

**Transmit a Report
to the Judge**

May 20, 2025

TO: Christopher Honigsberg, Presiding Judge, Sonoma County Superior Court

FROM: Karen Rocco County Grand Jury


RE: Grand Jury Report – Continuity Report 2018-2022

Enclosed for your review is a copy of the subject report, which has been approved by a supermajority of the grand jury.

After you have completed your review, please initial the appropriate box below and return the report and this cover sheet with your approval and/or comments. If you have any questions, please contact me at [phone number].

Thank you.

Enclosure: Continuity Report 2018-2022

<input checked="checked" type="checkbox"/>	I approve the report for release	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Please see comments attached	

Responses to Sonoma County Civil Grand Jury Reports 2018-2019 through 2022-2023

Every year the Civil Grand Jury produces a Continuity Report reviewing official responses to the previous year's Grand Jury reports. Agencies and elected officials that receive a Civil Grand Jury report are required to respond to it in one of three ways:

- The report's findings may be wholly accepted, or rejected, as written.
- The report's findings may be partially accepted and partially rejected, or
- The report's findings require further analysis.

No follow-up action (by either the Civil Grand Jury or the respondent) is required in cases where findings are accepted or rejected. When the respondent indicated that a recommendation required further analysis, however, the public is entitled to know what that analysis concluded; this report will tell you.

Similarly, regarding a report's recommendations, agencies and elected officials must respond in one of four ways:

- The recommendation is accepted and has already been implemented.
- The recommendation is rejected and no further action will be taken.
- The recommendation requires further analysis (which should be completed within six months of publication of the Grand Jury report).
- The recommendation has not yet been implemented but will be implemented in the future.

State law requires the heads of government agencies and elected officials to respond within 60 days of the Civil Grand Jury's issuance of a report; agencies run by boards are allowed an additional 30 days. Of course, substantive issues may not be resolved by the time the subsequent Civil Grand Jury issues its Continuity Report. Responses stating that "further analysis is required" or that "recommendations will be implemented in the future" are a commitment to action that probably won't be monitored or reported: this can be a convenient way for respondents to kick the can down the road (and sometimes hope it goes unnoticed).

The Sonoma County 2024-25 Civil Grand Jury reviewed all unresolved items listed in the "Civil Grand Jury 4 Year Continuity Report" published by the 2023-2024 Civil Grand Jury, and added unresolved items from the 2022-23 report. The Civil Grand Jury requested agency updates to recommendations that promised further analysis or future action to see whether these commitments had been fulfilled and/or promised actions had been taken by these agencies.

The following tables show the status of findings and recommendations that were not resolved in prior years' reports, and whether government commitments for future action were eventually met. We're pleased to note that most government commitments were fulfilled and here the Grand Jury is equally pleased to share the list of items still outstanding.

Civil Grand Jury Report 2018-2019 Unfulfilled Commitments

THE BEHAVIORAL HEALTH BUDGET: A Perfect Storm

Unresolved Recommendations and Current Status	Implemented
<p>R5 DHS will continue and expedite the Community Based Organization (CBO) contract evaluation and build performance metrics.</p> <p>Current Status: DHS has stated that it drafted and adopted specific budgetary policies and procedures in the summer of 2019 to address this finding. CAO staff continues to work closely with DHS Finance on budgetary matters—through the normal budget cycle and through board items. Despite this response, from 2022 to the present, DHS contract performance has been problematic, and no performance metrics are being published.</p>	No

Civil Grand Jury Report 2019-2020 Updated

All recommendations resolved.

Civil Grand Jury Report 2020-2021 Unfulfilled Commitments

BROADBAND ACCESS IN SONOMA COUNTY: Broadband IS a Utility; The Quiet Crisis of Availability

Unresolved Recommendations and Current Status	Implemented
<p>R1 The Sonoma County Board of Supervisors consider recognizing and designating broadband as a “Utility” that needs prioritization by October 31, 2021.</p> <p>Current Status: On March 2, 2021, the BOS approved a 5-year strategic plan that includes broadband deployment and access. It does not include designation of broadband service as a utility.</p>	Partially, no further follow-up recommended
<p>R4, R7, R8, R9 and R10 Current Status: These recommendations depend on broadband’s being designated as a utility. See R1.</p>	Partially, no further follow-up recommended

COUNTY JAIL INMATE TELEPHONE AND COMMISSARY: Overcharging a Captive Population

Unresolved Recommendations and Current Status	Implemented
<p>R2 By September 30, 2021, the Sheriff's Office develop a new communications model to provide for sufficient telephone kiosks to allow the inmate population free telephone and video visitation for at least 90 minutes per week until such time as a new communication contract is in effect.</p> <p>Current Status: According to the Sheriff's Office, inmates are allowed 70 minutes of phone calls per week at a cost to them of \$.07 per minute. Prior to Covid, inmates were charged \$.21 per minute. There are no additional telephone kiosks in place and there are no video visits.</p>	Partially, no further follow-up recommended
<p>R5 The Sheriff's Office reevaluate its commissary markup to be in line with grocery store, as opposed to convenience store, pricing, on or before September 1, 2021.</p> <p>Current Status: The commissary is now run by Summit, an outside company. More items are available to inmates, some at a lower cost, but many items are still marked up much more than grocery store prices.</p>	Partially complete
<p>R6 By September 30, 2021, the Sheriff's Office, using the reserve Inmate Welfare Trust funds, resume all inmate programs in existence pre-Covid, with funding at the same level once Covid restrictions are lifted.</p> <p>Current Status: According to the Sheriff's Office, inmate programs are being resumed. In-person classes as well as online classes are now offered.</p>	Partially complete
<p>R7 The Sheriff's Office restructure the 10-member Inmate Welfare Trust Committee by December 31, 2021, to include more diverse representation, for example, community members, financial analysts, social workers and educators to bring the Committee more in line with the requirements of Penal Code 5006 regarding commission membership standards to State Prisons.</p> <p>Current Status: The jail does not have to abide by the penal code for state prisons. However, according to the Sheriff's Office there are now two civilians on the Inmate Welfare Trust Committee, including one educator. The remaining committee members are composed of Sheriff's Office staff.</p>	Resolved

COVID MITIGATION AND THE COUNTY JAIL And its Unexpected Consequences

Unresolved Recommendations and Current Status	Implemented
<p>R1 The Sheriff's Office develop, no later than September 1, 2021, a policy to restore out of cell activity, in person and video visitation, and all programs to pre-pandemic levels.</p> <p>Current Status: In-person visits, and some classes and programs for inmates, have been resumed. There is little out-of-cell-activity and there are no video visits.</p>	Partially
<p>R4 The Sheriff's Office and the Board of Supervisors work together to develop a plan by December 31, 2021, to increase the contracted Wellpath resources to fund four additional Wellpath discharge planners for mental health and medical assignment to the Main Adult Detention Facility.</p> <p>Current Status: Wellpath services have increased per 2023-24 Grand Jury report responses.</p>	Resolved
<p>R6 The Sheriff's Office implement a surveillance-testing program and require 100% participation by all unvaccinated jail staff by September 1, 2021.</p> <p>Current Status: The Public Health Order regarding Covid has been rescinded, so the vaccine mandate is no longer applicable.</p>	N/A, Resolved

Civil Grand Jury Report 2021-2022 Updated Responses

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES: Dedication Overcame Dysfunction

Unresolved Recommendations and Current Status	Implemented
<p>R8 By December 31, 2022, the Board of Supervisors will consult with the Human Resources Department to consider establishing an Ombudsperson for County employees to provide a neutral means to voice issues of concern.</p> <p>Current Status: The Human Resources Department responded that it plans to conduct an employee-engagement survey in 2024 to determine the best path forward.</p>	Partially, survey in progress in 2025

<p>R13 By December 31, 2022, the Board of Supervisors and County Administrator's Office work with the Department of Health Services executive leadership team in developing an actionable plan to address work culture issues, including retaliation, harassment and bullying.</p> <p>Current Status: DHS responded that it hired an equity manager in March of 2022 who was then hired away by Marin County. Recruitment is underway to fill this position. DHS developed an equity plan in December of 2022.</p>	Partially, no further follow-up recommended
<p>R14 By December 31, 2022, the Board of Supervisors direct the County Administrator's Office to work with the Department of Health Services' executive leadership team to develop a clearly defined and actionable plan for internal communication that includes greater transparency and staff participation throughout the department.</p> <p>Current Status: DHS responded that it published an internal newsletter, <i>DHS Connect</i>, in the fall of 2022. Video clips of DHS employees were produced in November of 2023 and used in promotional material to recruit staff.</p>	Partially, no further follow-up recommended
<p>R16 By March 1, 2023, the Board of Supervisors direct the County Administrator's Office and the County Human Resources Department to develop a plan for the Board's review and consideration whereby the County Human Resources Department has oversight authority over all satellite human resource divisions.</p> <p>Current Status: The Human Resources Department responded that it will work with a consultant in 2024 to develop recommendations regarding oversight of all satellite-department human resources functions.</p>	Resolved via County organization restructure with all departments reporting to County Exec

SMART DECISION-MAKING: Citizen Feedback is Critical for Success

Unresolved Recommendations and Current Status	Implemented
<p>R4 By January 31, 2023, the Board of Directors require written Citizen's Oversight Committee analysis and recommendations prior to all strategic decisions whether or not incorporated in the five-year Strategic Plan.</p> <p>Current Status: The COC bylaws require the COC to issue reports, on at least an annual basis, on issues related to the Strategic Plan, but not on all strategic decisions.</p>	Partially resolved

In summary, the tables above give an update of the recommendations of the Civil Grand Jury reports of 2018-2019, 2019-2020, 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 that were unanswered when the follow-up reports were published. While there are still unresolved issues, this update shows the progress made after the Civil Grand Juries' terms expired.