

PANHANDLERS, VAGRANTS AND TRANSIENTS IN A NEIGHBORHOOD NEAR YOU?

Summary

The Nevada County Grand Jury is authorized to investigate all aspects of city and county government. It became obvious to members of the Nevada County Grand Jury that the number of panhandlers, vagrants and transients has increased in western Nevada County in recent years and is becoming highly visible. In addition, it is apparent there is a criminal element and behavior within this population that is causing additional expense to local law enforcement and other city and county agencies, as well as negatively impacting local businesses, residents, and visitors to this area. Some have identified this as a blight on our community.

Numerous community members are also aware and concerned about this situation, as witnessed by the unusually high number of news articles, Letters to the Editor, and Other Voices columns appearing in *The Union*, which have all given attention to, and expressed frustration over this growing problem.

To quote one community leader interviewed during this investigation, “The degree of the problem is related to the attitude of the community and the tolerance of its leaders.”

Retail businesses have incurred losses in excess of \$200,000 due to theft, vandalism and shoplifting.

Members of the Nevada County Grand Jury are also aware that the 49er Fire in 1988 was started by a homeless man in his illegal camp. The Nevada County Grand Jury is concerned that a fire in this drought year could have catastrophic results.

After an extensive investigation, the Nevada County Grand Jury found the following:

- Existing laws, code and ordinances are not being used to effectively reduce the complaints about panhandlers, vagrants and transients.
- None of the agencies involved accurately track time and costs associated with complaints against the targeted population.
- Well-meaning efforts by volunteer groups have unintended negative consequences.
- The increased appearance of “blight” is affecting the quality of life for both residents and visitors to the area.

The Nevada County Grand Jury concluded the report with the following recommendations for the Nevada County Board of Supervisors:

- Direct the Community Development Agency to work in conjunction with the Nevada County Sheriff and other city and county agencies to enforce existing codes and regulations to reduce the number of hazardous encampments.
- Direct the Information Technology Department to design and implement a tracking and reporting system to enable city and county departments to determine how much money and other resources are being spent on the problem.
- Take the lead in establishing an inter-jurisdictional task force with members from city and county law enforcement and fire, probation, Code Compliance, Environmental Health, homeless advocates, the chambers of commerce and interested citizens to develop a plan, using existing laws and codes, for improving the situation.

The Nevada County Grand Jury also recommends that the Grass Valley City Council examine the benefits of establishing a foot patrol in Grass Valley.

The Nevada County Grand Jury recognizes that any discussion of the homeless problem is politically challenging. There is a fine line between providing needed services to a deserving population and enabling or encouraging the less desirable element.

Reasons for Investigation

The Nevada County Grand Jury (Jury) is authorized to investigate all aspects of city and county government. It became obvious to members of the Jury that the number of panhandlers, vagrants and transients has increased in western Nevada County in recent years and is becoming highly visible. In addition, there appears to be a criminal element and behavior within this population that is causing additional expense to local law enforcement and other city and county agencies, as well as negatively impacting local businesses, residents, and visitors to this area. Some have identified this as a blight on our community.

Numerous community members are also aware and concerned about this situation, as witnessed by the unusually high number of news articles, Letters to the Editor, and Other Voices columns appearing in *The Union*, which have all given attention to, and expressed frustration over this growing problem.

To quote one community leader interviewed during this investigation, “The degree of the problem is related to the attitude of the community and the tolerance of its leaders.”

Background

For purposes of this report, panhandlers, vagrants and transients (PVTs) are defined as follows:

- Panhandler – a person who confronts and begs from people on the street or other public places.

- Vagrant & Transient – one who intentionally wanders from place to place without a permanent home or any obvious means of livelihood.

The current population also includes career criminals, one who is habitual, a repeater, and lives by means of a criminal life style and is often addicted to alcohol and/or drugs. These criminals are committing illegal acts which require investigation, arrest and prosecution, services provided by the already strained law enforcement community.

The 2008-09 Nevada County Grand Jury released a report entitled “*Helping Hands for the Homeless/Needy in Nevada County*”. This report was intended to be informational in nature, and listed services provided by Nevada County, as well as a number of non-profit organizations. These services still exist, and are doing an outstanding job as far as their resources permit. That report defines the homeless population as: “*those that prefer the homeless lifestyle, the drug and alcohol addicted, mentally challenged, disabled, and those that are victims of our economic downturn.*”

Members of the Jury are also aware that the 49er Fire in 1988 was started by a homeless man in his illegal camp. The Jury is concerned that a fire in this drought year could have catastrophic results.

The Jury recognizes that any discussion of the homeless problem is politically challenging. There is a fine line between providing needed services to a deserving population and enabling or encouraging the less desirable, and often criminal, element which is the subject of this report. The report is not implying that all homeless people and the mentally ill are criminals and responsible for the concern of the report; rather it is aimed at attempting to focus on the identified criminal behaviors.

Procedures Followed

In order to gather information on this extensive problem, the Jury conducted a significant number of interviews with a broad cross section of Nevada City, Grass Valley, and Nevada County elected officials, along with government officials including city and county department heads including but not limited to, police and fire departments, animal control, public works departments, sheriff’s office and social services.

In addition, the Jury interviewed City of Auburn staff, homeless advocates, non-profit organization leaders, small business owners, large retail business owners, representatives of Chambers of Commerce, and a variety of citizens concerned with this issue. Jury members also conducted numerous site visits including some encampment areas.

The Jury found it difficult in some cases to gather statistics. Many respondents stated they did not keep records or track costs, problems, damage, calls for service, etc. by a grouping of PVT-related. However, because of all the problems experienced in 2013-2014, several agencies were initiating a new tracking system in order to be able to monitor costs/calls/actions/etc. of PVT activities or problems. Those agencies providing information to the Jury for this report stated that their numbers were probably on the low or conservative

side, and therefore may not accurately identify complete, actual numbers of incidents or costs.

Facts

Fa. 1 To quote several community leaders interviewed during this investigation:

- *“The degree of the problem is related to the attitude of the community and the tolerance of its leaders.”*
- *“The quality of life here is going downhill and it’s worth protecting.”*
- *“Some stores may be willing to tolerate the behavior (shoplifting) and absorb the loss; our community should not.”*

Fa. 2 One interviewee who is extremely experienced in working with this population of people in our area stated:

- Most PVTs are males with drug and alcohol addiction problems.
- They do not take responsibility for their condition and do not seek treatment.
- Their behavior is not healthy to themselves or our community.
- Their camps resemble a third world site with dangerous trash and potential health issues for the community as a whole.
- The majority of PVTs are not willing to be rehabilitated.

Fa. 3 The Jury was advised that this population is increasing, along with its associated costs, and will continue to grow if left unchecked.

Fa. 4 The growing PVT population in our area includes a high percentage of individuals involved in criminal behavior, and individuals with outstanding court warrants.

Fa. 5 There are a number of PVT encampments within the city limits of Grass Valley, Nevada City and in Nevada County (County). These camps are in violation of city and county health, sanitation and safety regulations.

Fa. 6 PVTs use city and county jurisdictional lines to avoid prosecution.

Fa. 7 Negative impacts are associated with PVT activity:

- Many witnesses stated panhandlers are aggressive and threatening, and have been seen to be openly dealing drugs.
- Their behavior causes ill will at businesses or areas of town.
- Customers and visitors do not typically return to that business or town when they have been intimidated.
- Some business owners fear for their personal safety and that of their employees, particularly when arriving at work in the early, dark hours of the morning and leaving with nightly deposits.

- PVTs occupy benches and tables in front of businesses for long periods of time; some businesses have had to remove their outdoor furniture.
- Cigarette butts litter the area.
- Depending on PVT behavior and appearance, potential customers and visitors feel vulnerable, and females in particular find it disquieting.
- Even a Chamber of Commerce office worker stated she felt uncomfortable when the PVTs come in her office to use the restroom.

Fa. 8 Nearly all of the business owners interviewed stated that many customers have told them they won't return to town because of threatening and aggressive panhandling, visible drug use and dealing, smoking, drunken behavior, dogs and offensive language.

Fa. 9 Police estimate the PVT population to be approximately 100-200 just in the greater Grass Valley area.

Fa. 10 Officials stated that the community is too accommodating to the PVT population, which attracts them to the area.

Fa. 11 A variety of elected officials, business owners, and law enforcement personnel agree that some feeding and shelter programs attract additional PVTs by accommodating their needs.

Fa. 12 One witness stated that the feeding programs cause the PVTs to come together in a group. They then begin drinking, empower each other, at which time a pack mentality sets in and boisterous behavior begins.

Fa. 13 Grass Valley has enacted Ordinance 718 – The Good Neighbor Ordinance – which added Chapter 8.48 to the Municipal Code. This holds property owners responsible for acts committed by or enabled by their tenants. Grass Valley has additional codes and/or ordinances in place to prevent:

- smoking in the historic district,
- loitering,
- panhandling,
- California Penal Code §647 provides law enforcement with additional tools to address panhandlers.

Fa. 14 Nevada City has an ordinance prohibiting smoking in the historic area or in any city owned areas.

Fa. 15 Most witnesses stated the above ordinances are rarely enforced.

Fa. 16 Nevada City has a foot patrol officer assigned to the downtown area when staffing is available, which helps curtail undesirable activities.

Fa. 17 The Grass Valley Police Department does not have a foot patrol officer.

Fa. 18 Panhandling, loitering, drug dealing/using and shoplifting are common problems at several shopping centers, and have increased in recent years. Some stores do not report these behaviors for fear of retaliation, of being sued, or for the lack of results from the criminal justice system.

Fa. 19 Grass Valley business owners in areas near one of the camps report losses as follows:

- One owner estimates his losses at \$20,000 in 2013.
- Another owner estimates his costs and losses in excess of \$50,000 per year.
- A third owner estimates his losses from vandalism and theft at \$10,000 per year.
- The third owner also had to replace the security system which was recently stolen, at an additional cost of \$10,000.

Fa. 20 A major retail business in Grass Valley loses an estimated \$100,000 annually due to shoplifting.

Fa. 21 Enforcement of PVT behavior is often treated as a low priority for law enforcement.

Fa. 22 10 to 15% of the calls for Grass Valley Animal Control services were for PVT animals.

Fa. 23 Business owners stated they receive little or no support from the city councils or the chambers of commerce to address the PVT problem.

Fa. 24 Very few of the business owners interviewed participated in meetings with other owners and/or officials to try to find solutions to the problems.

Fa. 25 Community volunteers erected temporary housing, constructed of plywood walls with galvanized roofs at the Sugar Loaf Mountain location. These structures are referred to as Micro Houses.

Fa. 26 After construction, residents of the Sugar Loaf Mountain camp:

- dismantled these structures, using the galvanized roof, insecticides and an electrical charge to produce a substance similar to methamphetamine,
- modified the Micro Houses and expanded them into larger units,
- abandoned some of the Micro Houses; they are rotting in place.

Fa. 27 Grass Valley Police Department staff provided the following information:

- For the year 2013, there were 597 calls for services which used the terms panhandler, transient, homeless or squatter.
- There were 27 citations issued.

- An officer's average salary (\$53 per hour with benefits), average time of call for service (15 minutes), average report writing time (40 minutes) and average time to write and issue citation (15 minutes).

Fa. 28 Nevada City Police Department staff provided the following costs:

- The officer labor rate per hour including benefits is \$45.
- There are 15 to 20 calls for service per week under the transient category which result in costs of approximately \$225 per week.
- Five of these calls per week result in booking at the County Jail (2 hours each times \$45 of Officer salary times 5 bookings = \$450 per week).
- The total per week is estimated at \$675 which works out to \$36,400 per year.
- Another cost factor is the foot patrol officer's time which was not included in these estimates.

Fa. 29 Nevada County Sheriff's Office staff provided the following information for 2013:

- 138 calls for service involving the word transient.
- Average time on scene 31 minutes.
- Additional time for writing report is not tracked.
- Response time to and from the scene was not included.

Fa. 30 Nevada City Public Works Department staff estimates the following costs:

- A public restroom takes about \$100 dollars a week to clean up under normal usage. If someone puts human waste on the walls, it will take a crew of two people a couple of extra hours using a pressure washer to clean the walls and floors.
- About once a month, a door is broken on a restroom and an estimated cost is \$500 to repair that damage.
- The total cost to clean up the restrooms is \$5,000 per year with no vandalism. If vandalism is taken in to account, figure about \$10,000 per year.
- One or two of the Public Works crew handle the restrooms on a daily basis. The Police Department is supposed to lock these up at night, but often misses that task. The result is more damage.
- The camp on Sugar Loaf was cleaned up, but the cost was several thousand dollars from the Public Works budget. Volunteer labor and a donation of a Waste Management dumpster lessened the taxpayer cost for this activity.
- A major cost item is the theft of paper products from public restrooms which costs the city about \$3,500 per year.

Fa. 31 Grass Valley Public Works Department staff stated that:

- they have seen an increased transient population in their parks and facilities,
- they do not track the costs associated with transient problems,

- some Grass Valley residents have complained about PVT problems in parks and facilities; the residents have chosen not to use those facilities any more.

Fa. 32 Upon contact with law enforcement and fire personnel many PVTs exhibit aggressive behavior, are under the influence of drugs and alcohol, have a criminal history and have aggressive dogs.

Fa. 33 Fire service personnel reported that often they cannot take action on PVT-related calls until law enforcement arrives to assist.

Fa. 34 Fire personnel reported that transient encampments are found to have serious sanitation issues.

Fa. 35 The Nevada County Consolidated Fire District (NCCFD) estimated emergency response costs for transient calls within the NCCFD service area, including Nevada City and Grass Valley, to be \$90,000 per year.

Fa. 36 In 2013, between 250 and 300 calls directly related to PVT activities were received by NCCFD, including the following:

- fires at encampments,
- fires in dumpsters,
- fires in abandoned houses,
- EMT calls.

Fa. 37 Nevada County Social Services has checks and balances in place in an effort to prevent providing services to unqualified applicants.

Fa. 38 Within Nevada County Community Development Agency (CDA) is the Code Compliance Division (CC). CC is responsible to enforce regulations for:

- Building Code violations,
- California State Housing Law for minimum standards for safe and sanitary housing,
- solid waste,
- zoning requirements for land use.

Fa. 39 The Mission Statement of the Code Compliance Division is as follows:

“It is the mission of the Code Compliance Program to work in partnership with the people of Nevada County to promote and maintain a healthy, safe and desirable living and working environment. Code Compliance helps maintain or improve the quality of the community by administering a fair and unbiased enforcement program to correct violations of codes and ordinances enacted by the Board of Supervisors in regards to property, buildings, and structures. “

Fa. 40 CC administrative staff stated that, when complaints related to transient camps are received they are referred to NCSO for trespass investigations. There is a verbal policy that CC will not investigate the health and safety issues associated with PVT encampments. The imminent health and safety issues are:

- solid waste,
- substandard housing,
- no sewage systems to handle human waste,
- no safe water sources.

Fa. 41 CC is empowered to address the imminent health hazards associated with PVT encampments by issuing citations for criminal prosecution authorized in the Land Use and Development Code. The individual(s) responsible for the violation may be cited.

Fa. 42 There is no evidence of enforcement activity by CC at the encampments.

Fa. 43 Infrequent inter-jurisdictional sweeps of the camps have been conducted by personnel from law enforcement, fire, probation, city and county. These sweeps generally result in numerous arrests for outstanding warrants and other criminal activities.

Fa. 44 It has been at least 18 months since CC participated in one of the inter-jurisdictional sweeps.

Findings

Fi. 1 The numbers of PVTs, their visibility, aggressive behavior and the problems they create have increased several-fold in recent years.

Fi. 2 The problems with PVTs will continue to increase until city and county leaders seriously address the problem.

Fi. 3 It is only a matter of time until a health incident or a serious fire occurs in one of the illegal camps.

Fi. 4 City and Chamber officials fail to recognize the seriousness of the problem, choosing to concentrate their efforts on increasing tourist traffic, and encouraging people to shop locally, when the saturation of PVTs causes the opposite effect.

Fi. 5 In some cases, citizens who provide free food, free shelter, and other gifts to PVTs, though well-intended, typically create new problems as well as enable and perpetuate the PVT population.

Fi. 6 Enforcement actions authorized by law and/or codes, which are the responsibility of city and county agencies, are woefully lacking in their consistency and continuity of effort.

- Fi. 7** The Nevada City Police Department foot patrol is effective.
- Fi. 8** Business owners and members of the community rarely report illegal PVT behavior.
- Fi. 9** Mixed jurisdictions and agency responsibilities can complicate enforcement efforts.
- Fi. 10** Very few city and county agencies accurately track incidents or costs associated with PVTs.
- Fi. 11** Locking the restrooms in public facilities nightly would lessen the damage caused by PVTs.
- Fi. 12** CC has the responsibility and the tools necessary to remedy the sub-standard conditions found in PVT encampments, but does not enforce these statutes.
- Fi. 13** The CDA and CC fail to follow their own mission statement and do not investigate the complaints directed at PVT encampments. This allows imminent health and safety conditions to continue and worsen.
- Fi. 14** An inter-jurisdictional task force with members from city and county law enforcement and fire, probation, Code Compliance, Environmental Health, homeless advocates, the chambers of commerce and interested citizens should be able to come up with a plan, using existing laws and codes, for resolving the situation with the PVTs.

Recommendations

- R. 1** The Nevada County Board of Supervisors should direct the Community Development Agency to work in conjunction with the Nevada County Sheriff's Office and other city and county agencies to enforce existing codes and regulations to reduce the number of hazardous encampments.
- R. 2** The Grass Valley City Council should examine the benefits of establishing a foot patrol in Grass Valley.
- R. 3** The Nevada County Board of Supervisors should take the lead in establishing an inter-jurisdictional task force with members from city and county law enforcement and fire, probation, Code Compliance, Environmental Health, mental health professionals, homeless advocates, the chambers of commerce and interested citizens to develop a plan, using existing laws and codes, for improving the situation with the PVTs.
- R. 4** The Nevada County Board of Supervisors should direct the Information Technology Department to design and implement a tracking and reporting system to enable city and county departments to determine how much money is being spent on the PVT problem.

Responses

Grass Valley City Council

Findings 2, 4, 6

Recommendation 2

Due Date: September 27, 2014

Nevada County Board of Supervisors

Findings 2, 3, 6, 9, 10, 12-14

Recommendations 1, 3, 4

Due Date: September 27, 2014

COUNTY OF NEVADA
STATE OF CALIFORNIA
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS



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September 16, 2014

The Honorable Thomas Anderson
Presiding Judge of the Nevada County Grand Jury
Nevada County Courthouse
201 Church Street
Nevada City, CA 95959

Re: Board of Supervisors' Responses to the 2013-14 Nevada County Civil Grand Jury Report,
Panhandlers, Vagrants and Transients, In a Neighborhood Near You?

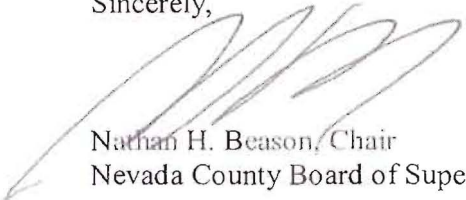
Dear Judge Anderson:

As required by California Penal Code Section 933, the Board of Supervisors hereby submits its responses to the 2013-14 Nevada County Civil Grand Jury Report, dated June 27, 2014, entitled *Panhandlers, Vagrants and Transients, In a Neighborhood Near You?*

These responses to the Grand Jury's Findings and Recommendations were approved by the Board of Supervisors at their special meeting on September 16, 2014. The Responses are based on either personal knowledge, examination of official County records, information received from the County Executive Officer (Department of Social Services), or the Board of Supervisors and County staff members.

The Board of Supervisors would like to thank the members of the 2013-14 Grand Jury for their participation and effort in preparing their Reports, and their participation in the Grand Jury process.

Sincerely,


Nathan H. Beason, Chair
Nevada County Board of Supervisors

cc: ✓ Keith Overbey, Foreman, Grand Jury
Rick Haffey, County Executive Officer

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NEVADA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS RESPONSES TO
2014 Nevada County Civil Grand Jury Report
Panhandlers, Vagrants and Transients, In a Neighborhood Near You?

DATED: June 27, 2014

Responses to findings and recommendations are based on either personal knowledge, examination of official county records, review of the responses by the County Executive Officer, (Department Of Social Services) or testimony from the Board of Supervisors and county staff members.

A. RESPONSES TO FINDINGS:

Finding 2: The problems with PVTs will continue to increase until city and county leaders seriously address the problem.

Partially Agree.

The statement “the problems with PVTs will continue to increase” is based on perception, not data. The data shows that the number of homeless individuals in our community has actually decreased slightly since 2009. Data collected is a “Point-in-Time Homeless Persons Count” following data collection criteria of the Department of Housing and Urban Development. The data collection provides a count of sheltered and unsheltered homeless persons. Counts are further broken down into subpopulation categories including counts of persons who are chronically homeless, persons with severe mental illness, chronic substance abusers, Veterans, persons with HIV/AIDS, and victims of domestic violence.

The number of persons on General Assistance aid has also decreased in the last five years. Typically, homeless populations are subcategorized by “families, individuals, youth, veterans, and the chronically homeless” because of the unique experiences and challenges that each of these groups face. It is important to note, the County has received reports that homeless services provided by local non-profit providers have increased.

County programs are designed to target the root causes of homelessness through assisting individuals as they are released from jail or on probation, and through providing housing, job training, substance abuse treatment, medication management and coordinated case management. These programs are significantly less expensive than the inevitable alternatives (hospitalization or jail). Additional resources for these programs would improve effectiveness. However some individuals will continue to choose a “homeless” lifestyle and for the most part, these individuals do not engage in criminal behavior.

Finding 3: It is only a matter of time until a health incident or serious fire occurs in one of the illegal camps.

Partially Agree.

The report focuses on a sub-population called Panhandlers, Vagrants and Transients. However, homeless individuals who inhabit encampments are not necessarily the same sub-populations. We agree that encampments are not safe for those who live there and do pose a risk to the greater community, but this is a different issue than panhandling as it is estimated that only 40-60% of panhandlers are actually homeless. In addition, only 44% of homeless people are “unsheltered” and therefore might live in an encampment and only 12% are unsheltered and chronically homeless. Research shows that most residents of homeless encampments say they would prefer to live in a more conventional way with their own room and a job, however a significant number are addicted to drugs or alcohol, and/or are mentally ill. Specialty trained staff, through a County contract, visit encampments regularly to check on known mentally ill individuals and encourage them to participate in County services. Although CalFire estimates that 90% of all wildfires in California are caused by humans, campfires (recreational or otherwise) only accounted for 4% of wildfires in Nevada County in 2012.

Finding 6: Enforcement actions authorized by law and/or codes, which are the responsibility of city and county agencies, are woefully lacking in their consistency and continuity of effort.

Disagree.

All complaints received regarding properties located within unincorporated areas are investigated by Nevada County Code Compliance. A majority of the complaints received deal with trespass issues which are not enforceable by the Community Development Agency or the Code Compliance Division.

Finding 9: Mixed jurisdictions and agency responsibilities can complicate enforcement efforts.

Agree.

Finding 10: Very few city and county agencies accurately track incidents or costs associated with PVTs.

Agree.

The Department of Social Services tracks the number and cost of services for General Assistance and nutritional assistance to individuals, who are homeless. In addition, Behavioral Health tracks the costs of providing housing and mental health treatment services to its clients, who may be homeless. Numerous cost studies have shown that providing shelter and basic services to the homeless population is significantly less expensive than the inevitable alternative: hospitalization, emergency medical treatment, prison/jail.

Although the Grand Jury’s definition of “transient and vagrant” does not stipulate an amount of time associated with that definition, the annual Homeless Count includes surveying homeless individuals and tracks the length of time individuals have been in Nevada County. For example, in 2013 of the 141 completed surveys, only ten respondents indicated they had resided in Nevada County for less than one year and only one individual indicated they were “just passing through.” In contrast, 74 individuals

indicated they have been in the county their whole lives or more than 5 years up to. Many statistics are maintained on homeless and low income populations; however the term "Panhandlers, Vagrants, and Transients (PVT)" is not a term the County uses and is not a stand-alone tracked category.

Finding 12: CC has the responsibility and the tools necessary to remedy the sub-standard conditions found in PVT encampments, but does not enforce these statutes.

Disagree.

The Code Compliance Division responds to complaints and is not authorized to independently act to remedy violations of the Codes. When a complaint is filed, and a violation is verified, the Code Compliance Division works with the property owner to rectify or eliminate the violation.

Finding 13: The CDA and CC fail to follow their own mission statement and do not investigate the complaints directed at PVT encampments. This allows imminent health and safety conditions to continue and worsen.

Disagree.

All complaints received regarding properties located within unincorporated areas are investigated. A majority of the complaints received deal with trespass issues which are not enforceable by the Community Development Agency or the Code Compliance Division.

Finding 14: An inter-jurisdictional task force with members from city and county law enforcement and fire, probation, code compliance, environmental health, homeless advocates, the chambers of commerce, and interested citizens should be able to come up with a plan, using existing laws and codes for resolving the situation with the PVTs.

Partially Agree.

Thus far, no community in the country has found a long term solution to dealing with the issues related to homelessness. However, existing efforts include:

1. The Homeless Resource Council of the Sierras' ongoing workgroup, the Nevada County Coordinating Council, meets monthly in Nevada County. The group consists of homeless advocates, non-profit leaders, mental health professionals, and county staff (HHS) to address homeless outreach/intake/assessment, prevention of housing loss, rapid re-housing, emergency shelter, transitional housing, permanent housing, and supportive housing.
2. Coordination between Law Enforcement and Social Services exists through Eligibility Worker visits to the Wayne Brown Correctional facility and Probation offices to assist recently released individuals and probationers to apply for Medi-Cal. Life skills and financial planning classes are offered to these groups as well as an evidence based practice to improve self-sufficiency skills and reduce recidivism rates.
3. The Community Development Agency routinely coordinates with the Sheriff's Office and other county departments to enforce existing codes and regulations.

B. RESPONSES TO RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: The Nevada County Board of Supervisors should direct the Community Development Agency to work in conjunction with the Nevada County Sheriff's Office and other city and county agencies to enforce existing codes and regulations to reduce the number of hazardous encampments.

The recommendation has been implemented.

The Community Development Agency routinely coordinates with the Sheriff's Office and other county departments to enforce existing codes and regulations.

Recommendation 3: The Nevada County Board of Supervisors should take the lead in establishing an inter-jurisdictional task force with members from city and county law enforcement and fire, probation, Code Compliance, Environmental Health, mental health professionals, homeless advocates, the chambers of commerce and interested citizens to develop a plan, using existing laws and codes, for improving the situation with the PVTs.

The recommendation will not be implemented.

Existing efforts preclude the need for the Board of Supervisors to take the lead in establishing an additional taskforce. Already addressing these issues are the Homeless Resource Council of the Sierras which has an ongoing workgroup, the Nevada County Coordinating Council that meets monthly in Nevada County. This group is working on homeless outreach/intake/assessment process, prevention of housing loss, rapid re-housing, emergency shelter, transitional housing, permanent housing, and supportive housing. Individuals from city and government agencies are members of this work group. Other city and county agencies can join this existing group. Coordination between Law Enforcement and Social Services exists through Eligibility Worker visits to the Wayne Brown Correctional facility and Probation offices. The Community Development Agency routinely coordinates with the Sheriff's Office and other county departments to enforce existing codes and regulations.

Recommendation 4: The Nevada County Board of Supervisors should direct the Information Technology Department to design and implement a tracking and reporting system to enable city and county departments to determine how much money is being spent on the PVT problem.

The recommendation will not be implemented.

"Panhandlers, Vagrants, and Transients (PVT)" is not a term the County uses, nor a subpopulation that is specifically tracked. Identified social and criminal issues associated with the homeless population are addressed by the County. The County addresses the criminal element (to the extent that the behavior is actually illegal) through Law Enforcement and Code Compliance. The social element (to the extent that individuals are willing and interested in assistance) is addressed through Health and Human Services programs which assist residents in overcoming their barriers to permanent housing and self-sufficiency through substance abuse treatment, mental health treatment, temporary and transitional housing, case

management, life skills development and public assistance for those who qualify. Both of these elements are tracked through existing systems. The cost to implement an additional tracking system would be prohibitive and would not address the core causes of the overall problems.