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COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

September 4, 2013

Honorable Arthur A. Garcia
Presiding Judge
Santa Barbara Superior Court
312-C East Cook Street
Santa Maria, CA 93454

Reference: Response to Santa Barbara Civil Grand Jury report titled, *Sheriff-Coroner's Bureau: The Manner of Death-A Final Diagnosis* (Published June 21, 2013 on Grand Jury Web Site)

Judge Garcia:

The Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors (Board) is providing response to the above- referenced Civil Grand Jury Report. The Board appreciates the critical investigative work conducted by the staff of the Sheriff-Coroner's Bureau. County residents deserve sensitive, thorough and accurate cause of deaths determinations. We are gratified that the Grand Jury found Bureau staff to be cooperative and collegial. Lastly, the Board acknowledges the Grand Jury's concerns about the Sheriff-Coroner's facility.

As directed by the Grand Jury, all responses are provided in accordance with Section 933.05 of the California Penal Code.

Finding 3a:

The presence of lingering noxious odors in the Coroner's Bureau indicates that the existing ventilation system is not adequate.

The Board disagrees partially with the finding.

The Board would require independent assessment of the existing ventilation system to determine if that is the cause of ongoing unpleasant odors.

Finding 3b:

A code compliant ventilation system is necessary to control and prevent the potential of infectious agents affecting the health of Bureau staff and the public.

The Board disagrees partially with the finding.

The Board would require additional information on the specific code compliance requirements necessary to prevent infections of staff or the public, as well as an assessment of the adequacy of the existing ventilation system.

Finding 12:

A Coroner's Bureau is not required to be accredited.

The Board agrees with the finding.

Recommendation 3a:

That the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors allocate the funds to retain a mechanical engineering firm to study and make design recommendations for the Coroner facility ventilation system.

This recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the next eight weeks.

Recommendation 3b:

That the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors allocate the funds to implement the design recommendations for the ventilation system in the Coroner's facility.

This recommendation requires further analysis.

As a result of the mechanical engineering firm's report, the Board of Supervisors could consider options for possible ventilation system redesigns, if needed, and funding sources. The Board may also consider not proceeding at this time with any project. It is estimated that Board consideration could occur two months after the General Services Department receives a final report from a mechanical engineering firm.

Recommendation 12:

That the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors include in all long-range strategic planning the goal of establishing and staffing a more centrally located facility that is eligible for full accreditation by the National Association of Medical Examiners.

This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable.

The Board notes that Finding 12 states that accreditation is not required for the Sheriff-Coroner Bureau. The Board is currently involved with the development of an Asset Management Plan that will identify the facility and infrastructure assets of the County, the estimated life of each asset and the required maintenance needed to maintain that asset for the remainder of its useful life. New or replacement facilities are considered by the Board of Supervisors through the five-year Capital Improvement Plan. Any consideration of a centrally located Coroner Bureau facility would go through the Capital Improvement Plan development process.

Sincerely,

Salud Carbajal, Chair
Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors

CC: Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors
Ted Sten, Foreman, 2013-14 Santa Barbara Civil Grand Jury