

# **NEVADA COUNTY COURTHOUSE AND HOLDING FACILITY**

## **REASON FOR THE INVESTIGATION**

California Penal Code Section 919(b) requires the Civil Grand Jury to inspect all detention facilities within the county.

## **PROCEDURE FOLLOWED**

The Grand Jury inspected the Courthouse and jail holding facility and interviewed the following Sheriff's personnel responsible for security:

Bill Butler, Sergeant

## **FINDINGS**

1. The jail holding facility provides security for housing prisoners awaiting court appearance.
2. The Sheriff's office maintains documented procedures to insure the safety of the public and prisoners in the event of emergencies.
3. Prisoners are transferred from the Wayne Brown Correctional Facility and returned when their court proceedings are completed. They are not held overnight in the court holding facility. However, in the event of an emergency this housing is readily available.
4. In the jail holding facility, prisoners awaiting court are separated by gender. Adults are separated from juveniles.
5. Since the previous Grand Jury report, the Courthouse has installed and staffed an electronic security device at its main entrance to monitor all persons entering the facility. In addition the garage entrances that were formerly open to public access have been secured.
6. As of the date of this inspection, the Deputy Sheriff's Sergeant-in-Charge of the Courthouse and Holding Facility indicates that there are two (2) Correctional Officer vacancies which he has been unable to fill because of recruitment and hiring difficulties.
7. There are no video monitoring devices in the Courtroom and corridors.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

1. The lack of video monitoring devices in the courtrooms and corridors compromises safety and security to both Courthouse personnel and the public.
2. Sergeant Butler appeared to be very knowledgeable on the Court's detention and security procedures.
3. The absence of two correctional officer positions in the jail holding facility places added burdens on existing staff which, in turn, could compromise their overall effectiveness.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Although the Board of Supervisors has previously acknowledged the need to improve Courthouse security, the Grand Jury recommends that they consider the funding for video surveillance equipment in the courtrooms and its corridors.
2. The Grand Jury recommends that the two vacant correctional officer positions be filled as soon as possible.

## **REQUIRED RESPONSES**

Sheriff, Due August 30, 2000

Board of Supervisors, Due September 30, 2000

**NEVADA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS RESPONSES TO  
1999-2000 CIVIL GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT NO. 7  
DATED JUNE 28, 2000  
RE: NEVADA COUNTY COURTHOUSE & HOLDING FACILITY**

*Responses to findings and recommendations are based on either personal knowledge,  
examination of official county records, review of the response by the Sheriff, or  
testimony from the board chairman and county staff members.*

**I. GRAND JURY INVESTIGATION:**

**Nevada County Courthouse & Holding Facility**

**A. RESPONSE TO FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**Findings:**

1. **The jail holding facility provides security for housing prisoners awaiting court appearance.**  
  
Agree
2. **The Sheriff's office maintains documented procedures to insure the safety of the public and prisoners in the event of emergencies.**  
  
Agree
3. **Prisoners are transferred from the Wayne Brown Correctional Facility and returned when their court proceedings are completed. They are not held overnight in the court holding facility. However, in the event of an emergency this housing is readily available.**  
  
Agree
4. **In the jail holding facility, prisoners awaiting court are separated by gender. Adults are separated from juveniles.**  
  
Agree
5. **Since the previous Grand Jury report, the Courthouse has installed and staffed an electronic security device at its main entrance to monitor all persons entering the facility. In addition, the garage entrances that were formerly open to public access have been secured.**

Agree

6. **As of the date of this inspection, the Deputy Sheriff's Sergeant-in-Charge of the Courthouse and Holding Facility indicates that there are two (2) Correctional Officer vacancies which he has been unable to fill because of recruitment and hiring difficulties.**

Agree

7. **There are no video monitoring devices in the Courtroom and corridors.**

Agree

### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Although the Board of Supervisors has previously acknowledged the need to improve Courthouse security, the Grand Jury recommends that they consider the funding for video surveillance equipment in the courtrooms and its corridors.**

The recommendation will not be implemented at this time.

The installation of a video surveillance system in the courthouse courtrooms and corridors was not included in the 2000-01 Sheriff 's operating budget because the Board of Supervisors and the Sheriff agree that recent security enhancements at the courthouse have resulted in an acceptable level of security.

The cost of installing a video surveillance system and the additional staffing that would be needed to monitor the equipment would also not appreciably enhance security beyond what has already been added to protect court members, county staff and the public. A Sheriff's bailiff is present in each courtroom while court is in session and is in constant contact with other assigned court security officers. Courthouse security officers are also located in the main entrance to the courthouse and other Sheriff's office personnel are routinely present throughout the courthouse during business hours. Since the investigation by the Grand Jury an additional sworn sergeant has been assigned to the courthouse to supervise courtroom and inmate security, allowing the other assigned sergeant to concentrate on other courthouse security issues. Additionally, public access to the courthouse has been restricted to the main entrance and a metal detector is used to screen all personnel and packages entering the building.

The Board of Supervisors and the Sheriff will continue to monitor the need for increased security at the courthouse and propose appropriate action, including consideration of a video surveillance system, as required to meet any increased security threat.

The Board will also request the Sheriff and the Court Administrator prepare a report on the adequacy of courthouse security for Board consideration during the 2001-02 budget process.

2. **The Grand Jury recommends that the two (2) vacant correctional officer positions be filled as soon as possible.**

The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be by January 1, 2001.

The two correctional officer positions vacant at the time of the Grand Jury inspection are presently unfilled but have been filled on a temporary basis with part-time employees. These employees are used to transport inmates between the Wayne Brown Correctional Center and the court holding facility at the courthouse.

An aggressive recruitment effort is presently underway to fill all correctional officer vacancies. The two correctional officer positions assigned to courthouse security should be filled by January 1, 2001. Until then, the vacant positions will continue to be back-filled with temporary employees.

**B. OTHER RESPONSES REQUIRED:**

Keith Royal, Sheriff-Coroner – August 30, 2000.

## Findings

1-7 The Sheriff agrees with the findings.

## Conclusions

1-2 The Sheriff agrees with these conclusions.

## Recommendations

1. Although we do agree that a video surveillance system would enhance courthouse security, this is a cost item not currently funded within the Sheriff's operating budget. In addition, installation of this equipment would also require additional staffing to monitor the cameras.

Currently, a sheriff's bailiff staffs each court while court is in session. Consequently, there is always a bailiff present to keep order in the court. These bailiffs have radios and are in contact with Courtholding and other courthouse security officers. We also have courthouse security personnel located in the main hallway entrance to the courthouse; and there are usually sheriff's personnel moving throughout the courthouse during business hours.

2. The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented by January 1, 2001. The two positions, which were vacant at the time of the Grand Jury's visit, have presently remained open. The reason for this is that one person is on medical leave for an undetermined time, and another vacancy was created when one of the correctional officers changed employment. These positions have been filled on a temporary basis with part-time employees. Their purpose is to transport inmates back and forth between the WBCF and Courtholding.

Since the time of the Grand Jury's visit, an additional sworn sergeant's position has been added to supervise courthouse security. This makes it possible for one sergeant to concentrate on courtroom and inmate security while the second sergeant takes care of courthouse security issues, including the perimeter and hallway areas. The Sheriff's Office, in conjunction with the Nevada County Personnel Department, currently has an ongoing recruitment and hiring process. All vacant positions will be filled as soon as possible and we will continue to use part-time employees to backfill behind these positions.