



Superior Court of California County of Colusa

BRENDAN MICHAEL FARRELL
PRESIDING JUDGE

LUKE STEIDLMEYER
ASSISTANT PRESIDING JUDGE

532 Oak Street
Colusa, CA 95932

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ERIKA F. VALENCIA
COURT EXECUTIVE OFFICER
CLERK OF THE COURT
JURY COMMISSIONER

MEMORANDUM

TO: Governmental Officers and Interested Parties

FROM: Colusa County Grand Jury

SUBJECT: Colusa County Grand Jury 2024-2025 Final Report

DATE: June 30, 2025

Enclosed please find a copy of the 2024-2025 Colusa County Grand Jury Final Report.

A copy of California of California Penal Code Section 933 is attached which provides for comments in response to the Report.



State of California

PENAL CODE

Section 933

933. (a) Each grand jury shall submit to the presiding judge of the superior court a final report of its findings and recommendations that pertain to county government matters during the fiscal or calendar year. Final reports on any appropriate subject may be submitted to the presiding judge of the superior court at any time during the term of service of a grand jury. A final report may be submitted for comment to responsible officers, agencies, or departments, including the county board of supervisors, when applicable, upon finding of the presiding judge that the report is in compliance with this title. For 45 days after the end of the term, the foreperson and his or her designees shall, upon reasonable notice, be available to clarify the recommendations of the report.

(b) One copy of each final report, together with the responses thereto, found to be in compliance with this title shall be placed on file with the clerk of the court and remain on file in the office of the clerk. The clerk shall immediately forward a true copy of the report and the responses to the State Archivist who shall retain that report and all responses in perpetuity.

(c) No later than 90 days after the grand jury submits a final report on the operations of any public agency subject to its reviewing authority, the governing body of the public agency shall comment to the presiding judge of the superior court on the findings and recommendations pertaining to matters under the control of the governing body, and every elected county officer or agency head for which the grand jury has responsibility pursuant to Section 914. I shall comment within 60 days to the presiding judge of the superior court, with an information copy sent to the board of supervisors, on the findings and recommendations pertaining to matters under the control of that county officer or agency head and any agency or agencies which that officer or agency head supervises or controls. In any city and county, the mayor shall also comment on the findings and recommendations. All of these comments and reports shall forthwith be submitted to the presiding judge of the superior court who impaneled the grand jury. A copy of all responses to grand jury reports shall be placed on file with the clerk of the public agency and the office of the county clerk, or the mayor when applicable, and shall remain on file in those offices. One copy shall be placed on file with the applicable grand jury final report by, and in the control of the currently impaneled grand jury, where it shall be maintained for a minimum of five years.

(d) As used in this section "agency" includes a department.
(Amended by Stats. 2002, Ch. 784, Sec. 538. Effective January 1, 2003.)

ENDORSED
SUPERIOR COURT
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25 2025
FILED
COLUSA COUNTY

CIVIL GRAND JURY | 2024-2025 COUNTY OF COLUSA



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FINAL REPORT

COLUSA COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT | 2024-2025

JURY MEMBERS | 2024-2025

Michael Phenicie, Foreperson

Nancy Newlin, Foreperson Pro Tempore &
County Committee Co-Chairperson
& Editorial Chairperson

Glen Duncan, City Chairperson

Juliana Engrahm, Co-Chairperson, Social Committee

Barbara Gomes, Chairperson, Criminal Justice Committee,
Co-Chairperson Social Committee

Sara Sandoval, Secretary

Steven Velazquez, County Committee Co-Chairperson

Rande Brookins

Vicki Burgett

David Carter

Donald Fry

Steven McCullough

Margie Pilgrim

Joana Roa

Catherine Sutton

Shannon Thompson

Tim Vaughn

Tom Vedo

Jill Wright

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COLUSA COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY

P.O. Box 715, Colusa, CA 95932

June 24, 2025

Honorable Brendan Michael Farrell, Presiding Judge
Superior Court of California, County of Colusa
532 Oak Street
Colusa, California 95932

Dear Judge Farrell,

As Foreperson of the 2024-2025 Colusa County Civil Grand Jury, I am privileged to provide you with the Grand Jury's Final Report.

On behalf of my fellow jurors, we appreciate the opportunity we had to serve Colusa County, and we approached our civic duty with integrity and determination to do our best as the watchdog for citizens of Colusa County.

As we moved forward through our tasks at hand, we learned a lot about the operations of our local government. We at times felt admiration at the dedication of public employees, and at times, frustration as we coordinated our schedules to that of individuals we spoke with. We are grateful for those who cooperated with interviews, giving their time and knowledge selflessly.

I have been honored to collaborate and work with each Grand Juror. We bonded quickly, and had many open discussions. I appreciate the different contributions each member brought to the table. Our diversity made us stronger.

I am extremely grateful to Nancy Newlin, Glenn Duncan, Barbara Gomes, Juliana Engrahm, Sara Sandoval, David Carter and Margie Pilgrim who went above and beyond to make sure we accomplished our goal. I am forever grateful to Senior Deputy County Counsel, Jennifer Sutton for keeping us on track as we encountered countless crossroads.

I extend my best wishes to the incoming 2025-2026 Grand Jury. I trust they will embrace the important role they face in ensuring our public entities are transparent and operating within the guidelines of the law.

Finally, I implore the court to better inform the public of the roles and responsibilities of the Grand Jury: what it is, and what limitations it has placed on it.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Michael Phenicie".

Michael Phenicie
Foreperson, 2024-2025 Colusa County Grand Jury

GRAND JURY’S OATH

Each member of the Grand Jury has taken the following oath:

“I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support the Constitution of the United States and of the State of California, and all laws made pursuant to and in conformity therewith, will diligently inquire into, and true presentment make, of all public offenses against the people of this State, committed or triable within this county of which the Grand Jury shall have or obtain legal evidence. Further, I will not disclose any evidence brought before the Grand Jury, nor anything which I or any other Grand Juror may say, nor the manner in which I or any other Grand Juror may have voted on any matter before the Grand Jury. I will keep the charge that will be given to me by the court.”

(California Penal Code §911)

INTRODUCTION TO THE CIVIL GRAND JURY

The Fifth Amendment to the United States Constitution and the California Constitution call for Grand Juries, formed as part of the judicial branch of government. The Colusa County Civil Grand Jury consists of nineteen citizens of the county that range in diversity of men and women of various socioeconomic, ethnic, age and educational backgrounds. Together, the jurors act as the independent, fact-finding body under the advisory supervision of the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court, the District Attorney, County Counsel, and the State Attorney General.

Duties

The primary civil function of the grand jury is to review the operations of City and county government as well as other tax supported agencies and special districts. Based on these reviews, the grand jury publishes its findings, usually at the end of the term, in a Grand Jury Final Report. Based on its findings, the grand jury may recommend constructive action to improve the quality and effectiveness of local government.

The grand jury also investigates complaints from private citizens, local government officials, or government employees.

The Grand Jury is also authorized, but not limited to:

- Inquire into any charges of willful misconduct in office by public officials or employees.
- Inquire into conditions of jails and detention centers.
- Inspect and audit books, records, and financial expenditures of all agencies and departments under their jurisdiction, including special districts and non-profit organizations, to ensure that public funds are properly accounted for and legally spent.

Members of the Grand Jury are sworn to secrecy and most of the jury's work is conducted in closed session. All testimony and deliberations are confidential. Breach of confidentiality is a misdemeanor punishable under the penal code.

Reporting

No later than the end of the fiscal year, the Grand Jury must submit to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court a final report of findings and recommendations related to the jury's investigations of local government. Those Grand Jury reports that contain recommendations of the improvement of local

government are submitted for response to the elected officials and the governing board of the agency that was investigated. Within ninety (90) days after the Grand Jury issues a report concerning a public agency, that agency's governing body must submit its response to the Presiding Judge on the findings and recommendations pertaining to matters under the control of the governing body. Any elective department head who has been asked to comment on a report must submit his or her comments within sixty (60) days to the Presiding Judge. Appointed department heads cannot be required to respond to Grand Jury recommendations, but the Grand Jury may request appointed officials to respond to recommendations. A copy of all the responses is placed on file with the Clerk of the Court and is provided to the Grand Jury.

REPORTS OF THE 2024-2025 CIVIL GRAND JURY

- 1. CITY OF COLUSA**
- 2. COLUSA COUNTY ANIMAL CONTROL**
- 3. INSPECTION OF THE COLUSA COUNTY JAIL**

COLUSA COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT 2024 2025
CITY OF COLUSA INVESTIGATION (2024/2025)

SUMMARY

Following the direction of the past year's Grand Jury Reports, the Colusa County Civil Grand Jury, 2024-2025, under its statutory authority, has chosen to investigate the City of Colusa (City) procurement methods and procedures. The focus of the Grand Jury's investigation was to try to figure out the procedure the City uses and the payment process for Goods and Services. And to follow up on the City's implementation of past Grand Jury recommendations.

While the City has made some efforts to address deficiencies in its purchasing procedures in response to the recommendations of the previous Grand Jury, it has not implemented the internal controls available to staff. The Grand Jury's review, which included interviews with City Council members, former staff, and administrators, as well as an examination of the City's website, council meeting attendance, meeting notes, and video recordings revealed that locating specific votes, directives, and discussions is extremely difficult. This lack of accessible documentation presents a significant challenge for any oversight and highlights a broader issue of insufficient transparency.

BACKGROUND

In accordance with its statutory responsibilities and in continuation of oversight efforts from previous Grand Jury investigations, the 2024–2025 Colusa County Civil Grand Jury initiated an investigation into the procurement practices of the City. The focus of this investigation was twofold:

1. To examine and evaluate the methods and procedures used by the City in the procurement of goods and services.
2. To assess the City's progress in implementing recommendations issued in prior Grand Jury reports, particularly those concerning financial controls and transparency.

The Grand Jury sought to gain a comprehensive understanding of the City's current procurement procedures and payment processes. Grand Jury investigation included:

- Conducting interviews with City Council members, former and current administrative staff.
- Reviewing publicly available records, including City Council meeting minutes and videos.
- Attempting to navigate and extract information from the City's official website.
- Attending City Council meetings to observe deliberations and decision-making processes.

Despite indications that the City has made some progress in addressing prior deficiencies, it became apparent that internal control mechanisms remain underutilized. Internal control mechanisms are the policies, procedures, and processes put in place by an organization to ensure the integrity of financial and accounting information, promote accountability, and prevent fraud. These mechanisms are a critical part of good corporate governance and risk management.

Moreover, **transparency remains a critical concern**. Public records of votes (not accurately depicted to reflect how each council member voted), directives, and discussions are difficult to locate or interpret, even for an oversight body such as the Civil Grand Jury. This lack of clarity and accessibility impedes the public’s ability to hold local government accountable and undermines confidence in the City's administrative practices.

METHODOLOGY

Information for this investigation was sourced from the following:

- 2021-2022, 2023-2024 Grand Jury Report.
- City Council, Letter of Response 2023-2024 to the Grand Jury Report from 2020 to present.
- City Council Meetings (Agendas and meeting notes).
- Interviews with current and former City Council members, staff and other elected City officials.

DISCUSSION

During the interviews conducted by the grand jury, several interviewees expressed concerns about the implementation of the City's current purchasing policy. These concerns included confusion among City staff regarding the policy's requirements, inconsistencies in how the policy is applied, a lack of transparency in purchase reporting, and inadequate oversight to ensure compliance with the City's adopted procedures. The information provided by these interviewees was consistent across all interviews in which such concerns were raised.

Additional findings point to vague financial reporting, lack of sufficient detail, and largely unusable for informed decision-making. There is consensus that the process suffers from a lack of transparency regarding accounts, fund allocations, and balances. The Grand Jury found it odd that City Council members were not aware of what the annual City budget is, yet they are to approve on an annual basis. Secondly, the City’s reserve is reported as being close to the annual budget, which City Council members were aware of, confirmation is needed if this is following City guidelines.

Furthermore, our discussions point to a lack of signatory control for check writing. More than one interviewee shared the case of a past City Council member (no longer seated) signing checks upon request when another city official declined authorization.

Finally, upon further research and discussions with various staff members and officials, it was relayed that the City of Colusa was enrolled within CUPCCAA (The California Uniform Public Construction Cost Accounting Act). This is a state law enacted under Public Contract Code (PCC) Sections 22000–22045. It provides a streamlined and standardized process for public entities in California (such as cities, counties, school districts, and special districts) to procure public construction projects in a more efficient and flexible manner. CUPCCAA allows participating agencies to perform certain public works projects with less formal bidding procedures, depending on the estimated cost of the project.

Once a public entity opts into CUPCCAA (by adoption of a resolution and notification to the State Controller), it can follow the specific procurement thresholds provided under the Act.

- 1 - Projects \$75,000 or less.
 - May be performed by the agency’s own workforce.
 - Force account.
 - Negotiated contract.
 - Purchase order.
 - NO BIDDING REQUIRED
- 2 - Projects between \$75,001 - \$220,000 Informal bidding process.
 - The agency must maintain a list of qualified contractors (bondable).
 - Notices are sent to contractors on the list or trade journals.
 - Bids are solicited informally (not publicly advertised).
 - Contracts awarded to the lowest responsive responsible bidder.
- 3 - Projects over \$220,000 Formal bidding process.
 - Publicly advertised bids.
 - Standard competitive bidding procedures must be followed.
 - Awarded to the lowest pre-qualified responsive responsible bidder.

Benefits for Public Entities.

- ✓ Faster project delivery (reduces delays on smaller projects by avoiding lengthy formal bid processes).
- ✓ Lower administrative costs (informal bidding and force account work reduce overhead).
- ✓ Increased flexibility (greater discretion on handling smaller projects).
- ✓ Encourages local participation (maintained contractor lists promote engagement with local businesses).

Upon numerous requests for the City’s submission, documentation could not be provided for CUPCCA representation. Through the Grand Jury’s research on the State Controllers web site, we confirmed that the City of Colusa was in fact a CUPCCAA participant since 1991. To date, we still have not been provided with a copy of the City’s Resolution passing this directive by the City Council.

From our interviews with current and former administration staff and current City Council Members, we found that no one was aware of the CUPCCAA guidelines and or procurement methods, including what CUPCCAA acronym meant.

Considering the issues identified in the 2021–2022 Grand Jury report concerning the purchasing policy and based on the investigation and interviews conducted by the current Grand Jury, it is concluded that the City of Colusa should undertake a thorough review of its current purchasing policy for City purchases in all departments. All necessary and appropriate revisions should be made to ensure that the expenditure on public funds for City purposes is conducted in a professional and transparent manner.

FINDINGS

The Grand Jury finds that.

F1 - The City has chosen to implement new purchasing procedures selectively; however, from information gathered within Grand Jury interviews, the current procedures are not in compliance with the applicable public procurement thresholds under CUPCCAA.

F2 – City of Colusa is registered as a CUPCCAA entity, but CUPCCAA procurement methods and thresholds are not being followed. Direction to City staff from management appears to be ineffectual.

F3 - The City’s accounting and procurement procedures are outdated and inefficient. Current financial reporting is vague, lacks sufficient detail, and is largely unusable for informed decision-making. There is consensus that the process suffers from a lack of transparency regarding accounts, fund allocations, and account balances.

F4 – The City’s check-writing and disbursement procedures lack a formalized approval process, and there is insufficient clarity regarding control measures and signatory authority roles, which raises concerns about accountability and oversight.

F5 – Lack of detailed minutes from City Council meetings and poor quality of video/voice recordings leads to further lack of transparency.

RECOMMENDATIONS

R1 – The Grand Jury recommends adopting and making public, “City Accounting and Procurement Procedures” (Accounting Manual) as an adopted resolution.

R2 – The Grand Jury recommends that the City of Colusa visit CUPCCAA guidelines and implement a training procedure for all staff and mandatory training for new hires and include into your existing Accounting Directive. Training is available through the State Controllers website. A CUPCCAA approved list of prequalified contractors (bondable) is to be created and posted on the City of Colusa website. This will need to be maintained annually per CUPCCAA guidelines.

R3 – The Grand Jury recommends that the City of Colusa update accounting software to a more user-friendly software and applicable to a City Account system/process. Generate reports and present them monthly to the City Council (fund balances and forecast budget).

R4 – The Grand Jury recommends a process to be created and implemented as follows.

- Creation and implementation of a “Check Request” form to accompany any purchase order request and processing of a check.
 - Cost accounting (coding) for project/purchase reference
 - Mandatory 2 part signature.
 - 1 – City Treasurer
 - 2 – Mayor and/or Pro Tem Mayor
- January of each fiscal year, new updated signatory cards are filed and recorded with the bank of use. This needs to be done immediately and the removal of any past Council members that are presently assigned signatory capabilities.

R5 – The Grand Jury recommends the City Council approves and directs an upgraded Audio/Visual system be purchased and implemented within 3 months for improved public information and participation.

REQUEST FOR RESPONSES

The following responses are required pursuant to Penal Code 933 and 933.05:

From the following individuals and governing bodies:

City of Colusa

- Findings F1 – F5
- Recommendations R1-R5

DISCLAIMER

Reports issued by the Grand Jury do not identify individuals interviewed. Penal Code 929 requires that reports of the Grand Jury do not contain the name of any person or facts leading to the identity of any person who provides information to the Grand Jury.

This report on the City of Colusa is issued by the full 2024-2025 Grand Jury. No Grand Jurors recused themselves from this investigation.

COLUSA COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT 2024 2025

COLUSA COUNTY ANIMAL CONTROL SERVICES

INTRODUCTION

One of the primary functions of the Grand Jury is to examine certain parts of government entities within the county. This investigation and reporting on local governments is sometimes referred to as the Grand Jury’s “watchdog” function.

BACKGROUND

Colusa County Animal Control provides services to all of Colusa County. The City of Colusa and the City of Williams have contracts with the county to provide services within the cities. In addition to providing services to the cities of Williams and Colusa, it also serves the unincorporated areas of the county—Arbuckle, College City, Delevan, Grimes, Maxwell, Stonyford and Princeton.

This report is the result of a Grand Jury inquiry to check the operations and needs of the Colusa County Animal Control.

METHODOLOGY

The Grand Jury used the following resources to conduct its investigation:

- Interview with Animal Control staff
- Tour of the Animal Control facility
- Animal Control Colusa County, CA official website
- Review of Animal Services data—Animal ID statistics, Citation Offense County Statistics, Case Statistics
- Shelter Improvement List
- Agreements with contractors, Dispatch Services
- Scope of work for electrical upgrades
- Best Friends Animal Society Grant Agreement
- UC Davis Shelter Services Agreement
- Budgets from 2023, 2024 and current
- 2012 Needs Assessment & Facility Program
- 2017-2018 Grand Jury Report--Colusa County Animal Control Services

DISCUSSION

Animal Control Services duties include rabies shots, spay and neuter, field calls, licensing and collection of fees. Currently, Animal Control only accepts cash or checks. There is a need for an online payment system, such as DocuPet. It is anticipated that the majority of animal owners would pay online.

Grand Jury members had the opportunity to tour the Animal Control Services facility. Dogs that had been picked up in the county were located outside with very little shade. The employees were doing their best with limited resources. The office space is too small for more staff; however, they need more staff. There is grant money available for repairs and improvements; however, it is difficult to find anyone to do the repairs and improvements. One volunteer is currently lining up qualified people to provide shade/shelter cover funded by FOCCAS. FOCCAS (Friends of Colusa County Animal Shelter) is a nonprofit whose purpose is to support the shelter by providing resources the county does not and raised money for the shelter. A van was recently purchased to transport animals to facilities such as UC Davis. Grant money was used to purchase this vehicle.

The Animal Control staff shared a number of needs that would improve the animal shelter. Equipment needs include a Tommy Gate Lift, a hydraulic lift to help transport larger animals. Updated electrical for the building is another identified need. Volunteers are needed to help put up kennels, foster animals, and transport animals for procedures such as neutering and spaying. Volunteers currently help maintain the shelter.

Shelter Pro is a software program used in the Animal Control Services office. Shelter Pro features include incident reports, citation records, and bite case records. It has been used since 2020. An additional reporting device is needed out in the field.

In 2012, a Needs Assessment & Facility Program was conducted. The Animal Control staff indicated that almost everything from the assessment is still relevant. According to the Needs Assessment, at least 6.53 employees were recommended to provide the services necessary for Animal Services. At the time of the assessment, Animal Services had one Chief Animal Control Officer, one Animal Control Officer, one part-time position, and two inmate workers. Currently, there is one Chief Animal Control Officer, two Animal Control Officers, and one inmate worker. Additional staffing would provide more coverage to accommodate the community and provide proper care for the animals.

In addition to the staffing challenges, the Animal Control staff has seen a dramatic increase in the level of expected care and live outcomes. A decade ago, 50% of the animals brought to the shelter were cared for. Currently, Animal Control is expected to care for over ninety percent of the animals. Due to this higher percentage, dogs are now held a lot longer; and the shelter is almost always at capacity. California Food and Agricultural Code Sections 31108.3 and 31752.1 requires all animals that leave a shelter be microchipped. Animal Control does its best to ensure all animals are spayed and neutered before they leave the shelter. All of this takes a lot of time and money.

Additional needs include lowering the cost of euthanasia and alternatives, the reorganization of staff, hiring a kennel attendant, a part-time office person, and purchasing Pet Finder Helper which tracks information. An additional veterinarian in the county would provide local care for the animals.

In 2023, there were 2000 incident reports. Approximately fifteen hundred animals were picked up, and 276 were returned to their owners. In 2024, there was an average of 27 dogs in the shelter at any given time. The number of dogs in the shelter varies from 18-35. According to NACA (National Animal Care and Control Association) recommends each dog be fed and cleaned at least 15 minutes per day. This does not include walking the dogs, sanitizing carriers, assisting with vaccinating and microchipping.

The shelter is overcrowded, and there is a need to design a new layout.

A representative from FOCCAS was interviewed and spoke in support of additional staff members and volunteers to support the shelter. Also, FOCCAS is in support of hiring additional staff personnel and felt that a full-time person would allow officers to be able to go out into the county.

The Animal Shelter received a \$150,000 donation from the Colusa Casino. A UC Davis grant was awarded, and it expires at the end of 2025. A Best Friends grant of \$45,000 was received to pay for electrical work. Tractor Supply of Williams has donated a large quantity of pet food, both dog and cat.

FINDINGS

F1–The Grand Jury finds the Colusa County Animal Control is providing the best services possible with limited resources.

F2–The Grand Jury finds the employees are dedicated and have a good attitude about everything.

F3–The Grand Jury finds that due to several grants being awarded, Animal Control purchased a van to transport animals. Grant money will also be used to pay for licensing software, repairs, and improvements to the shelter.

F4–The Grand Jury finds the Animal Control shelter is in need of several improvements such as replacing kennels, adding a shade structure, painting, repairs, etc.

RECOMMENDATIONS

R1–The Grand Jury recommends hiring additional staff and the creation of a foster/volunteer program.

R2–The Grand Jury recommends purchasing software to improve animal control services such as DocuPet, ShelterPro, and Pet Finder Helper.

R3–The Grand Jury recommends hiring a consultant to redesign a new layout or expansion for the kennels.

RESPONSE

The following responses are required pursuant to Penal Code 933 and 933.05 from the following individuals and governing bodies:

Colusa County Sheriff:

Findings F1, F2, F3, F4
Recommendations R1, R2, R3

Colusa County Board of Supervisors:

Findings F1, F2, F3, F4
Recommendations R1, R2, R3

INVITED RESPONSES The following responses are invited from the following individual:
Lieutenant—Correctional Services, Colusa County Sheriff's Departments

Findings F1, F2, F3, F4
Recommendations R1, R2, R3

DISCLAIMER

Reports issued by the Grand Jury do not identify individuals interviewed.
Penal Code Section 929 requires that reports of the Grand Jury not contain the name of any person or facts leading to the identity of any person who provides information to the Grand Jury. This report on the Colusa County Jail is issued by the full 2024-2025 Grand Jury.

COLUSA COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT 2024 2025

INSPECTION OF THE COLUSA COUNTY JAIL

SUMMARY

The Colusa County Grand Jury (Grand Jury) participated in an inspection of the Colusa County Jail (Jail) with the Jail's operations team on April 29, 2025. The Jail is operating to current Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC) standards, which sets the guidelines for recreation, food, and healthcare for inmates.

The Jail facilities are outdated and present a potential safety risk to both inmates and staff. However, these issues will be addressed with the construction of the new Jail facility due to be completed May 2026 and populated June 2026.

The Grand Jury has prepared this report summarizing the findings of our Jail inspection and recommendations.

BACKGROUND

The Grand Jury is authorized to visit and inquire into the conditions of any public Jail within the county, as outlined in Section 919 (a) and 919 (b) of the California Penal Code. Inspecting the safety and security in Jails are the Grand Jury's priorities along with ensuring inmates are treated in a safe and humane manner. The BSCC is a state regulatory agency that establishes and oversees standards for the construction, operation, and administration of the county detention facilities. The Jail houses a maximum of 92 inmates, and the inmate population at the time of our inspection was 68. The existing layout and infrastructure of the Jail is not up to modern detention facility standards which could create safety risks to both inmates and Jail staff, although the facility does comply to all BSCC standards.

METHODOLOGY

Information for this investigation was sources from the following:

- Grand Jury Committee tour of the Jail facility
- Interviews with the County's Jail administration and staff
- Review of Jail inspections conducted by the California Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC)
- Fire, health, and safety inspection reports
- Past Colusa County Grand Jury reports
- Documents concerning Jail services available to inmates provided by the Jail, which included:
 - List of items available for purchase by inmates
 - List of items provided by the jail to inmates at no cost
 - Pamphlet from Trinity Food Service
- Colusa County website (www.countyofcolusa.org)
- American Correctional Association (<https://www.aca.org/>)
- Title XV operating standards

DISCUSSION

Pre-Inspection Interview

On April 22, 2025, Representatives of the Grand Jury and Jail administration held an introductory meeting. The meeting served to acquaint the Grand Jury with the overall operations of the Jail. At the time of the pre-inspection interview, there were 62 inmates in the facility. This figure remained unchanged during the follow-up in-person visit. During the pre-inspection interview, the issues of staffing, Jail facilities, general Jail operations, inmate services, and food were discussed. The current Jail was built in 1962.

Grand Jury Jail Inspection Tour

On April 29, 2025, the Grand Jury conducted an inspection tour of the Jail. The Grand Jury's focus was inmate processing in the Jail facility. The in-person tour consisted of inspection of the Jail; intake processing area, housing units, kitchen and food storage area, recreational area, educational programming rooms, medical office, laundry, and the Jail staff break room and commissary storeroom.

Meal Program and Food Facilities - Trinity Services Group, Inc. (Trinity) has been contracted to provide the food service for the Jail. Jail staff stated that they were overall pleased with the service that Trinity is providing. The Jail staff noted that the existing food service contract was renewed in 2024. Inmates are served three meals per day (including one hot meal which is typically the dinner meal). All meals are delivered to and consumed in the inmate's cell. At the time of our visit there were 3 Trinity staff members and one inmate trustee preparing meals for the day. Special dietary needs are considered based upon inmate needs. Meal planning and preparation are developed in collaboration with the Medical, Jail and Trinity Services staff. Inmates can supplement the Jail provided meals with orders from the Commissary. These items can be ordered by the inmate or their family. Orders placed by Sunday evening are delivered directly to the inmate by Tuesday. In addition to food items, inmates can purchase an array of other items such as personal care items and print media. There is a \$150.00 per week limit on commissary orders per inmate.

Recreation Program - The recreation section of the Jail is very small and offers very little space to provide adequate recreation space for inmates. The recreation space is a small square courtyard surfaced entirely with asphalt. The Jail is required to provide three (3) hours of recreation time per week, but it does provide a general recreation time each day ranging from 30 minutes to an hour. Each inmate is offered a specific time; however, the inmate may request an alternate time which Jail staff make efforts to accommodate. If the following time slot is empty, they allow for extra time for the current inmate in the recreation area. The construction of the new Jail facility will have additional recreation yards that are larger and more functional than those at the current facility.

Education Program - The Jail's educational facilities include a classroom and a well-stocked library. On our visit we were able to see that volunteers had begun to reorganize the library, making it easier for inmates to locate specific materials. The educational program is staffed by a teacher from the Colusa County Office of Education who provides educational services to inmates on a voluntary basis. The

educational programs include High School Diploma and GED programs, literacy programs, as well as other “life skills” training programs that can benefit the inmate when they transition out of the Jail. The Jail staff noted that outside organizations (i.e. religious, substance abuse, etc.) also provide educational programs in the Jail. The Jail’s classroom or library does not currently have computer access to support the educational program; however, the new Jail may include infrastructure to allow for tablet access for inmates to support the Jail’s educational programs. These tablets will also make it convenient for inmates to fill out forms and submit directly to different agencies. Tablets are currently available in the classroom more for accessing learning materials. Also noted was that the Sheriff’s Office tries to make their graduations a family event. Celebrating inmates who have successfully completed a High School Diploma or GED program. On the date of our visit, we observed many certificates of completion from a vast range of inmates.

Medical Services – Colusa County has contracted with Wellpath for onsite medical services. There is currently one (1) full-time Registered Nurse (RN) who provides primary medical services for the inmates and a part time Licensed Vocational Nurse (LVN). Nursing staff have an on-call doctor available for consultation and medical directives as there is no doctor on-site. If additional treatment is needed beyond what the Jail can provide, inmates are transported to the local hospital located in the County. If more extensive treatment is required for serious medical conditions, inmates are transported to nearby emergency medical centers. Psychological services are provided by the Colusa County Behavioral Health Services on an as-needed basis. The current medical facilities in the Jail are very small and create a significant challenge for the medical staff to provide services to the inmates. The new Jail will include medical facilities that are better suited to providing these medical services.

New Jail Project Update - The construction of the new Colusa County Jail is currently under way, with hopes of completion by May of 2026, and populated in early June of 2026. The new Jail is located behind the current Jail. The current Jail will not be attached to the new Jail facility, as that would entail more extensive upgrades along with higher costs. There will be a breeze way between the two with approximately a 1–2-inch gap between the existing wall and the new facility. The current facility has a capacity of 92 inmates. The new facility will increase to a maximum of 96 meeting current Jail housing standards and regulations. It is anticipated that once the new Jail is constructed, the current Jail would not be used for housing inmates, but utilized for administrative offices, along with Jail-related operational uses. The new Jail construction was not in the scope of this visit, but may be for future Grand Juries.

FINDINGS

F1. The Grand Jury finds that Colusa County Jail administration and staff are operating the facility in an efficient and professional manner with the facility, tools, and staff at their disposal.

F2. The Grand Jury finds that while the Jail is currently functional, the outdated facilities and aged infrastructure does not meet modern correctional facility standards due to its design and layout, which poses a potential safety risk to inmates and staff. The current jail was built in 1962.

F3. The Grand Jury finds that the Jail is following its annual inspections and maintains an appropriate safety plan for all Jail staff and inmates.

F4. The Grand Jury finds that the current educational program could benefit from additional educational offerings and technology for the inmates, such as individual tablets for each inmate as well as expanded education opportunities, including more self help type classes to improve their lives upon leaving jail.

RECOMMENDATIONS

R1. The Grand Jury recommends that the County of Colusa continue to move forward as quickly as possible the existing plan to construct a new, modern Jail that incorporates up-to-date facilities, technology, inmate housing, and safety features.

R2. The Grand Jury recommends that the Jail invest more resources into its educational programming, including expanding the use of computer technology, to provide a more substantive level of educational options for inmates. Such as self-improvement classes and job skills.

R3. The Grand Jury recommends that the Jail Staff conduct regular reviews of the contracted meal service program to identify potential improvements, including soliciting feedback from inmates.

REQUEST FOR RESPONSES

The following responses are required pursuant to Penal Code §933 and §933.05: From the following individuals and governing bodies:

Colusa County Sheriff:

Findings F1, F2, F3, F4

Recommendations R1, R2, R3

Colusa County Board of Supervisors:

Finding F1, F2, F3, F4

Recommendations R1, R2, R3

INVITED RESPONSES The following responses are invited from the following individual:
Lieutenant - Correctional Services, Colusa County Sheriff's Department:

Findings F1, F2, F3, F4

Recommendations R1, R2, R3

DISCLAIMER

Reports issued by the Grand Jury do not identify individuals interviewed.

Penal Code §929 requires that reports of the Grand Jury not contain the name of any person or facts leading to the identity of any person who provides information to the Grand Jury. This report on the Colusa County Jail is issued by the full 2024-2025 Grand Jury.