

# GRASS VALLEY CITY GOVERNMENT

## REASON FOR THE INVESTIGATION

The Nevada County Civil Grand Jury may investigate the incorporated cities within the county. In addition the Grand Jury received a formal complaint regarding management practices within the City of Grass Valley (City).

## PROCEDURE FOLLOWED

During the investigation the Grand Jury interviewed the following:

- A city council member
- City Administrator Gene Haroldsen
- Newly appointed Police Chief
- Newly appointed Community Development Director
- City Planner
- Associate Planner
- Two former department superintendents
- City Engineer/Director of Public Works
- County Agricultural Commissioner
- The complainant

The Grand Jury reviewed the September 17, 1998, progress report on goals and objectives of the City, General Plan, Civil Service Rules and Regulations, police recruitment informational announcements and the Grass Valley Redevelopment Plan. Members attended Grass Valley City Council meetings and a meeting of the Personnel Commission. An inspection of the Grass Valley Wastewater Treatment Plant was conducted.

## FINDINGS

1. The City has hired its first Community Development Director who will supervise the planning, building and future developments of the City. A new police chief, fire chief and public works and park superintendent were recently hired.
2. The City is undertaking several projects involving annexation and development before the completion of the updated general plan. Future annexations will increase the City's approximate acreage from 2500 to 4500 acres.
3. The 1982 General Plan has been modified from time to time and is in the process of being revised with completion expected by July 1999.

4. The City has recently completed the reconstruction and landscaping of Main Street. Preparation for the street's resurfacing involved additional costs because of unforeseen below-surface problems.
5. The City is currently involved in several other projects, including planning for a hotel/conference center, a major upgrading of City Hall and a new combination fire station/classroom facility at Sierra College.
6. A goals and objectives plan is formulated by the City at the beginning of each fiscal year with updated information provided periodically.
7. Some City employees have expressed concern that the City administration in its determination to achieve its goals is pressuring its workers into stressful conditions. While the City has kept a balanced budget, staff has been reduced, causing some managers to be responsible for several departments. Various department employees expressed the need for more administrative support and improved communication.
8. The City's present sewage capacity is 1.72 million gallons a day, average dry weather flow, and the City is operating at this capacity. Expansion of the Wastewater Treatment Plant will provide a planned capacity of 2.78 million gallons. Expansion is due to begin in April or May of 1999, and is scheduled to be completed within two years at a cost of 9.3 million dollars.
9. The City, through its recently initiated newsletter, Grass Valley City Messenger, invited its citizens to participate on various boards, commissions and committees. A survey was conducted in which the public was asked to express their opinion of several areas of city performance. While the City has recorded the public responses, it has yet to publish another Grass Valley City Messenger presenting this information to the public.
10. The City conducted a police recruitment program in the fall of 1998 that produced only eight applications. The statewide average is 100 applications to fill one vacancy. An effort had been made to improve the recruitment process, but the procedure had to be repeated because of the poor response. At the time of this review, the City had no female police officers.
11. Currently, the City and Nevada County operate separate animal shelters. The Nevada County Agricultural Commissioner has jurisdiction over the county animal shelter, and the police chief has jurisdiction over the city animal shelter. Informal talks on combining some of the operations have taken place without resolution.

## CONCLUSIONS

1. The consolidation of planning, building and future development of the City under the Community Development Director should provide increased communication between departments and better service to the public.

2. Some employees feel pressured by increased responsibilities and decreased recognition. They are not encouraged to give input to management regarding their areas of expertise. The City has managed to operate within its budget at the cost of reducing staff, training programs and motivational incentives. City employees are to be commended for their response to the downsizing.
3. The publication of a newsletter is a valuable tool for keeping in touch with the community, particularly during the current period of growth and development. It offers an opportunity for the City to demonstrate its interest in public opinion.
4. The City's plan for expansion of the Wastewater Treatment Plant specifies a capacity that may be inadequate for proposed expansion needs.
5. The City's police recruitment problem is not only a City concern, but also one for Nevada County and the state.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

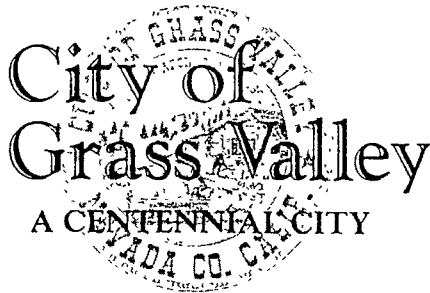
1. The City should finalize the update of the General Plan before continuing its aggressive annexation and development plans.
2. The City Administrator and department managers should develop a plan to balance departmental workload and improve internal communications.
3. The City should publish its newsletter, Grass Valley City Messenger, on a quarterly basis for better communication between the administration and the community.
4. The incorporated cities and the county should coordinate their law enforcement recruitment effort to create a larger pool of qualified applicants. Cooperative meetings have already started on this subject, and the Grand Jury recommends that they continue.
5. The City and Nevada County should re-establish formal discussions on consolidating or combining their respective animal control shelters.

## **RESPONSES**

City Administrator  
Due August, 30, 1999

Grass Valley City Council  
Due September 30, 1999

Rec 8/13/99 DS



**CITY COUNCIL**  
**BILL HULLENDER, MAYOR**  
**LINDA STEVENS, VICE MAYOR**  
**PATTI INGRAM**  
**GERARD TASSONE**  
**JOHN A. TAYLOR**  
  
**GENE HAROLDSSEN**  
**CITY ADMINISTRATOR**

July 14, 1999

125 EAST MAIN STREET  
GRASS VALLEY, CA 95945  
(530) 274-4310 FAX: 274-4399

Honorable Carl Bryan II  
Presiding Judge of the Nevada County Courts  
201 Church Street  
Nevada City, CA 95959

RE: Response to the 1998-99 Grand Jury Report

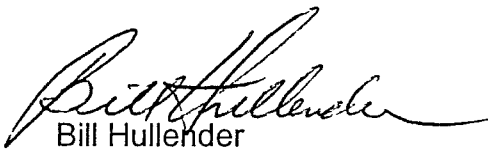
Your Honor,

This letter is the City of Grass Valley's response to the 1998-1999 Grand Jury Report. We appreciate the interest that members of the Grand Jury had in the City, the time that went into their review and the efforts made in preparing this report.

Because of the number of findings, conclusions and recommendations, each of which deserve to be carefully reviewed and commented upon, we have responded in the attached detailed report. This response was discussed and approved by City Council at its July 13, 1999 meeting:

If you have any questions, please contact us. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Bill Hullender  
Mayor



Gene Haroldsen  
City Administrator

Attachment: Detailed Response to 1998-1999 Grand Jury Report

cc: City Council  
Lorraine Jewitt-Burdick, Nevada County Clerk / Recorder  
Claude Biddle, City Attorney  
John Foster, Chief of Police  
Rudi Golnik, Director of Public Works / City Engineer  
Kyle Kollar, Community Development Director  
Bobbi Poznik, City Clerk

**CITY OF GRASS VALLEY  
DETAILED RESPONSE TO THE 1998-1999 GRAND JURY REPORT**

**FINDINGS**

1. *The City has hired its first Community Development Director who will supervise the planning, building and future developments of the City. A new police chief, fire chief and public works and park superintendent were recently hired.*

**Response:** The City agrees with this finding.

2. *The City is undertaking several projects involving annexation and development before the completion of the updated general plan. Future annexations will increase the City's approximate acreage from 2500 to 4500 acres.*

**Response:** The City disagrees with this finding. Although the City has approved annexation agreements with the owners of Loma Rica Ranch (452 acres), Northstar (760 acres) and Kenny Ranch (363 acres), only Loma Rica Ranch has been submitted to Nevada County LAFCo for processing in advance of the City's General Plan Update. In fact, Council specifically directed that the Northstar EIR be coordinated with the General Plan Update EIR and the annexation of Kenny Ranch remains several years away. The City continues to actively process other small annexations (totaling less than 100 acres) in cooperation with LAFCo.

3. *The 1982 General Plan has been modified from time to time and is in the process of being revised with completion expected by July 1999.*

**Response:** The City agrees with this finding; however, it is noted that the General Plan Update is now anticipated to be completed by September 1999.

4. *The City has recently completed the reconstruction and landscaping of Main Street. Preparation for the street's resurfacing involved additional costs because of unforeseen below-surface problems.*

**Response:** The City agrees with this finding.

5. *The City is currently involved in several other projects, including planning for a hotel/conference center, a major upgrading of City Hall and a new combination fire station/classroom facility at Sierra College.*

**Response:** The City agrees with this finding.

6. *A goals and objectives plan is formulated by the City at the beginning of each fiscal year with updated information provided periodically.*

**Response:** The City agrees with this finding.

7. *Some City employees have expressed concern that the City administration in its determination to achieve its goals is pressuring its workers into stressful*

conditions. While the City has kept a balanced budget, staff has been reduced, causing some managers to be responsible for several departments. Various department employees expressed the need for more administrative support and improved communication.

**Response:** Since Grand Jury interviews are private, the City is not in a position to agree or disagree with this finding. It is acknowledged that due to the State's previous budget actions (i.e. ERAF) that the City has been forced to operate within tight financial constraints and implemented numerous fiscal measures. These included reorganizing to eliminate the need for several management and other positions when such employees retired or departed. The City's workforce reached a low of 88.2 full time equivalents (FTEs) in FY94-95. In FY98-99 the City was able to increase its workforce to 95 FTEs, which is nearly the same as in FY92-93. To fulfill the expectations of the Grass Valley's constituents, the City has a heavy workload of service requests and projects.

8. *The City's present sewage capacity is 1.72 million gallons a day, average dry weather flow, and the City is operating at this capacity. Expansion of the Wastewater Treatment Plant will provide a planned capacity of 2.78 million gallons. Expansion is due to begin in April or May of 1999, and is scheduled to be completed within two years at a cost of 9.3 million dollars.*

**Response:** The City agrees with this finding.

9. *The City, through its recently initiated newsletter, Grass Valley City Messenger invited its citizens to participate on various boards, commissions and committees. A survey was conducted in which the public was asked to express their opinion of several areas of city performance. While the City has recorded the public responses, it has yet to publish another Grass Valley City Messenger presenting this information to the public.*

**Response:** The City agrees with this finding; however, it is noted that another City Messenger was published and distributed in June, which included public responses from the last newsletter.

10. *The City conducted a police recruitment program in the fall of 1998 that produced only eight applications. The statewide average is 100 applications to fill one vacancy. An effort had been made to improve the recruitment process, but the procedure had to be repeated because of the poor response. At the time of this review, the City had no female police officers.*

**Response:** The City agrees with this finding.

11. *Currently, the City and Nevada County operate separate animal shelters. The Nevada County Agricultural Commissioner has jurisdiction over the county animal shelter, and the police chief has jurisdiction over the city animal shelter. Informal talks on combining some of the operations have taken place without resolution.*

**Response:** The City agrees with this finding.

## CONCLUSIONS

1. *The consolidation of planning, building and future development of the City under the Community Development Director should provide increased communication between departments and better service to the public.*

**Response:** The City agrees with this conclusion.

2. *Some employees feel pressured by increased responsibilities and decreased recognition. They are not encouraged to give input to management regarding their areas of expertise. The City has managed to operate within its budget at the cost of reducing staff, training programs and motivational incentives. City employees are to be commended for their response to the downsizing.*

**Response:** The City disagrees with part of this conclusion. The City has employee recognition programs such as Employee of the Month, Employee / Manager of the Year, Firefighter of the Year, Service Awards, etc. In their areas of expertise, employee input to management is welcome and appreciated. The City concurs with the reality of having to operate within its budget and the commendation of its employees for their responsiveness and commitment.

3. *The publication of a newsletter is a valuable tool for keeping in touch with the community, particularly during the current period of growth and development. It offers an opportunity for the City to demonstrate its interest in public opinion.*

**Response:** The City agrees with this conclusion.

4. *The City's plan for expansion of the Wastewater Treatment Plant specifies a capacity that may be inadequate for proposed expansion needs.*

**Response:** The City disagrees with this conclusion. The 2.78 mgd sizing of the Wastewater Treatment Plant was analyzed in the Environmental Impact Report and based on the "most probable" population level identified in the Menkin / Lucero population analysis. The expansion will provide the City with 5,000 equivalent dwelling units (EDUs). Historically, the City has been utilizing 100 to 150 EDUs per year. This expansion should provide the City with sufficient sewer capacity for at least the next 20 years.

5. *The City's police recruitment problem is not only a City concern, but also one for Nevada County and the state.*

**Response:** The City agrees with this conclusion.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. *The City should finalize the update of the General Plan before continuing its aggressive annexation and development plans.*

**Response:** The City disagrees with this recommendation. The City's existing General Plan is legal, valid and legitimate for all purposes. The City does not have "aggressive" annexation and development plans. The City responds to residents and property owners who seek to annex in order to obtain municipal type services. The City carefully manages its annexations and plans its growth.

2. *The City Administrator and department managers should develop a plan to balance departmental workload and improve internal communications.*

**Response:** The City agrees with this recommendation. The FY99-00 budget included funding for a Personnel & Labor Relations Coordinator, who should certainly help in this effort.

3. *The City should publish its newsletter, Grass Valley City Messenger, on a quarterly basis for better communication between the administration and the community.*

**Response:** To publish and distribute an edition of the City Messenger costs \$3,579. Because of the costs and the desire to keep it informative, the City Messenger is currently published twice a year. Consideration of increasing the frequency of publication will occur in conjunction with future budget deliberations.

4. *The incorporated cities and the county should coordinate their law enforcement recruitment effort to create a larger pool of qualified applicants. Cooperative meetings have already started on this subject, and the Grand Jury recommends that they continue.*

**Response:** The City agrees with this recommendation.

5. *The City and Nevada County should re-establish formal discussions on consolidating or combining their respective animal control shelters.*

**Response:** The City disagrees with this recommendation. Previous reviews of consolidating or combining the animal shelters have concluded that it is not feasible. The City's shelter is well suited and located to serve the residents of Grass Valley and Nevada City. Unfortunately, the County's shelter has a significant debt load, deed restrictions which restrict its reuse and lacks municipal water / sewer services. Though the City remains open to working with the County in cooperative training or other opportunities, further review of consolidating or combining animal shelters remains pointless.