainability plan is needed by the Law Library to evaluate opportunities for additional revenue and reduced expenses. The County believes that there is additional revenue that can be recouped from fee waivers in cases in which there is a settlement, legislative changes to the funding structure, grant opportunities, and fund-raising efforts.

The County believes that when there is a significant shortfall in the funding for a program, the service delivery model should be reviewed for new and innovative ways to provide quality services with existing resources. Therefore, the long-term sustainability plan should also consider cost cutting measures, including consideration of shared administrative services, possibly with neighboring law libraries or the Sonoma County Public Library.

F2: There is little coordination with other agencies that provide services similar to those offered by the Law Library.

We disagree with this finding.

Based on information provided by the Law Library, they currently have a Memorandum of Understanding with Empire College, which has resulted in \$22,900 of new revenue annually for the Law Library. The Law Library continues to reach out to other agencies, and is willing to continue these efforts.

The report references the law library maintained by the Family Justice Center. According to staff at the Family Justice Center, they do not maintain a law library.

RECOMMENDATIONS

R1: The Board of Supervisors provide an emergency, one-time payment of \$40,000 for operational expenses.

Response: This recommendation has not been implemented and will be considered for implementation in the future.

The Board believes the Law Library provides an important service and has directed staff to work with the Law Library to develop an agreement to provide the Law Library with one-time funding, spread over two fiscal years (FY 2016-17 and 2017-18). This funding, shall not exceed \$40,000/year and it shall match private donations 1:1. It should be noted that the private donations currently include \$23,456 raised as part of the Law Library's "125 Donation Drive."

The agreement also authorizes the County and the Law Library to conduct a county-funded Management Review. This review should include an analysis options to reduce expenses and enhance revenue, included an in-depth evaluation of the revenue that could possibly be realized in cases when there is a fee waiver and a subsequent settlement. This review should evaluate opportunities to eliminate duplication of services among other community agencies and provide the Law Library with a data-collection template to support future grant-seeking opportunities, and to provide a record of what publications are used, to help inform future purchasing decisions.

R2: The Board of Supervisors create a community Task Force to examine the long term needs of the Law Library and work toward the elimination of duplication of services among other community agencies.

Response: has not been implemented and will not be implemented in the future.

As described on the website for the Sonoma County Public Law Library, the Law Library is "a state local government agency separate from the county government (much like fire or water districts). The Law Library is governed by an independent Board of Trustees, consisting of five judges and two attorneys. Since the Board has no authority over the Law Library, it would not be appropriate for us to appoint such a Task Force. Given the consideration of a Management Review and a possible contract for funding, it is anticipated that the Chair and the Vice-Chair of the Board of Supervisors, the County Administrator and the Administrative Analyst assigned to the Justice Partners will meet with representatives of the Law Library on an as-needed basis.

The Management Review should identify specific areas in which services are being duplicated and provide a recommendation of how to eliminate the duplication.

R3: Pursuant to the Task Force findings, the Board of Supervisors allocate annual funding until Law Library funding is stabilized.

Response: Has not been implemented but will be considered for partial implementation in the future.

The Board will not commit to ongoing funding of the Law Library, but will provide one-time funding (discussed above) as well as funding for a Management Review to support the long-term sustainability of the Law Library. The County will also include efforts to support the Law Library in the legislative platform.

When negotiating the agreement for one-time funding, County staff will look at the possibility of Law Library developing a long-term sustainability plan for the Law Library. This plan shall include a description of the resources provided by the Law Library within the scope of the larger legal system (including services provided by Legal Aid, etc.); statistical data of the clients who utilize the Law Library; a plan for repayment of waived fees in cases where there is a settlement, a detailed expenditure plan, opportunities for budget reductions, evaluation for shared administrative services, and revenue enhancements, including the identification of targeted donor groups (publication companies, local Bar Association members, etc.) and grants. To support this effort, the County agrees to give the Law Library access to the County grant-writing resources (Glen Price Group).

R4: Pursuant to Task Force findings, the Board of Supervisors waive annual interfund expenses (e.g. insurance, utilities, etc) for a savings of approximately \$18,000 per year until Law Library funding is stabilized.

Response: Has been partially implemented.

Sonoma County already provides the facility, including maintenance, janitorial and utilities to the Law Library, valued at approximately \$60,000/year. The Law Library also paid \$3,700 in FY 2015-16 for their prorated share of charges for accounting services, the Human Resources Management System (HRMS) and the Enterprise Financial System (EFS). The balance of "interfund" or county provided services paid by the Law Library is for the Information Systems Department, based on the service level identified by the Law Library. The Law Library, as an independent entity, could choose to utilize a different provider for these services.