

**TRINITY COUNTY GRAND JURY**

**1999-2000**

**FILED**

**APR 25 2000**

**SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA  
COUNTY OF TRINITY  
BY: DONNA REGNANI, DEPUTY CLERK**

**FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE  
FINAL REPORT**

**GENERAL REVIEW OF COUNTY GOVERNMENT**

**This report was approved  
On April 13, 2000**

**1999-2000 TRINITY COUNTY GRAND JURY  
FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE  
GENERAL REVIEW OF COUNTY GOVERNMENT  
FINAL REPORT**

**PURPOSE:**

The Trinity County Grand Jury is charged each year to perform a review of county government operations to make sure that the citizens of the county are being well served.

**BACKGROUND:**

The operations of Trinity County government are diverse with an annual budget of 32.7 million dollars, and approximately 470 employees. These operations impact all citizens of the county and deserve to be scrutinized on a regular basis. By performing their responsibility diligently, the Grand Jury can aid in insuring the best possible return on the citizen's investment.

The 1999-2000 Grand Jury, in addition to thoroughly and completely investigating a number of citizen complaints, also conducted a review of the operations of all county departments.

**METHODOLOGY:**

Citizen complaints were investigated in depth and specific reports issued where warranted. In addition, the Finance and Administration Committee interviewed most County Department heads, all members of the Board of Supervisors and a representative of the County Employee's Association. Visits to many departments were also made.

**FINDING #1:**

Overall, the Grand Jury finds County government operations to be generally well run. Communication and coordination between department heads and throughout County government seems to be good. In most instances there appears to be good communication between Department Heads and the Board of Supervisors. In recent years the county has initiated monthly meetings of Department Heads, the CAO and the Chairperson of the Board of Supervisors, which seem to greatly foster the overall good quality of County government.

**RECOMMENDATION #1:**

The Grand Jury strongly encourages the continuation of the monthly meetings of the Department Heads, the CAO and the Board of Supervisor's representative.

**FINDING #2:**

Most of those interviewed felt that the CAO position served an important function within the structure of County government. There appeared to be general support for the current CAO. There were general compliments of the CAO's abilities, particularly in team building and communication.

A few of those interviewed felt that CAO position could be re-structured. However, there did not appear to be any clear consensus on how the position could be structured better in the future. Several of those interviewed felt that the position does not require a full time position and that some consolidation of duties with another position may be possible.

**RECOMMENDATION #2:**

The Grand Jury recommends that some attention be given to what the job description will be for a future CAO and how that position will be filled. The Grand Jury also recommends that solid administrative and leadership ability along with a working understanding of the operations of the major departments be a prerequisite for the CAO position.

**FINDING #3:**

The County is presently developing plans to utilize the present Weaverville Airport site when it is moved. However, there appears to be no overall long-range vision of what should go there. Nor does there appear to be any attempt to insure architectural and operational consistency. Recently, informal meetings have begun to develop such a vision. These meetings include certain department heads and other personnel with expertise in planning issues.

**RECOMMENDATION #3:**

The Grand Jury strongly recommends that the airport site planning meetings continue on a regular basis and that an official Strategic Planning committee be formed. This committee should include appropriate Department Heads and departmental staff assistants along with a member of the Board of Supervisors. This committee should develop both short and long range plans for this site. It is recommended that basic site and planning guidelines be developed that include parking areas, landscape design and overall architectural consistency. As the development of the site and the plans for the future evolve, the plans should be updated to show significant changes as they occur.

**FINDING #4:**

The minutes of the Board of Supervisor meetings are brief and only record motions, actions taken, votes and appearances of non-board members. For several years

the meetings have been recorded on videotape for rebroadcast on local cable TV. These videotapes are then saved for a few months and are available to the public through the County Library. After a few months these tapes are then reused.

**RECOMMENDATION #4:**

The Grand Jury recommends that the County adopt a policy to record all Board meetings and that the County Clerk be responsible for maintaining a permanent archive of the videotapes that would be accessible to the citizens of Trinity County. Only copies of the videotapes should be loaned out.

**FINDING #5:**

In response to citizen complaints of abuse of power on the part of individual Board of Supervisors members, the Grand Jury investigated the oversight of selected county departments by the Board of Supervisors. The expertise in management of departmental operations, procedures, rules and regulations resides with the department heads and staff. The Board of Supervisors function is to collectively provide policy guidance, oversight and sometimes specific action. Individual Board members are not generally empowered to act unilaterally. The relationship between the Board of Supervisors and the county departments is typically complimentary and commendable. However, the Grand Jury did find some instances where requests for information and/or action from individual Board members were unreasonable. These instances were often indicative of a lack of knowledge of specific departmental functions and responsibilities rather than willful abuse of power.

**RECOMMENDATION #5:**

The Grand Jury recognizes that the Board of Supervisors and other local governing boards have ultimate responsibility for local government operations. The Grand Jury also understands that Board members often get requests from constituents to act on their behalf. However, the Grand Jury recommends that board members make a conscious effort to avoid unnecessary involvement and detailed individual direction of activities that can and should be supervised and directed by department heads and lower level managers. Such action can also often demoralize or frustrate county employees unnecessarily.

**30-DAY RESPONSE REQUESTED FROM:** Trinity County Board of Supervisors, County Administrative Officer.



# TRINITY COUNTY

## OFFICE OF THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Administration – Human Resources

Grant Management – Data Processing

P. O. Box 1613 Weaverville, CA 96093-1613

County Administrator Phone: (530) 623-1382

Human Resources Phone (530) 623-1325 FAX (530) 623-4222

JEANNIE NIX-TEMPLE, County Administrative Officer

To: Honorable John K. Letton, Presiding Judge of Superior Court

From: *Jeannie Nix-Temple*  
Jeannie Nix-Temple, County Administrative Officer

Date: May 5, 2000

RECEIVED  
MAY 22 2000  
SUPERIOR COURT  
JUDGE'S CHAMBERS

RE: Response to Recommendations of 99/00 Grand Jury on General Review of County Government

My response to the 99/00 Grand Jury on general review of county government is as follows:

I would like to thank the grand jury for their investigation of our county government. There is a correction I would offer regarding the amount of the county budget for this fiscal year, which is 44.4 million dollars rather than the 32.7 million, stated in the report. Also we recently counted the county allocations for positions and the current employee count is 519 rather than the 470, stated in the report. We have grown.

### Finding #1 and Recommendation #1:

I appreciate the fact that the grand jury feels that the county is generally well run. I agree that the regular monthly meetings of department heads, the CAO and a member of the Board of Supervisors are beneficial to the communication and cooperation within county government. We now welcome all department heads in on our twice-monthly board agenda meetings also. This gives all department heads and opportunity to have a clear understanding of what items are coming before the board.

Recommendation #2 I agree.

Recommendation #3 The Weaverville Airport relocation committee meets regularly. Steve Roberts Assoc. Planner from the Department of Transportation is assigned the duty of coordinating the activities for the relocation. Significant work has been done including hiring a consultant, involvement of community pilots and citizens, and development for a plan for funding and acquisition of the suitable sight.

In addition, the county has organized a strategic planning committee that began its work in Jan. 1999. The task of the committee was to look at county owned

property and county leased property. The committee continues to convene on a monthly basis. It was part of the task to look at the existing hospital building for continued use as a hospital or future use for county offices. An engineer was hired to evaluate the potential for retrofitting the building to meet 2008 earthquake standards. It was as a result of this study that the Hospital Options 2008 committee convened.

I agree that short term and long term plans need to be developed. This is our goal, which is being accomplished.

Recommendation # 4. I agree with the Grand Jury. I find it very helpful to be able to look back at the tape when necessary to refresh my memory of the details of the discussion. I believe that the County Clerk/Recorder may have a different perception of the need for tapes to be retained.

Recommendation #5. In order to fully understand individual issues, Board members often will visit individual departments to talk to staff or the department head. Board members also attend various meetings with department members and may offer suggestions or become aware of individual issues. An individual board member does not have the authority to direct the activities of a department. They do however obtain the support of other Board members on issues that may, in effect, define the direction of a department.



# TRINITY COUNTY

Clerk Recorder

P.O. Box 1258  
Weaverville, CA 96093  
Phone: (530) 623-1222  
Fax: (530) 623-8398

To: Honorable John K. Letton, Superior Court Judge

From: Dero B. Forslund, Trinity County Clerk  
Ex officio Clerk of the Board

Date: October 22, 2000

Re: Response to Recommendation #4 99/00 Grand Jury on General Review of County Government

RECEIVED

NOV 22 2000

SUPERIOR COURT  
JUDGE'S CHAMBERS

Currently the Board of Supervisor meetings are videotaped under an agreement with Channel 22. The meetings are shown on Channel 22 and copies of the Tape(s) are provided to the County with a copy being provided to the Trinity County Library and a copy to the County Clerk. The current copies of the meetings are kept for a month after the meeting after which they are recycled and the tapes are used again.

In order to provide a permanent archive of the meetings the County would have to make several changes in the process of taping the "Board" meetings. VHS tape does not provide a permanent format and will degrade with age. We can solve this problem if we convert to a digital format, which will have a much longer life and would be convertible to newer formats as they become available. In addition if we are to provide a permanent record of the meeting County personnel, under the direction of the County Clerk, should perform the process.

If we are to provide a permanent video archive of the meetings I recommend that we get an opinion from County Counsel on the status of the record as it relates to the minutes of the board meeting. We should not have two official versions of the board meetings.

I will be working with the board over the next few months to determine how we might be able to implement the recommendation.

  
Dero B. Forslund  
Trinity County Clerk Recorder Assessor



# TRINITY COUNTY

## BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

P.O. Drawer 1613 (530) 623-1217  
WEAVERVILLE, CALIFORNIA 96093

*Dero B. Forslund, Clerk*  
*Jeannie Nix-Temple, County Administrative Officer*

RECEIVED

SUPERIOR COURT  
JUDGE'S CHAMBERS

To: Honorable John K. Letton, Superior Court Judge

From: Trinity County Board of Supervisors

Date: October 20, 2000

RE: Response to Recommendations of 99/00 Grand Jury on General Review of County Government

The Board of Supervisors appreciates the work of the Grand Jury in their investigation of our county's general operations. In the Jury's background discussion both the size of the county budget and workforce are both understated. The Board agrees with both Finding and Recommendation #1. We are pleased that you found the county well run and we agree that top management communications are essential and will continue with our present efforts.

### Finding and Recommendation #2

Given the size and complexity of today's county government, the Board of Supervisors feels that a County Administrative Officer is an essential position. We agree with Recommendation #2.

### Finding and Recommendation #3

Committees charged with site planning for Weaverville's new airport as well as planning for the reuse of the old airport site meet on a regular basis. The Board agrees with Recommendation #3.

### Finding and Recommendation #4

The Board agrees in principle with this recommendation and will work with the County Clerk to implement it as dictated by time, money and demand.

### Finding and Recommendation #5

The Board agrees with this recommendation and individual Board Members will not participate in any abuse of power be it real or imagined.

DATE: 11/9/00

APPROVED: *Ralph Modine*  
CHAIRMAN-Board of Supervisors -46-