

Attachment A

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COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

July 14, 2020

Honorable Michael J. Carrozzo
Presiding Judge
Santa Barbara Superior Court
County Courthouse
1100 Anacapa Street
Santa Barbara CA 93101

Reference: Response to Santa Barbara Civil Grand Jury report titled, “Santa Barbara County Coroner’s Bureau – Still a Substandard Facility” published May 11, 2020.

Judge Carrozzo:

Please find attached the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors (Board) response to the above referenced Civil Grand Jury Report. As directed by the Grand Jury, all responses are provided in accordance with Section 933.05 of the California Penal Code.

The Board appreciates the work conducted by the Sheriff’s Department for their assistance in responding to this matter.

Sincerely,

Gregg Hart, Chair
Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors

CC: Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors

Attachment

Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors
Response to the Santa Barbara County Grand Jury 2018-2019 Report
“Santa Barbara County Coroner’s Bureau – Still a Substandard Facility”

Finding 1

The current building, constructed in 1987 and adapted to be the Sheriff-Coroner’s Bureau in 1988, does not meet National Association of Medical Examiners standards.

The Board of Supervisors agrees with the finding.

Recommendation 1

That the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors allocate funding for a facility specifically designed as a Coroner’s Bureau, built to meet the current recommended standards of the National Association of Medical Examiners.

This recommendation will not be implemented because it is unwarranted. The Sheriff-Coroner is able to successfully manage the autopsy caseload and decedent storage requirement with the current design of the facility. The Sheriff-Coroner averages 5 autopsies per month.

Finding 2

There is one autopsy room, no toxicology lab and no isolation room dedicated to handle high risk cases.

The Board of Supervisors agrees with the finding.

Recommendation 2

That the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors specify that the Coroner’s facility be designed with two autopsy rooms, a toxicology lab, an isolation room, and a refrigeration room.

This recommendation will not be implemented because it is unwarranted. The Sheriff-Coroner is able to successfully manage the autopsy caseload with one autopsy suite. The current autopsy suite is constructed with a filtered, negative air flow pressure system, allowing Coroner’s Bureau personnel to conduct autopsies on high risk exposure cases. The Sheriff-Coroner currently utilizes a contracted post-mortem certified toxicology laboratory for all post-mortem toxicology needs. Designing and building an independent toxicology laboratory is unnecessary and costly with little perceived benefit to the County. Additionally, the current Coroner’s Facility is properly equipped with refrigeration storage based on the current and future needs of the Sheriff-Coroner. In regards to an isolation room, the Coroner’s Facility is equipped with an outside refrigerated box designated for decedents who are decomposed or have known infectious disease.

Finding 9

The Santa Barbara County Sheriff-Coroner's Bureau is not accredited by the National Association of Medical Examiners.

The Board of Supervisors agrees with this finding.

Recommendation 9

That the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors require that the Sheriff-Coroner's Bureau meet the standards for accreditation set by the National Association of Medical Examiners and the National Academy of Sciences, as recommended by the U.S. Department of Justice.

This recommendation will not be implemented because it is unwarranted; it is not a requirement or mandate, only a recommendation by the US Department of Justice. Additionally, the accreditation process is costly and will provide little benefit to the Sheriff-Coroner or the County population. The Sheriff-Coroner will reconsider this recommendation in the future if funding becomes available.

Finding 10

In Santa Barbara County, the Sheriff is also the Coroner.

The Board of Supervisors agrees with the finding.

Recommendation 10

That the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors separate the Santa Barbara County Coroner position and make it independent from the Santa Barbara County Sheriff when the current Sheriff-Coroner's term expires.

This recommendation will not be implemented because it is unwarranted. The Sheriff's Department has successfully overseen the Coroner's Bureau for many years. Making it an independent operation or transferring it to another department is unnecessary and costly with little perceived benefit to the County population.