

CITY HALL OF NEVADA CITY

REASON FOR INVESTIGATION

The Civil Grand Jury reviewed the operations of the three incorporated cities in Nevada County. The Grand Jury selected the city hall of Nevada City for evaluation.

PROCEDURE FOLLOWED

The Grand Jury interviewed Mayor Harry Stewart, Vice Mayor Tom Balch, City Manager Beryl Robinson, the chief of police, the fire marshal and the city clerk of Nevada City.

FINDINGS

1. The Nevada City Hall was built in 1937 as a WPA project. It is an art deco building located in the downtown historical district.
2. The building houses the office of the city manager, the city clerk and staff, the chief of police, nine sworn officers and six reserves, the fire marshal, city fire prevention officer and two engine units of the fire department.
3. Nevada City is planning to construct a new firehouse and when completed one of the engine units will move to that location.
4. The city manager occupies a space at a front window in an area delineated by file cabinets which affords no privacy. Due to space congestion the city clerk shares a desk with staff.
5. The city manager and city clerk must reserve a time to use the only conference room in order to conduct private meetings with staff or citizens. The conference room is the office of the part-time city planner.
6. The chief of police shares an office with the sergeant. There is inadequate space within the police department's area for officers' privacy to change uniforms, which is made more difficult as there now are male and female officers. There is no space to privately discuss internal police matters or to interview citizens, witnesses or suspects.
7. Nevada City is a small city with a small population and business base. The city's small revenue base restricts the amount of funds available to city management to maintain or enhance public facilities.
8. A large portion of the basement of the city hall is used for storage. The stored materials include police records and city records dating back to the turn of the century. The storage subjects records to possible deterioration by moisture accumulation in the basement. The city clerk estimated that up to 20 percent of the work day is lost in research of subjects in this congested area.

9. Nevada City prepared plans in 1992 to remodel and expand the city hall. The estimated remodeling cost was \$854,000. The city had approximately \$100,000 in reserves. The city council was unable to arrive at a satisfactory financing method.

10. The city has several properties, including the old Nevada City Airport, that are currently unused and therefore not producing revenue.

CONCLUSIONS

1. The city hall is inadequate both in serving the needs of the community and in providing an efficient work environment for the city employees.

2. The planned relocation of the fire engine unit provides an opportunity to utilize that space for expansion for offices, although this would not eliminate many of the deficiencies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The basement storage should be reorganized.

2. A review and update of the existing 1992 remodel plans and a forecast of future requirements should be made. The revised plans could be used to obtain estimates of cost. A phased remodel of this building should be considered, thereby eliminating the necessity of raising large amount of funds at one time.

3. The city should explore means of financing efforts to improve the city hall facilities. Options should include possible federal-state-private grant sources and sale or lease of unused real estate assets.

REQUIRED RESPONSES

City Council
Due September 30, 1998