

PUBLIC & SUPPORT SERVICES COMMITTEE

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PUBLIC & SUPPORT SERVICES COMMITTEE

The Public and Support Services Group (PSSG) was formed during a reorganization of the County approved by the Board of Supervisors in April, 2005. The Public and Support Services Committee was assigned the responsibility of investigating the 10 departments that provide services to the general public or internal support to other County departments.

Subcommittees were formed and the following departments were investigated for operational and functional efficiency:

- Architecture and Engineering
- County Fire
 - Office of Emergency Services
- Facilities Management
- Fleet Management
- Real Estate Services
 - Redevelopment & Real Estate Ad Hoc Committee
- Registrar of Voters
- Special Districts

Findings and recommendations resulting from the investigations by the various subcommittees are detailed in this final report for the following departments:

- Architecture and Engineering
- Fleet Management
- Office of Emergency Services
- Real Estate Services
- Registrar of Voters

ARCHITECTURE & ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT

BACKGROUND

Architecture and Engineering (A&E) is responsible for planning and implementing the quality design and construction of projects included in the County Capital Improvement Program (CIP), as well as other Regional Parks, Airports, and Community Development and Housing Department projects. The department collaborates with other County agencies, the County Administrative Office and the Board of Supervisors to determine project scope, schedule and budget. A&E administers projects from conceptual design through construction to completion. Staff issues Requests for Proposals to secure consultant services, prepares bid packages, solicits competitive construction bids, obtains the appropriate jurisdictional approvals, and provides inspection and construction management services.

FINDINGS

Architecture and Engineering is currently undergoing a reorganization structure change in order to streamline the current work process and to reduce the number of capital project backlogs. Job titles have been changed to better reflect assigned duties and responsibilities. Additional project managers have been added to more efficiently handle the increasing workload. The project managers do not perform engineering on any of the projects, even though some do have an engineering background. All engineering and design projects are performed by outside engineering consultants on a contract basis. The project managers handle projects from start to completion. Evaluation of their performance is based on their ability to interface with clients, do the necessary paperwork, and complete projects in a timely, cost-effective manner. Monthly meetings are held with the project managers to review the status of ongoing projects under their responsibility.

This department does not presently have a Policy and Procedures manual. Prior Grand Jury recommendations in 2003-2004 and 2004-2005 recommended that a manual be developed and put into practice to protect the best interests of the County. This task was never accomplished. A manual would help to protect the department and the County against questionable policies and procedures in the awarding of construction contracts.

An administrative staff person was hired in fiscal year 2004-2005 to specifically develop this manual. However, that person was reassigned to the Accounting section due to some major problems the department was experiencing in keeping track of the funding and expenditures on projects. This person is now being transferred to another department and a new person has been recruited to fill this position. The principal duty of this new position is to develop the manual and to have it completed within three months.

A&E does not maintain any computerized bidders' database to use when soliciting bids for their construction projects. They advertise the bid notice in the local newspaper and various construction trade papers, and post the bid notice on the County's webpage. In addition, the project manager who is in charge of the project will telephone contractors that they know to inform them of the project that is going out to bid.

The department does not have any formal bid protest procedures in place. They are guided by the State's Public Contract Code when a contractor files a formal bid protest. The director stated he does not maintain any suspension or debarment list of contractors who were awarded construction contracts but did not perform according to bid requirements.

The director stated the department does not utilize any of the standard industry computerized software programs for keeping track of their construction projects. When asked about computerizing their bidding process through the Internet, the director stated, "I don't have any plans to do this; however, I will look into it".

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 06-53 DEVELOP A POLICY AND PROCEDURES MANUAL TO INCLUDE A SUSPENSION AND DEBARMENT POLICY.

- 06-54 PUT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES INTO PRACTICE WITHIN THREE MONTHS OF THIS RECOMMENDATION.

- 06-55 IMPLEMENT A COMPUTERIZED BIDDERS' DATABASE TO INCREASE THE OUTREACH EFFORTS TO OBTAIN ADDITIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDS ON COUNTY PROJECTS.

COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT

OFFICE OF EMERGENCY SERVICES

BACKGROUND

The Office of Emergency Services (OES) operates under the auspices of the San Bernardino County Fire Department. Its mission is to coordinate information, both internal and external, during an emergency. The OES operates with a County budget of approximately \$1.1 million, plus Federal and State grants of \$29 million.

Internally the office operates the Emergency Operations Center (EOC), coordinates with County departments, provides training, oversees the County Emergency Operations Plan, and coordinates with the Disaster Council and key emergency personnel transportation.

Externally the office operates the Inland Business Council for Emergency Preparedness, Emergency Alert System, emergency communications service, and assists in coordinating the Telephone Emergency Notification System (TENS).

The office offers the following technology:

- Internet Response Information Management System
- Tri-net paging and network, along with CalTech United States Geological Survey (USGS) broadcasts of earthquakes
- Emergency electronics and specialized vehicle
- Telephone Emergency Notification System (TENS)
- Daily conference calls with the National Weather Service

FINDINGS

The OES building is located across the street from the Sheriff's Aviation Division in Rialto. It is fenced and entrance is obtained only by the use of an electronic device. The inside of the building is neatly arranged according to tasks, but it is crowded.

The Emergency Operations Center has over 200 EOC responders available to respond 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The EOC does not directly manage field operations but, rather, insures coordination of an event, such as the Old Fire and the more recent Plunge Wildfire. When the EOC is activated, it provides situation summaries with twice daily reports to a wide range of distribution. It provides coordination with the State OES, the Red Cross, utility companies and others.

The present OES facility was adapted from a warehouse built by Special Districts in 1985 to serve as a food bank distribution center. For that use the building was earthquake compliant. In 1991 the building was remodeled to serve as a temporary facility for the Office of Emergency Services. The change of use resulted in a change in the seismic requirements, as the building became an "essential facility", according to the County's Architecture and Engineering Department (A&E). A&E reported that although the remodel contained some structural elements, the building, in all likelihood, does not meet current seismic requirements for an "essential facility". To make the building earthquake compliant, an engineering study would need to be performed to determine the modifications necessary to meet the current seismic requirements. According to Architecture & Engineering, a pre-fabricated metal building reacts favorably in a seismic event, but the foundation and structural members would require modification to meet current codes.

The scope of the necessary modifications to this facility has not been determined; there has not been an engineering study to develop a cost estimate for the upgrade.

In an emergency, the County will be relying on this center; therefore structural integrity is essential.

RECOMMENDATION

06-56 MOVE THE OFFICE OF EMERGENCY SERVICES AND EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER TO AN EARTHQUAKE COMPLIANT FACILITY WITH SUFFICIENT SPACE NEEDED FOR PERSONNEL TO FUNCTION EFFICIENTLY.

FLEET MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT

BACKGROUND

The Fleet Management Department provides vehicles, equipment, and services to officials and employees in order to provide County services to its citizens. They operate six repair/maintenance facilities and 22 fuel sites throughout the County.

The County has three other fleets which are not controlled by the Fleet Management Department: the Sheriff's Department, County Fire Department, and Special Districts. Each of these departments currently manages their own fleet of vehicles and equipment.

FINDINGS

Alternative fuel vehicles within the Fleet Management Department's inventory are currently being phased out and only a few of them are in use. This is primarily due to lack of interest, which diminishes the availability of fueling locations. The department currently has 20 Toyota hybrid vehicles in their inventory. They feel these vehicles are the design of the future.

While visiting the department on September 22, 2005, participating Grand Jurors were each given safety goggles to wear during a walk-through of the Shop area. We were told upon entering the building that it is a requirement that everyone must wear eye protection. Once inside the Shop area one of the first observations we made was that none of the employees we saw were wearing any eye protection. The only people with proper eye protection were the visiting Grand Jurors and the Fleet Management Department managers. It is clearly posted at the entrances/exits of the Shop area that protective eyewear is required.

At that same visitation we were initially informed of a consolidation study being done by an outside consultant. The Board of Supervisors had ordered a study to consider the issue of consolidating the four County fleets into one fleet. We were told that the study began about two years ago and was 90-95 percent complete. We were advised that we could see the report when it was completed, sometime in December 2005.

On November 23, 2005 the Grand Jury contacted the Director of Fleet Management. He advised us that that Fleet Management had been relieved of responsibility associated with the study. A request was then sent to the Associate Administrative Officer (AAO) in the CAO's office inquiring into the status of the consolidation. We requested information be provided by December 15, 2005. On December 15 we received a response from the AAO stating that he would be happy to provide us with copies of all documents, but could not do so by the requested date. He further asked our indulgence until the middle of January 2006, when he expected the work to be completed.

On January 15, 2006, having received no further response from the AAO, the Grand Jury submitted another written request for the information and was again told they are still working on the report and it should be ready by the middle of February 2006. In mid-February the Grand Jury again requested the information from the AAO. When he requested an additional 30 day extension, he was asked to appear before the Grand Jury to explain the delay. This meeting was held on March 2, 2006.

The AAO explained that the Supervisor for the Second District ordered the study over two years ago. The study cost \$63,000 and was completed in July or August of 2005 by Fleet Counselor Services of Mesa, Arizona. This is contrary to what we were told by the Fleet Management Director on September 22, 2005.

The Associate Administrative Officer confirmed the study recommended consolidation of the County fleets, and the Director of Fleet Management concurred. However, the AAO and others did not agree with the report and prepared a cover letter for presentation to the Supervisor of the Second District. The original report would remain as written by the consultant, with the AAO's cover letter attached.

Nine months have now elapsed, and the Grand Jury has yet to be provided with the requested consolidation study.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 06-57 INCREASE ALTERNATIVE FUEL AND HYBRID VEHICLE INVENTORY AND USAGE WHEREVER PRACTICAL.
- 06-58 STRICTLY ENFORCE SAFETY RULES AND REGULATIONS AND IMPOSE DISCIPLINARY ACTION FOR ALL VIOLATORS.
- 06-59 MAKE PUBLIC THE COMMISSIONED CONSOLIDATION REPORT CONDUCTED BY FLEET COUNSELOR SERVICES OF MESA, ARIZONA.

REAL ESTATE SERVICES DEPARTMENT

BACKGROUND

The responsibility of the Real Estate Services Department (RES D) is to develop policies and procedures to provide and administer real estate services to all County departments, special districts, and other public agencies. This includes providing real estate purchases for general County use and disposal of surplus property no longer needed by the County. The Real Estate Services Department is required to maintain a complete inventory of all County-owned land and facilities, as well as all leased facilities.

FINDINGS

The Board of Supervisors declares when real property becomes surplus to the needs of the County, upon recommendations from various departments and the Real Estate Services Department. Once property is declared surplus, the disposal of the property is handled by Real Estate Services through a bid process and/or public auction. The public auction is advertised in various newspapers, and real estate brokers are also notified. According to the RES D policy and procedures manual, sealed bids are received and oral bids are also accepted. Oral bids are accepted after the written bids have been opened, examined and publicly declared by the auctioneer, per California Government Code 25531. To be a valid oral bid, the bid must be submitted on the basis of the terms and conditions specified in the Board of Supervisors' resolution and must be at least five percent (5%) higher than the highest conforming sealed bid. The property is then sold to the highest bidder(s) which, in all cases, is no lower than the appraised value. Funds received from the sale are deposited into the County General Fund, with the exception of Flood Control Districts.

Our investigation found that State Government Code Section 50569, which requires County property and surplus land be updated on a yearly basis, was not in compliance. The 2003-2004 Grand Jury had requested a Master Inventory Listing of County-owned property, including surplus land, as the current listing was over eight years old. This listing was never provided. Three additional requests were made for this listing by the 2005-2006 Grand Jury. In January 2006 an incomplete listing was provided, lacking current appraised values, physical locations, and recommendations for disposal of surplus properties.

Last year's Grand Jury recommended that a policy and procedures manual be established. This Grand Jury followed up on this and was told that the department was working on the manual. The Grand Jury was promised a copy of the manual when it was completed. After several requests, we were provided with what RESD referred to as their updated manual in January 2006. The copy that we received was difficult to use, did not have an index and it did not contain page numbers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 06-60 DELETE THE USE OF ORAL BIDS; ACCEPT ONLY SEALED BIDS ON SURPLUS PROPERTIES.

- 06-61 FINALIZE AND MAINTAIN THE MASTER INVENTORY DATABASE OF COUNTY-OWNED PROPERTY ON A QUARTERLY BASIS, INCLUDING APPRAISED VALUES AND PHYSICAL LOCATIONS.

- 06-62 COMPLETE THE REAL ESTATE SERVICES POLICIES AND PROCEDURES MANUAL TO INCLUDE AN INDEX AND PAGE NUMBERING.

REGISTRAR OF VOTERS

BACKGROUND

The County Registrar of Voters (ROV) is responsible for conducting voter registration and voter processes with the highest level of professional election standards, accountability, security and integrity.

Grand Jurors attended Logic and Accuracy Test on October 6, 2005 and observed the process of ballots being brought into the ROV office and tabulated on November 8, 2005.

FINDINGS

The Registrar of Voters uses student volunteers and considers the student workers very beneficial. The ROV has speakers available to go to the schools to recruit volunteers. The ROV stated that the student poll workers program needed to be pursued more vigorously. Prior to the November 2005 election, it was pointed out by the Grand Jury that a teacher at one local high school, who teaches two advanced placement government classes, had not been contacted, due to the previous teacher's retirement. The ROV then contacted the present teacher, which resulted in the training and assignment of 32 student volunteers for the election. Future plans of the ROV are to increase the number of students who participate, including having the manager of the Poll Workers Section contact schools. The manager will meet with government teachers to encourage them to participate in the program. The manager will also review the material that is sent to schools, revising it if necessary. The ROV sends a thank you card to all poll workers. The Grand Jury believes it would be beneficial to include with the card a survey of the poll worker's experience.

An estimated 1,965 poll workers are needed for a minor election, and 2,500 for a major election. These numbers are down significantly from the 4,000 poll workers required for a major election prior to the implementation of touch screen voting. The number of poll workers assigned to a polling place is a formula based on the number of registered voters per polling precinct. Some polling places were overstaffed, which discourages poll workers from volunteering again.

One of the problems observed on Election Day November 2005 was difficulty by poll workers in reaching ROV personnel when problems arose, even though the office had 24 phone lines dedicated to incoming Election Day inquiries. The ROV did have ten dedicated lines for Rovers (trouble shooters). The poll inspectors were not provided with the Rovers cell phone numbers.

Prior to the Primary Election this June, the ROV used County employees who had to take a vacation day to work the polls. A new County ordinance was recently adopted that allows County employees to serve as poll workers without using a vacation day and receive their regular pay, in addition to the stipend for poll workers. It is intended to provide a stable pool of poll workers.

All of the members of the Board of Supervisors believe there is justification for using County employees as poll workers. They would prefer volunteers rather than County employees, but expressed a need for a stable pool of poll workers. The Grand Jury has not seen a demonstrated need for this program. The Registrar said they had not considered an outreach program to recruit major employers of San Bernardino County for poll workers from their businesses.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 06-63 UPDATE THE DATABASE OF HIGH SCHOOL GOVERNMENT TEACHERS TWICE YEARLY; ONCE IN LATE AUGUST AND ONCE IN LATE JANUARY, TO ACCOUNT FOR CHANGES IN TEACHER ASSIGNMENTS.
- 06-64 SEND A PREPAID SURVEY CARD TO POLL WORKERS WHEN THE THANK YOU CARD IS SENT, SEEKING TO DETERMINE THE EXPERIENCE OF THE POLL WORKER AND SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT.
- 06-65 PROVIDE TELEPHONE NUMBERS OF THE ASSIGNED ROVERS TO EACH POLL INSPECTOR.
- 06-66 USE COUNTY EMPLOYEES ONLY AS SUBSTITUTE POLL WORKERS.