

July 7, 2009

Honorable Judge J. William McLafferty  
Santa Barbara County Superior Court  
1100 Anacapa Street, Second Floor  
Santa Barbara, California 93121-1107

Reference: Board of Supervisors' Response to the 2008-2009 Santa Barbara County Civil Grand Jury Report, "Santa Barbara County Emergency Operations Center – How Many More Delays?"

Dear Judge McLafferty:

During its regular its regular meeting on July 7, 2009, the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors (Board) adopted the following as the Board's response to the relevant findings and recommendations in their Fiscal Year 2008-2009 Grand Jury report entitled "*Santa Barbara County Emergency Operations Center; How Many More Delays?*"

### **Summary**

In previous Grand Jury reports, the respective Grand Juries have stated the need for a permanent emergency operations center (EOC) for the County of Santa Barbara<sup>1</sup>. In its current report the Grand Jury states, "*...it is critical that we establish an EOC that is dedicated, protected, efficient, and large enough to accommodate all necessary personnel.*" The Grand Jury went on to state, "*To ensure adequate coordination in the wake of all types of emergencies, a more secure EOC must be established.*"

Over the course of time the Board of Supervisors and the County Executive Officer (CEO) have diligently designated capital project funding for a permanent EOC. Staff has appeared before the Board of Supervisors on multiple occasions explaining the EOC, its function and made recommendations as to the need for a permanent dedicated facility.

The Board wishes to thank the Grand Jury for its report regarding the County's and Operational Area EOC. The Board agrees that the matter of responding to, managing emergencies and ensuring the effective continuance of local government during disasters is highly important to the citizens of the County and the Board.

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<sup>1</sup> 1995-1996 Grand Jury Report "Preparedness For Disasters"  
1999-200 Grand Jury Report "Office Of Emergency Services Santa Barbara County"

## Background

During an emergency or disaster, it is imperative that a community respond in a coordinated and organized manner. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) describes an EOC as a permanent facility where management of an emergency takes place<sup>2</sup>. The overall objective of emergency managers in the EOC is to ensure the effective management of response forces and resources in preparing for, responding to and recovering from situations associated with natural disasters, technological incidents and national security emergencies.

In recognition of the need for a primary EOC and an alternate back-up EOC, the Board has maintained the EOC Capital Project in the County's adopted 2009-2010 Capital Improvement Budget<sup>3</sup>. In addition, plans developed for the Betteravia Government remodel include plans for an alternate backup EOC<sup>4</sup>. The Board has also directed staff to prepare the primary EOC (recommended for the 4400 block of Cathedral Oaks Road) for bid and then return to the Board for further direction.

The responses below indicate that the County has been diligent in its efforts to develop a permanent and dedicated EOC and an alternate back-up facility; despite difficult financial times.

**Finding 1: "The Santa Barbara County Emergency Operations Center is housed in temporary modular buildings which are unlikely to be usable following an earthquake."**

**Response:** Agree.

**Recommendation 1: "That the Board of Supervisors direct that the County research other sites to create a dedicated interim Emergency Operations Center. The sites considered must be measured against the existing Emergency Operations Center in terms of size and seismic safety."**

**Response:** This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted.

The Board disagrees with the Grand Jury. Funding for the EOC has been set aside in the County's Capital Project designation. Funds needed to conduct additional site studies (beyond those already performed) would only reduce the limited available EOC funding and delay the ultimate goal of a permanent dedicated facility.

While the Board appreciates the Grand Jury's belief that any improvement from the current modular buildings classroom being used would be better, the Board believes that final efforts around dedicated facility are more prudent. The Board has directed staff to

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.all-hazards.com/LGP/library/CPG1-20/120CH3.pdf> (Page 25)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.countyofsb.org/ceo/budgetresearch/documents/cip2009/07-2%20General%20Services.pdf>  
(Page B-201)

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.countyofsb.org/ceo/budgetresearch/documents/cip2009/07-2%20General%20Services.pdf>  
(Page B-199)

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proceed with all aspects of design, engineering and administrative processes to make the EOC project "shovel ready" and ready for bidding. It is anticipated that staff will return to the Board in August with a recommendation. The Grand Jury's recommendation would require the use of EOC project funds to develop another interim EOC (essentially an interim for the existing interim). This approach would further delay the ultimate goal of having a permanent and dedicated facility to serve during emergencies.

**Finding 5: The Office of Emergency Services Director is evaluating the purchase of Web EOC to allow Santa Barbara County to develop a Virtual EOC. The cost has been estimated at \$68,000, which might be paid for by Homeland Security funds.**

**Response:** Agree. It is the Board's understanding that the Emergency Operations Chief has been actively pursuing this project.

**Recommendation 5: That the Board of Supervisors authorize funds for the purchase of Web EOC.**

Response: The recommendation will not be implemented as it is not warranted.

Is the understanding of the Board that the OES has requested funding for emergency management software, e.g. WebEOC<sup>®</sup>, from Homeland Security funds. The request has been tentatively approved and is pending final authorization. In addition to software costs, the Emergency Operations Chief has worked with the Information Technology (IT) Department to address the difficulties in setting-up the EOC's existing computer system. These difficulties occur because the interim EOC is set-up as a classroom when not used as an EOC and the computer system for the EOC requires 2 or more hours to set-up and resolve technical issues. The funds being requested by Homeland Security includes locally hosted servers with the web-based service serving as a back-up system and an update to the EOCs existing computer system to reduce the time it currently takes to activate the EOC.

In the unlikely event that the OES does not receive the funds necessary to execute this project, the Emergency Operations Chief will be directed to return to the Board with an alternate plan and identified funding sources. When funding approval is received, the matter will be presented to the Board of Supervisors for grant acceptance.

Sincerely,

Joseph Centeno, Chair  
Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors

cc: Foreman, Santa Barbara County Civil Grand Jury