

# **Nevada County Courthouse Holding Facility**

## **Summary**

The replacement/remodel of the Nevada County Courthouse in Nevada City has gone from being an approved project to being placed on indefinite delay. The California Penal Code requires the Nevada County Grand Jury to annually inspect the holding facility located in the Nevada County Courthouse as to its condition and management.

Although the holding facility was determined to be adequate, the Nevada County Grand Jury found two areas of concern regarding safety of inmates, court and county employees, and independent contractors. A previous Nevada County Grand Jury report issued in 2010-11 identified the need for additional surveillance cameras in the parking garage of the facility. The response to that report stated the California Superior Court did not have the funding to accommodate the recommendation. The 2012-13 Nevada County Grand Jury has determined the cost would be minor, given the need to protect those using the facility, and the cost would be shared by Nevada County and the California Superior Court. The Nevada County Grand Jury also found that no formalized security training is provided to court and county personnel.

The Nevada County Grand Jury recommends that these areas of concern be addressed promptly by both the Nevada County Sheriff and the Nevada County Superior Court.

## **Reasons for Investigation**

California Penal Code Section 919(b) requires: “The grand jury shall inquire into the condition and management of the public prisons within the county.” The Nevada County Grand Jury (Jury) defines public prisons as any adult or juvenile correction or detention facility within the county.

## **Background**

The Nevada County Courthouse (Courthouse) has occupied the present location since 1855. The current courthouse was completed in 1865, replacing the previous one destroyed by fire. In 1900, the building was remodeled and in 1936-37, an extensive renovation of the building was done under the depression-era Works Project Administration (WPA). The courthouse annex was added in 1963. It housed the county jail until the building of the Wayne Brown Correctional Facility in 1992 and still houses the court holding facility. The Courthouse is

jointly owned by the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) of the State of California and Nevada County.

The Jury is aware that the AOC plans to replace or remodel the Courthouse at some time in the future. That project has been placed on indefinite delay due to lack of funding.

The 2010-11 Jury issued a report on the holding facility which recommended a number of changes regarding security of inmates, courthouse employees, and the public.

### **Procedures Followed**

The Jury inspected the holding facility at the Courthouse on August 16, 2012 and interviewed staff. The Jury also interviewed members of the court staff and County Facilities Management. The Jury also verified that recommendations agreed to by the Nevada County Sheriff (Sheriff) subsequent to the 2010-11 report had been implemented.

### **Facts**

- F.A.1.** The fenced and gated area, commonly known as a sally port, allows inmates to be loaded and unloaded in a secure area before being taken to the holding cells.
- F.A.2.** The 2010-11 Jury recommended that the Sheriff should direct staff in the proper use of the sally port for loading and unloading of all inmates.
- F.A.3.** In-custody inmate movement between the holding cells and the courtrooms takes place in unsecured public corridors.
- F.A.4.** The 2010-11 Jury recommended that the Sheriff should direct staff to clear individuals from hallways when inmates are moved to courtrooms.
- F.A.5.** The parking garage is used by Sheriff's personnel, court and county employees, and independent contractors.
- F.A.6.** There are surveillance cameras installed throughout the Courthouse and the parking garage which are monitored by Sheriff's personnel.
- F.A.7.** The surveillance cameras installed in the parking garage do not provide viewing of all sections of the garage.
- F.A.8.** The 2010-11 Jury recommended that additional cameras be installed in the parking garage to ensure the safety of both Sheriff's personnel and court employees.
- F.A.9.** The recommendation for additional cameras was not implemented due to the lack of funding through the AOC.
- F.A.10.** Nevada County Facilities Management provided the Jury with an estimate of \$6400.00 to install three additional surveillance cameras in the parking garage.

- F.A.11.** Costs for additional cameras in the parking garage would be shared by the County and the courts, through a formula based on their percentage of usage of the garage space.
- F.A.12.** The Chief Executive Officer of the Superior Court is responsible for security throughout the facility.
- F.A.13.** No formalized security awareness training is provided to court and county employees.
- F.A.14.** Although the Superior Court is not required to respond to a Jury report, a representative of the Superior Court indicated that a response would be provided.

### **Findings**

- F.I.1** The sally port is now being properly used by staff.
- F.I.2** Staff is now clearing individuals from hallways when inmates are moved to and from courtrooms.
- F.I.3** The cost of installing additional surveillance cameras is justifiable when personal safety is at stake.
- F.I.4** The lack of formal security awareness training poses a potential risk to personnel.
- F.I.5** The inability to monitor all sections of the parking garage endangers those using the garage.

### **Recommendations**

- R.1.** The Nevada County Sheriff should promptly coordinate with the Nevada County Superior Court to provide additional surveillance cameras in the parking garage.
- R.2.** The Chief Executive Officer of the Superior Court should ensure that all personnel receive formalized security awareness training.

### **Responses**

Nevada County Sheriff: Date: July 30, 2013

Nevada County Superior Court: Date: July 30, 2013