

The 2006/07 Siskiyou Co. Civil Grand Jury spent hundreds of hours dealing with citizens complaints and conducting oversight investigations of various county agencies. It was a great experience to work with a group of volunteers, and with the help of the County Counsel's office, the Sheriff's Dept. and the Superior Court, watch our inexperience turn into a viable investigative body. I commend the members of the 2006/07 Grand Jury for their dedication and commitment.

The Civil Grand Jury is here for the people of Siskiyou County as a means to deal with some of the problems citizens may experience, or be aware of, in the workings of county or city agencies. The Grand Jury is made up of 19 volunteers who meet the requirements set forth by the Superior Court. As you will see when you read the report some of our investigations were extensive and informative. I hope you enjoy reading our report.

Thank you, Carl Rehbock  
Grand Jury Foreperson, 2006/07

## SISKIYOU-MODOC REGIONAL DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SUPPORT SERVICES

### Background:

The Grand Jury performed a watchdog investigation of the Siskiyou-Modoc Regional Department of Child Support Services in September 2006. The last time the Department was reviewed was 1997/98. We interviewed two staff members. The building appeared to be clean and in good condition. Security is good, but not ideal.

Child support is no longer under the direction of the office of the District Attorney, but is instead an independent department which receives its funding from the federal and state governments. It is located in the old Forest Service building at 1215 S. Main Street in Yreka, and now occupies the entire building. Grand Jury members met with staff in the conference room, which was airy and comfortable. Staff consists of the Director and Assistant Director, two attorneys (including the Chief Child Support Attorney), fourteen Child Support Specialists (including three supervisors and one Senior Child Support Specialist), six Child Support Assistants, five legal secretaries, six fiscal and administrative staff, and one Ombudsman/Outreach Coordinator. The primary task of the Department is to establish and modify court orders for child support, to establish paternity, and to collect child support.

### Findings:

1. According to staff, approximately 5,000 to 6,000 new cases are opened each year on average. Of the 30 to 50 cases opened a week, about five to six go to court every week. While establishing new cases seems to be a relatively smooth process, locating parents and collecting support is quite a bit more problematic. About 90% have support orders (meaning the non-custodial parent has eventually been found), but there is only about a 55% payment rate. However this figure is about ten percent higher than the state average, and has improved about 10-15% over the past few years in Siskiyou County. Approximately 60% of the money collected comes from about 20% of the customers. Parents are located through the other parent, the DMV, utility companies, law enforcement, the military, employers, family, the internet, and the Franchise Tax Board. The department is unable to obtain information from the Internal Revenue Service or Social Security due to privacy laws.
2. One of the issues mentioned by staff was the inefficiency of the Statewide computer system known as CASES (Computer Assisted Support Enforcement System). This system is in the process of being replaced. Apparently, California is one of only two states that do not have all counties linked into the same system, which makes child-support collection cumbersome. It is estimated that the update should be complete by 2008.
3. Customer complaints are referred to the Ombudsman and there are both an

informal and a formal resolution process in place. Department policy is to respond to complaints within three working days informally, and, if the issue has not been resolved, within thirty days to a formal, written complaint. If the customer is still not satisfied, the matter is referred to a hearing with an administrative law judge at the State level. It was estimated that there have been approximately seventy-five complaints in the last five years, of which, only two went to a State hearing. Both were resolved in favor of the Department. Staff said that about four to five informal complaints, on average, are filed a month.

4. Staff stated that they were happy in their jobs; that they did not feel intimidated or discriminated against in any way. They were not asked to work outside their job descriptions, and that training was adequate. Security also appeared to be adequate. There is an alarm system in all interview rooms, all doors have locks that are opened with a regularly changed security code, and there are video cameras in place. However, the glass is not bulletproof.
5. In the past, a popular newsletter was mailed to all customers. The rising cost of postage has resulted in the discontinuation of this practice.

#### Conclusions:

All in all, this Department appears to be functioning smoothly and efficiently. The staff members whom we interviewed are happy in their jobs. This is a large department with a huge responsibility and an almost overwhelming task. All staff members appear to be working hard to meet their responsibilities with good morale.

#### Recommendations:

1. The newsletter could be resurrected, printed, and copies left in the office for customers to pick up.
2. The installation of bulletproof glass would help staff to feel safer.

#### Response Required:

None

## THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

### Background:

The Grand Jury conducted a watchdog investigation of the Office of the County Administrator in August of 2006. It had been more than five years since the office had been investigated and the first with the current Administrator.

### Findings:

The Office of the County Administrator is responsible to the Board of Supervisors for the general administration and coordination of all County operations and programs, together with the preparation of the County budget. The Government Code provides that the Board may create a County Administrator position and delegate it such authority as it deems appropriate. Unlike many rural counties which established the Administrator's Office fairly recently (within the last twenty years), Siskiyou County has had the position for more than fifty.

The current County Administrator began his employment with Siskiyou County in January 2006 after working as an administrator in Colorado. The Administrator's office is located one block from the Courthouse at the corner of Center and Fourth Streets. The office is leased from Saint Mark's Episcopal Church.

1. The County Administrator appears to be adjusting to the procedural differences between Colorado and California. In Colorado, county boards are party-affiliated and elected at-large.
2. In his assessment, the County is better off fiscally than it was two to three years ago.
3. The County Administrator does not consider the multi-stage building program which was developed in the early 2000's to be currently realistic due to its' high cost. One of his biggest concerns is what should the County's position be with the Behavioral Health building presently under lease to the County. He sees a dire space need in the Sheriff's Office and the need for an infrastructure development plan.
4. Labor contracts have for the most part been brought current. The County will continue to employ outside services in labor negotiations.
5. The office consists of four full-time employees and one part time employee and the Administrator proposes no changes in staffing in the near future. He sees the need for more County grant funding for which the part-time employee was hired.
6. Proposed changes include establishing an internal service fund for plant acquisition whereby fixed assets can be leased to the using department. He also sees a need to make County government simpler.

### Conclusion:

Overall the Administrator showed good knowledge of County operations.

Recommendations: None

Response Required: None.

## DEADWOOD CONSERVATION CAMP

### Background:

Members of the Grand Jury inspected the Deadwood Conservation Camp on January 25, 2007. Both California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation and the California Department of Forestry (CAL-FIRE) staff spoke with the Grand Jury members, answered questions, and led the tour of the facility.

### Findings:

1. Deadwood Conservation Camp, opened in 1962, is one of nineteen fire camps in Northern California, and thirty-nine camps total in the state. The camp is jointly administrated by the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation(CDCR) and the California Department of Forestry, now known as “Cal-Fire”. Inmate hand crews provide an immediate response work force for floods, snow removal, conservation projects, and community services. The camp houses approximately eighty inmates at any given time, including four fire crews of seventeen, and other workers (cooks, clerks, etc.). Inmate fire crews are trained in basic firefighting techniques for four weeks at the Susanville prison. Staff includes eight CDCR officers, one sergeant, and one lieutenant, and eight CDF captains and a division Chief. The camp’s mission is to provide low-security inmates as fire crews for fire suppression and community service where needed, but principally in Siskiyou County. In-camp services include a CDF vehicle shop where State, Federal and volunteer fire department vehicles are repaired by inmate crews. Other areas of the camp include a welding shop, wood shop, saw sharpening area, paint shop, and storage for fire equipment. The inmates have also built a fenced garden area and a landscaped pond, waterfall, and picnic area.
2. Inmates have provided services such as brush clearing, clean-up, general maintenance, painting, and fuel reduction to local schools, cities, cemetery associations, the Red Cross, the US Forest Service, and many other government agencies.
3. Local vendors are used for most supplies to the camp.
4. Inmates selected for the camp are level one (low security) males with less than four years left to serve on their terms. There are no sex offenders, arsonists, or violent inmates. Inmates receive two days off their sentence for every day they are in camp. There have been very few escapes since the camp opened.

### Conclusions:

The Deadwood Conservation Camp is very well maintained and efficiently run. It provides many services to Siskiyou County and its residents, as well as offering inmates valuable job skills and patronizing local businesses.

Recommendations:

None

Response Required:

None

## THE LITTLE RED SCHOOLHOUSE

### Background:

The Grand Jury received complaints about the operation of the Delphic Elementary School District that included conflict of interest and possible Brown Act violations by the board of trustees, lack of support for a special education student attending the school, and mismanagement of the school due to the absence of the Superintendent/Principal on a regular basis. A further issue was that any complaint about the situation at Delphic was pointless because of the unusual close relationship between the principal and school board.

Delphic Elementary School was established in 1916 and provides instruction for grades kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup>. It is located four miles east of Yreka on Oberlin Road. The school had somewhere between forty-eight to fifty-one students enrolled at the time of this investigation. Only a handful of these students actually reside within the small, rural district. The school employs three full time teachers, one secretary/administrative assistant, one cook, one part-time REAP (Rural Education Achievement Program) teacher, a bookkeeper, three part-time instructional aides, a two hour a week art instructor, and a janitorial firm which cleans the school at night. The school board also employs a superintendent/principal whose contract stipulates she work 190 days a year from home or at school and paid her over \$55,000 a year (salary and health benefits included) and an administrative stipend of \$15,00. Most years, to her credit, the Superintendent/Principal did not accept this stipend. Her contract does not stipulate the number of hours to be worked per day. There was no system of accountability for the days or hours worked. There is no stipulated number of days given that the Superintendent/Principal work on the school site, but estimates from all those interviewed – with the exception of the board members- stated it was less than fifty percent of the school year. Some years the Superintendent/Principal has been absent for a month at a time. In one school year that began in August, the Superintendent/Principal was not on site until after October 1<sup>st</sup>. Even on the days she was on site, the Superintendent/Principal often arrived after school had begun, left before the end of the day, or attended administrative meetings in Yreka. One employee reported a time when the Superintendent/Principal left in the morning and returned later in the day with her hair and nails done. The Superintendent/Principal is, however, always on site for “visible” events such as open house, the back to school BBQ, poetry night, etc. She also uses some of her “on site” time to chaperone class trips and attend ski days.

Delphic Elementary School District is unique in that it serves a very small population and area of our county. Very few of the students attending there even live in their district. Students are recruited from neighboring school districts. Employees reported that they were informed that if enough students were not recruited, their jobs were in jeopardy. Enrollment can vary from year to year. Funding is received as a “Necessary Small School” in bands of enrollment of 23 or 24 students. In the 2006/2007 school year the school received in excess of \$360,000 in funding from the state. If the

enrollment falls below forty-nine students for the 2007/2008 school year over \$120,000 in funding may be lost for the 2008/2009 school year.

In conducting this investigation, the Grand Jury interviewed a former board member, former certificated and classified employees, current staff members, current board members, parents, and the current Superintendent/Principal. These interviews took place over a four month period and involved many, long hours. Documents from the Siskiyou County Office of Education were also utilized. The Superintendent/Principal also supplied the Grand Jury with most – but not all -requested documents.

#### Findings:

Concerns regarding special education students in the district appear to have been addressed satisfactorily through the support of the Special Education Department from the Siskiyou County Office of Education.

The Delphic Elementary School Board is made up of three members. Two of these three members are married to each other. Although none of the board members saw this as a problem, based on “human nature”, it was difficult to believe that school business is never discussed between these spouses outside board meetings. Any discussion of school business by a majority of Board members outside of a regularly scheduled board meeting is a violation of the Brown Act (Gov. Code # 54961).

Even if the Brown Act has never been violated by this board, the very close relationship of these board members - two have served together for over twenty years – gives an appearance of impropriety. Two of the three Board members also receive health benefits at a cost to the District in excess of \$13,000 a year. These benefits are “uncapped” which means the District will continue to absorb the rising medical costs for these board members. The payment of benefits for Board members certainly could be a reason for a Board member to have a vested interest in remaining on that Board.

Of further concern is the uncommonly close relationship between the Superintendent/Principal and the president of the Board. They reportedly talk almost daily by phone and consider each other close friends. The husband and wife team had visited the Superintendent/Principal at her home in Southern California, had attended local basketball games together, celebrated their birthdays together, and dined out together. Again, this husband and wife team represented a majority of the Delphic Elementary School Board. It is difficult to believe that school business is never discussed among these three friends. When the Board was questioned by the Grand Jury it was clear that the Delphic School Board based all their knowledge of school matters, personnel, work done, and time spent by the Superintendent/Principal on site simply on the Superintendent/Principal’s word for it. One Board member, when interviewed, even categorized himself as a “bad board member”. In the Grand Jury investigation it has been discovered that even required, routine school plans had not been addressed in some time. There has not – to any Board member’s memory – ever been a written evaluation of their Superintendent even though it is required (Education Code sections 44600-44665). This

close relationship among two Board members and their Superintendent/Principal made it difficult for staff members to believe they would receive an impartial hearing at a Board meeting.

The concern with mismanagement of Delphic Elementary School due to the absence of its Superintendent/Principal appears to be a valid one. The Superintendent/Principal, by most reports, spent less than 50% of the school year on campus. Even when she was there, she rarely arrived before 9:00 a.m. and had to leave by 3:00 p.m. at least two days a week to attend to her husband's medical needs. She often brought her ill husband with her to work. She left him in the office/library that is very small and overcrowded, or in an occupied classroom. He is 81 years old. School staff was expected to supervise him as well as instruct their students. His state of health was disruptive as well as a cause of concern to some staff. In our interviews with the Superintendent/Principal, she denied that it was anyone else's responsibility to supervise him; however he remained at Delphic during our lengthy interview in Yreka and according to employees the Superintendent/Principal regularly left him there at Delphic while she attended meetings at the Siskiyou County Office of Education. The Superintendent/Principal denied that her husband is seriously ill and maintained that he is an active volunteer at Delphic. When questioned as to why he was there all the time she is there, she maintained that she couldn't leave him home alone. There had been no background check or fingerprinting done of this man in all the years that he "volunteered" there. This is not legal. It was reported by an employee that the Superintendent/Principal's husband had made a kindergartener cry. The Superintendent/Principal denied that this could have happened because, "she always knew what he was doing", even though he was at the school without her "supervision" as she spoke. The Superintendent/Principal also maintained that her husband worked on his own job in the school library while at Delphic. His job requires that he utilize the school TV and video player. Employees stated that when her husband was "working", it kept them from using the library for various groupings of students and that the staff could not utilize the video equipment for their classes.

The Superintendent/Principal maintained that she was available to staff and parents by cell phone, fax, or e-mail, but some of those interviewed said that was not always the case. Sometimes when the Superintendent/Principal was called she was at the doctor's, grocery store, golfing, or at a social function, etc., and it wasn't convenient to talk. Sometimes when the Superintendent/Principal returned to Delphic, she contradicted answers she had given over the phone. The staff began e-mailing her so that they would have written confirmation of her answers. The Grand Jury found that the Superintendent/Principal didn't always read her e-mails when she failed to bring the requested documents to her interview with the Grand Jury. She said she hadn't received the e-mail even though it had been sent to all three of her e-mail addresses. The original arrangement of the Superintendent/Principal to work part-time on site in Siskiyou County and part-time from her home in Southern California was to have been "temporary", but it has gone on for more than six years. The Superintendent/Principal is not accountable to anyone for the hours worked or time on site. When the Superintendent/Principal was off site, many of her duties/responsibilities fell on other employees. One of the employees

received a stipend of \$5,000 to handle school discipline when the Superintendent/Principal was off campus. Some reports, forms, and documents were signed using a “signature stamp” rather than the Superintendent’s actual signature.

Some staff at Delphic were fearful for their jobs. At the end of the 2005/2006 school year, two of the three teachers were not rehired. One was escorted off-campus to her car while school was still in session in late May. She was not even allowed to take her personal possessions. According to some staff members interviewed that even though some students and parents protested the loss of these two teachers; it was to no avail. Both teachers were hired and are currently employed by other districts in Siskiyou County. This same year, the school secretary also quit, and the custodian was released from his position. According to testimony from some employees, even with the Superintendent/Principal absent from the school site so frequently, a feeling of intimidation was communicated to the staff. Nothing was to be done by the staff of Delphic without checking with the Superintendent/Principal first. Even in emergency situations, the Superintendent/Principal was to be called first to check as to how the emergency should be handled. Staff meetings, according to one employee, were not allowed unless the Superintendent/Principal was in attendance. There was evidence of control, but little active leadership by the Superintendent/Principal.

The Superintendent/Principal does not possess an administrative credential. Although it is not required for a school of such small enrollment, it is usually obtained at some point after assuming this role. She has been Superintendent/Principal for 13 years. The Superintendent/Principal without a credential cannot evaluate her teaching staff. She can - with Board approval – choose not to reelect (rehire) probationary teachers (those with two or less years of experience). This she has chosen to do at least twice in the last two years. The Superintendent/Principal maintained that if she felt a teacher needed review she would hire another administrator to do it for her. This practice is an additional expense for this small district and a responsibility that an involved Superintendent/Principal would be accepting. The process of obtaining an administrative credential is – at this time – a relatively easy and inexpensive one.

Some of the basic responsibilities of a Superintendent/Principal appeared not to have been addressed at all. The Superintendent/Principal was requested to bring to her interview copies of some of the basic documents that would be required of a Superintendent/Principal and that should be readily available to the public (California Public Records Act) in her office. These documents were:

- A copy of Delphic’s School Plan
- A copy of Delphic’s School Safety Plan
- A copy of Delphic’s Wellness Plan
- A copy of Delphic’s Accountability Report Card
- A copy of Delphic’s current evaluation tool for certificated and classified employees
- A copy of the Superintendent/Principal’s last evaluation
- A copy of the last School SITE Council agenda and minutes of the previous meeting
- A copy of Delphic’s budget for 2006-2007

A copy of the most current grant the Superintendent/Principal had written and received funding for.

The Superintendent/Principal arrived for her interview with the Grand Jury without any of these documents. She maintained that she had not received the e-mail even though the e-mail had been sent to all three of her e-mail addresses. She said that the documents would be ready the next day and it was arranged that one of the Grand Jury members would pick them up at Delphic at 3:30 p.m. During the interview, several additional items were requested from the Superintendent/Principal. When the Grand Jury member arrived not even one document was ready, and he was informed that the Superintendent/Principal would let us (the Grand Jury) know when they would be available. The additional items requested were:

A copy of the last three years fire drill schedules

The number of miles traveled to and from Southern California and Siskiyou County as reported on her 2006 income tax

A copy of the Superintendent/Principal's job description

A copy of the Delphic School Mission Statement

A copy of Delphic's Education Technology Plan

This interview was held on April 17<sup>th</sup>. Throughout the interview there was a perception that the Superintendent/Principal was not necessarily forthright and several times had to be cautioned about her perceived lack of candor. On April 24<sup>th</sup> some of the requested documents were dropped off at the County Counsel's office in Yreka.

The Grand Jury requested and received the following documents:

1. The Delphic School Site Plan, although labeled 2004-2005, 2005-2006, 2006-2007, contained no information newer than goals for the year 2000. The enclosed agendas and minutes for the SITE Council meetings were from 1998 and 1999. The school Plan and School SITE Council are a mandated, integral part of any school participating in School-Based Program Coordination (Education Code 52800-52887). It is also mandated (Education Code 52852.5) that the Board of a school district adopt policies "ensuring that a school site council is established to consider whether or not it wishes to participate in the program." Further, "Districts applying for School-Based Coordination funding through the consolidated application process must consolidate their program plan into a single plan for student achievement" (Education Code 53853,64001). The School Site Council shall "approve, annually review, and update a single plan for student achievement". There was no evidence that this is occurring at Delphic. When the Superintendent/Principal was questioned by the Grand Jury she, at first, said that she could not remember who was on the current SITE Council. Later she repeatedly said that she was unable to recruit any parent members for SITE council. The Grand Jury found

this fact hard to believe since the majority of students at Delphic live out-of-district and their parents chose for them to attend Delphic and even provide transportation daily. This lack of parent involvement was also contradicted by the school's own School Accountability Report Card from 2004-2005. "Because parents are the only source of transportation for Delphic students, there is a strong parental support and commitment. Delphic parents volunteer to assist teachers in the classroom and on field trips. They serve on School Site Council, help at school events, and serve as valuable resources to our entire school community." Even though this quote was written in 2005-2006, there was no evidence provided of an operational SITE Council for those years. None of the employees questioned were on this year's school SITE Council or were even aware of when it met. Schools, like Delphic, which receive monies for any categorical program must establish a school site council or advisory committee composed of half school staff (the majority of whom must be classroom teachers) and half parents/guardians or parent/guardian representatives. To be operating without a school SITE Council or advisory committee is a serious matter. Later, in interviews conducted May 15, 2007, it was discovered that one SITE Council meeting had been scheduled in September and was canceled due to lack of a quorum.

On May 3, 2007, two members of the Grand Jury visited Delphic Elementary School in order to examine the School Safety Plan. While there, we were provided with a copy of the "Single Plan for Student Achievement". This document is the most current document for guiding student achievement in California schools. "The Superintendent or designee shall ensure that a single plan for student achievement is prepared by the school site council as required by law for each school participating in specified state and/or federal categorical programs." (Education Code 41507, 41572, 52055.755, 64001) In this document, provided by the Delphic Superintendent/Principal, were the names of the current SITE Council members. There were two parents, one part time teacher, and the Superintendent/Principal herself. On May 15, 2007, members of the Grand Jury interviewed the President, Vice President, and parent member of Delphic's SITE Council. According to the President, there had been a SITE council meeting called in September, 2006. This meeting had been adjourned due to lack of a quorum. According to the three members interviewed, there had been no other meetings called for the entire school year. If there had been any other meetings called, no one had notified them. There was, however, a SITE Council meeting scheduled and posted for May 16, 2007. We informed these three members of this fact. Two of the three interviewed hadn't even been aware that they were on SITE Council this year. The teacher on SITE Council said that had she been aware that she was the "teacher representative" on SITE Council, that she would, of course, have been in attendance at meetings. None of the three knew anything about a Single Plan for Student Achievement. The Grand Jury was pleased to hear of the scheduled meeting for the next evening, but it certainly appeared that it was an example of too little, too late for this year.

The document itself (Single Plan for Student Achievement) was sadly lacking. The State and our Siskiyou County Office of Education supplies an excellent template complete with extensive checklists to help our schools and their SITE Councils construct this comprehensive plan. Delphic's Plan appeared to have been thrown together with no

input from either SITE Council or a “Needs Assessment” of staff, students, and parents. There are thirteen required contents of a Single Plan for Student Achievement. The first is a “School Vision and Mission”. This was given. The second is a “School Profile”. This section lacked six of the nine suggested components. For the third, the reader was directed to pick up this information from the school office in the form of the School Accountability Report Card. The fourth section, “Analysis of Assessments and Current Education Practice”, consisted of questions asked, but NOT answered. The fifth, “Student Performance Data & Analysis”, was merely directions to the California Department of Education WEB sites. The sixth, “School Goals for Improving Student Achievement”, was non-specific. The seventh section, “Instructional services for English Learners, educationally disadvantaged pupils, gifted and talented pupils and pupils with exceptional needs”, was not addressed at all. The eighth, “Planned Improvements in Student Performance”, was not addressed at all. The ninth, “Professional Development Plan”, was not addressed at all. The tenth section, “Categorical Funding” was supposed to deal with all funding sources and how the monies were to be used. Not only were there no plans given as to the use of funding, but not even all the correct funding sources or amounts were given. The eleventh section, “School SITE Council Membership” was given, but as mentioned above, the members were not even involved in the process. The twelfth section was “Recommendations and Assurances”. It was included, but since so much of the plan being recommended was non-existent, and since the plan does not represent the work of a SITE Council, who is recommending it? The last section is that of “Board Approval and Dates”. This section was not included in the copy given to the Grand Jury.

2. The safety plan for Delphic Elementary was not submitted due to its bulk. On Thursday, May 3<sup>rd</sup>, two Grand Jury members stopped by Delphic School to examine this document. The two members were given two large binders said to be “Delphic’s School Safety Plan”. The binders were not a school safety plan. They were two manuals of policies/suggestions on safety from Keenan and Associates (the school insurance company). Education Code 32286 requires each school to adopt a Comprehensive School Safety Plan. The development of this plan shall be overseen by the Superintendent or designee. (Education Code 32281) “The Board shall approve the plan at a regularly scheduled meeting and the adoption of the plan shall not be a consent item.” (Education Code 35294.22) This plan shall consider “three essential components” described in Education Code 35294.21 “An updated file of all safety-related plans and materials is to be readily available for inspection by the public.” (Education Code 32282) The school site council or safety committee is to be an integral part of developing this plan. The state of California considers this plan so important that Education Code 32288 provides that if there has been “a willful failure by a district” to not comply with the safety plan requirements that they may be fined \$2,000. Delphic Elementary School does not appear to have such a plan.

School safety is of paramount concern in today’s world. Delphic, although presenting an idyllic picture of a small, safe school, is not exempt from the world’s violence. One concern noted by the Grand Jury is the working space for the school secretary which allows anyone to enter the school unseen and unannounced. The first

office encountered by a visitor is that of the frequently absent Superintendent/ Principal. The school secretary, who is there daily, must work out of the already crowded office/library located past this office. She has no view of visitors until they are almost at her desk. The room she is located in is utilized as a library, for classroom groupings, and for storage. This is a situation that needs to be addressed.

3. Delphic's Wellness Plan was brought in by the Superintendent/Principal. In her interview on April 17, 2007, the Superintendent/Principal told the Grand Jury that she had written this plan. When it was brought to her attention that this plan, "must be developed with the involvement of parents/guardians, students, school food service professionals, school administrators, Board representatives, and members of the public" (42 USC 1751 Note), she stated that, as with the SITE Council, no one was willing to help. The Delphic Wellness Plan and Policies, when delivered to the Grand Jury, consisted of a cover page with the date 2006-07. The rest of this "plan" consisted entirely of photocopied Board Policies and Administrative Regulations set in borders. This was no plan – only the policies distributed by the California Department of Education for designing a plan.

4. A copy of Delphic's School Accountability Report Card was delivered to the County Counsel on April 24, 2007. The Superintendent/Principal told the Grand Jury that she had supplied the information for this report to a company called School Services to produce it. It was a very attractive, professionally done report that cost the district \$1,500. The state of California supplies a "template" on-line that can be utilized by schools at no cost and presents the same information. The Grand Jury was unable to locate Delphic's School Accountability Report Card on-line at that time. The report did appear on-line around the middle of May. However, this "report card" was published in 2005-2006, and it is time to write another. Will this one cost the district another \$1,500?

5. The Superintendent/Principal did provide an evaluation tool for the certificated employees. It is a form that can be downloaded directly from the internet. The form reflected the current standards for teachers. It is an excellent evaluation tool, but since the Superintendent/Principal does not have an administrative credential it will not be used. No copy of an evaluation tool for classified employees was submitted.

6. There was no evaluation of the Superintendent/Principal by her school board submitted to the Grand Jury. The Superintendent/Principal said she had not been evaluated in the last five years. The Board members, when interviewed, couldn't ever remember a formal written evaluation. A former Board member said they had evaluated the Superintendent/Principal in 1994. This former Board member felt that the current Superintendent/Principal had been mismanaging Delphic School at that time, but since she was in the minority on the Board, she resigned. The annual evaluation of the Superintendent/Principal is a clear duty of the School Board.

7. As mentioned earlier, the only copies of SITE Council agendas and minutes that were submitted were from 1998 and 1999. At the interviews conducted on May 15<sup>th</sup>,

the parent who, ultimately, was given to the Grand Jury as this year's SITE Council President, said that there were some meetings of SITE Council held in the 2005/2006 school year. The Grand Jury was never given copies of those requested agendas and minutes.

8. A copy of Delphic's 2006/2007 budget was submitted. Currently, Delphic School is functioning in the "black", but projections for 2007/2008 and 2008/2009 do indicate that the school will be deficit spending (in the red). This can be explained due to lack of Forest Reserve Funding, but can also be due to the continuing practice of "uncapped" benefits for instructional staff and Board members. In late May, it was announced by the federal government that Forest Reserve Funding will be extended for an additional year. This will be a positive note for Delphic and should allow them to remain in the "black" for an additional year. The issue of uncapped benefits remains.

9. The Superintendent/Principal submitted a copy of "the most current grant" she had written. This grant is known as REAP (Rural Education Achievement Program) and involves little more than going on-line and certifying that your school enrollment is less than 600 and your federally assigned code is a "7" or "8". This process takes less than 20 minutes and involves no real "writing". A Board member interviewed indicated that the Superintendent/Principal was invaluable to the District for the many grants she writes annually. The budget supplied to us by the Superintendent/Principal shows no evidence of "multiple" grants and if this is the most "current" grant written, it was awarded in August of 2006.

Quite by chance, the Grand Jury learned of the awarding of a VAPA (Visual and Performing Arts) grant to Delphic. This grant was to be in excess of \$4,000 and was approved at the May 16<sup>th</sup> Delphic Board meeting this year. Why this grant was not given to the Grand Jury as the "most current" grant written remains a mystery.

Of the other requested documents from the April 17, 2007 interview:

A copy of the last three years' scheduled fire drills was submitted.

A copy of the mileage claimed by the Superintendent/Principal to and from Southern California was not submitted.

A copy of the Superintendent/Principal's job description was not submitted.

A copy of the Mission Statement and Beliefs for Delphic School was submitted.

A copy of the Technology Plan for Delphic School was submitted. This plan was a very professional and comprehensive plan. It was written to cover the period from July 1, 2006 to June 30, 2011. It was written with the assistance of the Siskiyou County Office of Education.

The investigation of the situation at Delphic School ended on a very sour note at the May 16 2007 meeting of the School Board. In spite of repeated cautions not to discuss the Grand Jury investigation, the Board members and their Superintendent/Principal discussed the investigation in an open session. A Grand Jury member was in attendance at this meeting; it hindered them not one bit. Such flagrant disregard of Grand Jury proceedings serves as an indication of a board and superintendent/principal who are out of control.

Recommendations:

1. Delphic School should continue working closely with the Siskiyou County Office of Education to ensure that all students with special education needs and 504 plans be properly served.
2. The Delphic Elementary School Board needs to receive training to familiarize themselves with the responsibilities of boardsmanship. They need to understand the school budget and to oversee mandated programs, plans, and policies. They need to evaluate their Superintendent/Principal and hold that person accountable for the hours and days for which she is compensated. They need to be better acquainted with the staff they employ. They need to refrain from any appearance of partiality. They need to do the job for which they volunteered and, in some cases, received health benefits.
3. One of the husband/wife board member team should consider resigning to avoid the appearance of impropriety. Every effort needs to be made to find someone within the district boundaries to serve on the board and add a new dimension of opinion. They need to start this search with the parents of current Delphic students residing within the district.
4. The members of the school board should consider not accepting health benefits from their district. If this practice does continue, these benefits need to be capped. This small district cannot afford to continue this expensive practice in a time of deficit spending.
5. The Board needs to insure that Delphic School maintains a school SITE Council. This body is an integral part of any school. The Superintendent/Principal needs to actively recruit parent involvement. Members of SITE Council need to be called personally and reminded of meetings.
6. The current Superintendent/Principal is not doing her job. She has no accountability for hours worked, days on site, or work completed. Since Delphic is such a small school, it is recommended that there be an on-site teaching/principal and a shared superintendent. This model is used – with success- in several other schools in Siskiyou County. This model keeps the cost down and supplies active leadership for the school.
7. The safety concern regarding the ability of anyone to enter Delphic School unseen and/or unannounced needs to be addressed by the Board and/or Superintendent.

Responses Required:

The Delphic Elementary School Board is required to respond per 933.05 PC.

The Superintendent/Principal of Delphic Elementary School is required to respond per 933.05 PC.

The Siskiyou County Office of Education is required to respond per 933.05 PC.

## DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE “WATCHDOG” REPORT

### Background:

The Government Committee members conducted a “watchdog” interview with the Agricultural Commissioner, who is the head of the County Department of Agriculture.

The Department of Agriculture is responsible for many phases of government control including: “Weights and Measures”, Air Quality, the issuance of permits for pesticide application, predatory and domestic animal control and environmental resources.

### Findings:

1. Weights and Measures receive financial support from the County’s general fund because of large budgetary shortfalls. Nonetheless, they have inadequate man power and an excessive workload.
2. The Department has an onsite lab to sample air quality and results indicate that the County is one of two counties (the other being Lake County) that exceeded state air quality standards. The air quality might be even higher if the sampling lab was in a different location. The current lab is adjacent to the freeway. The Department of Agriculture can deny Forest Service requests to have “control burns” based on meteorological conditions, thereby preserving the air quality.
3. Property owners, farmers and ranchers are required to pass a test in order to gain permits that enable them to purchase and/or apply pesticides. Fertilizers are self applied and are controlled by the State and not the County’s Department of Agriculture. The Department does conduct surveys to assess damage caused by the application of both pesticides and fertilizers.
4. The County Department of Agriculture eliminated animal control contracts with individual cities in April of 2006. At that time, cities that had previously contracted with the County for domestic animal control had to employ other means of accomplishing that task.

There are only two animal control employees for the entire County and although there is some revenue generated through licensing fees (domestic animal license fees totaled \$62,500.00 last fiscal year) it is not nearly sufficient to cover the cost of employees. A majority of counties statewide have domestic animal control conducted by the Sheriff’s Department.

5. Other environmental issues are dealt with by the County Department of Agriculture on an individual basis as they develop.

Recommendations:

1. The County should consider re-locating the air sampling lab to another location where a more accurate sample could be obtained.
2. Because of the inherent dangers involved with some domestic animal control issues, the Sheriff's Department may be a better choice for this task. Predatory animal control could continue to be handled by the Department of Agriculture.

Response Required:

None

## THE CITY OF MONTAGUE

### Background:

The Government committee conducted a watchdog evaluation of the City of Montague. Information was gathered from meetings and interview conducted with staff of the City of Montague, in addition to other resources.

### Findings:

The City of Montague has a mayor who is compensated \$75 per month for his/her service. The current Mayor has served in his capacity since June 2006. The position of the Mayor is rotated on an annual basis from the City Council members. Prior to his appointment as Mayor, he has been active on the City Council since 1995. The role of Mayor is to oversee the general aspects of the City (within the City limits) and the municipal airport. He/she receives no health insurance or any benefits associated with City's employment practices. One of the goals the Mayor has is to increase economic development within Montague and restore the Community Hall. Grant money was secured for a portion of the restoration and applications for additional grant money continue to be pursued. Currently and historically Montague has no City Administrator.

Council members meet on the first Thursday of each month at the City offices to conduct city business and affairs. The meeting are published and posted in accordance with the Brown Act.

The City of Montague has a variety of employees as follows: two clerical people in the office, a part-time compliance officer, three public works employees, and several part-time employees in the Teen Resource Center.

City records are housed in the Clerk's office in addition to other "historic" documents at the fire department safe. Records may only be accessed by the City Clerk and the Assistant.

The City of Montague currently receives legal Council from an attorney located in Redding, California. They are happy with the services they receive.

The City of Montague has no direct website for the public to access local information and events that take place. The current employees take no interest in creating a website due to time constraints.

Animal control seems to be an issue for the City. There is very little control for loose dogs, feral animals and dead animals in the City limits. Response time is slow. The Sheriff is responsible for any animal issues within the City limits, and the County Animal Control is responsible for the area outside the City limits.

The merchants in the historic district have been working together to “put Montague on the map.” They meet monthly and have been working with the City to foster an increase awareness and promotion of the amenities and activities that take place. They have a strong work ethic and are very driven to create a website to promote Montague.

Conclusions:

The current Mayor seems to have a good working knowledge of the complexities of the small community. He is eager to see the City improve. The employees also seem to have a good working relationship with one another.

Recommendation:

The recommendation of the Grand Jury is for the City of Montague to work with the Montague Merchants to assist with the development of a website. A website could put Montague on the map for many popular events that both the City and the Montague Merchant host throughout the year. It could foster a greater awareness and increase the revenues and economic development for the City.

Response Required:

None

## SISKIYOU COUNTY PUBLIC WORKS/ROAD DEPARTMENT

### Background:

The 2006/2007 Government Committee investigated a complaint regarding the response from the Siskiyou County Public Works Director of the Road Department. Two members of the committee met with this Director in March of 2007.

### Findings:

1. The complete responses to the Grand Jury finding of the 2005/2006 report were tape recorded and kept on file in the Grand Jury Room.
2. The Road Department acknowledged the record keeping needed improvements and has implemented changes to their record keeping and security of timecards. They have also improved their internal record keeping system.
3. Original timecards are kept locked up and retained by the Department for one year. The County Auditor will retain original timecards for a period of seven years.
4. The Road Department submits requests for bids as to the hiring of independent contractors for specific projects. The Board of Supervisors awards contracts without the Road Department's required recommendations. Once an independent contractor is awarded a contract, the Road Department has no direct control over whom the independent contractor hires. The Road Department does discourage their employees from working in a "conflict of interest" situation.
5. The information available to the Grand Jury from 2005/2006 was indeed 7 inches thick, however, the amount copied and retained for their records was only ½ inch thick.
6. The Road Department did investigate the matter concerning allegations of a foreman in Etna and found no substantiated evidence to indicate wrongdoing by Road Department employees. There was acknowledgement of sloppiness in paper work and corrections have been implemented as indicated above. The above mentioned foreman has since resigned.

### Conclusions:

1. The Public Works Department addressed the complaint and responded accordingly.

### Recommendations:

None. There is no further action or response required.

## SISKIYOU COUNTY JAIL

### Background:

One required function of The Grand Jury is to perform a yearly oversight inspection of the County Jail. We were pleased to find the Jail is being run in an efficient manner. After the conclusion of the onsite visit and interviews of staff, the Grand Jury questioned the shortage of counseling services available to the inmates.

In an effort to help improve this situation, the Health, Education, and Welfare Committee made efforts to facilitate a meeting between the Director of Behavioral Health and the Captain of the Jail. Funding for these departments is already stretched to their limits and because of the sincere compassion of these two individuals and their determination to find a solution a plan was born.

### Outcome:

In January of 2007 Behavioral Health Services began a pilot program in Drug and Alcohol Addiction Self Help at the Siskiyou County Jail. This program, called the Start Here Program, will be for those inmates desiring to overcome their addictions. Screening for the program will be done through a screening instrument provided by Behavioral Health Services. A screening by the correctional nurse will follow this self-administered test. The pilot program will begin with 6 to 8 persons in a group session held once a week for one to one and a half hours. A Behavioral Health Specialist will facilitate the program with a background in Drug and Alcohol Relapse Prevention, Cognitive Restructuring Education, and Family Needs assessment. The basic desire of the program is to help the participants to recognize and alter the structure of negative thinking and behavior patterns and to think and behave in a more positive and beneficial manner.

Since this is a pilot program we realize that there will probably be some changes needed as the program progresses forward. This program has been put together in compliance with the needs of the Siskiyou County Jail and their staff is most anxious to see it in operation.

We as members of the 2006-2007 Civil Grand Jury feel this to be a very worthwhile program and see a need for it in our communities. Being able to help stop addictions at this level and reduce the number of repeat offenders in our jails and criminal system will be a real plus to our communities as well as save tax dollars in the long run. When parents overcome their addictions they are home to monitor their children and help them to resist those addictive habits.

### Recommendations:

The Grand Jury recommends that consideration should be given to a "halfway House" for those being released from the program that still need some monitoring and further assistance to stay clean and sober. We hope that the Board of Supervisors, the

community, and all concerned will see the positive nature of this program and give it their full support.

## SISKIYOU COUNTY PUBLIC ADMINISTRATOR

### Background:

The Grand Jury performed a watchdog investigation on the Siskiyou County Office of the Public Administrator in September 2006. The office was last reviewed by the Grand Jury in 1999/2000. The function of the Public Administrator is somewhat of a mystery to most of the public, and is in fact a fairly complicated business, but in short, the Assistant Public Administrator is responsible for processing the estates (belongings, money, etc.) of residents of Siskiyou County who die without a will ("intestate") or any known heirs. The duties of the Public Administrator, which fall under the auspices of the District Attorney, are actually carried out by the Assistant Public Administrator (APA), who reports to the District Attorney Administrator.

### Findings:

1. The person currently in the position has been doing the job for about six years, and actually works as a legal secretary in the district Attorney's office forty hours a week, with the Assistant Public Administrator's duties included as part of the job. The current Public Administrator has attended trainings regarding the job duties and was trained by the former Public Administrator, but there is no procedural manual describing the specifics of how to complete the tasks outlined in the job description.
2. When someone (usually the Coroner's Office) notifies the District Attorney's Office that a person has died in the County without any known relatives, and the Sheriff's Office has secured the estate, the APA is responsible for taking an inventory of the estate and attempting to find any record of a will or relatives/heirs. The Coroner and the funeral home also do some investigating at times. Sometimes, but not all the time, the DA Administrator goes with the APA to the residence of the deceased.
3. The APA keeps bank and other records in a locked file cabinet in the DA's Office for up to ten years. The Assistant District Attorney is apparently checking to see how long records must be kept. Guns have been kept at the Sheriff's Office. Most items are sold at yard sales arranged by the APA, who also arranges for residences to be cleaned. Any money left after the sale of the deceased's property is used to pay bills, including the funeral home, and then kept in a separate account at Scott Valley Bank for approximately ten years, after which it is believed to escheat to the State of California. The APA's office generally receives a fee of \$650.00, which is usually donated to the funeral home to help defray expenses.
4. Cases can take anywhere from several hours (E.G., when a relative is found) to two months to process. In very complicated cases, attorneys and/or a private detective must be hired, but this is rare. There is storage space available for the deceased's personal items, such as photographs, should relatives show up at some later date. Items of no monetary value and with no personal significance are donated to charity. Sales of items are documented and records are kept in the file. If the value of an estate is over \$20,000,

a probate case is filed with the court. The current ADA stated that on average, about five cases a year are processed by the DA's office.

Conclusions:

The task of the Public Administrator is a complicated one. The person currently in the position appears to know the job well, despite little formal training and not having a great deal of time to spare for the task. She is to be commended for her efforts.

Recommendations:

1. A thorough and complete inventory of all items found in the residence and their disposition should be made part of every file, preferably with an accompanying camcorder record, in order to protect the ADA in case of a dispute as to the disposition of items.
2. The Office of the District Attorney should develop a written procedural manual for the Office of the Public Administrator so that future ADAs have a thorough description of their job duties and how to perform them. This should be accompanied by a formal training period for any new staff in the position.
3. The written procedural manual should include a rule that, for the protection of the ADA, any person carrying out the duties of the position should, when entering any residence, business, or storage unit of a client, always be accompanied by at least one other person, preferably from the District Attorney's Office.

Response Required:

The Office of the District Attorney is required to respond per P.C. 933.05.

## SISKIYOU COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

### Background:

The Grand Jury concluded a watchdog investigation into the condition of the physical plant at the Sheriff's Department in November 2006. The facility had last been reviewed by the Grand Jury in 2001/2002. We interviewed the Sheriff, the Undersheriff, and staff, and toured the main office and the detectives building.

### Findings:

1. The Sheriff's Department is housed in the old jail building, which is believed to have been built before 1900. The building was added to in the 1950's. Approximately \$10,000 was spent in 2005 to renovate the venting, paint, and make other cosmetic changes.
2. There is a severe water leak in the basement (about 4-5 gallons a minute). The water is chlorinated, indicating that the origin of the leak is from the city water supply. A sump pump has been installed, but the Sheriff's Office still pays for about 79,000 gallons of water a month due to the leak. In addition, when the rains are heavy (usually three to four times a year), water leaks into the basement, where most of the deputies have their offices, and everything must be stored 4-5 inches off the ground to prevent water damage. There are two small drains outside the exit door in the basement, one at the bottom of a ramp, which are apparently insufficient to contain the volume of water. Staff complained of rashes, hives, and other illnesses due to mold, presumably caused by the constant dampness. There was an OSHA inspection last year, which reported that the asbestos has been encapsulated.
3. Although there is over 10,000 square feet of space in the main building, the entire upstairs area (the old trustee tank and other areas) is cold and unusable for anything other than storage; besides the Sheriff's records, the area is used to store records from the Auditor's/Treasurer's office. It is estimated that to function effectively, the Sheriff's office would need from 25,000 to 34,000 square feet. As it is now, five deputies share one room in the basement, while the sergeant has a tiny office off that. There is a tiny shower and toilet area, with no separate facilities for women unless staff goes upstairs. There is no space for a conference. Lockers line the halls, but there are not enough for every deputy to have one. Loose wiring is visible under the false ceiling and in other areas the wiring is insufficient for the demands put on it. The carpeting is old, worn, and probably damp. The steps leading to the basement are steep and probably not to code. More than one staff member reported having fallen on them. There is no handicap accessibility, and one staff member was noted to be in a wheelchair. Aisles are not wide enough to accommodate a wheelchair, or even crutches, because due to the lack of storage space it is necessary to store some items in the hall.

4. On the main floor are tiny (approximately 6' by 9') offices for: the Sheriff, the Undersheriff, a secretary, two fiscal employees, the Lieutenant, and the Captain. There is also a truly tiny closet for the Chaplain. Dispatch is in the old jail area. There is a camera on the outside parking lot and bullet-resistant glass in the communications and front office areas. A side door provides public access after hours. Every available space is utilized; the old kitchen is the evidence locker, the former women's tank is the armory. The computer mainframe is in the old visiting room, and the former mug and print room is used for locked storage.
5. The annex area, behind the courthouse and next to the old jail, is used for fingerprinting, and houses the civil division. It is shared by Public Works and the Planning Department. The Sheriff is also the Coroner, although medical exams to determine the cause of death are done on a contract basis. There are approximately 100 cases a year requiring a Coroner's report in Siskiyou County. Across the street is a triple-wide mobile home used for sixteen detectives, including the canine unit and the marijuana eradication team, with the task force being located elsewhere. The trailer is handicap accessible, so anyone in a wheelchair can be seen there. The lab is near the triple-wide trailer in a separate building. Overall, there is a severe lack of parking for both employees and the public.

#### Conclusions:

Although staff appears to be cheerful and humorous about their office situation, they are aware that it is a rather embarrassing situation to be in. Staff does complain of rashes and hives and other illnesses possibly related to the dampness. The lack of handicap accessibility is a severe problem, as is the parking situation. Staff stated that they believe County officials are doing their best to remedy the situation, but it would take at least two years to build a new facility, and the slowness with which the County reacts (probably by necessity) has resulted in other options being lost. Staff have done their best to make the space workable, but it is clearly inadequate, expensive (due to the water leak), and an inefficient set-up. Short of the County making the Sheriff's office an immediate priority, the Grand Jury is uncertain what steps the Sheriff's office itself could do to remedy the situation. The Grand Jury is concerned about potential liability issues.

#### Recommendations:

The County Board of Supervisors should make the relocation of the entire Sheriff's Department a top priority.

#### Response Required:

The Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors respond with a plan for the relocation of the Sheriff's Department.

## TOLERATING TRUANCY – INVITING FAILURE SISKIYOU COUNTY HIGH SCHOOLS FAIL TO ENFORCE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE \*<sup>1</sup>

### Background:

The Health, Education, and Welfare Committee of the Grand Jury conducted an investigation of attendance and truancy in Siskiyou County High Schools. Most schools in Siskiyou County are experiencing declining enrollment. Siskiyou County schools are projected to lose *thousands of dollars in the near future due to the loss of Forest Reserve Funds*. For many schools the answer to this problem is laying off staff. The committee wanted to find out if improved school attendance could have a positive effect on the funding that schools receive from the State. To help with this investigation the committee developed a comprehensive survey to gather data from the 2005/2006 school years. All high schools in Siskiyou County participated in the survey. In addition, meetings were held with the District Attorney and his staff.

### Findings:

Schools receive their funding through ADA (Average Daily Attendance). If a student is not in school, excused or unexcused, the school will not receive funds for the student that day. A common misconception is that schools **do** receive money for excused absences.

Schools are supposed to keep track of attendance for two different purposes: one, to receive funding from the State, and two, to report truanancies.

In regard to truanancies - Absences or tardies that are considered excused by the State are illness, medical, court, or death in the family. All other absences are classified as unexcused. If a student has an excused absence or tardy, and the parent sends a note or makes a phone call to the school, the school considers that a verified absence, if not, it is considered an unverified absence or tardy.

“Personal or (parent)-justifiable” (Calif. Education Code 48205) is a category that can result in an excused (by the State) absence, if the process is followed correctly. A personal-justifiable excuse can be an excused absence if the student gets permission for the absence from the principal prior to the absence occurring, such as a family vacation, religious event, etc. *This category of absence is being misused. Parents are led to believe that absences like (hair cut, slept in, longer lunch with mom, etc.), are okay because they are called “parent justified” rather than unexcused.* This category is misleading. As long as the parent sends a note or calls the office with **any** excuse, even an excuse that does not state the reason for the absence (ex. Johnny was absent.), the admit slip that the student receives is marked “parent justified”. The student and/or parent leave, believing the absence is okay because they are told the absence was “parent justified”. This practice has led to many unnecessary absences that result in a loss of funding to our schools. (See chart)

An accumulation of three unverified absences or three unverified tardies or any combination of three absences or tardies should generate a 1<sup>st</sup> truancy letter to the parent. The student’s next absence or tardy should generate a 2<sup>nd</sup> truancy letter to the parent and a parent conference. The student’s next absence or tardy should generate the 3<sup>rd</sup> truancy letter. The third truancy letter will send the student and the parent to SARB (Student Attendance and Review Board) for intervention.

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<sup>1</sup> \* This title was borrowed from the SFUSD Grand Jury Report on attendance and truancy. We are not alone in this problem.

SARB is a group of people made up of the District Attorney and a representative from Behavioral Health, Health Services, Probation, Sheriff, School Nurse, a Member at Large, and a rotating Superintendent. *They meet once a month.* For SARB to work effectively, it depends on all schools to follow consistent guidelines that are in place (as described above.) Schools pay a fee of \$2.00 per student for the County to provide this service.

Our survey concluded that **no** high schools in our County are complying with the SARB guidelines, in their entirety. Some schools are arbitrarily making up their own truancy standards. Some count the absences but not the tardies. Some set their own arbitrary standards but don't even follow those. Students can accumulate an exorbitant amount of tardies, all day absences, or multitude of period absences (sometimes over 100 period absences for one student), and the student is never questioned nor his/her parents informed.

Schools are reimbursed by the State for the expense of this process through a program called Mandated Costs. Even though schools can be reimbursed for the cost of following this process, some administrators **still** will not follow the process.

The statistics of our survey definitely show that schools that are even partially attempting to follow the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> truancy letter of the SARB process show a definite decline in truancy. Some administrators **still** will not follow the process.

In the past, SARB has not been a priority of the District Attorney's Office. The new District Attorney feels SARB is an important service to the citizens of the County. If it is used correctly and consistently, it will decrease absenteeism, increase student academic success, lower the drop out rate, and help to lower crime in our County. The current District Attorney is committed to making the SARB process a priority. The SARB committee is a group of concerned, caring, and committed people. They are able to be creative and effective in lowering truancy in our County.

*Student absenteeism in our County is alarming.* The results of our survey for the 2005-2006 school year show that all-day student absences range from 258 days to 6,667 days and period absences range from 158 periods missed to 45,159 periods missed (*Periods meaning anything less than an entire day*).

Most schools have a designated person who contacts the parent to verify if a child is absent. The schools that use this practice say it is effective. One school does not contact parents when their child is absent. (See chart)

A good attendance reward program can be effectively used to help improve school attendance. Local employers see the value of good attendance in school and the carryover into the workplace. They are generally willing to donate to this type of program. Currently, only half of the high schools in our County are using this incentive to improve student attendance.

When a student is suspended from school and stays home for the assigned period of time of the suspension, the school receives no funding for that student. In-house suspension sets up the situation whereby the student is assigned to a specifically designated area within the school for their assigned time of suspension. If a school uses in-house suspension, the school loses no funding for the student's suspension.

In recent years, the problem of declining enrollment in our public schools has become even more complex. All schools in our County lose students in the traditional way throughout the year, such as, students moving out of the area. In addition, parents and students today have more choices. Our public high schools are losing many students to home school and charter schools. Our local charter schools enroll over 300 high school

students. This is money that is lost to our public schools (This amounts to approximately 2 million dollars a year). Smaller schools in the County fall under a type of funding called Necessary Small School Formula. (See Chart) As their enrollment drops, they lose funding in “blocks” of money. A “block” of money could be as much as \$88,460. Several schools in our county have lost or are in jeopardy of losing funding “blocks” because of declining enrollment.

Most schools in our County do a moderate job, at best, of informing and educating students and parents about the importance of school attendance in regard to school funding. On our survey, when asked the question, “Are students, parents, and staff regularly informed of the importance of school attendance not only for educational value, but financial need by our schools?” one school responded by saying, “The funding factor argument is misunderstood and has never worked for me or my teachers. I refuse to use it again.” Another said, “We push the educational value not the financial.”

Schools use a formula called their “Attendance Rate” to show their percentage of attendance. Most schools in our County “boast” that their rate is somewhere in the 90% range. This formula is deceptive because only full day attendance is counted. They do not calculate the missed periods or less than full days of attendance. If they would actually count all missed school into the formula, they would come to a much different view of their “actual” attendance.

The County Office of Education, in co-operation with the District Attorney’s Office, has provided opportunities for principals and superintendents to attend instructional meetings and learn more about truancy problems and the SARB process. It has been reported that *no high school principals or superintendents have attended these meetings as of 9/7/06.*

Siskiyou County High Schools are losing a substantial amount of money because of student absenteeism (See Chart). When schools lose money, they traditionally cut staff and programs. A significant way to generate funding is by increasing student attendance.

## In Summary

Never before in our history have public schools faced the challenges they are facing today. Students and parents today have choices. Our schools cannot continue to lose students and money and hope to survive. We must be creative, innovative, and open to new ideas to meet the needs of all our students. We must hire, sustain, and support capable teachers and support staff. We must keep administrators down to acceptable ratios. It is imperative that we offer stimulating electives, and maintain and support wholesome extra curricular activities. There is a need to offer more ROP (Regional Occupation Program/Career and Technical Education) classes for non-college bound students, and make sure that all classes are relevant to the real world. It is critical that we create an environment where all students feel safe.

Declining enrollment in Siskiyou County is a reality. The probable loss of Forest Reserve funds that help support our schools in Siskiyou County is a reality. It’s a fact, if students aren’t in school, they don’t learn. It’s double jeopardy when attendance and truancy policies are not enforced, our children lose valuable education, and our schools lose valuable dollars to provide that education. If public education in Siskiyou County is to survive, we need to strive harder to meet the needs of all students.

There are talented and dedicated teachers and administrators in our County who are willing to make courageous changes to improve our schools. We need to support and encourage them.

Declining enrollment means lost dollars. Lax truancy standards mean lost dollars. Lost dollars means fewer choices for our children.

### Recommendations:

All high schools in Siskiyou County need to deal with school *attendance* and *truancy* in a more serious and comprehensive manner. This would be a relatively simple and low cost way to save potentially thousands of dollars.

Administrators need to follow the SARB process consistently and fairly. At one high school several students who were in this category (multitude of absences and tardies over a period of time) were called into the principal's office and told they could not attend their school (of residence) any longer because of their poor attendance. They were told to get a drop sheet and leave. The SARB process was not followed for these students or their parents. All students and parents deserve to be treated equally. The standard for one should be the standard for all. The new District Attorney has said SARB is an important priority to him and needs only to be asked to be of assistance by our schools. He has new and creative ideas.

Students have the "right to fail". At the same time, administrators have the responsibility to do everything they possibly can to help them succeed. If not already in place, each school should have something comparable to a "Student Success Team". This team needs to identify and help students who are at risk **before** SARB becomes involved.

There is a multitude of information available to schools regarding improvement of school attendance. This information is easily accessible and free. School administrators need to take advantage of this excellent information.

Superintendents need to do a better job of supervising principals, and principals need to do a better job of supervising their staff. Just assuming that things are getting done doesn't mean they are being done. *If this was a business and the bosses' livelihood depended on the success of the business, the boss would make sure things were done properly.*

Administrators need to make sure that attendance is being taken properly and consistently. If a teacher is not taking attendance properly and consistently, a letter of reprimand or some other serious consequence should be enforced.

All schools need to implement an attendance reward program. Awards could be as simple as a computer-generated certificate – to community donations from local businesses (pizza discounts, burger coupons, six packs of sodas, bicycle drawings, extra privileges, etc.) Possibilities are limitless if one is motivated.

All schools need to contact parents to verify if a child is absent. All schools that use this practice reported that it is effective in lowering absenteeism. The Parents Rights Act of 2002 and No Child Left Behind mandates, "Parents have the right to be notified in a timely manner if their child is absent from school without permission."

Schools are misusing the personal/parent-justification category of absence and need to use this category correctly. This absence is excused only with prior approval of the principal, not after the fact, and only for specifically allowable reasons (Calif. Education Code 48205).

Teachers need to do more to educate and inform parents and students about the seriousness and relationship of school attendance to school funding and the potential consequences.

Administrators need to collaborate with all their employees and parents.

Administrators need to step up and *take the heat* to educate parents, staff, and students about the process and critical importance of school attendance as it relates to school funding.

School board members need to be more in tune to this problem. Their job is to represent the parents in their communities. The superintendent works for them.

All schools need to consider in-house suspension.

Schools that have open campus could issue updated off campus passes to students who do not have a scheduled class. This would be a valuable tool to assist law enforcement in being an active partner in decreasing truancy.

Schools could consider the possibility of closed campuses. It would then be a privilege connected to school attendance and grade point average to be able to leave campus at lunch. (e.g., Central Valley High School and Dunsmuir High School)

Consider hiring a Truancy Officer.

Consider using the old Juvenile Hall in Yreka as a “Reception Center” to hold truants. This could be a valuable tool in the District Attorney’s pursuit of upgrading the SARB process.

We recommend that a future Grand Jury investigate the possibilities of the savings and the increased educational value that might occur if schools and/or districts in our County would combine. *In the face of potential school closures, egos will have to be swallowed and traditions may have to change.*

Responses Required:

None

## Student Attendance Report For Siskiyou County High Schools

High School	Enrollment	Have a written School Attendance Policy	All day absences	Period absences	Are Parents Called When Student is Absent	Amount of 1st truancy letters sent to parents	Amount of 2nd truancy letters sent to parents	Amount of 3rd truancy letters sent to parents	Is school complying with SARB requirements (1st letter sent after 3 absence/ tardies)	Use Good Attendance Reward Program	In-House Suspension used (school loses no ADA \$ for suspensions, etc.)	Total \$ Lost from All Absences
Yreka	732	Yes	6667	45,159	Auto dialer within first 30 minutes	3	0	0	No	Yes	Yes	224,145
Mt. Shasta	387	Not current	3959	15,417	No	5	0	0	No	No	No	138,565
Etna	229	Yes	2093	6,117	Yes, system is very effective	15	0	0	No	No	Yes	0 - Under small schools \$ formula
Weed	187	Yes	2666	17,412	Yes, called by 12:00 P.M.	5	2	0	No	Yes	Yes	88,460
Dunsmuir	113	Yes	1362	8,572	Yes, same day or next day	38	20	3	No	Yes	Yes	0 - Under small schools \$ formula
Butte Valley	108	Yes	1055	7,500	Yes, very effective	8	4	4	Yes	very limited	Yes	0 - Under small schools \$ formula
Happy Camp	90	Yes	751	13,245	If missing during school day, after being present	47	25	14	No	Yes	Yes	0 - Under small schools \$ formula
McCloud	8	Yes	258	158	Yes, within one school day	2	1	1	No	No	No	0 - Under small schools \$ formula

### Continuation High Schools

Jefferson	30	Yes	1333	956	Yes	23	7	0	No	Yes	No	N/A Receive Block Funding
Scott River	19	Yes	15 - use positive hourly attendance	20 - use positive hourly attendance	Yes	12	2	1	?	Yes	Yes	N/A Receive Block Funding

### Charter School

Matole Valley	152	Yes	NA	NA	Yes	21	4	0	No	No	No	.6 ADA
Golden Eagle	221	Yes	NA	NA	Yes	1	1	1	No	No	No	\$5,885

NA = Does not apply

ng = Not given

## TULELAKE MULTI-FIRE DISTRICT

### Background:

The Grand Jury conducted an investigation into a complaint related to the use of Tulelake Multi-Fire District trucks used to display election campaign posters in the Tulelake-Butte Valley Fair parade. Three District officials and two candidates were interviewed.

### Findings:

1. There were posters displayed on two Multi District trucks.
2. The candidate had asked permission to place posters and permission was granted.
3. It has been the practice of the District to allow campaign posters to be placed on trucks in the past.
4. The Fire District officials and the candidate interviewed stated that they did not know it was illegal to display campaign posters on the fire trucks.
5. The District officials interviewed stated that in the future campaign posters will not be allowed to be displayed on their equipment.

### Recommendation:

Officials of The Tulelake Multi-Fire District ensure that in the future campaign signs will not be allowed to be displayed on any of their equipment.

### Response:

A response is required from the Tulelake-Multi Fire District.

## WEED POLICE DEPARTMENT

### Background:

The Grand Jury, in accordance with Penal Code Section 925 (a), conducted a watchdog investigation of the Weed Police Department. The Weed Police Department facility was toured and interviews were completed in November 2006.

The Chief of Police has been with the Department for thirty-one years, rising through the ranks from officer to chief. His duties include the supervision and direct responsibility for all aspects of the Department's operation. Budgetary considerations and staffing are the primary objectives. The Department operates seven days a week and twenty-four hours a day, handling approximately nine thousand responses per year.

The Lieutenant is the second in command. He is responsible for direct supervision and ongoing instruction of the officers and sergeants.

There are two sergeants currently on duty. Their role is supervision of all staff. The required duties are split between the two; one sergeant has the responsibility for administration, report review, community support, and investigation supervision. The other sergeant has direct oversight of all officers.

The Weed Police Department currently has ten officers on duty. Their duties are to respond to calls and patrol within the city limits. At this time the Department is short-handed and more officers are needed.

There are two reserve officers available. Due to current training requirements they are utilized in community service and traffic control situations only.

The dispatchers are multifunctional personnel. Their main duty is to respond to the public's need for help and to take the appropriate action to answer that need. They also handle some of the paperwork regarding reports and administration. There is a dispatcher or alternate on duty at all times.

The Community Service Officers' duties include animal control, automobile abatement, assisting officers when appropriate and control of the evidence room to secure the chain of evidence.

### Findings:

1. The current facility is approximately ninety years old. While it is in good repair, certain security and safety deficiencies are apparent.
2. At this time a new site in south Weed has been selected for a combination police and fire substation. It is currently undergoing an environmental impact report and the hope is to finish the project in the next year or two.

3. The City of Weed has entered into a new contract with the Police Department to increase pay approximately thirty percent over the next three years. This will help in the retention of officers and improve morale in the Department.
4. Pride in their career is apparent among the staff. The need for a locally based police department is apparent when you consider the response times for other agencies.
5. The ongoing growth of Siskiyou County will need to be matched by growth in the Weed Police Department.

Recommendation:

The City of Weed is on the correct path to update and upgrade the Weed Police Department and should be encouraged to continue on this course. While the consideration of budget constraints will surely interfere with this aim, the needs of the local community should come first.

Response Required:

None.

## THE YREKA FARM ADVISOR

### Background:

The Government committee conducted a watchdog evaluation of the Yreka Farm Advisor. It has been about ten years since this operation was investigated. Information was gathered from meetings and interviews conducted with staff.

The Yreka Farm Advisor plays an important role in the agricultural impact of Siskiyou County. The Farm Advisor's Office is a cooperative effort between University of California and Siskiyou County. The County provides the annual operating budget while the University provides the salary, training and research support for two full-time Farm Advisors and a part-time 4-H Youth Development Program Representative and a few other part-time employees.

### Findings:

1. The current Farm Advisors (two) have been in their positions for over fifteen years. They assist farmers, ranchers and the public with up to date information on agriculture, natural resources and current research that impacts Siskiyou County. People contact them via the office by phone or in person, or on location at either educational workshops or at specific sites.
2. The office is located on the corner of Main Street and 4-H Way. The parking lot is not well graded and entry to the building is difficult especially for people trying to gain access by wheelchair or while pushing a stroller.
3. The bathroom in the building is very small and is not ADA (American Disabilities Act) compliant.
4. The current staff would like to see the possibility of an "Ag Complex" in the County. There are several departments that work together on an ongoing basis and proximity to one another is beneficial for both agencies and the public.
5. The office is part of the County yet it does not have any communication link via the "Banner system" network.
6. During the heavy rains and winter season the parking lot is constantly flooded with standing water and no drainage.

### Recommendations:

The county needs to address the ADA issue with this building immediately. Access to public building by all is required.

The importance of communication and duplication of work could be reduced by the inclusion to the County computer network. The Banner system would allow direct input of budgets and timecards to improve efficiency and reduce redundant input.

Response required: None.