



# COUNTY OF SONOMA

575 ADMINISTRATION  
DRIVE, ROOM 102A  
SANTA ROSA, CA 95403

## SUMMARY REPORT

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**Agenda Date:** 8/13/2024

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**To:** Sonoma County Board of Supervisors  
**Department or Agency Name(s):** County Administrator's Office  
**Staff Name and Phone Number:** Lois Hopkins, 707-565-2431  
**Vote Requirement:** Majority  
**Supervisorial District(s):** All

**Title:**

Response to the 2023-24 Civil Grand Jury

**Recommended Action:**

- A) Approve the Board of Supervisors response to recommendations from two reports from the 2023-24 Civil Grand Jury, "Election Integrity in Sonoma County" and "Is Fire Safety a Priority in Rural Sonoma County", and direct staff to formally transmit Sonoma County's responses to the Sonoma County Superior Court.
- B) Direct Permit Sonoma to publish additional materials related the Fire Safe Regulation's requirements and the forms and process for applying for an exception to standards, pursuant to Recommendation 1 from the Sonoma County Civil Grand Jury's report "Is Fire Safety a Priority in Rural Sonoma County."
- C) Direct Permit Sonoma to meet and confer with the fire prevention agencies and solicit comments on its forms and procedures for applying for and reviewing exceptions to standards, pursuant to Recommendation 3 from the Sonoma County Civil Grand Jury's report "Is Fire Safety a Priority in Rural Sonoma County."
- D) Directs Permit Sonoma to work with Sonoma Public Infrastructure and the Department of Emergency Management to identify and map public roads in the SRA and indicate whether they meet the standards of the Fire Safe Regulations, pursuant to Recommendation 4 from the Sonoma County Civil Grand Jury's report "Is Fire Safety a Priority in Rural Sonoma County."

**Executive Summary:**

Each year the Civil Grand Jury completes reports on its investigations of potential issues they prioritize in local government agencies. In May, 2024, the 2023-24 Grand Jury issued two reports, "Election Integrity in Sonoma County" and "Is Fire Safety a Priority in Rural Sonoma County." These reports include findings and recommendations that require response from the Board of Supervisors within 90 days of issuance.

The remaining three Grand Jury reports (regarding Property Taxes & Spending, Main Adult Detention Facility, and Health Services Contracting) require Board of Supervisors' response by September 15, 2024 and are scheduled to come before the Board of Supervisors on September 10, 2024.

The final set of reports can be found [HERE. <https://sonoma.courts.ca.gov/general-information/grand-jury/grand-jury-reports-responses>](https://sonoma.courts.ca.gov/general-information/grand-jury/grand-jury-reports-responses)

**Discussion:**

Under California law, the Civil Grand Jury exercises oversight of local government agencies, including counties, cities and special districts. They do so by investigating issues that are either brought to their attention through citizen complaints or are selected by the Grand Jury members, and by issuing reports on their findings and recommendations.

Typically, the Grand Jury releases a consolidated Final Report near the middle of June each year. This year, two of the Grand Jury reports were issued early, on May 13, 2024, and May 22, 2024.

The Final Report, issued on June 17, 2024, can be found [HERE. <https://sonoma.courts.ca.gov/general-information/grand-jury/grand-jury-reports-responses>](https://sonoma.courts.ca.gov/general-information/grand-jury/grand-jury-reports-responses)

The two early-release reports contain various findings and recommendations, and the Grand Jury has requested responses from the Board of Supervisors, as follows:

**Report: Election Integrity in Sonoma County**

- R2. By June 30, 2025, the Board of Supervisors develop and approve a long-term plan to provide ROV with a facility that better accommodates space and physical security requirements.
- R3a. By August 31, 2024, the Board of Supervisors and ROV develop and implement a plan for enhancing existing ROV security measures and developing new security measures based on recurring threat assessments and recommendations by qualified authorities.
- R4. By December 31, 2024, the Board of Supervisors allocate resources for a project to create a publicly accessible Sonoma County elections database to enable ready access to, and analysis of, past election results.

This report required a response by the Registrar of Voters and the Board of Supervisors.

Attachment A is the Clerk/Recorder/Assessor departmental response which was submitted to the Honorable Shelly J. Averill, Presiding Judge of the Superior Court on July 25, 2024.

Attachment B is the proposed Board of Supervisors response to the Grand Jury Report entitled "Election Integrity in Sonoma County."

**Report: Is Fire Safety a Priority in Rural Sonoma County**

- R1. By November 1, 2024, the Board of Supervisors will direct Permit Sonoma to publish an applicant's guide to fire safety ingress and egress requirements and mitigation procedures for applications on roads that don't meet FSR requirements.
- R2. By November 1, 2024, the Board of Supervisors will direct Permit Sonoma to include administrative

review of *all* exceptional fire safety mitigation plans to the list of permits needing approval by either Permit Sonoma Design Review Committee or Permit Sonoma <<https://permitsonoma.org/boardscommissionsandcommittees/designreviewcommittee>> Project Review Advisory Committee.  
<<https://permitsonoma.org/boardscommissionsandcommittees/designreviewcommittee>>

- R3. By November 1, 2024, the Board of Supervisors will direct Permit Sonoma to meet and confer with all independent Fire Prevention agencies to review its mitigation and appeal procedures by February 1, 2025.
- R4. By November 1, 2024, the Board of Supervisors will direct Permit Sonoma to identify and map all roads within the SRA that don't meet State FSR standards and publish that map on the County Department of Emergency Management website by February 28, 2025.

This report requires a response only from the Board of Supervisors.

Attachment C is the proposed Board of Supervisors response to this report.

Once these two Board of Supervisors' responses have been approved by the Board and executed by the Chair, department staff will transmit to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court.

**Strategic Plan:**

N/A

**Racial Equity:**

**Was this item identified as an opportunity to apply the Racial Equity Toolkit?**

No

**Prior Board Actions:**

The Board responds annually to the Civil Grand Jury Requests.

**FISCAL SUMMARY**

**Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:**

None

**Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):**

None

**Attachments:**

- A. Clerk/Recorder/Assessor's departmental response to Grand Jury report "Election Integrity in Sonoma County."
- B. Proposed Board of Supervisors' response to Grand Jury report "Election Integrity in Sonoma County."
- C. Proposed Board of Supervisors' response to Grand Jury report "Is Fire Safety a Priority in Rural Sonoma County."

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**Related Items "On File" with the Clerk of the Board:**

None