



# COUNTY OF SONOMA

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

## SUMMARY REPORT

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**Agenda Date:** 9/10/2024

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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) 565-2421  
**Vote Requirement:** Majority  
**Supervisorial District(s):** Countywide

**Title:**

Response to the 2023-24 Civil Grand Jury

**Recommended Action:**

Approve the Board of Supervisors' responses to recommendations from three reports of the 2023-24 Civil Grand Jury and authorize the Chair to submit to the Presiding Judge.

**Executive Summary:**

Each year the Civil Grand Jury issues reports on its investigations of issues they prioritize in local government agencies. The 2023-24 Civil Grand Jury issued a total of five reports. In August 2024, the Board of Supervisors responded to two reports, which were released in May 2024. Three additional reports were released in June 2024 as part of the Grand Jury's Final Report: "Often Reported, Never Repaired," "Taxing and Spending in Sonoma County," and "MADF: Déjà Vu All Over Again." These reports include findings and recommendations that require response from departments and the Board of Supervisors.

Departmental responses to the three reports were filed with the Superior Court in August 2024. The Board of Supervisors responses are due to be filed with the Superior Court by September 15, 2024. Upon approval of the proposed Board of Supervisors responses, staff will file the responses with the Superior Court.

Out of the 7 total recommendations directed to the Board of Supervisors, staff recommends responding as follows:

- 2 have not been implemented but will in the future if warranted.
- 3 will not be implemented because they are not warranted or are not reasonable.
- 2 require further analysis.

Staff has developed recommended responses from the Board of Supervisors for findings and recommendations required by the Grand Jury. The complete 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 brought to their attention through citizen complaints or are selected by the Grand Jury members, and by issuing reports on their findings and

recommendations. The County must follow a prescribed timeline for its response, based on the report release date. After the Board of Supervisors' responses have been approved by the Board and executed by the Chair, department staff will transmit them to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court.

The 2023-24 Civil Grand Jury released two reports in May 2024, and the Board of Supervisors responded to those reports in August 2024. Three additional reports were issued on June 17, 2024, and contain various findings and recommendations, which require the Board's response by September 15, 2024. The three reports are summarized below.

### **Report: Often Reported Never Repaired**

The Civil Grand Jury investigated the Department of Health Services' (DHS) general management practices and its interactions with County departments during its procurement process. This report required a response from DHS, Human Resources, Auditor Controller Treasurer Tax Collector (ACTTC), Public Infrastructure, and the Board of Supervisors.

Specifically, the Board is required to respond to Recommendation #3, below. Findings associated with Recommendation #3 are as follows:

#### **Findings?**

- F1. DHS contracting practices and procedures are chaotic, inefficient, and take too long. This results in delayed execution of contracts, delays in vendor payments, and local County health services missing for extended periods.
- F3. Chronic short staffing and employee turnover have led to a significant loss of institutional knowledge.
- F6. County Purchasing and Internal Audit failed to require that DHS follow mandated procurement policies.
- F7. The Board of Supervisors failed to require changes to DHS procurement procedures despite published reports that DHS has been violating County procurement policy.

#### **Recommendations?**

- R3. By December 31, 2025, the Board of Supervisors will request, and County Auditor will complete and publish, a comprehensive audit report on DHS procurement processes and procedures, contract administration oversight and compliance with County procurement policy and publicly present said report to the Board of Supervisors. (F1, F3, F6, F7)

Departmental responses were filed with the Superior Court in August 2024 as follows:

- Attachment A: Department of Health Services Response
- Attachment B: Human Resources Response
- Attachment C: Public Infrastructure Response
- Attachment D: Auditor Controller Treasurer Tax Collector Response

Attachment E is the proposed Board of Supervisors response to the Grand Jury Report entitled "Often Reported Never Repaired."

### **Report: Taxing and Spending in Sonoma County**

The Grand Jury initiated this investigation in response to a civil complaint regarding school bond oversight which then expanded to the Grand Jury looking at overall taxes and fees paid by citizens, and associated spending and reporting. This report required a response from ACTTC and the Board of Supervisors.

Specifically, the Board is required to respond to Recommendation numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, below. The Grand Jury did not associate Findings with each recommendation and therefore all Findings are listed:

#### Findings?

- F1. The total amount and source of tax collections is not published in a useful, publicly accessible format by any government entity.
- F2. The actual amount of money being spent to address public need is not published in a useful, publicly accessible format by any government entity.
- F3. The Sonoma County Office of Education publishes no report summarizing how much, in total, is being collected, spent, or borrowed to pay for public education in Sonoma County.
- F4. The County Auditor/Controller/Treasurer/Tax Collector Citizen's Report, a helpful document, doesn't answer major questions about tax revenue or spending.
- F5. The County Auditor doesn't have the resources needed to conduct performance audits throughout County government.
- F6. The County Assessor doesn't have the resources needed to eliminate a significant assessment backlog. As a consequence, many taxpayers will get hit with significant back-dated property tax bills when this assessment backlog is cleared.
- F7. Sonoma County sales tax rates are among the highest in California.
- F8. Citizen Oversight Committees are frequently inoperative, largely ineffective and have no authority.

#### Recommendations?

- R1. By December 27, 2024, the Board of Supervisors shall direct and fund the Controller to modify County financial systems such that spending classification data capture enables cross-agency categoric reporting for fiscal 2026 onward.
- R2. By February 28, 2025, the Board of Supervisors, ACTTC and County Office of Education shall jointly determine personnel and professional services needed to make the Citizens Report a comprehensive presentation of all Sonoma County property and sales tax collections and expenditures.
- R3. By June 30, 2025, the Board of Supervisors shall fund the ACTTC so the Citizens Report includes this categorized information for fiscal years 2026 and onward.
- R4. By June 30, 2025 the Board of Supervisors shall fund and authorize staffing sufficient for the Auditor to conduct appropriate performance audits each fiscal year from 2026 onward.
- R5. By December 28, 2024 the Board of Supervisors shall fund and authorize temporary staffing to enable

the Assessor’s Office to eliminate the assessment backlog within 12 months.

Attachment F is ACTTC’s Response, which was filed with the Superior Court in August 2024.

Attachment G is the proposed Board of Supervisors response to the Grand Jury Report entitled “Taxing and Spending in Sonoma County.”

**Report: Deja Vue All Over Again**

By statute, the Civil Grand Jury is required to inquire regarding the conditions and management of all public prisons within the County. This year, the Grand Jury’s Report focused on the Main Adult Detention Facility (MADF) and specifically regarding the impact that inmates with mental health diagnoses have on corrections staff, other inmates and facilities.

This report required a response from the Sonoma County Sheriff and the Board of Supervisors. Specifically, the Board is required to respond to Recommendation #2, below. The Grand Jury did not associate Findings with each recommendation and therefore all Findings are listed:

Findings

- F1. There are a large number of mentally ill inmates held in the MADF whose needs are not being met.
- F2. The planned MADF mental health extension, “on hold” since 2016, would increase the safety of correctional officers and inmates and make more room in the Main Jail for programming.
- F3. There is a persistent deficiency in OCA [out of cell activity] time for inmates, especially those in the modules for the mentally ill.
- F4. There has been a chronic staffing shortage in the MADF.
- F5. Mandatory staff overtime is excessive and a detriment to the safety, security, and health of both officers and inmates

Recommendations

- R2. By December 31, 2024, the Board of Supervisors will develop a plan to fund construction of the mental health extension.

Attachment H is Sonoma County Sheriff’s Response, which was filed with the Superior Court in August 2024.

Attachment I is the proposed Board of Supervisors response to the Grand Jury Report entitled “Déjà Vu All Over Again.”

**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 of Supervisors responds annually to the Civil Grand Jury.

**FISCAL SUMMARY**

**Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:**

N/A

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

N/A

**Attachments:**

- A: Department of Health Services Response to the Grand Jury Report "Often Reported Never Repaired"
- B: Human Resources Response to the Grand Jury Report "Often Reported Never Repaired"
- C: Public Infrastructure's Response to the Grand Jury Report "Often Reported Never Repaired"
- D: ACTTC's Response to the Grand Jury Report "Often Reported Never Repaired"
- E: Proposed Board of Supervisors' Response to the Grand Jury Report "Often Reported Never Repaired"
- F: ACTTC's Response to the Grand Jury Report "Taxing and Spending in Sonoma County"
- G: Proposed Board of Supervisors' Response to the Grand Jury Report "Taxing and Spending in Sonoma County"
- H: Sonoma County Sheriff's Response to the Grand Jury Report "Déjà Vu All Over Again"
- I: Proposed Board of Supervisors' Response to the Grand Jury Report "Déjà Vu All Over Again"

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

N/A