

2009-2010 Grand Jury Celebrates Plumas County Airports' Success

Finding 1: For the 2008-2009 year, the Airport Department operated with a budget that ended with \$5,391 in the black. At midyear this year, the airport budget is in the black by \$7,783.19. We commend the Airport Department for maintaining a budget that allows our airfield to be able to provide their services while not being any sort of financial burden on the people who live and pay taxes in our county.

Response: The Board of Supervisors agrees with the finding.

Recommendation 1: The Board of Supervisors should continue to fund our airports as they have done in the past. Any operating surplus remaining in the budget should be reinvested in the airports for future growth and improvements.

Response: The airports operate as their own enterprise fund, which means both that they are not subsidized by the County and that any surplus remains with the airport fund. Any operating surplus can be reinvested in growth and improvements or used to reduce fee charges to airport users.

Finding 2: An inspection at our three airfields during January 2010 by Exxon Mobil Aviation examined the general facilities, personal and flight line safety, records and receipts, fuel documentation, and filtration. One hundred and twelve quality control checks were performed in this inspection without any "discrepancy description or recommendations." The county facility at Gansner field was given a compliance rating of 90%. Rodgers Field and Nervino Airport received compliance ratings of 93% and 98% respectively. For this superior rating the Airport Department received Exxon Mobil's High Quality Standard Award.

Response: The Board of Supervisors agrees with this finding.

Recommendation 2: The Grand Jury recommends the airports continue to adhere to their high standards of safety, service, and quality. We commend all three managers for their fine work, both in their offices and on the grounds throughout our airport facilities. This award would not have been given without the dedication of airport staff trained in the many procedures ensuring the safety of fuels and the flight line.

Response: The Board of Supervisors will continue to support the airports to ensure the continuation of high standards of safety, service, and quality.

Finding 3: During the summer of 2009, the Department of Transportation (DOT) made an inspection of the runways and surrounding airspace path of any aircraft at each of our airports. Critical issues were addressed in a timely manner. With the agreement of the DOT, items that were identified as not being critical safety issues will be corrected when funding from DOT becomes available.

Response: The Board of Supervisors agrees with this finding.

Recommendation 3: The Grand Jury encourages the Airport Department to continue their compliance with DOT standards.

Response: The Board of Supervisors and Airport Department will continue to ensure that all airport operations comply with DOT standards.

Economic Development in Plumas County

Finding 1: The County is not focused on economic development, as defined by the Grand Jury. The Board of Supervisors relies entirely on Plumas Corporation and the local Chambers of Commerce to set priorities and direction for economic development and tourism marketing.

Response: The Board of Supervisors disagrees that the County is not focused on economic development. The County supports the Chambers of Commerce and the Plumas County Visitors Bureau with annual funding for the very reason that those organizations have the greatest expertise and motivation to work to attract visitors and support local businesses.

Recommendation 1: The Board of Supervisors should take a leadership role by defining and implementing an economic development policy and program to include planning, funding, implementing, and monitoring economic development in the county. The Grand Jury recommends that the county employ an economic development coordinator to focus on business recruitment and follow through on an economic development plan.

Response: The Board of Supervisors is currently overseeing the update of the Plumas County General Plan and has directed that an “economic development” element be included as an addition to the mandatory general plan elements. The Board of Supervisors believes that the funding in the County budget that is allocated to economic development and tourism should continue to be used to support existing organizations and not be redirected to create a new County staff position.

Finding 2: The County is not providing stable or enough funding to support ongoing economic development. There is a tendency to decrease funding for economic development and tourism promotion when the economy is in a downturn. This is evidenced by recent across-the-board budget cuts.

Response: The Board of Supervisors disagrees with this finding. It is always easy for the Grand Jury to recommend spending more money without providing any recommendations for offsetting reductions in spending or increases in revenue. The Board of Supervisors has made selective and substantial reductions in the County budget over the past three years and has not simply resorted to “across-the-board” budget cuts. The Board of Supervisors did reduce a number of the community contributions – including contributions to the Chambers of Commerce – by one percent in the FY2010-11 budget, but that reduction was far less than the reductions that were implemented in many other areas.

Recommendation 2: The Board of Supervisors should recognize that economic development is a **high priority** for Plumas County and fund it accordingly to ensure resilience as the economy improves.

Response: The Board of Supervisors recognizes that economic development is a high priority. The FY2010-11 budget provides over \$240,000 to support economic development and tourism, including:

Chambers of Commerce	\$111,495
Arts Council	\$29,700
Economic Development and Tourism	\$75,000
Quincy Library Group Defense	\$28,000

Finding 3: Plumas County has no contractual obligations attached to its use of public funds for economic development. In the 2009-2010 Plumas County budget, Plumas Corporation received over \$230,000. There is no formal accountability mechanism in place.

Response: The Board of Supervisors disagrees with this finding. The County has a contract with Plumas Corporation that provides the framework for implementation and administration of tourism and economic development services by Plumas Corporation. Plumas Corporation conducts an annual workshop with the Board of Supervisors to report on ongoing activities and discuss priority programs and actions.

Recommendation 3: The County should execute an annual contract with Plumas Corporation for each year's economic development program. A formal contract should include a detailed scope of work and benchmarks for success which can be validated.

Response: The Board of Supervisors agrees that coordination with and oversight of the work carried out by Plumas Corporation should be increased. The Board of Supervisors has provided County staff with the parameters for the terms of a new contract with Plumas Corporation and directed that a new contract be prepared to increase oversight, accountability, and effectiveness.

Finding 4: Because of the unique geography in Plumas County, regional economic centers exist: Almanor Basin, Blairsden-Graeagle, Eastern Plumas, Greenville, and Quincy. Each center has its own distinctive qualities and economies but all fall under the jurisdiction of the county.

Response: The Board of Supervisors agrees with this finding.

Recommendation 4: Any updated economic development plan completed by the county should take into account the differences between our economic centers and provide specific objectives to assist them in developing and growing their economies.

Response: The Board of Supervisors has directed that a new economic development element be added to the Plumas County General Plan as part of the current general plan update process. The Board of Supervisors has appointed public working groups for each of the five supervisorial districts to ensure that the final plan reflects the different circumstances, opportunities, and priorities of the different areas of the County.

Finding 5: The Board of Supervisors has hired consultants and the General Plan update is moving toward completion in 2011. Yet Plumas County has not contracted with the current General Plan consultants to include the optional Economic Development Element.

Response: The Board of Supervisors disagrees with this finding. The contract with the General Plan consultant provides for inclusion of the economic development element.

Recommendation 5: Plumas County should ensure that economic development is an **essential** component of the General Plan update. This critical element must be a **high priority**.

Response: The Board of Supervisors has directed that the economic development element be included in the new General Plan.

Finding and Recommendation 6: [addressed to the City of Portola]

Finding 7: The Grand Jury saw little evidence in our investigation that Plumas County and the City of Portola have made an effort to collaborate on economic development.

Response: The Board of Supervisors agrees that there has been little collaboration with the City of Portola on economic development.

Recommendation 7: The timing is right for the county to make sure the Economic Development Element of its General Plan is compatible with the city's updated element. The city and the county should collaborate to develop compatible economic development plans and provide countywide leadership to attract new businesses and industry. Both should consider sharing the cost of an economic development professional for mutually beneficial projects.

Response: The County has consulted with Portola in the course of the General Plan update and will continue to do so. The County is prepared to work with the City of Portola on any mutually beneficial projects that are identified.

Finding 8: As defined by the Government Code, "Sphere of Influence" is a plan for the probable physical boundaries and service area of a local agency. The City of Portola is in the process of updating and redefining its Sphere of Influence and needs cooperation and support from the county to get this done.

Response: The Board of Supervisors agrees that the update of Portola's sphere of influence is best accomplished in cooperation with the County.

Recommendation 8: The Grand Jury feels that much can be gained by the two governments working together on the city's Sphere of Influence. Plumas County and the City of Portola must come together to agree upon an updated Sphere of Influence for the city. Advance sales tax and hotel tax sharing agreements between the two governments

should be considered to facilitate moving forward on development projects which could help our economy grow.

Response: The Board of Supervisors is prepared to work with the City of Portola to update the city's sphere of influence. A master tax sharing agreement already exists between Plumas County and the City of Portola for any areas annexed into the city.

Is the Food in Plumas County Safe?

Finding 1: Plumas County ordinances do not require that restaurants and other food facilities visibly display their inspection sheet, so customers don't know the quality and cleanliness of the facility. The Grand Jury believes that more transparency should exist for the inspection results.

Response: Partially agree. While it is true that neither the California Retail Food Code (Cal Code) nor Plumas County ordinances require restaurants and other food facilities to display their inspection sheet, inspection results are available in a variety of other ways in compliance with state law. Section 113725.1 of Cal Code requires all facilities to post a notice advising consumers that a copy of the most recent routine inspection report is available upon request. Facility compliance with this requirement is noted in data field number 47 on the routine inspection report. All food facility inspection reports are also available for public review at the local Environment Health office. Environmental Health also provides a third option for the public review not required by state law. Food inspection reports can be viewed on the county's website at www.countyofplumas.com/publichealth/envhealth.

Recommendation 1: The County's Environmental Health Division should either establish a grading system whereby the quality and cleanliness (safety) of the facility is displayed in the form of letter grade of A, B, or C, or by the colors green, yellow, or red, as determined by the quality of the latest inspection. If a grading system is determined not workable, the Division should require food facilities to display the most recent inspection form, placed near the entrance, visible to patrons.

Response: The relative advantages and disadvantages of a food grading system are well-established in public health literature. In general, a food grading system is intended to provide the public an at-a-glance summary of the most recent food inspection results. Some suggest a food grading system may help improve food safety and sanitation by providing a visible reminder, but these opinions are not universally held.

Unfortunately, grading results can be misleading. The grade result is only a snapshot in time when the inspector was present in the facility. Also, grades are not solely based on food-borne illness risk factors, but necessarily include scoring of facilities, equipment, utensils and buildings which are but small factors in food safety. The World Health Organization notes "while the sanitary setting is certainly important, the actual operation in the handling of food is more important to food protection". The federal Food and Drug Administration warns that "a grade sign on a restaurant window simply does not convey any understanding of the nature of, or the seriousness of the violations observed by the inspector." In general, the posted grade can often reflect the age of the food facility rather than the safety of the food prepared in the kitchen.

At the Plumas County level, implementation of a food grading system would be an expensive undertaking. Besides standard program development costs, additional costs for restaurant owner outreach, public education, and inspector training would be required.

Considerable ongoing costs for increased re-inspection requests are also anticipated. In general, preliminary estimates suggest the costs to implement a food grading system would be up to twice the costs of the current food safety program.

Finally, as Plumas County has not had a documented case of food-borne illness since 2006, the existing food safety program is demonstrated to be highly effective. Based on all of the above, this recommendation will not be implemented.

Finding 2: Presently, mobile/temporary food facilities don't have to display their permits or inspection compliance sheets.

Response: Disagree. Mobile and temporary facilities are subject to the same requirements as fixed food facilities regarding posting their facility permit (Section 114381(e) of the California Retail Food Code). The permits also have a written reminder to "Post in a Conspicuous Place." Additionally, notices that a copy of the most recent inspection report is available for review must also be posted (Section 113725.1 of the California Retail Food Code).

Recommendation 2: If a grading system is not used for all food handling facilities, the Division should require the mobile/temporary businesses to display the operating permit and the results of the most recent inspection, visible to potential customers.

Response: Requirements for posting the operating permit and the notice that the last inspection report is available for review are being implemented.

Finding 3: The current approach for handling infractions appears to be based more on establishing a positive, collaborative, relationship with owners/managers of food handling facilities than with setting strict guidelines and times for correcting the problems.

Response: Partially agree. Environmental Health's food safety program is based on prevention and compliance. This is far preferable to enforcement or action taken after a food-borne illness outbreak. When compliance cannot be achieved through education, outreach, and collaboration, Environmental Health has and will take all steps necessary to ensure the safety of retail food. If strict compliance actions and time frames are indicated in a specific situation, they are applied.

Recommendation 3A: The Division should establish a brief but detailed set of instructions for inspectors to apply uniformly for correction of infractions.

Response: Although the California Retail Food Code (Cal Code) specifies enforcement actions and options available to the local agency, to help ensure compliance consistency countywide, a written food safety enforcement plan will be developed by January 1, 2011.

Recommendation 3B: The Division should establish a standard pattern of rotation for inspectors in such a manner that the same inspector does not conduct more than one of the two inspections of a facility in the same calendar year.

Response: With three inspectors located in two separate offices, each inspector responsible for a variety of environmental health programs, efficient travel and workload allocation across all environmental health programs, and over 200 food facilities spread throughout the county, this recommendation is not practical or economically feasible.

Recommendation 3C: The Division should establish a standard schedule of fines or sanctions for reoccurring violations of a consistent nature.

Response: Cal Code specifies enforcement options and alternatives for non-compliance, including penalties for misdemeanors and processes for permit suspension or revocation. Consistent application of these alternatives will be addressed in the written food safety enforcement plan discussed in response to Recommendation 3A above.

Recommendation 3D: The Division should establish a fee for owner/operator requested re-inspections for those owners who want to improve their previous inspection grade.

Response: As discussed in the response to Recommendation 1, a food grading system will not be implemented at this time, so this recommendation is not applicable.

Finding 4: The Division's web site, where food facility inspection results are posted, is a very positive process for creating transparency and awareness for food safety. The Grand Jury commends the effort, but believes that many County residents and tourists are not aware of the site.

Response: Agree.

Recommendation 4: The Grand Jury suggests that the Division increase their effort to publicize the existence and nature of this site, using any and all media approaches to reach as many people as possible.

Response: This recommendation is being implemented. A food safety partnership article in Plumas County newspapers published on May 19, 2010, was the first effort to increase public awareness. Efforts are also underway to update the county's website and make the inspection reports more accessible to the public. The county website address is also listed on inspection noticed posted in each food facility.

Finding 5: The funding for the department comes from a variety of sources. If any of those funds were reduced, service would suffer if the other sources were not increased.

Response: Agree.

Recommendation 5: That the Board of Supervisors not reduce the County's tax contribution further than it is now nor take any actions that would compromise the state and other resources that fund the program.

Response: The Board of Supervisors has eliminated one position in the Environmental Health Division budget for the 2010-11 fiscal year. Over the past five years the County workforce has been reduced from 455 employees to 370 employees, and reductions have had to be made in almost all areas of service.

Water Quality and Abundance

Finding 1: Once individual private wells are permitted and approved, no other monitoring or testing is done unless the owner requests it. With 10,000 to 11,000 septic systems in the county, some of them quite old, can we assume the well water is not affected?

Response: Based on the data available from local, small and public water systems, septic systems are not adversely affecting well water quality in Plumas County.

Recommendation 1: Each Individual aquifer should be tested for contamination periodically on a schedule determined by the EHD.

Response: Ongoing private well testing is not required by state law or county code. However, Plumas County regulates approximately 140 local, state small and public water systems which do provide periodic and ongoing sampling and analysis of their water quality. Routine surveillance of these systems, which includes bacteriological, inorganic and organic chemical analysis, has not revealed any aquifer-wide contamination problems. Furthermore, a variety of groundwater protection measures are in place, including the permit and regulatory process for both septic systems and individual water supply wells administered by Environmental Health. Septic systems are located, designed and constructed to prevent impacts to ground or surface waters. Groundwater wells are located to prevent contamination, and they are constructed with a 20-foot sanitary seal specifically designed to help protect water quality. Because the existing groundwater surveillance system does not suggest any problems, and a variety of safeguards to prevent contamination are in place, this recommendation will not be implemented at this time.

Finding 2: Private wells fed by aquifers within the County are only tested for coliform bacteria. Metal contamination and other microbial contamination are not tested. If mercury is found in lakes and streams, is it in our well water?

Response: The most likely source of mercury in Plumas County is from mining use during the gold rush. Much of this mercury was spilled, dumped or otherwise released to surface water. The concern for this type of mercury contamination is “bio-accumulation,” or concentrating mercury by aquatic organisms as it is passed up the food chain. This form of mercury does not readily spread to groundwater and is highly unlikely to contaminate our well water.

Recommendation 2: The EHD should also test well water from each aquifer within the county for the following potentially toxic metals: Antimony, Arsenic, Beryllium, Cadmium, Chromium, Copper, Lead, Mercury, Nickel, Selenium, Silver, Thallium and Zinc. This is especially relevant in an area such as Plumas County with a history of mining. Additionally, because of increased development and agricultural activity, testing should be done for a broader spectrum of disease producing microbes.

Response: Plumas County well water is not at undue risk for these metals because of the county's mining history. As discussed above, the primary concern with mercury contamination is surface water not groundwater. Sampling and analysis for a broader spectrum of disease producing microbes is not cost effective, nor is it a sound scientific approach. The current surveillance system of reviewing data collected through existing public water system chemical and bacteriological monitoring and being alert for problems or trends will continue, but this recommendation will not be implemented at this time.

Finding 3: Because of non existing recordkeeping during earlier years, there are an undetermined number of water wells existing within the county without documentation as to their location.

Response: Agree. Few records exist regarding wells drilled prior to 1980.

Recommendation 3: The EHD should actively establish and implement a plan to locate and document old and/or undocumented wells, lessening the chance of those wells contaminating our aquifers.

Response: This recommendation is being implemented as current resources allow. During the course of regular field activities, Environmental Health Specialists routinely watch for old, abandoned wells. Locations are noted and owners of such wells are educated on the risks and encouraged to abandon them if they are no longer needed or not operational. Environmental Health also has participated in project-specific work, such as recent well head protection programs in American Valley and the Lake Almanor Basin, as well as the Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) project in Sierra Valley coordinated by Plumas County Flood Control. These projects have helped defray costs of protecting groundwater resources, inventorying and destroying abandoned wells as appropriate.

Finding 4: With new developments larger than 200 water connections, the EHD is not involved in evaluating the quality or quantity of the source of water proposed by the developer and sanctioned by the state, until after the development is approved. As it is now, there is no one within the county who evaluates whether the state is doing an adequate job of assuring there is enough water available for the development.

Response: Disagree. State law requires review and certification of the water supply for large projects, such as Lakefront at Walker Ranch. In addition, the Plumas County Planning Department reviews water supply for new projects when it prepares an Environmental Impact Report.

Recommendation 4: This Grand Jury strongly recommends that the EHD be actively involved in the Planning Department's approval process to independently evaluate all aspects of the water quality and quantity proposed by the development to assure that the water source for the development is adequate and won't adversely affect another. This would lessen the chance of a development being approved without sufficient water, as

has happened in the past.

Response: Environmental Health staff are actively involved in the Planning Department's approval process for new developments. However, the state Department of Public Health has not delegated jurisdiction for regulatory oversight to Plumas County for water systems exceeding 200 connections, nor does state law allow for such delegation. Furthermore, Environmental Health staff do not have the credentials or expertise required to review the work of state agency professional engineers and hydrologists on these matters. Therefore, this recommendation cannot be implemented as proposed.

Finding 5: There is a history of developments gaining approval without demonstrating that the proposed water source is sufficient to provide for both residential water, and water for fire protection of the development.

Response: Partially agree. In the case of Grizzly Ranch, studies indicated a sufficient water supply was available, but mitigation measures were not implemented in a timely manner to address interference with neighboring wells. Also, in some areas of the County the water supply itself is abundant, but subdivisions were approved decades ago without providing for adequate water supply infrastructure.

Recommendation 5: The Board of Supervisors should not approve any development without the EHD first evaluating and certifying that the proposed water source for both domestic and emergency fire protection use is sufficient.

Response: Environmental Health will continue to actively participate in the planning process and apply Plumas County Code to proposed developments under its jurisdiction. However, water supply assessments and approvals also involve geohydrologists from the California Department of Water Resources, engineers from the California Department of Public Health, and the staff of the Plumas County Planning Department.

Finding 6: Realistically, the water quality of our lakes and streams is fragile to say the least. There are multiple county agencies, departments and community groups that oversee that fact. This Grand Jury believes that maintaining the quality of above-ground water is also the task of each individual that lives here and those who come to enjoy the beauty and recreate.

Response: Partially agree. Plumas County enjoys high levels of water quality, as evidenced by the results of the water quality monitoring program at Lake Almanor, the monitoring conducted under the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program, and the minimal number of impairments to beneficial uses that have been detected by the State Water Resources Control Board.

Recommendation 6: The EHD and other agencies should develop a public relations campaign to raise awareness that our lakes and streams are fragile.

Response: Environmental Health continues to partner with many agencies that share a role in protecting and maintaining this valuable resource.

Finding 7: Once a septic system is installed, there is no requirement for ongoing monitoring. There is no requirement for periodic pumping of septic tanks.

Response: Agree.

Recommendation 7: The Board of Supervisors, through the EHD, should establish a countywide requirement for mandatory pumping of septic tanks when a property is sold, and actively inform residents of the need to pump their septic systems every three to five years.

Response: The recent statewide proposal for mandatory septic tank pumping (AB 885) met with strong public opposition. Plumas County is working with state and regional partners to develop workable wastewater regulations and to develop local septage receiving and treatment options. Also, the Environmental Health Director is participating on a statewide working group dedicated to resolving this issue

Frighening Realities About Fire in Plumas County

Fire Services

Finding 1: There are no fire protection services for 4,631 (19%) parcels in Plumas County. You can't be guaranteed of any fire fighting response if you live outside of a Fire Protection District (FPD) or Community Services District (CSD). You may be billed for firefighting services if they are rendered. The 4,631 number is misleading. Each parcel could have many structures.

Response: The Board of Supervisors agrees with the finding but also believes the way it is stated could be misleading. The number of parcels located outside the boundaries of a special district is a serious problem in Plumas County, but that does not mean all of those parcels have "no fire protection services." The many fire departments in the County respond regularly to emergencies outside of their district boundaries. However, in doing so, there is the dual problem of the fire department not receiving any funding to provide the service or of the homeowner receiving a substantial bill for the service.

Recommendation 1a: County government leaders must take immediate action to ensure the safety of its citizens. This Grand Jury does not presume to know exactly what action must be taken. However related Findings and Recommendations are cited below.

Response: Members of the Board of Supervisors have been working with the Emergency & Fire Services Advisory Committee to develop a financial mechanism that will improve fire and emergency medical services for parcels that are currently located outside of existing fire districts. While the County can continue to work to facilitate this process, ultimately it falls to the individual fire departments and the property owners located outside the fire districts to agree on appropriate arrangements for fire coverage. These arrangements could include annexations to expand the coverage of the existing fire districts, out-of-area service agreements with their own financing mechanisms, or other possible options.

Recommendation 1b: Every homeowner should contact the nearest fire house and ask very specific questions: will they come to your home to fight a fire and will they charge? Your house may be covered, but are your neighbors'? Their fire can quickly become yours!

Response: The Board of Supervisor agrees that every homeowner should know whether or not they are located in a fire district or whether (and under what conditions) the closest fire department will respond to their home in an emergency.

Finding 2: There is no clear way for landowners to ascertain if their property taxes are paying for fire protection services.

Response: The Board of Supervisors agrees with this finding. The allocation of property taxes to fire departments varies greatly across the more than 200 different Tax Rate Areas in Plumas County.

Recommendation 2: The County Tax Collector must modify the property tax statements to itemize the amount of property taxes that are allocated for fire protection, including the name of the district providing fire fighting service. If none of the property tax goes to support fire protection, the statement should say so.

Response: The Board of Supervisors agrees that it would be good if this information could be included on the property tax statements. However, providing such information is cost-prohibitive. There are changes in Tax Rate Areas every year, and it is not feasible to attempt to customize existing software to incorporate information on Tax Rate Areas or to update that information annually.

As part of the County's new website and content management system, information on Tax Rate Areas and the allocation of property taxes to special districts will be available on-line.

Development

Finding 1: Plumas County government leaders have been approving land development without adequate fire fighting services. This practice amplifies the number of homes and parcels with inadequate or no fire protection services.

Response: The Board of Supervisors disagrees with this finding. The last significant development to be approved was Grizzly Ranch, and conditions of approval included annexation into an existing fire district, construction of a new fire station, and purchase of an additional fire engine. Smaller projects, such as the redevelopment of the Feather River Inn, have been required to obtain fire protection as a condition of discretionary approvals. Smaller subdivisions have been approved based on the fire protection standards in the current general plan. Those standards are currently being reviewed in conjunction with the General Plan update process.

Although requirements for fire protection have been increased over the past decade, the Board of Supervisors also recognizes that in the past inadequate provisions were made for fire protection and that legacy problems need to be addressed as discussed above.

Recommendation 1. The Board of Supervisors is urged to adopt ordinances requiring stringent minimum standards that developers must meet prior to Subdivision Master Plan approval that include:

- A signed contract for fire protection services
- Installed fire protection infrastructure and equipment
- Sufficient emergency water supplies

Response: Sufficient emergency water supplies and fire protection infrastructure are already required for development. Specific requirements are being evaluated as part of the General Plan update process and may be updated as a result of that process.

Contracts for fire protection services may or may not be appropriate in a particular situation. New development should be part of a fire protection district, in which case no contract is needed. Contracts are also an imperfect means of providing fire protection, since it is difficult to create a contract that will guarantee fire protection in perpetuity.

Board of Supervisors

Finding 1: The Board of Supervisors is doing next to nothing about the fact that so many residents and property owners have no fire protection.

Response: The Board of Supervisors disagrees with this finding. There are significant and unaddressed needs for fire protection service in Plumas County resulting from a combination of both inadequate planning in the past and the unavoidable challenges of providing services to rural and sparsely populated areas. The Board of Supervisors chartered its Emergency & Fire Services Advisory Committee for the very purpose of identifying solutions that can improve fire protection services for our citizens. The Board of Supervisors has also approved property tax sharing with fire districts to encourage annexations of additional territory into existing districts.

Recommendation 1: This Grand Jury believes that the Board of Supervisors has no other choice than to sue the State of California to obtain the same *CAL FIRE* firefighting resources that all other neighboring counties enjoy.

Response: The Board of Supervisors does not believe this is a practical recommendation. The primary mission of CAL FIRE is wildland firefighting in State Responsibility Areas – which is the function carried out by the U.S. Forest Service in Plumas County under its agreement with CAL FIRE. Where CAL FIRE provides a wider range of services, such as in Butte County or Nevada County, it does so under contracts with county or city governments.

Finding 2: The Board of Supervisors has not been sufficiently involved with the land exchange agreements between the U S Forest Service and *CAL FIRE*. This continues to leave Plumas County without State fire services. Clearly the best interests of the County have not been served for years.

Response: The Board of Supervisors disagrees with this finding. In Riverside County, as one example, the county government spends over \$100 million per year on its contract with CAL FIRE, which may be a practical option for an urbanized county with a large tax base. There is no free lunch when it comes to fire protection services, and Plumas County needs to pursue realistic options that take into account our low population density and limited financial resources.

Recommendation 2: The Board of Supervisors needs to take the initiative to be actively involved with all aspects of Fire Safety, and not allow the County to be under represented or unprotected now or in the future.

Response: The Board of Supervisors agrees on the need to be proactive and aggressive in addressing fire protection services.

Finding 3: The Board of Supervisors has not acted on recommendations by its own Emergency & Fire Services Advisory Committee.

Response: The Board of Supervisors has not acted on the recommendations because the recommendations are not ready for action. County staff have been working with the Emergency & Fire Services Advisory Committee to refine the recommendations and the most recent draft was only presented on July 21.

Recommendation 3: The Board of Supervisors must act on the committee's recommendations.

Response: The Board of Supervisor will consider the committee's recommendations and incorporate appropriate recommendations in the Safety Element of the new General Plan.

Finding 4: No organization in Plumas County discloses with certainty if a parcel is located in a fire protection district.

Response: The Board of Supervisors disagrees with this finding. The Plumas County Planning Department can provide information about whether a parcel is located in a fire protection district.

Recommendation 4: The Board of Supervisors will mandate that:

- The Planning Department will disclose fire protection status for every parcel in the County (including fire protection district name or "no district").
- The Building Department will require written acknowledgement of that status from a property owner who applies for a building permit.
- All sellers of real estate disclose fire protection status for any real estate sale in the county.

Response: The Board of Supervisors will forward these recommendations to its General Plan consultant and the General Plan public workgroups and ask that the recommendations be considered as part of the General Plan update.

Audit Committee Report

Finding 1: The Grand Jury Audit Committee members found it very helpful to meet the independent auditor and county officials early on in our terms and to learn firsthand about the audit process.

Response: The Auditor/Controller is always happy to arrange such meetings.

Recommendation: The County Auditor/Controller should continue to schedule an introductory meeting of the County Audit Committee in early September each year.

Response: The Auditor/Controller will continue to schedule an introductory meeting of the County Audit Committee in early September each year.

Finding 2: In January, the County Auditor/Controller provided a very rough electronic draft of the pending financial statements to the two Grand Jury members participating in the Audit Committee. The draft was difficult to follow and understand. It was not feasible for the Grand Jury members to provide comments based upon that draft. The final audit report was not made available to the Grand Jury until the final audit review meeting.

Response: The Auditor/Controller agrees that a rough draft of the financial statements was provided to the members of the Audit Committee and that the final report was provided at the final audit review meeting. The Auditor/Controller forwarded both the rough draft and final report to the Grand Jury as soon as the documents were received.

Recommendation 2: The County Auditor/Controller should release the final audit report within a reasonable timeframe to allow for Grand Jury review and questions prior to the scheduled County Audit Committee final review meeting.

Response: The Auditor/Controller will provide the audit report to the Grand Jury as soon as it is received.

Finding 3: The County Audit Committee final review meeting was scheduled one hour prior to final audit presentation to the Board of Supervisors.

Response: The Auditor/Controller agrees with this finding.

Recommendation 3: The County Audit Committee final review should take place at least one week prior to presentation of the report to the Board of Supervisors to allow for any necessary changes found during the final audit review.

Response: The County's contract with the outside auditor provides for only three trips to Plumas County each year. If the Grand Jury would like, the Auditor/Controller will attempt to schedule a meeting for members of the Audit Committee at the offices of the outside auditor.

Finding 4: The Board of Supervisors representatives were not present at any of the County Audit Committee meetings.

Response: The Board of Supervisors agrees with this finding.

Recommendation 4: The two members of the Board of Supervisors appointed to the County Audit Committee should attend the meetings.

Response: The Audit Committee was established at the request of and for the benefit of the Grand Jury. Members of the Board of Supervisors receive updated information on the County's finances on an ongoing basis throughout the year. Board members may attend meetings of the Audit Committee if scheduling allows and/or if useful information that has not already been provided to the Board can be transmitted.

Finding 5: The two members of the 2009-2010 Grand Jury Audit Committee had substantial professional work experience in public sector finance and accounting that made their participation on the County Audit Committee reasonably easy. Future years' Grand Jury participants may not have that sort of professional background.

Response: The Auditor/Controller agrees with this finding.

Recommendation 5: The County Auditor/Controller, as committee facilitator, needs to be highly sensitive to the diverse backgrounds of the Grand Juror participants to assure full understanding of both the governmental audit process, as well as, any resulting findings.

Response: The Auditor/Controller will work with members of the Grand Jury, regardless of their background and experience, to ensure they are informed and satisfied with their understanding of the financial records and audit.

Jail Inspection Report

Facility

Finding 1: The current jail is one of the last linear designed jails in California. The design has the cells and other rooms in a straight line where it does not permit the staff to easily observe inmates in different locations of the jail or to be able to respond to emergencies.

Response: The Board of Supervisors and the Sheriff agree with this finding to the extent it describes the layout of the jail. New jail design can provide for better functionality, but the Plumas County jail has served its intended purpose for many years. The jail is inspected annually by the California Department of Corrections and determined to have adequate levels of safety and functionality.

Finding 2: In addition, due to the poor construction design, radio communication within the facility is spotty, allowing potentially dangerous situation to develop with weak response.

Response: The Board of Supervisors and the Sheriff disagree with this finding. The jail is inspected annually by the California Department of Corrections and determined to have adequate levels of safety and functionality.

Finding 3: Another concern, which is due to occasional overcrowding are the forced early release of inmates into the community. A larger facility would alleviate this reoccurring problem.

Response: The Board of Supervisors and the Sheriff generally agrees with this finding. Even with a larger facility, there may still be times when overcrowding requires early release.

Finding 4: The perimeter fence in the exercise yard is bordered by a public access road. Outsiders have clear access to the fence enclosing the exercise yard. They can then place drugs, weapons and other contraband where inmates can retrieve them. There have been two escapes (one being abetted by an accomplice) in the past dozen years, but both were soon captured.

Response: The Board of Supervisors and the Sheriff agree with this finding to the extent it describes the physical layout of the exercise year. Security procedures are employed to ensure that contraband is not transferred to inmates.

Finding 5: There are risks involved in transporting prisoners to the courthouse. Video arraignment, where the inmate is arraigned from the jail was tried, but poor acoustics in the jail precluded its use.

Response: The Sheriff agrees with this finding. There is always some level of risk in transporting prisoners. Some of the current risks will be reduced or eliminated with the construction of the new courthouse in Quincy and the planned segregation of prisoners from court staff and the public.

Finding 6: The washer and dryer need replacing but the kitchen was adequate and clean but is overdue for a fire inspection. Meals are well-prepared and nutritious.

Response: The Sheriff agrees with this finding.

Recommendation 1: New jail is needed. In the last Grand Jury report it was noted that Plumas County is to receive state funding for a new courthouse. A new jail facility must be part of the planned construction, one with improved design to insure better inmate monitoring and more consistent communication between staff.

Response: Plumas County itself is not receiving funding for a new courthouse. The court system is no longer part of the county government and is funded and controlled by the state government. The statewide Administrative Office of the Courts has decided to build a new courthouse in Plumas County.

Recommendation 2: Critical Need -- Short of the building of a new facility, it is imperative that the current jail be provided a safer enclosure for the exercise yard which would prevent escape attempts and ensure greater exclusion from the outside public.

Response: The Sheriff recognizes that the physical security of the current jails needs to be improved. The Sheriff is pursuing state and federal grant funding to make improvements at the existing facility.

Recommendation 3: Soundproofing one of the jail rooms might enable the use of video arraignment, thereby reducing the need for dangerous transportation of inmates to the current courthouse.

Response: There is not enough available space in the existing jail to dedicate a room to video arraignments. The Sheriff disagrees that the transportation of inmates to the current courthouse is inordinately dangerous. Security will be enhanced with the construction of the new courthouse.

Recommendation 4: Critical need -- An efficient and dependable communication system needs to be installed in the current facility so that quick responses would help mitigate any emergencies arising within.

Response: The radio communications system for the Sheriff's Department is undergoing an upgrade project over the next three years. Additional repeater sites will improve communications for the entire department, including personnel transmitting within the jail.

Staffing

Finding 1: The current level of 15 correctional officers (three of 18 are on long term sick leave) is wholly inadequate for a jail of this size. While the staff is doing a superb job in our estimation. Understaffing encourages dangerous and threatening conditions to exist for both staff and inmates alike.

Response: The Sheriff agrees that the jail should have additional staff and supports dedicating additional resources to the jail when fiscal conditions improve.

Finding 2: Because of the numerous programs going on during the evening and graveyard shift involving much movement of inmates the possibility of disruption or attack are greatest at this time. They are manned by only two officers, too few to respond effectively and safely to any problems.

Response: The Sheriff agrees that any movement of inmates increases risk and that the design and layout of the current jail cannot maximize the security and the effectiveness of available staffing. In the near-term, additional staffing should be added as resources allow, and in the long-term construction of a new jail with modern design will maximize the staffing efficiency and security of the facility.

Finding 3: Beside the potential problems expressed in the previous findings, there exists the possibility for future lawsuits, costing the county millions of dollars in settlements.

Response: The Sheriff and the Board of Supervisors agree that there is always the potential for claims against the County and that, to some extent, improving facilities and staffing may prevent or minimize some claims. However, the County is frequently targeted by claims and lawsuits, most of which are frivolous or exaggerated. The County has endeavored to operate the jail and implement necessary repairs as available resources and competing priorities allow, and the County has not incurred any liabilities related to the jail in recent years.

Finding 4: Inspections by the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation have found the current jail to be understaffed by a minimum of five correctional officers. In addition, four previous grand juries and this one have also found the jail staffing to be terribly inadequate and unsafe.

Response: The Sheriff agrees that the Department of Corrections has recommended higher levels of staffing and that previous grand juries have made the findings as stated.

Recommendation: Critical need -- The Board of Supervisors should immediately seek funding to bring staffing up to an adequate level. Yes it will be expensive (the Sheriff estimates it will cost \$500,000 to bring on five new officers) but this Grand Jury is convinced it's not a matter of if something tragic will happen, but when.

Response: The Sheriff is actively pursuing financial assistance through the county's state and federal representatives.

Programs and Procedures

Finding 1: The procedure for booking and detaining arrestees is secure and efficient. Because of the inadequate staffing, the exercise areas are potentially problematic. The workout room can hold only 20 inmates at a time with one officer monitoring them. The exercise yard has only one officer monitoring of 35 inmates at a time. This ratio is totally inadequate for individuals with violent and/or psychotic proclivities.

Response: The Sheriff agrees that the procedure for booking and detaining arrestees is secure and efficient. As noted above, staffing is limited due to available fiscal resources and additional staffing will be a priority when economic conditions improve. Ultimately, the long-term solution to efficiently staffing the jail is to construct a new facility with modern design.

Finding 2: The grievance process for inmates seemed to be adequate. Concerns of the inmates are appropriately addressed and dealt with.

Response: The Sheriff agrees with this finding.

Finding 3: Programs offered at the jail include: educational, religious, medical/dental and mental health. Not offered, because of a lack of need for them or as a result of the minimal time spent at the facility (all inmates are released within one year) are programs concerned with; vocational, domestic violence, victim/gang, diversity awareness and work furlough activities.

Response: The Sheriff agrees with this finding.

Recommendation: Considering the lack of space and staffing, the Grand Jury feels the jail is doing all it can to provide the needed programs for inmates to utilize. Assistance from various community organizations on an as needed basis is certainly greatly needed and appreciated.

Response: The Sheriff welcomes offers of assistance from community organizations and is always ready to meet with organizations to discuss opportunities to provide assistance.