

Response to Grand Jury Report Form

Report Title: Permit Sonoma 2025: Management Review is a Beginning, not an End

Report Date: June 12, 2025

Response by: Scott Orr Title: Interim Director

Agency/Department Name: Permit Sonoma

FINDINGS:

I (we) agree with the findings numbered: F1, F2, F3, F6, F8, F9

I (we) disagree wholly or partially with the findings numbered: F4, F5, F7

(Attach a statement specifying any portions of the findings that are disputed with an explanation of the reasons.)

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Recommendations numbered: None _____ have been implemented.
(Attach a summary describing the implemented actions.)
- Recommendations numbered: R2, R3, R4, R5, R6, R7, R8, R9, R10, R12, R13 _____ have not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future.
(Attach a timeframe for the implementation.)
- Recommendations numbered: R1 _____ require(s) further analysis.
(Attach an explanation and the scope and parameters of an analysis or study, and a timeframe for the matter to be prepared for discussion by the officer or director of the agency or department being investigated or reviewed, including the governing body of the public agency when applicable. ***This timeframe shall not exceed six months from the date of publication of the Grand Jury report.***)
- Recommendations numbered: None _____ will not be implemented because they are not warranted or are not reasonable.
(Attach an explanation.)

Date: 7/26/2025

Signed: Scott Orr

Number of pages attached: 0

(See attached PC Civil Grand Jury Response Requirements)

Findings

We disagree wholly or partially with the findings numbered F4, F5, F7.

F4. Permit Sonoma is not able to factually report permit review and approval throughput because its workflow tracking systems are not capturing data on a consistent and reportable basis.

We disagree with this finding. Permit Sonoma has completed an update to its dashboard that includes built-in workflow tracking based on AB 2234 (2022) deadlines, including warnings for permits that are in jeopardy of missing the required timeline. This dashboard is displayed in the office and on the department's intranet page.

F5. Permit Sonoma has made excellent plans to implement all of the Berry Dunn management review recommendations, but its reports overstate the actual progress observed by the Civil Grand Jury.

We partially disagree with this finding. Permit Sonoma worked extensively with the consultant team at BerryDunn on the recommendations in the final BerryDunn report. The report was intended to result in meaningful process improvements for customers. Permit Sonoma achieved the goals of the report by using resources as efficiently as possible, and prioritized achieving process improvement results rather than documenting internal steps toward attainment of those results.

F7. Other than compliance with California Assembly Bill 2234 (2022), Permit Sonoma senior management has not established objective expectations for staff performance regarding plan review or timely permit issuance.

We partially disagree with this finding. Permit Sonoma agrees that objective expectations are an important aspect of organization efficiency, particularly for compliance with regulatory processing timelines and conformance with adopted fee studies. However, not all processes or permits can be reduced to quantitative expectations for individual staff performance that can be applied equally across the department. For example, staff that focus on complex discretionary projects such as visitor serving commercial uses or subdivisions with significant environmental constraints are going to have different work product expectations from staff that process intake for ministerial permits or perform field inspections.

Recommendations

R1. By October 17, 2025, Permit Sonoma shall require that all employees record, within the workflow systems, time spent on tasks for permit intake and plan check, site visitation, field inspection and code enforcement review.

This recommendation requires additional analysis. The department permit sections that currently require employees to record within workflow the time spent on each task are the departments that have the most significant processing bottlenecks and are most subject to customer service complaints. Permit Sonoma will assess if the added time spent documenting

individual steps in permit processing outweighs the efficiencies of only reporting the cumulative time to process a permit in its entirety. All employees already enter their time in the County's timekeeping system known as Dimensions. Permit Sonoma will complete this additional analysis by December 19, 2025.

R5. By December 19, 2025, Permit Sonoma shall review and publish its requirements and expectations for express permit review and approval, third party plan check, permit and inspection self-certification, and use of program management techniques to fulfill all Berry Dunn Report recommendations

Partial implementation: By December 19, 2025, Permit Sonoma shall review and publish its requirements and expectations for express permit review and approval, third party plan check, permit and inspection self-certification.

This recommendation either requires more analysis or will not be implemented: Use of program management techniques to fulfill all Berry Dunn Report recommendations by December 19, 2025. By December 19, 2025, Permit Sonoma will assess the Initiatives not covered in other recommendations that the Grand Jury has found to be incomplete.

R2, R3, R4, and R6 as recommended by the Grand Jury for implementation by December 19, 2025.

R7, R8, R9, and R10 as recommended by the Grand Jury for implementation by March 27, 2026.

R12 and R13 as recommended by the Grand Jury for implementation by July 2026.