



2024-2025
San Joaquin County
Civil Grand Jury Report



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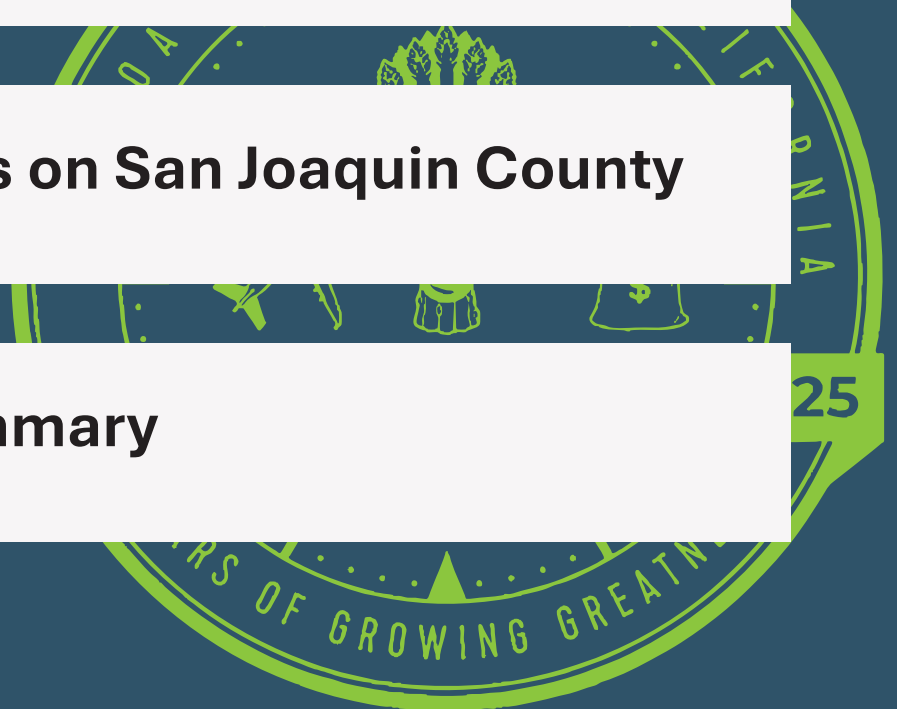
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The San Joaquin County 175th Anniversary Commemorative Seal

How Far We've Come

The Civil Grand Jury is an independent body overseen by the Superior Court of San Joaquin County. While we are not part of the County government, our work focuses on County departments, cities, and other public agencies that serve the people of San Joaquin County. This year marks the County's 175th anniversary, and we wanted to acknowledge this milestone. The Board of Supervisors authorized the County Administrator to grant permission for the 2024–2025 Civil Grand Jury to use the commemorative seal in this year's report.

The seal, designed by student A. Vasquez and selected through a countywide art contest, features a clock set to 2:09 to reflect San Joaquin County's area code and symbolizes both local identity and the passage of time. We included the seal to celebrate the County's past, present, and future — and to recognize the creativity and talent of a new generation of residents.

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YEARS OF GROWING GREATNESS

2024 - 2025 San Joaquin County Civil Grand Jury



GRAND JURY OFFICERS

Mary Kennedy-Bracken, Foreperson
Richard Dunne, Foreperson, Pro Tem
Karen Montgomery, Foreperson, Pro Tem
Charles Keen, IT/Treasurer
Linda Ferrell, Treasurer
Sheila Holloway, Sargeant at Arms
Donna Sinnock, Secretary

GRAND JURY COMMITTEES

Complaints
Continuity
Investigations
Law & Justice
Independent Special Districts
Editorial
Social

PRESIDING JUDGES OF THE SUPERIOR COURT

Honorable Gus C. Barrera, II, Presiding Judge
Honorable Lance G. Jacot, Assistant Presiding Judge

GRAND JURY LEGAL STAFF & ADVISORS

Advising Judge to the Grand Jury:
Honorable George J. Abdallah, Jr.

Irving Jimenez, Judicial Secretary
Kimberly D. Johnson, Assistant County Counsel
Richard Price, Assistant District Attorney



Superior Court of California, County of San Joaquin

180 E. Weber Avenue, Ste 1306J

Stockton, CA 95202

Telephone: (209) 992-5695

June 5, 2025

The Superior Court of California, County of San Joaquin thanks and commends the 2024-2025 Grand Jurors for their conscientious efforts on behalf of all San Joaquin County citizens. The Grand Jurors undertook and completed their duties with great industry, intelligence and care.

The Grand Jury is composed of qualified individuals who applied for membership, those drawn from the community and individuals nominated by community leaders. The chosen citizens serve as an independent body under the court's authority. The 2024-2025 San Joaquin County Grand Jury now takes its place in a long history of citizen involvement in civic life which was born in the English Common Law of 1166, adopted during the American Colonial period and codified in California in the 1880s. The 2024-2025 Grand Jurors' thoughtful and constructive recommendations will help ensure the highest quality civic life to which all citizens are entitled.

As the Grand Jury Advisor and Supervisor, it has been my privilege to review the work of the 2024-2025 Grand Jury. The Grand Jurors also received well considered advice from their highly experienced Advisors, County Counsel Ms. Kimberly Johnson, the Assistant District Attorney Mr. Richard Price and the invaluable assistance of the Superior Court administrators. Among their accomplishments, the Grand Jurors undertook consideration of the work of governmental institutions responsible for the daily life of municipalities and their citizens. The Grand Jurors also made careful efforts to follow through on the work of their predecessors thereby assuring the community that the San Joaquin County Grand Jury as an institution sustains its role in the County's civic life. The Grand Jury Final Report educates the public through well written accounts of the work, findings and recommendations of these devoted citizens. The Grand Jurors' recommendations are deserving of careful consideration by government officials and the citizenry.

The efforts, commitment, collective wisdom and experience of these dedicated individuals will continue to better the civic life of all San Joaquin County residents. To each member of the 2024-2025 San Joaquin County Grand Jury, for your many accomplishments, the Superior Court extends its congratulations and gratitude.

Hon. George J. Abdallah Jr.

Supervising Judge of the San Joaquin County Grand Juries

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Civil Grand Jury of San Joaquin County

180 E. Weber Avenue, Suite 1114
Stockton, CA 95202
Telephone: 209-468-3855

June 9, 2025

Honorable Gus C. Barrera II
Presiding Judge of the
Superior Court of California
County of San Joaquin
180 E. Weber Avenue, Suite 1306J
Stockton, CA 95202

Honorable George J. Abdallah
Judge of the Superior Court and
Judge Advisor to the Grand Juries
County of San Joaquin
180 E. Weber Avenue, Suite 1306J
Stockton, CA 95202

Dear Judge Barrera and Judge Abdallah:

On behalf of the 2024–2025 San Joaquin County Civil Grand Jury, I am honored and privileged to formally submit this year’s Final Report to you and the citizens of San Joaquin County.

The Grand Jury was sworn in to investigate and uphold the following laws and penal codes, thereby fulfilling the Mission of the Grand Jury and its responsibilities by evaluating the government's operations.

The 2024–2025 Civil Grand Jury worked collaboratively throughout the year. Each member brought a unique blend of skills, experiences, and insight, which greatly enriched our deliberations and findings.

As this was my first year serving as Foreperson, I quickly learned the challenges of working with a diverse group of personalities. It wasn’t always easy, nor was there always perfect alignment, but through constructive debate (some of which left me scratching my head), we found our way forward.

A special note of appreciation goes to our Editorial Chairperson, whose exceptional organizational skills helped bring structure and clarity to our work. Her leadership played a key role in the successful completion of this report.

Judge Abdallah initially swore in 19 jurors, and we had two alternates. Before the official start of our term, both alternates were seated as full jurors. As is common, some jurors departed over the course of the year for various personal or professional reasons.

Despite these changes, we concluded the term with 15 committed and dedicated jurors who remained focused on fulfilling the responsibilities and purpose of the Grand Jury.

The mission of the Civil Grand Jury is to review the operations of local government, identify areas for improvement, and make recommendations to enhance efficiency, accountability, and transparency. This includes a thorough examination of all aspects of county government, including special districts, to ensure that public funds are managed responsibly and that operations are conducted in a lawful and effective manner.

Site Visits and Agency Engagements

Participation in the Civil Grand Jury includes mandatory tours and site visits, which are essential for gaining firsthand insight into the operations of local government agencies. The 2024–2025 Grand Jury completed all required site visits, including:

- The San Joaquin County Sheriff's Office and Jail
- The Juvenile Detention Facility
- The California Health Care Facility
- San Joaquin General Hospital
- The Mary Graham Children's Shelter
- The Port of Stockton
- Micke Grove Park and Zoo

In addition, several Grand Jury members participated in ride-alongs with local law enforcement agencies to better understand their day-to-day operations. All police departments within the county provided presentations detailing the current state of their respective agencies.

Other county departments also delivered presentations in response to the Grand Jury's inquiries, offering valuable information that supported the Jury's review and recommendations.

- District Attorneys' Office
- County Public Works
- City of Stockton Public Works

- County Administrator
- Stockton Animal Control
- San Joaquin County Chief Administrative Officer
- Registrar of Voters
- San Joaquin County Office of Education
- Homeless
- San Joaquin County Cold Case Unit

The Grand Jury received 10 complaints, which were thoroughly investigated. However, ten complaints is a very low number to build an investigation from. However, there were several inquiries as a result and directly led to opening one investigation. The Civil Grand Jury conducted 13 witness interviews, 23 Presentations and 10 tours.

On behalf of this year's Civil Grand Jury, I would like to thank our advisors, Judge Abdallah, Assistant District Attorney Rick Price, and Assistant County Counsel Kimberly Johnson for all their input and advice. We want to acknowledge Ms. Kimberly Johnson, Assistant County Counsel, for her continued guidance and support throughout the Grand Jury's term. We extend our sincere appreciation to Mr. Irving Jimenez, Judicial Secretary and Civil Grand Jury Staff Secretary, for his dedicated service and hard work in support of the Civil Grand Jury. Now in his second full year in this role, Mr. Jimenez has demonstrated a strong commitment to learning and independently mastering Grand Jury procedures. His positive attitude and ability to work well with others have made him a valued and respected member of the team. He will be an asset for years to come.

Acknowledgments

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to all members of the Grand Jury for your dedication, hard work, and commitment in producing this year's Final Report. Your efforts have not gone unnoticed, and I hope your experience has been both meaningful and impactful—perhaps even inspiring you to consider serving again in the future.

Serving on the Civil Grand Jury offers a unique opportunity to see the inner workings of our local government and institutions—experiences that few others have. It opens your eyes to areas where change is needed and motivates you to be part of that change, helping to strengthen and uplift our community.

I sincerely wish each of you the very best in all that lies ahead.

Lastly, I would like to express my deep gratitude to Judge Abdallah for entrusting me with the opportunity to serve as Foreperson of the 2024–2025 San Joaquin County Civil Grand Jury. It

has been an honor and a privilege. You will not know the outcome unless you accept the challenge.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mary Kennedy-Bracken', with a large, stylized initial 'M'.

Mary Kennedy-Bracken
Foreperson of the 2024-2025
San Joaquin County Civil Grand Jury

2024-2025 San Joaquin County Civil Grand Jury



Group Picture of 2024-2025 Civil Grand Jury
Front Row: Sheila-Ward Shaw, Karen Montgomery, Chrystena Rockett, Linda Ferrell,
Mary Kennedy-Bracken, Donna Sinnock, Jerry Ruiz
Back Row: Antonio Garcia, Sheila Holloway, Richard Dunne, Charles Keen, Jon Pevna,
Patrick Curry, David Matsuyama, Paul Brown

About the Civil Grand Jury

What is a Civil Grand Jury?

A Civil Grand Jury differs from a trial jury because it does not hear cases in a courtroom. Instead, Civil Grand Jurors investigate the functions of various government offices, departments, and agencies within San Joaquin County and its cities. California state law requires all 58 counties to impanel a Civil Grand Jury to serve during each fiscal year (Penal Code Section 905 and California Constitution, Article I, Section 23).

California Penal Code Sections 925 through 933.6 outline the scope and responsibilities of the Civil Grand Jury in each county:

- Investigate and report on the operations, accounts, and records of local public agencies
- Inquire into the condition and management of the public prisons in the County
- Investigate allegations of willful or corrupt misconduct by public officials
- Submit a final report with findings and recommendations to the Superior Court Presiding Judge at the end of its term

Who is the Civil Grand Jury?

The Civil Grand Jury consists of 19 citizens who are selected for a one-year term. Any citizen in San Joaquin County can apply to become a Civil Grand Juror. One of the Civil Grand Jury's key strengths is the range of experiences and viewpoints each juror brings. As an independent body, the Civil Jury operates separately from other branches of government, allowing it to approach its responsibilities with objectivity, integrity, and purpose. Our greatest strength is unity—achieved through a shared focus on goals and a strong commitment to service—which is central to the Civil Grand Jury's effectiveness.

By state law, you may apply if you:

- Are you a United States citizen
- Are 18 years of age or older

- Have been a resident of San Joaquin County for at least one year
- Demonstrate sound judgment, integrity, and good character
- Have sufficient knowledge of the English language to communicate orally and in writing

The Role of the Civil Grand Jury

Civil Grand Jurors meet with county and city officials, visit detention facilities, and conduct independent reviews of issues of interest or concern. They aim to ensure that county government operates lawfully and efficiently, and that public funds are appropriately managed.

The Civil Grand Jury determines which officers, departments, and agencies it will investigate during its term. Once the final report is issued, any local governmental entity named in the report must respond to the recommendations in writing within a specified timeframe.

Citizen Complaints

Any citizen may submit a complaint to the Civil Grand Jury. The Civil Grand Jury addresses complaints regarding county departments, cities within the county, all school districts, and special-purpose or taxing districts. It may also consider allegations of misconduct against public officials and policies, as well as complaints against county and city employees. Citizens should submit a complaint only after all reasonable efforts to resolve the issue have been unsuccessful.

The identity of complainants remains confidential, encouraging them to come forward without fear of retaliation or intimidation. The Civil Jury provides complainants with a written acknowledgment of receipt of their complaints. With numerous possible investigations, the Civil Grand Jury must decide which ones to undertake during their term. The Civil Grand Jury complaint form can be found at:

<https://www.sjcourts.org/wp-content/uploads/GrandJuryComplaintForm2.pdf>

Submit completed forms to the San Joaquin County Superior Court, Attention: Irving Jimenez, Judicial Secretary, at 180 E. Weber Avenue, Suite 1114, Stockton, CA 95202. Forms can also be obtained by visiting or writing to this address.

2024-25 Civil Grand Jury

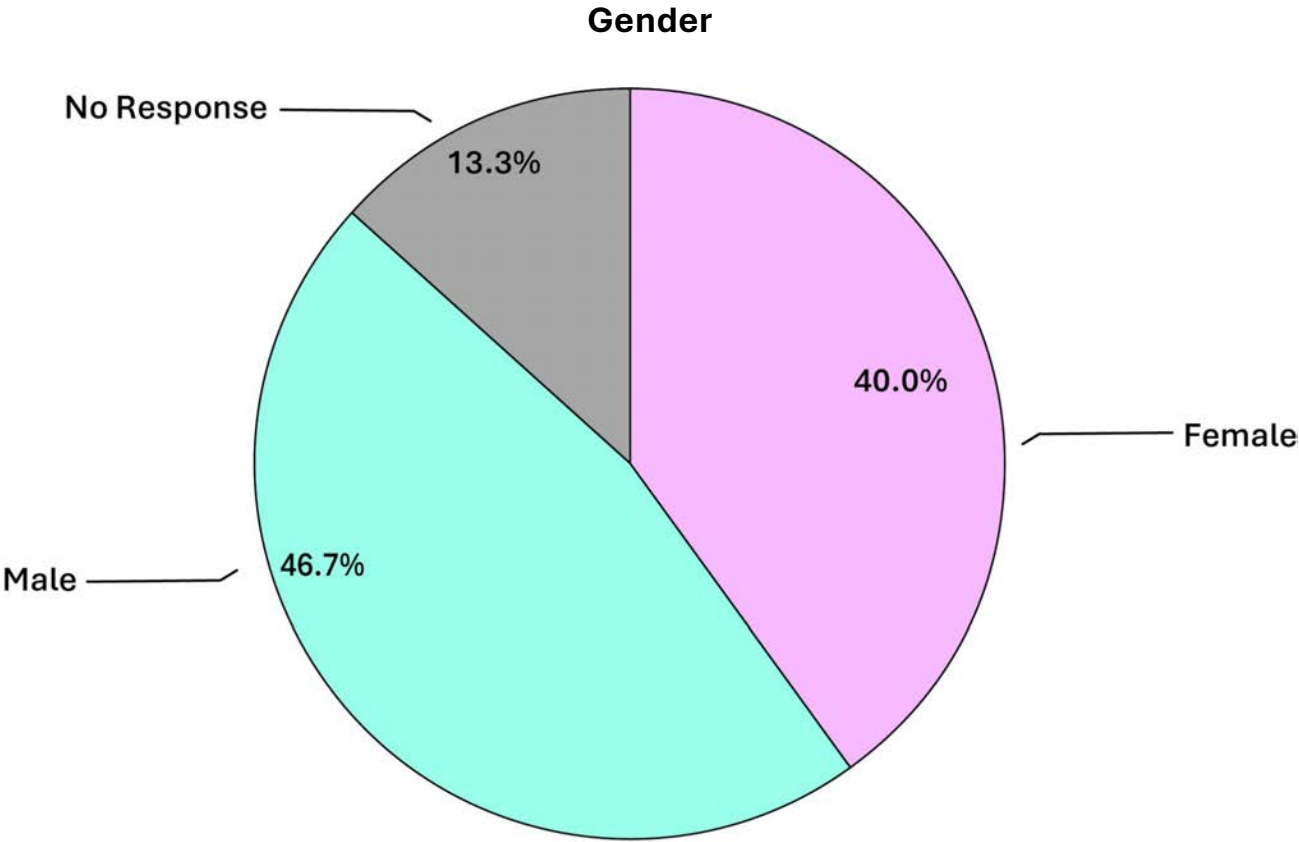
The 2024-25 San Joaquin County Civil Grand Jury represents a diverse cross-section of academic and career backgrounds and life experiences. Each Civil Grand Juror dedicated hundreds of hours to fulfilling their statutory responsibilities. The following individuals served on the 2024-25 Civil Grand Jury:

Mary Kennedy-Bracken, Foreperson
Richard Dunne, Pro Tem
Karen E. Montgomery, Pro Tem
Paul Brown
Patrick Curry
Linda Ferrell
Antonio Garcia
Sheila Holloway
Charles Keen, Jr.
David Matsuyama
Jon Pevna
Chrystena Rockett
Jerry F. Ruiz
Donna Sinnock
Sheila Ward-Shaw

For more information about the San Joaquin County Civil Grand Jury, visit:

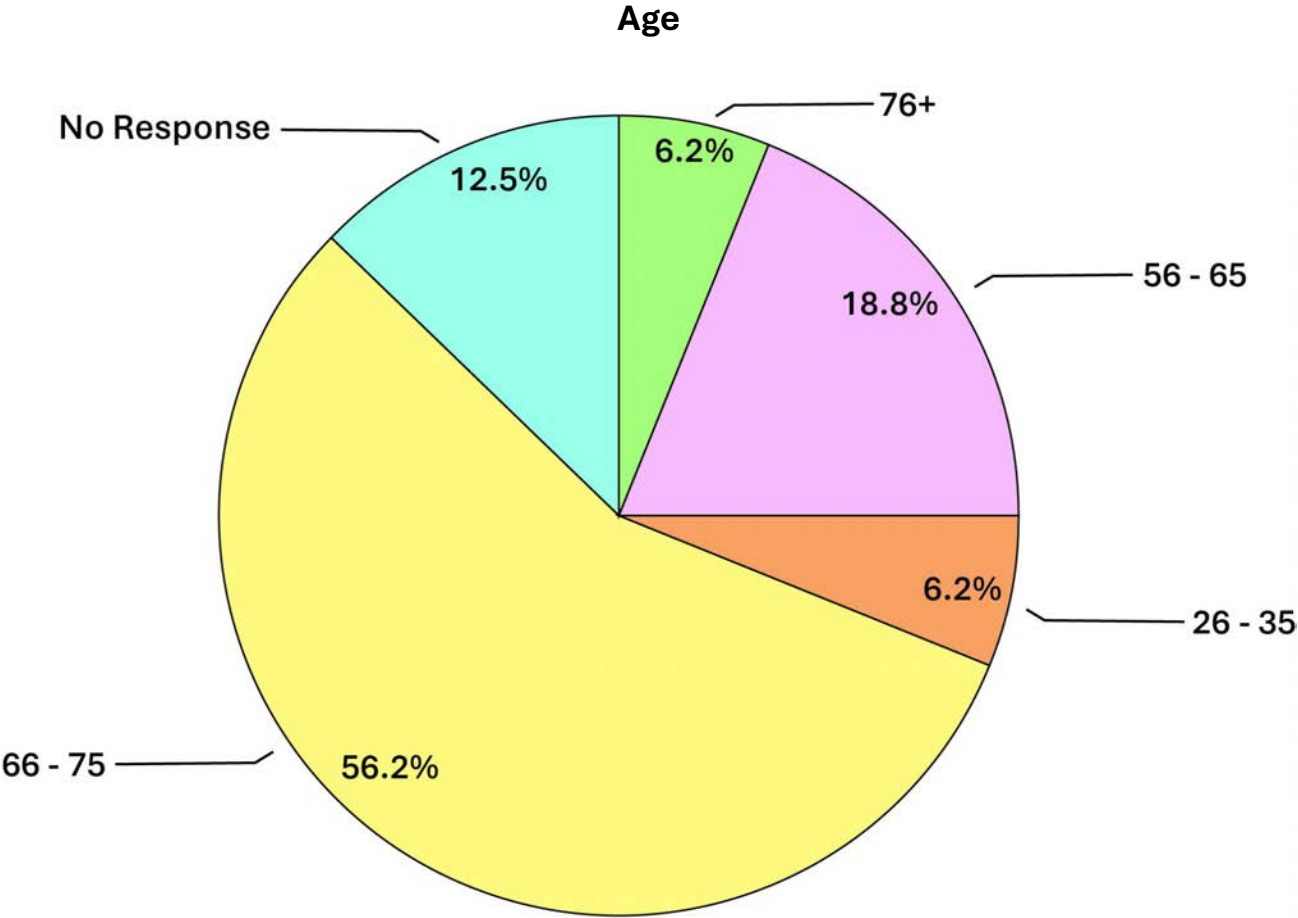
<http://sjcourts.org/general-info/civil-grand-jury>

Demographics of 2024-025 Civil Grand Jury



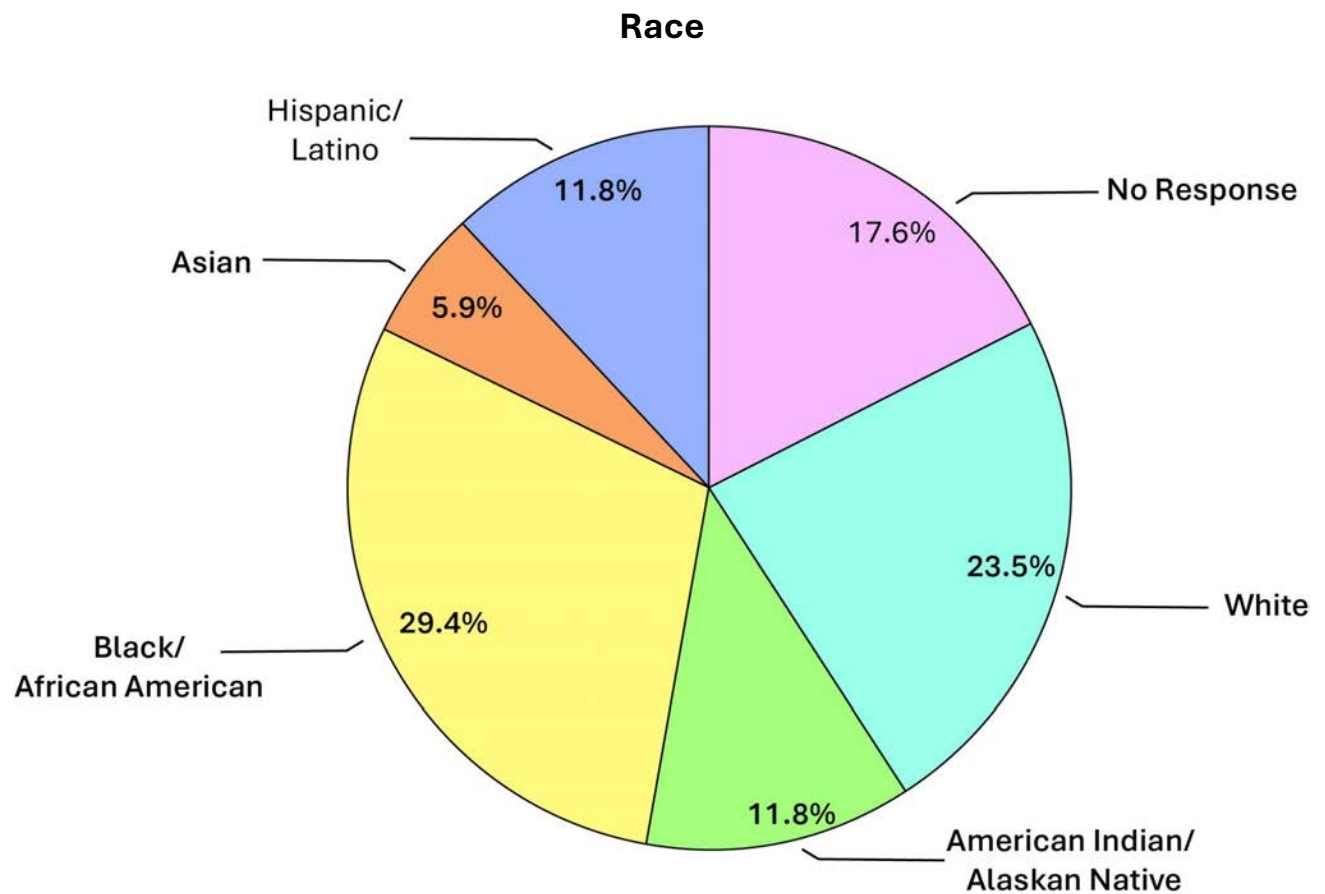
| | |
|-------------|-------|
| Male | 46.7% |
| Female | 40.0% |
| No Response | 13.3% |

Demographics of 2024-025 Civil Grand Jury



| | |
|-------------|-------|
| 66 - 75 | 56.2% |
| 56 - 65 | 18.8% |
| No Response | 12.5% |
| 26 - 35 | 6.2% |
| 76+ | 6.2% |

Demographics of 2024-025 Civil Grand Jury



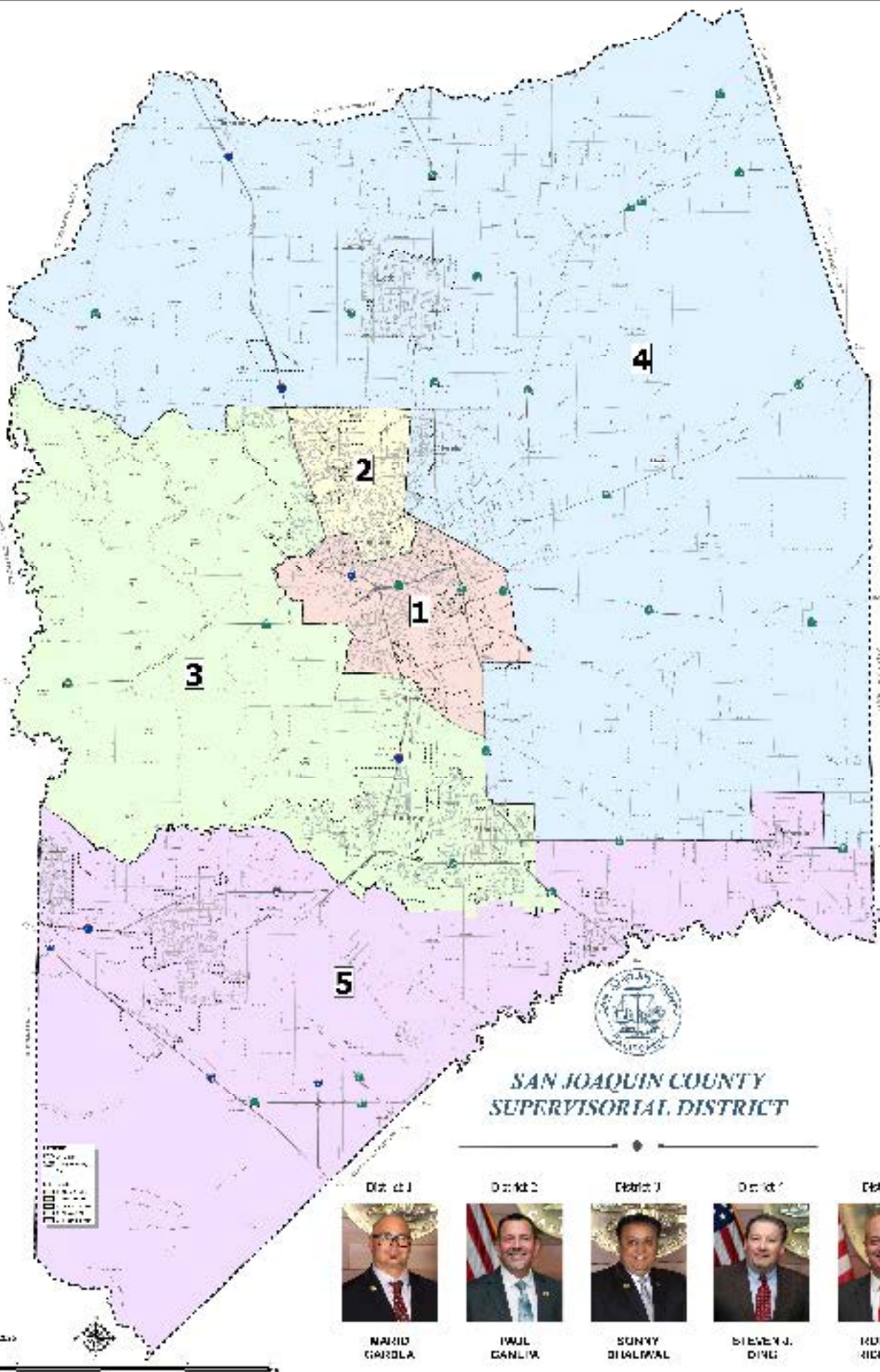
| | |
|-----------------------------------|-------|
| Black/African American | 29.4% |
| White | 23.5% |
| No Response | 17.6% |
| American Indian/ AlaskanNative | 11.8% |
| Hispanic/Latino | 11.8% |
| Asian | 5.9% |

San Joaquin County

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Population: | 800,965 |
| Area: | 1,440 sq mi approximately |
| Climate: | Mediterranean (hot, dry summers; mild, wet winters; low annual rainfall; occasional tule fog; long growing season) |
| Type of Government: | Board of Supervisors/County Administrator |
| Governing Board: | Board of Supervisors |

The county has eight cities: Escalon, Lathrop, Lodi, Manteca, Mountain House, Ripon, Stockton, and Tracy. Stockton, the largest city, has the largest inland deepwater port on the West Coast, serving as a gateway for international trade and linking the Central Valley to global markets through the San Francisco Bay. It is the second busiest inland port in the West.

The county is also served by major transportation corridors, including Interstate(I)-5, Highway 99, the Altamont Pass (I-205 and I-580), and a network of freight and passenger railways, making it a central corridor for commerce and travel between Northern and Southern California and the Bay Area.



**SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY
SUPERVISORIAL DISTRICT**

District 1



DAVID
GARBALA

District 2



PAUL
GANLEY

District 3



SONNY
DALMWAL

District 4



STEVEN J.
DING

District 5



ROBERT
HICKMAN

San Joaquin County Board of Supervisors

Phone: (209)468-2350 E-Mail: allboardmembers@sjgov.org

The Board meets regularly on Tuesdays, unless noticed otherwise.

Mario Gardea

SUPERVISOR - DISTRICT 1

Jan 2025 - Jan 2029

mgardea@sjgov.org

Paul Canepa

SUPERVISOR - DISTRICT 2

Jan 2023 - Jan 2027

pcanepa@sjgov.org

Sonny Dhaliwal

SUPERVISOR - DISTRICT 3

Jan 2025 - Jan 2029

sdhaliwal@sjgov.org

Steven J. Ding

SUPERVISOR - DISTRICT 4

Jan 2023 - Jan 2027

sding@sjgov.org

Robert Rickman

SUPERVISOR - DISTRICT 5

Jan 2025 - Jan 2029

rrickman@sjgov.org

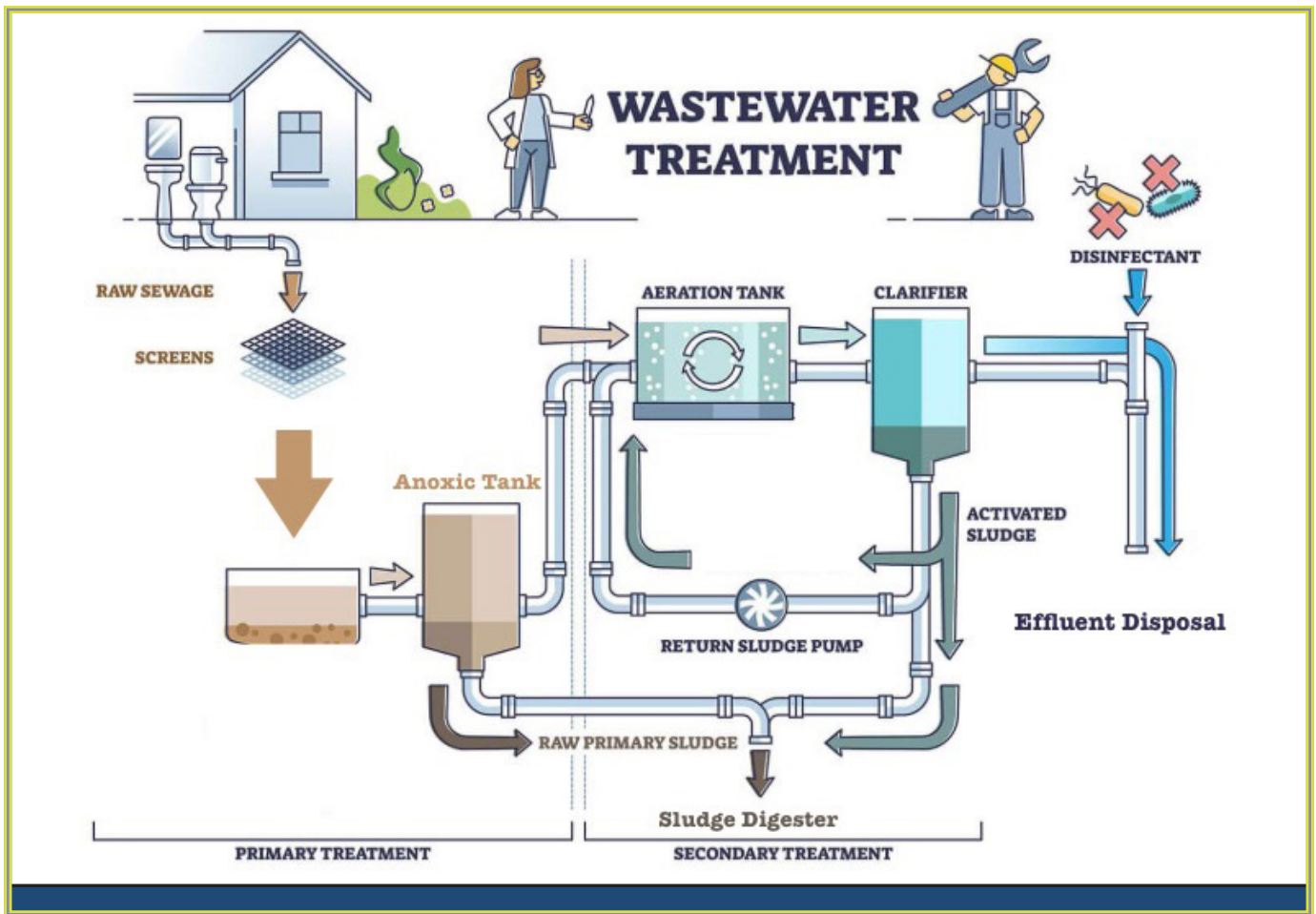
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INVESTIGATION

25

**#0124 Old System, New Costs:
Confronting Wastewater
Inefficiency in Linne Estates**





This diagram represents a typical wastewater treatment plant and may not be specific to CSA 44, Zones E and G.

2024- 2025 San Joaquin County Civil Grand Jury



Old System, New Costs: Confronting Wastewater Inefficiency in Linne Estates Case # 0124



Wastewater treatment plant for CSA 44, Zone G (Linne Estates) Taken Oct 2, 2024

Summary

The 2023-2024 San Joaquin County Civil Grand Jury (SJCCGJ) received a complaint from a homeowner in the Linne Estates County Service Area (CSA) 44, Zone G. The complaint arrived late in the 2023-2024 SJCCGJ term. The previous Civil Grand Jury forwarded the complaint to the current Civil Grand Jury. It is important to note that each Civil Grand Jury must conduct its own independent investigation. The information included in this report comes from the current Civil Grand Jury.

Linne Estates is a community in unincorporated San Joaquin County (SJC). It is situated outside the City of Tracy and is not serviced by the City's Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP). Therefore, an independent Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) was constructed by the developer to service CSA 44 Zone G.

The complaint alleged that the San Joaquin County Department of Public Works (DPW) mismanaged the operation of the independent Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) due to continued rate hikes. The 2024-2025 Civil Grand Jury did not find any evidence of mismanagement; rather, it determined that the rate hikes resulted from operational and design inefficiencies. Over the past 20 years, homeowners' sewer rates for maintaining and operating the WWTP have consistently increased. Despite these rising sewer rates, there remains a funding deficit from previous repairs, which homeowners attribute to the County approving a poorly designed WWTP.

In 2020, the homeowners received a letter from the county indicating that the CSA 44 Zone G fund had a deficit of \$411,000. The homeowners agreed to a significant rate increase to eliminate the deficit over five years. The homeowners agreed to the rate increase because the county stated it would reduce the deficit, but it continues to rise. They were in regular contact with the DPW but remained frustrated because the deficit continued to grow due to high maintenance and operational costs.

The homeowners are concerned about an impending sewer rate increase set to begin in fiscal year 2025-2026.

Glossary

SJC – *San Joaquin County is a county located in the U.S. state of California.*

BOS – *San Joaquin County Board of Supervisors the primary governing body of the county, acting as the county's legislature, executive, and quasi-judicial authority. It is a five-member elected body that makes decisions on various county matters. The Board establishes County policies, passes local ordinances, approves the budget, sets local tax rates, and supports community programs.*

CSA - *County Service Area- A County Service Area (CSA) can be established under California state law by county homeowners, the Department of Public Works (DPW), or the Board of Supervisors (BOS). The establishment of a CSA allows the County to provide homeowners in unincorporated areas with a wide range of public services, such as water, street lighting, and sewer. The County is responsible for billing for the services rendered. The revenues generated are deposited into a fund to support the maintenance and operations of the CSA.*

DPW - *Department of Public Works -The primary mission of the San Joaquin County Public Works Department is to enhance the community's quality of life by protecting its investment in the County's roadway, fleet, water, wastewater, flood control, utilities, drainage, and solid waste disposal systems.*

WWTP – *Wastewater Treatment Plant- A facility that treats wastewater, including sewage, to remove contaminants and pollutants before it is discharged back into the environment or reused.*

SJCCGJ – *San Joaquin County Civil Grand Jury - A group of 19 appointed citizens tasked with investigating and reporting on the operations of county government, including school and special districts. They examine whether government functions efficiently, lawfully, and whether public money is spent appropriately.*

SDS – *Special District Settlement - The San Joaquin County Board of Supervisors has a significant role in approving settlements, waiving loan repayments, and authorizing funding from the General Fund to cover special district needs.*

SCADA - *Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition- A SCADA system is an industrial control system used to monitor and control infrastructure and facility processes. SCADA consists of several components that work together to collect, process, and act on real-*

time data. This system allows workers to remotely monitor systems and processes to ensure the efficient operation of the facility. If the system detects a problem, corrective action could be taken remotely, reducing travel to the facility.

Intertie Connection – A connection between two systems. (In this case, two sewage systems)

Background

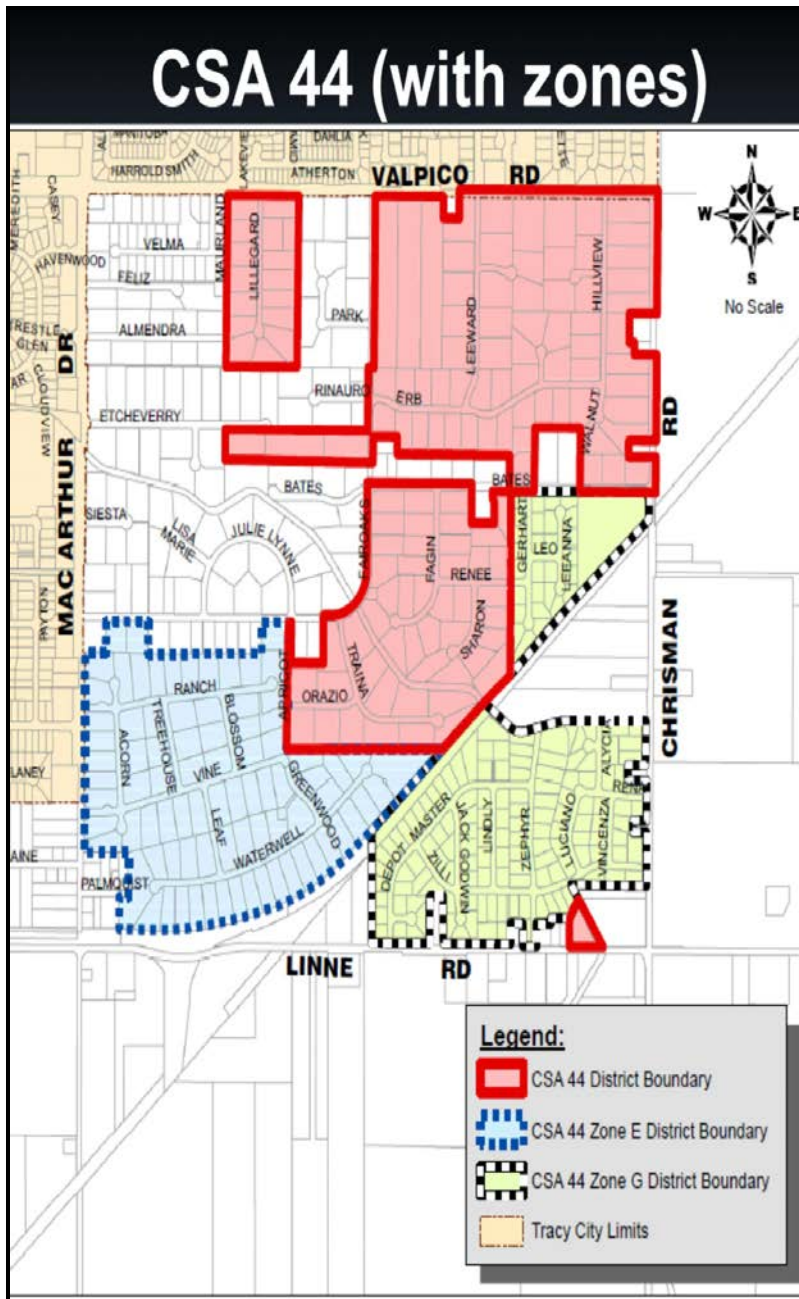
In 1989, San Joaquin County (SJC) established CSA 44 to provide drinking water to the southeastern unincorporated area of Tracy. This area is bordered by Linne Road to the south, South Chrisman Road to the east, and MacArthur Drive to the west. (See map below.)

The CSA 44 Zone E and Zone G districts were established in 2004 to provide additional public services:

- Zone E: Castello Estates – Water, sewage, storm drainage
- Zone G: Linne Estates -- Water, sewage, storm drainage, street lighting

These two small WWTPs were designed and constructed by 7H Technical Services Group, under contract with the developers, utilizing a proprietary WWTP. The developers were required to operate the two separate WWTPs until a sufficient number of homes were occupied to demonstrate that the normal operation of the plants was satisfactory.

Following acceptance by the County in July 2005, the County retained 7H Technical Services Group to operate and maintain the plants while providing training to County staff.



After the County assumed daily operation of the WWTPs in July 2008, it encountered operational deficiencies that led to permit compliance issues. In 2009, the County contracted a consultant through a competitive selection process to evaluate the WWTP and develop a corrective action plan, which was finalized in January 2010. In February 2010, the Board of Supervisors determined that emergency conditions existed and authorized \$1.65 million in short-term bridge loans from the County General Fund to

facilitate immediate corrective actions. Later that year, the County proposed rate increases to finance the repayment of the loans. However, homeowners successfully protested the proposed rate increases, and service charges remained unchanged. Consequently, the districts lacked the financial capacity to repay the loans.

The primary reason given by homeowners for protesting the proposed rate increases was the loan repayment. Homeowners contended that, since the loans stemmed from design flaws acknowledged by the County, homeowners should not bear the responsibility of repayment. They argued that the proposed increases in sewer rates, meant to cover the loans, would place a significant financial burden on homeowners. Homeowners within CSA 44 are currently paying some of the highest sewer rates for CSAs in SJC (Table A).

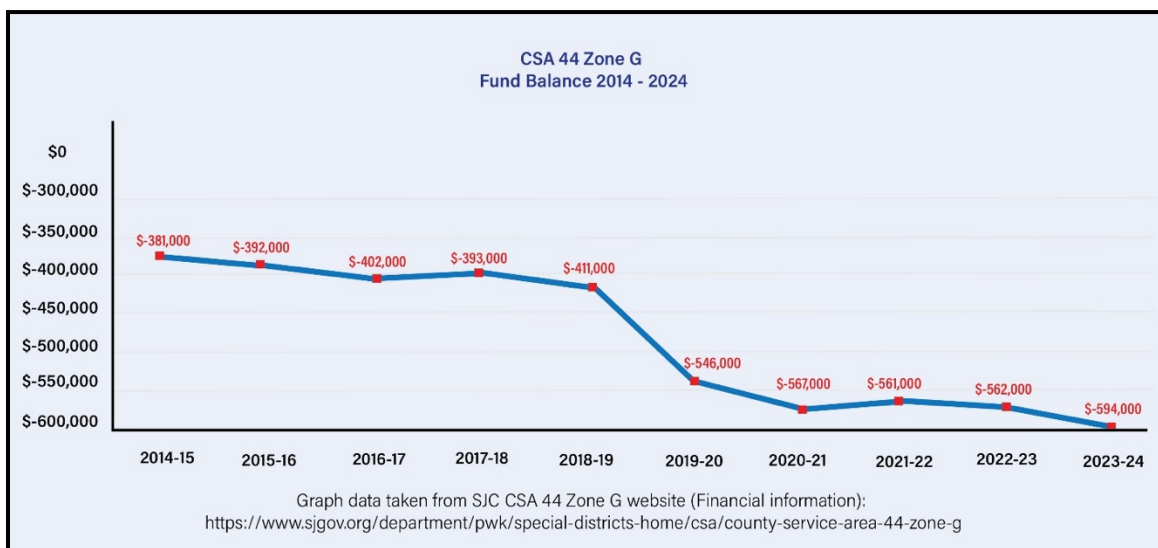
Table A

| Sewer Rate Comparison - 2025 | | |
|--|--------------------|---|
| Location | Annual Cost | Service Type |
| Linne Estates CSA 44 (Zone G) | \$2,675.00 | Standalone WWTP |
| Castello CSA 44 (Zone E) | \$3,314.00 | Standalone WWTP |
| Lincoln Village (Unincorporated Stockton) | \$885.00 | Intertie connection within Stockton WWTP |
| Tierra del Sol (Unincorporated Stockton) | \$400.00 | Intertie connection within Stockton WWTP |
| Fair Oaks (Unincorporated Redwood City) | \$1,055.00 | Intertie connection within Redwood City WWTP |
| Empire (Unincorporated Modesto) | \$510.00 | Intertie connection with Modesto WWTP |
| City of Tracy | \$588.00 | Residential Rate |
| City of Stockton | \$660.00 | Residential Rate |

In March 2011, the Board authorized a loan of \$664,000 from the Special District Settlement (SDS) Fund. The loan financed \$120,000 in additional improvements in Zone G and repaid \$544,000 of the outstanding General Fund loan. This Board action stipulated that the districts would repay the SDS Fund loan with interest at the prevailing rate for

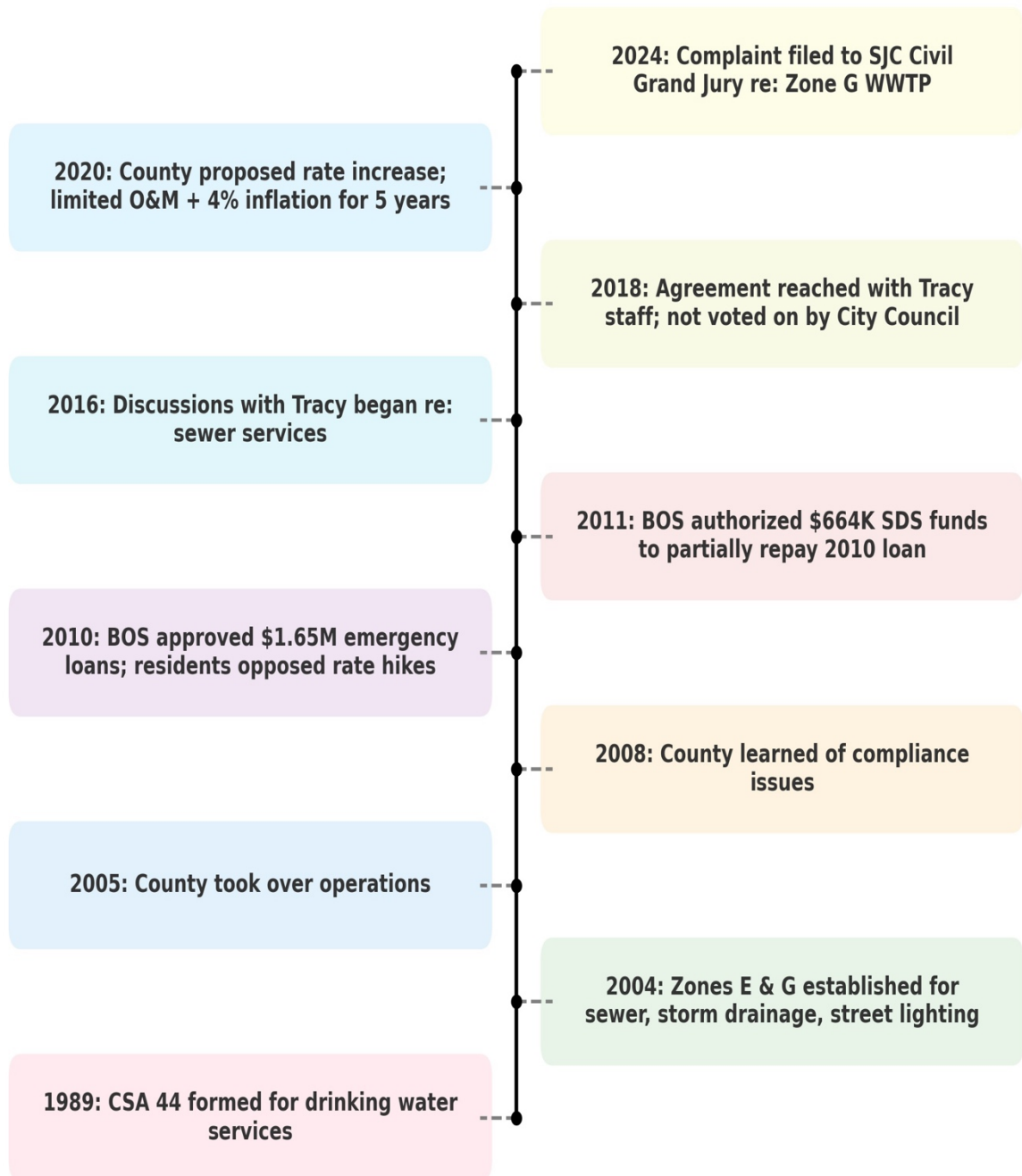
County Treasury funds, and that no further interest would accrue on the General Fund loan balances.

Subsequently, the WWTPs have operated without any significant complications; however, the financial condition of the zone has continued to deteriorate since the last service charge adjustment in 2007. Revenues have not kept pace with the gradually increasing costs. Consequently, both zones currently maintain negative fund balances. As of June 30, 2019, the fund balance for Zone E was a deficit of \$505,760, while the fund balance for Zone G was a deficit of \$411,196 (see graph below).



Over the past few years, department staff have attempted to reach an agreement with the City of Tracy to process this sewer waste, which could result in significant cost savings for homeowners. The City's agreement for such an arrangement has not yet been obtained.

CSA 44, Zone E and Zone G



Methodology

The San Joaquin County Civil Grand Jury conducted a comprehensive investigation into the matter by researching public documents and interviewing homeowners, employees from DPW, staff from the City of Tracy, and elected officials from SJC. Additionally, Civil Grand Jury members toured the WWTPs.

Materials Reviewed

- Proposition 218
- County Service Area 44 Zones E & G Community Meeting State of District's Finances date February 3, 2020 https://www.sjgov.org/docs/default-source/public-works-documents/special-districts/csa-44-zone-e-and-g---community-meeting-february3.pdf?sfvrsn=9a44953a_7
- County Service Area 44 Zones E & G Community Meeting State of District Finances dated March 5, 2020. https://www.sjgov.org/docs/default-source/public-works-documents/special-districts/csa-44-zone-e-and-g---community-meeting-march5.pdf?sfvrsn=84ae85fb_12
- San Joaquin County CSA 44 Zones E & G Sewer Service Timeline https://www.sjgov.org/docs/default-source/public-works-documents/special-districts/csa-44-zone-e-and-g---sewer-service-timeline.pdf?sfvrsn=5b456950_3
- Engineer's Report on Service Charge Adjustments for Fiscal Year 2020-21 through 2024-25 dated April 10, 2020 https://www.sjgov.org/docs/default-source/public-works-documents/special-districts/engineer-reports/csa-44-zone-e-and-g---engineer-report.pdf?sfvrsn=416d7723_5
- County Service Area 44 Zone E Notice of Proposed Service Charge Increase and Public Hearing dated May 5, 2020 https://www.sjgov.org/docs/default-source/public-works-documents/special-districts/notice-of-public-hearing/2021/notice-of-public-hearing---csa-44-zone-e.pdf?sfvrsn=ddf22e89_3
- CSA 44 Notice of Public Hearing CSA 44 Zone G Letter dated April 5, 2022 https://www.sjgov.org/docs/default-source/public-works-documents/special-districts/notice-of-public-hearing/2022/noticeofpublichearing-csa_44_zoneg.pdf?sfvrsn=ddb02a6e_7
- County Service Area 44 Community Meeting Proposed Water Rate Increases PowerPoint dated November 8, 2021 https://www.sjgov.org/docs/default-source/public-works-documents/special-districts/csa-44-public-meeting.pdf?Status=Master&sfvrsn=2e5cf2c3_3
- San Joaquin County CSA E and G Letter to homeowners dated June 11, 2011 [https://www.sjgov.org/docs/default-source/public-works-documents/special-districts/csa-44-e-g-sewer-\(letter-to-owners\).pdf](https://www.sjgov.org/docs/default-source/public-works-documents/special-districts/csa-44-e-g-sewer-(letter-to-owners).pdf)

- San Joaquin County Special Districts Report May 10, 2024
<https://sjgov.org/docs/default-source/public-works-documents/special-districts/engineer-reports/2024/2024-2025-engineer's-report.pdf>
- San Joaquin County CSA 44 Zone E - Castello Estates website.
<https://www.sjgov.org/departments/pwk/special-districts-home/csa/county-service-area-44-zone-e>
- San Joaquin County CSA 44 Zone G Linne Estates website.
<https://www.sjgov.org/departments/pwk/special-districts-home/csa/county-service-area-44-zone-g>
- California Tax Data-What is a County Service Area
<http://www.californiataxdata.com/pdf/countyservicearea.pdf>
- What's so Special about Special Districts? https://www.ca-ilg.org/sites/main/files/file-attachments/resources__2010WSSASD4edition.pdf

Discussion

The Civil Grand Jury received a complaint from a homeowner of Linne Estates (CSA 44 Zone G). Both Linne (Zone G) and Castello Estates (Zone E) have independent Wastewater Treatment Plants (WWTPs). These WWTPs, built underground, require two maintenance workers to be on-site every weekday. Daily tasks include cleaning screens and pump impellers. (See bar screen below.)



Taken February 21, 2025, bar screen held together with straps and ties

This report focuses on Zone G; however, the Findings and Recommendations also apply to Zone E and Zone G. The WWTPs for Zone E and G are located within a half mile of each other. Research has indicated that if a new WWTP is required, consolidating the equipment into a single facility may be more cost-effective than replacing the two existing WWTPs with new ones.

Active WWTP equipment, such as pumps, must be replaced more often because they operate 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Non-active equipment, like tanks and piping infrastructure, has a life expectancy of 20 years under optimal conditions. While some active equipment has been replaced, the WWTPs are approaching the end of their life expectancy.

From 2016 to 2023, the County attempted to negotiate with the City of Tracy to connect (intertie) the area (CSA 44) to the city's WWTP. An informal agreement was reached in 2023, but final approval was never formalized. Connecting to the City of Tracy's WWTP could lead to a significant reduction in the County's operational expenses. These reduced expenses could decrease the likelihood of rate increases for homeowners.

Agreements between a city (in San Joaquin County) and an unincorporated area of San Joaquin County have previously been negotiated and implemented. For example, one neighborhood in unincorporated Stockton is connected to the City of Stockton WWTP. The County has an agreement with the City of Stockton to process the wastewater from these neighborhoods. Homeowners in these neighborhoods pay WWTP rates through their property tax bills, and the County pays Stockton for this service.

In a CSA, when a new development requires infrastructure in unincorporated county areas, the developer is responsible for installing the necessary infrastructure. Once the development is complete, the County assumes responsibility for maintaining it by establishing a new CSA. In response to these issues, the County adopted a new policy in

2018 stating it will not create any new County Service Areas (CSAs) unless approved by the Director of Public Works.

Under the Right to Vote Tax Act of 1996 (Proposition 218), increases in sewer rates require consent through a protest process. Homeowners must be notified of the public hearing where proposed rate increases will be considered. If the majority of affected homeowners do not protest the proposed rate increase, higher rate adjustments may be adopted. In February 2020, at the Linne Estates homeowners' request, a meeting was held with the County Department of Public Works (DPW) to express concerns about rising sewer rates. This sewer rate increase was intended to cover operational and maintenance costs and eliminate the ongoing deficit. In response to homeowner opposition, the DPW limited the rate increase to 4% annually for the next five years, covering only actual costs and inflation, which would not be sufficient to eliminate the deficit.

BOS and DPW have held both public and private meetings with the homeowners, primarily when it was necessary to raise rates. They have also responded to multiple emails, maintaining open communication with the homeowners. Additionally, DPW has a website for all CSAs in the county: <https://www.sjgov.org/departments/pwk/special-districts-home/csa>.

Maintenance and operation costs of Zone E and G WWTFs have consistently risen, partly due to plant worker salaries, consultants, aging infrastructure, equipment upgrades, and management overhead. For safety reasons, two employees must work together since some tasks are conducted underground. (See underground access pictures below.) Workers are based in Stockton, and the daily travel to and from the facility is included in the labor cost to maintain the WWTP (see Table B below).

Table B

| Cost of Travel to and from Stockton | | | | | |
|--|--------------------------------|---------------------|----------------|--------------|---------------|
| Time each way | Stockton-Tracy Round Trip (HR) | Trip hours per year | Days traveling | One Employee | Two Employees |
| 45 minutes | 1.5 | 390 | 48.75 | \$46,800.00 | \$93,600.00 |
| 1 Hour | 2.0 | 520 | 65.00 | \$62,400.00 | \$124,800.00 |
| 1 Hour and 15 minutes | 2.5 | 650 | 81.25 | \$78,000.00 | \$156,000.00 |
| Charged at \$120/hr. per County Employee (includes salary, overhead, benefits) | | | | | |



Taken February 21, 2025, underground tank



Taken February 21, 2025, underground tank access

The facilities and systems require frequent inspection to ensure it is operational and functioning properly. Staff are required to manually clean screens daily to remove larger solids, such as flushable wipes, rags, and golf balls—objects that reduce flow within the system. Workers must clean filters and bag smaller solids for drying and disposal. (See bagging station photo below.) The staff is also responsible for loading the dried waste into a dumpster for disposal at the landfill. (See bags of drying bio-solids below.)



Taken February 21, 2025, bagging stations for bio-solids draining



Taken on February 21, 2025, bags of biosolids drying

A tour of the WWTP by members of the SJCCGJ revealed that much of the equipment is rusted, corroded, and requires frequent repair or replacement. Photos document temporary and improvised measures used to keep the systems operational. During the visit, Civil Grand Jury members observed the ongoing maintenance required to support equipment such as the bar screen, underground access points, and tank systems, as previously described and pictured.

When the homeowners agreed to the rate increase in 2020, the county planned to install a SCADA (Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition) system that would significantly reduce the labor hours needed. Although \$45,000 was authorized, it is unclear why a less expensive monitoring system was purchased. The installed system can monitor and alert the operators but cannot control anything remotely; maintenance and operation costs did not decrease. Our research determined a true SCADA system would partially automate the operations, resulting in decreased maintenance and operational costs.

Findings

F1: If the City of Tracy agrees to an intertie connection, the County could reduce long-term costs for CSA 44 Zones E and G.

F2: A single WWTP would function more efficiently than two. Maintenance and operational costs could decrease.

F3: Both WWTPs are nearing the end of their service lives and require replacement.

F4: The SCADA system that was installed was not a true SCADA system and did not reduce maintenance labor costs.

F5: Maintenance costs have exceeded projections.

F6: Employees must first drive to the DPW facility in Stockton before starting work and then return to Stockton. Facilities near the WWTP work site could benefit the southern County sites by reducing labor costs.

F7: The County has been transparent with homeowners.

F8: In 2018, the County adopted a policy that prohibits the formation of CSAs without the approval of the Director of Public Works.

Recommendations

R1: By October 1, 2025, the Board of Supervisors should begin negotiations with the City of Tracy to explore the feasibility of an intertie connection to the City of Tracy WWTP.

R2: By October 1, 2025, if the intertie is not feasible, the Board of Supervisors should consider consolidating the two smaller WWTPs into a single, more efficient facility.

R3: By October 1, 2025, the Board of Supervisors should create a plan to replace or upgrade the facilities.

R4: By October 1, 2025, the Board of Supervisors should create a plan to install a true SCADA system to reduce maintenance labor costs.

R5: By October 1, 2025, the Board of Supervisors should create a plan with current and projected discharge requirements to reduce operating costs.

R6: By October 1, 2025, the Board of Supervisors should assess the feasibility of establishing a satellite office to serve the south county.

Disclaimer

Civil Grand Jury reports are based on documentary evidence and the testimony of sworn or admonished witnesses, not on conjecture or opinion. However, the Civil Grand Jury is precluded by law from disclosing such evidence except upon the specific approval of the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court or another judge appointed by the Presiding Judge (Penal Code Section 911. 924.1 (a) and 929). Similarly, the Civil Grand Jury is precluded by law from disclosing the identity of witnesses except upon an order of the court for narrowly defined purposes (Penal Code Sections 924.2 and 929).

Request for Responses

California Penal Code Sections 933 and 933.05 require that specific responses to all findings and recommendations contained in this report be submitted to the Presiding Judge of the San Joaquin County Superior Court within 90 days of receipt of the report.

Note: If the responder is an elected official, the response must be sent within 60 days of receipt.

The San Joaquin County Board of Supervisors shall respond to all findings and recommendations.

Mail or hand deliver a hard copy of the response to:

Honorable Gus C. Barrera II, Presiding Judge
San Joaquin County Superior Court
180 E Weber Ave, Suite 1306J
Stockton, California 95202

Also, please email a copy of the response to Mr. Irving Jimenez, Staff Secretary to the Civil Grand Jury, at civilgrandjury@sjcourts.org.

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GROWING GREEN



2024-2025 San Joaquin County Civil Grand Jury



Follow-up Reports

Introduction

The key role of the Continuity Committee is to review court-approved agency responses to final reports issued by prior civil grand juries to ensure statutory compliance.

California Penal Code Section 933.05 requires responses to be submitted to the Presiding Judge of the San Joaquin County Superior Court within 90 days of receipt for agencies and 60 days for elected officials.

For purposes of [subdivision \(b\) of Section 933](#), as to each grand jury finding, the responding person or entity shall indicate one of the following:

- (1) *The respondent agrees with the finding.*
- (2) *The respondent disagrees wholly or partially with the finding, in which case the response shall specify the portion of the finding that is disputed and shall include an explanation of the reasons therefor.*

For purposes of [subdivision \(b\) of Section 933](#), as to each grand jury recommendation, the responding person or entity shall report one of the following actions:

- (1) *The recommendation has been implemented, with a summary regarding the implemented action.*
- (2) *The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future, with a timeframe for implementation.*
- (3) *The recommendation requires further analysis, with an explanation and the scope and parameters of an analysis or study, and a timeframe for the matter*

to be prepared for discussion by the officer or head of the agency or department being investigated or reviewed, including the governing body of the public agency when applicable. This timeframe shall not exceed six months from the date of publication of the grand jury report.

- (4) *The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable, with an explanation therefor.*

The Continuity Committee reviewed responses to the 2023-2024 Civil Grand Jury investigations and Second Look reports. These reports and response requirements are summarized in the table below. Two of these reports, Micke Grove Zoo: Honoring the Past, Securing the Future and Cold Cases in San Joaquin County: On the Back Burner, required more than a typical review. A more in-depth follow-up was completed for these reports.

| REPORT | RECOMMENDATION | AGENCY |
|---|--|---------------------------------|
| 2023-2024 Report #0123 City of Stockton; Crisis in Government | R1.2, R1.6, R2.1 – R2.3 R3.1 | City of Stockton |
| 2023-2024 Report #0323 City of Tracy: Public Trust Still Not Restored | R1.1-1.8, R2.1-2.5, R3.1 | City of Tracy |
| 2018-2019 Report #0519 City of Stockton: Talking Trash | R1.1, R1.2 | City of Stockton |
| 2018-2019 Report #0519 Illegal Dumping: Talking Trash | R1.1 | SJC Board of Supervisors |
| 2018-2019 Report #0318 Cold Cases: On the Back Burner | 1, 1.1, R1, R2, R3, R4, R5, R6, R7, R8, R9, R10 | Law Enforcement Agencies |
| 2018-2019 Report #0218 Micke Grove Zoo: Honoring the Past, Securing the Future | R1, R2, R3, R4 | Board of Supervisors |

Complete copies of the original reports and the agency responses are available on the San Joaquin County Civil Grand Jury website at:

<https://www.sjcourts.org/divisions/civil-grand-jury/civil-grand-jury-reports-by-year/>

2023- 2024 San Joaquin County Civil Grand Jury



City of Stockton Crisis in Government Case #0123

Summary

The 2022–2023 Civil Grand Jury initiated an investigation into potential Brown Act violations by members of the Stockton City Council. The 2023–2024 Civil Grand Jury continued this inquiry and investigated complaints of a hostile and ineffective work environment within the Stockton City Government.

This report contains the responses to the 2023-2024 San Joaquin County Civil Grand Jury report #0123: The City of Stockton: Government in Crisis, along with the 2024-2025 Civil Grand Jury follow-up determinations to the compliance of those responses. Agency responses are italicized, followed by the 2024-2025 determinations.

The Civil Grand Jury finds that the Stockton City Council has not complied with California Penal Code Sections 933(c) and 933.05(b).

Section 933 (c) states, “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 914.1 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...”

For purposes of 933.05 subdivision (b), each grand jury recommendation, the responding person or entity shall report one of the following actions:

- (1) The recommendation has been implemented, with a summary regarding the implemented action.*
- (2) The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future, with a timeframe for implementation.*
- (3) The recommendation requires further analysis, with an explanation and the scope and parameters of an analysis or study, and a timeframe for the matter to be prepared for discussion by the officer or head of the agency or department being investigated or reviewed, including the governing body of the public agency when applicable. This timeframe shall not exceed six months from the date of publication of the grand jury report.*
- (4) The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable, with an explanation therefor.*

In addition, the Council’s actions have obstructed the Civil Grand Jury’s efforts to evaluate public agency accountability and transparency, thereby eroding public trust in local government.

Complete copies of the original report and the agency’s responses may be found on the San Joaquin County Civil Grand Jury website at:

<https://www.sjcourts.org/divisions/civil-grand-jury/>

Method of Follow-up Investigation

Reviewed responses from:

- City of Stockton, Letters dated August 21, 2024, and September 4, 2024
- City of Stockton City Council Meeting Agenda for May 13, 2025
- City of Stockton Email to Civil Grand Jury dated May 20, 2025
- City of Stockton Second Grand Jury Follow-up response to the San Joaquin Grand Jury dated May 14, 2025
- City of Stockton Draft Minutes City Council Meeting dated June 3, 2025

The table below shows a summary of the responses:

| Respondent | # | Recommendation | Response | Grand Jury Conclusion |
|-----------------------|-----|---|-----------------|---|
| Stockton City Council | 1.1 | Stop enabling SMP | Not implemented | See 2024-2025 Recommendation 1 |
| | 1.2 | Rules for handling unlawful threats | Not implemented | See 2024-2025 Recommendation 1.2 |
| | 1.3 | Adopt ordinance for election transparency | Not implemented | See 2024-2025 Recommendation 1.3 |
| | 1.4 | Stop agendizing performance reviews | Implemented | No further action |
| | 1.5 | Form 700 available online to public | Implemented | No further action |
| | 1.6 | Standardize employment rules in Mayor’s Office | Not implemented | Next year’s Civil Grand Jury will follow up to ensure full compliance |
| | 2.1 | Amend closed session policies | Implemented | No further action |
| | 2.2 | Develop ordinance regarding Brown Act violators | Implemented | No further action |

| Respondent | # | Recommendation | Response | Grand Jury Conclusion |
|------------|-----|---|-----------------|----------------------------------|
| | 2.3 | Policy that Brown Act violations released to Grand Jury within 7 days | Not implemented | See 2024-2025 Recommendation 2.3 |
| | 2.4 | Amend policy regarding use of City Stationary | Implemented | No further action |
| | 3.1 | Investigate City's Ethics Hotline | Not implemented | See 2024-2025 Recommendation 3.1 |

Threatening Work Environment Recommendations

R1.1: By September 1, 2024, the City Council should stop enabling the SMP from interfering with effective city government through their continued association and/or support of individuals associated with the SMP.

8-21-24 Agency response: *The City Council acknowledges the 2023-2024 Grand Jury recommendation.*

F1.1: The 2024–2025 Civil Grand Jury determined the Stockton City Council did not respond in accordance with California Penal Code 933.05(b).

R1.1: By October 1, 2025, the Stockton City Council should stop allowing outside influences to interfere with city government through their ongoing association with individuals connected to them.

R1.2: By March 31, 2025, the City Council should adopt rules for handling unlawful threatening Communications received by City officials and employees. Unlawful threats, not covered under the First Amendment, should be referred to the District Attorney's office.

8-21-24 Agency response: *The City's Charter Officers (Manager, Attorney, Auditor, and Clerk) plan to work together, in coordination with the City Council's Audit and Legislative Committees, to discuss and prepare appropriate and relevant draft policies for review and approval by the full Council no later than March 31, 2025. A progress update will be provided to the Grand Jury and Presiding Judge in April of 2025.*

5-14-24 Agency response: *The City’s Charter Officers (Clerk and Attorney) will work together, in coordination with the City Council’s Legislation Committee, to discuss and prepare appropriate and relevant draft policies for review and approval by the full Council no later than August 31, 2025. A progress update will be provided to the Grand Jury and Presiding Judge in September 2025.*

F1.2: The 2024-2025 Civil Grand Jury found the Stockton City Council did not comply with California Penal Code Sections 933(c) and 933.05(b).

R1.2: By October 1, 2025, the Stockton City Council should establish a policy for addressing threatening communications directed at City officials and employees. The policy should include forwarding threats to the District Attorney’s office.

R1.3: By March 31, 2025, the City should adopt an ordinance similar to the City of San Francisco Campaign and Governmental Conduct Code Section 1500 et seq., to strengthen election transparency. That ordinance requires political consultants and candidates to file reports directly to the City in all municipal elections listing business relationships, financial investments, and who they pay for political help or receive in-kind support from, as well as indicating whom they provide support to in elections.

8-21-24 Agency response: *The Interim City Clerk brought this item to the City Council’s Legislative and Environmental Committee for an introductory discussion, on July 17, 2024, as item 3.2 (agenda). The Committee members discussed and provided to staff feedback, including consideration of the above-mentioned code language from the City of San Francisco. This item will continue to be updated under the direction of the Council Committee before being finalized to go to the full Council for approval and adoption. Supporting documents from the July 17th Committee meeting are included as Attachment R1.3.*

F1.3: On July 17, 2024, the Stockton City Council’s Legislative and Environmental Committee held an introductory discussion regarding a proposed policy to strengthen election transparency, with input from the Interim City Clerk and staff. While the Committee reviewed sample language from the City of San Francisco and provided feedback, the policy is still under development. It has not yet been finalized or submitted to the full Council for adoption.

R1.3: By October 1, 2025, the Stockton City Council should develop a policy on election transparency.

R1.4: By March 31, 2025, the City should stop the practice of agendizing Chartered Officers performance reviews on an ongoing basis but set them annually or for specific situations which require notice by law.

8-21-24 Agency response: *The City Council provided direction to cease the agendization of Chartered Officers performance reviews on an ongoing basis and instead set them annually and for specific situations which require notice by law.*

The 2024-2025 Civil Grand Jury determined to take no further action.

R1.5: By March 31, 2025, the City should amend its policies and procedures to make all Form 700 filings available to the public online.

8-21-24 Agency response: *The City agrees with this recommendation. As such, the Interim City Clerk notified staff of the updates to the public's ability to access Form 700 information online, via memo on June 24, 2024(Attachment 1.5). Links to the Public Portal are now available on the Clerk's webpage on the city website, under the Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC) tab.*

The 2024-2025 Civil Grand Jury determined to take no further action.

R1.6: By March 31, 2025, the City shall enact a policy that all employees of the Mayor's office be under the same mandated employment rules and laws as the rest of the City staff.

8-21-24 Agency response: *The City's Charter Officers (Manager, Attorney, Auditor, and Clerk) plan to work together, in coordination with the City Council's Audit and Legislative Committees, to discuss and prepare appropriate and relevant draft policies for review and approval by the full Council no later than March 31, 2025. A progress update will be provided to the Grand Jury and Presiding Judge in April of 2025.*

5-14-25 Agency response: *The City Council acknowledges the Grand Jury's recommendation R1.6. However, the recommendation and report do not contain sufficient information to respond other than as follows:*

Under City of Stockton Charter section 1102(n) all the Mayor's appointees "shall serve at the pleasure of the Mayor in the unclassified service; and shall serve under such terms and conditions, salaries and benefits as are similar to other unclassified employees." All unclassified, at-will employees of the City must adhere to all applicable employment rules and laws.

F1.6: The Civil Grand Jury finds the Stockton City Council did not comply with California Penal Code Sections 933(c) and 933.05(b).

The 2024-2025 Civil Grand Jury recommends the 2025-2026 Civil Grand Jury follow up to ensure full compliance.

Brown Act Recommendations

R2.1: By March 31, 2025, the City should amend its Closed Session policies and procedures to minimize the risk of revealing confidential information. There should be a requirement that no phone, electronic communication or recording devices be allowed in the room when it is a Closed Session. Additionally, each attendee should sign a pledge of secrecy on entering each meeting as an immediate and continual reminder that the rules of the Brown Act apply.

8-21-24 Agency response: *The City Attorney is scheduled to introduce draft language related to use of cellphone and technology to the Council Legislative Committee meeting on August 28, 2024, for discussion and feedback. This item will continue to be updated under the direction of the Council Committee before being finalized to go to the full Council for approval and adoption before March 31, 2025. A progress update will be provided to the Grand Jury and Presiding Judge in April 2025.*

5-14-25 Agency response: *The City Attorney brought this item to the City Council's Legislation Committee for an introductory discussion on August 28, 2024, as item 3.8. The Committee members discussed, provided feedback, and directed staff to bring it back to the Committee for further discussion. The item was brought back on October 23, 2024, as item 3.2 and staff were directed to forward a recommendation for Council consideration. The item was presented to the full council on November 19, 2024, and was adopted under Resolution 2024-11-19-1218 (Attachment R2.2). Additionally, each councilmember (former and current), signed closed session acknowledgement forms. Current council acknowledgments are attached (Attachment R2.1) Former council acknowledgments can be provided if needed.*

The 2024-2025 Civil Grand Jury determined to take no further action.

R2.2: By March 31, 2025, the City shall develop a City Ordinance regarding Brown Act violators that includes an impartial process for determining whether the Brown Act confidentiality requirement related to Closed Session has been violated and appropriate

sanctions for the violator, including but not limited to, mandatory public censure and removal from committees and commissions.

8-21-24 Agency response: *The City Attorney is scheduled to introduce draft language related to censure and discipline to the Council Legislative Committee meeting on August 28, 2024 for discussion and feedback. A separate discussion will be planned related to handling Brown Act violations[sic] or violators. These item[sic] will continue to be updated under the direction of the Council Committee before being finalized to go to the full Council for approval and adoption before March 31, 2025. A progress update will be provided to the Grand Jury and Presiding Judge in April of 2025.*

5-14-25 Agency response: *The City Attorney brought this item to the City Council's Legislation Committee for an introductory discussion on August 28, 2024, as item 3.8. The Committee members discussed, provided feedback, and directed staff to bring it back to the Committee for further discussion. The item was brought back on October 23, 2024, as item 3.2 and staff was directed to forward a recommendation for Council consideration. The item was presented to the full council on November 19, 2024, and was adopted under Resolution 2024-11-19-1218 (Attachment R2.2).*

The 2024-2025 Civil Grand Jury determined to take no further action.

R2.3: By March 31, 2025, the City shall enact a policy that all findings of Brown Act violations investigations must be released to the Civil Grand Jury within seven days of receipt by the Council.

8-21-24 Agency response: *The City's Charter Officers (Manager, Attorney, Auditor, and Clerk) plan to work together, in coordination with the City Council's Audit and Legislative Committees, to discuss and prepare appropriate and relevant draft policies for review and approval by the full Council no later than March 31, 2025. A progress update will be provided to the Grand Jury and Presiding Judge in April of 2025.*

5-14-25 Agency response: *The City's Charter Officers (Clerk and Attorney) will work together, in coordination with appropriate City Council Committees, to discuss appropriate and relevant policies. A progress update will be provided to the Grand Jury and Presiding Judge in September 2025.*

Finding 2.3: The Civil Grand Jury finds the Stockton City Council did not comply with California Penal Code Sections 933(c) and 933.05(b).

R2.3: By October 1, 2025, the Stockton City Council shall enact a policy requiring all findings from investigations into alleged Brown Act violations to be submitted to the Civil Grand Jury within seven days of receipt by the Council.

R2.4: By March 31, 2025, the City should amend their policies and procedures regarding the use of City stationery.

8-21-24 Agency response: *In April of 2024, The Stockton City Council directed the City Manager and City Attorney to work with the Council Legislative Committee to draft a policy addressing concerns regarding the use of City letterhead. Stockton City Council policy 2.06- Council Communications was revised to add a new section, Policy 2.06.020 – Use of City Letterhead. This Council Policy was approved by the full Stockton City Council at its June 18, 2024 meeting as consent item 12.4, under Resolution 2024-06-18-1204. A copy of the staff report, resolution, and related attachments have been included in **Attachment R2.4**.*

The 2024-2025 Civil Grand Jury reviewed Policy 2.06.020. It states, "City letterhead" and/or "City resources" (i.e., staff support, postage, etc.), may only be used to communicate the official policy, position, or actions of the City or City Council, not individual Councilmember positions or opinions...No Councilmember may use the City letterhead for the purpose of press release, news release, or communications with the media."

The 2024-2025 Civil Grand Jury determined to take no further action.

Grievance Process Recommendations

R3.1: By March 31, 2025, the City shall hire an independent third party to investigate the City's Ethics Hotline process to regain employee and public trust in the system.

8-21-24 Agency response: *The City Attorney, with assistance from the City Auditor and City Manager, will engage an independent third party to assess the ethics hotline process. A progress update will be provided to the Grand Jury and Presiding Judge in April of 2025.*

5-14-25 Agency response: *The City Attorney, with assistance from relevant Charter Officers, will present for Council consideration, the engagement of an independent*

third party to monitor and reply to the City’s ethics hotline. A progress update will be provided to the Grand Jury and Presiding Judge in September 2025.

F3.1: The Civil Grand Jury finds the Stockton City Council did not comply with California Penal Code Sections 933(c) and 933.05(b).

R3.1: By October 1, 2025, the Stockton City Council shall hire an independent third party to investigate the City’s Ethics Hotline process to regain employee and public trust in the system.

Disclaimers

Civil Grand Jury reports are based on documentary evidence and the testimony of sworn or admonished witnesses, not on conjecture or opinion. However, the Civil Grand Jury is precluded by law from disclosing such evidence except upon the specific approval of the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court, or another judge appointed by the Presiding Judge (Penal Code Section 911. 924.1 (a) and 929). Similarly, the Civil Grand Jury is precluded by law from disclosing the identity of witnesses except upon an order of the court for narrowly defined purposes (Penal Code Sections 924.2 and 929).

One member of the 2024–2025 San Joaquin County Civil Grand Jury was recused from all phases of this report.

Response Requirements

| Responding Agency | Finding and Recommendation | Respond By |
|-------------------|----------------------------|-----------------|
| City of Stockton | F1.1, R1.1 | October 1, 2025 |
| | F1.2, R1.2 | |
| | F1.3, R1.3 | |
| | F2.3, R2.3 | |
| | F3.1, R3.1 | |

California Penal Code Sections 933 and 933.05 require that specific responses to all findings and recommendations contained in this report be submitted to the Presiding Judge of the San Joaquin County Superior Court within 90 days of receipt of the report.

Note: If the responder is an elected official, the response must be sent within 60 days of receipt.

Mail or hand deliver a hard copy of the response to:

Honorable Gus C. Barrera II, Presiding Judge
San Joaquin County Superior Court
180 E Weber Ave, Suite 1306J
Stockton, California 95202

Also, please email a copy of the response to Irving Jimenez, Staff Secretary to the Civil Grand Jury, at civilgrandjury@sjcourts.org.

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2024- 2025 San Joaquin County Civil Grand Jury



Follow-up Report to 2023-2024 City of Tracy: Public Trust Still Not Restored Case #0323

Preface

This follow-up report presents the official responses to the 2023-2024 San Joaquin County Civil Grand Jury report titled “*City of Tracy: Public Trust Still Not Restored*,” along with the 2024-2025 Civil Grand Jury’s determinations regarding the adequacy of those responses. The agency responses are provided verbatim and italicized. The 2024-2025 Civil Grand Jury’s conclusions are provided after each response.

Discussions, findings, and recommendations from 2024-2025 Civil Grand Jury are in text boxes framed in black.

Complete copies of the original investigation report and the full agency responses are available on the San Joaquin County Civil Grand Jury website at:

<https://www.sjcourts.org/divisions/civil-grand-jury/>

Summary

Previous Civil Grand Juries have found that the Tracy City Council faced ongoing challenges in governing effectively and prioritizing the needs of City residents over personal differences and agendas. In 2018-2019, the San Joaquin County Civil Grand Jury issued a report, *“Restore the Public Trust,”* that identified concerns about the Council’s ability to work cohesively and maintain professionalism during public meetings.

The 2023-2024 Civil Grand Jury initiated a follow-up investigation after observing that many of these issues appeared to persist. At that time, disagreements over Tracy’s growth and development contributed to a lack of consistent vision for the City’s future, fostering distrust among council members and developers.

These tensions culminated in the resignation of the City Manager in May 2023, resulting in a leadership void and disruption to city services. Prolonged vacancies and the reliance on temporary senior staff further strained City operations. During that period, the City Attorney’s efforts to revamp agreements and report formats were hindered by high staff turnover, which contributed to delays that frustrated both staff and the public, ultimately impacting the City’s reputation in the business community.

The 2023-2024 Civil Grand Jury’s investigation identified numerous opportunities for improvement and issued corresponding recommendations. This report summarizes the City’s formal responses and provides the 2024-2025 Grand Jury’s determinations regarding the adequacy of those responses.

Method of Follow-up Investigation

Reviewed all responses from:

- City Council meeting videos and minutes
- The City of Tracy City Council Response Letter dated September 12, 2024
- The City of Tracy City Council, Supplemental Response dated November 22, 2024

Response Summary

| Respondent | # | Recommendation | Response | Grand Jury Conclusion |
|--------------------|---------|---|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| Tracy City Council | 1.1 | City Council Training: | Implemented | No further action |
| | 1.2-1.6 | City Council Continuous Brown Act Training | Implemented | No further action |
| | 1.7 | 90 Day public notice to change 4/1 vote | Not Implemented | No further action |
| | 1.8 | Goals and objectives for City Attorney and City Manager be established within 90 days of hire | Implemented | No further action |
| | 1.9 | Parliamentarian | Will not be implemented | No further action |
| | 2.1 | Hire an outside firm to expedite the backlog | Implemented | No further action |
| | 2.2 | Develop standardized agreements | Implemented | No further action |
| | 2.3 | Budget for additional staff | Requires further analysis | No further action |
| | 2.4 | Hiring Outside Counsel when there is a conflict of interest | Will not be implemented | No further action |
| | 2.5 | City Attorney Training | Implemented | No further action |
| | 3.1 | 3 rd Party Confidential reporting for council-hired employees | Implemented | No further action |

Tracy City Council Recommendation Responses

R1.1: By October 1, 2024, members of the City Council need in-depth and continuous training on the understanding and the effective utilization of the City of Tracy Code of Conduct, City of Tracy Council Meeting Protocols and Rules of Procedures, and Rosenberg's Rules. Members of the City Council and the City Attorney should refer to the League of California Cities: Counsel and Council: A Guide to Building a Productive City <http://www.calcities.org/>

9-12 Agency response: *This recommendation has been implemented.*

The City Council receives ongoing and continuous training on these practices and no additional training is required by October 1, 2024.

More specifically, during this City Council's term, they have received in-depth and continuous training on the understanding and the effective utilization of the City of Tracy Code of Conduct, City of Tracy Council meeting Protocols and Rules of Procedures, and Rosenberg's Rules. In addition, new and existing City Councilmembers are encouraged to take training with the League of California Cities, including the Mayor and Council Academy and the Annual Conference.

The City Council reviews its Code of Conduct, Meeting Protocols, and Rosenberg's Rules during its biennial Strategic Retreats. The City Council may request reviews between these regularly scheduled trainings, as needed. For example, the City Council as a body recently completed a comprehensive review of the Code of Conduct and Meeting Protocols in May 2023. The City Council had previously requested a review of the Meeting Protocols and Code of Conduct to return in September 2024.

11-22 Supplemental Response: *City Council members Arriola, Bedolla, Davis, Evans and Mayor Young have all attended trainings for effective utilization of the City of Tracy Code of Conduct, City of Tracy Council Meeting Protocols and Rules of Procedures, and Rosenberg's Rules prior to October 1, 2024.*

More specifically, during this City Council's term, they have received in-depth and continuous training on the understanding and the effective utilization of the City of Tracy Code of Conduct, City of Tracy Council meeting Protocols and Rules of Procedures, and Rosenberg's Rules as issues arise at City Council meetings. In addition, new and existing City Councilmembers are encouraged to take training with the League of California Cities, including the Mayor and Council Academy and the Annual Conference.

The 2023-2024 Tracy City Council members attended the following meetings which include training sessions: California League of Cities (Cal Cities) Annual Conference September 20-22, 2023 attendees: Dan Arriola, Eleassia Davis and Nancy Young; Cal Cities July Board of Directors Meeting July 13-14, 2023 attendee: Nancy Young; National

League of Cities (NLC) City Summit November 15-18, 2023 attendee: Nancy Young; US Mayors 92 Annual Winter Meeting January 16-19, 2024 attendee: Nancy Young; NLC Annual Conference 2024 March 9-13, 2024 attendees: Nancy Young, Dan Arriola, and Mateo Bedolla; 2024 Tracy Federal Lobby Trip April 8-12, 2024 attendees: Nancy Young, Mateo Bedolla, Eleassia Davis and Dan Arriola; Cal Cities City Leaders Summit April 17-19, 2024 attendee: Nancy Young; and SJCOG One Voice May 4-10, 2024 Nancy Young, Dan Arriola, Eleassia Davis and Dan Evans.

Tracy City Council Members completed AB 1234 Ethics Training on the following dates: Nancy Young – March 13, 2023, Eleassia Davis – January 19, 2023, Dan Arriola – March 20, 2023, Mateo Bedolla – March 20, 2023, and Dan Evans – January 19, 2023.

As noted above, the City Council reviews its Code of Conduct, Meeting Protocols, and Rosenberg's Rules during its biennial Strategic Retreats. The last Strategic Meeting occurred in February 2023, at which time there was extensive discussion about the Code of Conduct and Meeting Protocols. Subsequently, the City Council, over multiple City Council meetings, discussed and revised both policy documents. The next Strategic Retreat is scheduled for February 2025, after the new Council is installed.

The 2024-2025 Civil Grand Jury determined no further action is needed.

R1.2-R1.6: By October 1, 2024, members of the City Council need in-depth and continuous training in understanding the requirements of the Brown Act.

9-12 Agency response: *This recommendation has been implemented.*

The City Council receives ongoing and continuous training on these practices and no additional training is required by October 1, 2024.

More specifically during this City Council's term, the Council body has completed the required training on understanding the Brown Act. In addition, new and existing City Councilmembers have access to and are encouraged to take additional training with the League of California Cities and other associations, including Brown Act and AB1234 training.

The 2024-2025 Civil Grand Jury determined no further action is needed.

R1.7: By October 1, 2024, City Council should approve an ordinance requiring a supermajority vote to modify any ordinance requiring a 4/1 vote. Additionally, a 90-day public notice to change this vote requirement ordinance should be mandatory.

9-12 Agency response: *The City Council will not implement this recommendation. As a general law city, the authority for the City's powers are granted by State law, including the ability to adopt ordinances. Absent on point authority to the contrary, divesting this Council or a future Council of its power to legislate pursuant to the prescribed powers in the Government Code is legally tenuous and may be subject to challenge. The Council retains its right to change a super majority to a simple majority.*

The 2024-2025 Civil Grand Jury determined no further action is needed.

R1.8: By October 1, 2024, the employment contracts for the City Manager and the City Attorney should require individual performance goals and objectives established within 90 days of hire. These goals and objectives should be evaluated annually.

9-12 Agency response: *This recommendation has been implemented.*

Prior to the publication of the Grand Jury report, the City Manager's and City Attorney's employment contracts already included the language to require individual performance goals and objectives and the requirement for an annual evaluation.

11-22 Supplemental Response: *Since August 2024, the City Manager and City Attorney have been meeting with a facilitator and the City Council to establish performance metrics and objectives. The development of the performance metrics and objectives has required a series of meetings between the facilitator, and individual council members and the respective appointed staff to develop thoughtful, productive and achievable objectives and goals. It is anticipated that the City Manager's and City Attorney's November 22, 2024 evaluations will occur on November 19, 2024, and any requisite amendments resulting from those evaluations to their respective employment contracts will be considered on December 3, 2024.*

The 2024-2025 Civil Grand Jury determined no further action is needed.

R1.9: By October 1, 2024, if a Parliamentarian is deemed necessary at City Council meetings, the position should be held by an independent third party.

9-12 Agency response: *The City Council will not implement this recommendation.*

Per the League of California Cities: Understanding Your City's Departments, "The City Attorney may also serve as the Council's Parliamentarian." Staff is not aware of a

structure in which the City Attorney is not the parliamentarian of the council. The City Attorney is advisory only.

The 2024-2025 Civil Grand Jury determined no further action is needed.

R2.1: By October 1, 2024, an outside legal firm should be engaged to help expedite the current work backlog in the City Attorney's office.

9-12 Agency response: *The recommendation has been implemented.*

As noted above, the City Attorney engages outside counsel, as needed, to assist with various litigation matters and special counsel assignments, to ensure that timely and expert legal services are being rendered to all City teams. The City Attorney's Office expects to issue a statewide Request for Proposals (RFP) for on-call legal services by the end of August 2024, as the prior RFP was done several years ago. This RFP will allow the City Attorney's Office to have access to more law firms practicing in the State, across various practice areas relevant to the needs of the City. The RFP will also request proposals from law firms seeking to serve as an outside Assistant City Attorney, in the event that a suitable in-house attorney is not found to fill the vacant position through the normal recruitment process.

11-22 Supplemental Response: *On August 30, 2024, the City Attorney's Office issued an RFP for specific categories and sought attorney(s) or firm(s) with substantial experience in various municipal law practice areas to be placed on an On Call List, to assist in meeting the specialized legal needs of the City, as and when needed. Proposals included a statement of qualifications that included descriptions of the attorney or firm's experience in any of the following practice areas:*

- *General Municipal Law and Special Counsel Matters*
- *Labor and Employment Matters*
- *Real Property and Land Use*
- *Assistant City Attorney, to serve, as needed, the functions of an Assistant City Attorney to provide direct support to the City Attorney*

The City received and reviewed sixteen (16) proposals from various law firms with vast experience in advising and representing municipalities. Final analysis is being done and the proposed On Call List is expected to be considered by the City Council at its December 3, 2024, meeting.

In early November 2024, the City also initiated a public recruitment for an Assistant City Attorney, to fill the current vacancy. The City Attorney also passed from probation two new hires that had joined the office in May and June, respectively. These new additions

to the office are the Deputy City Attorney and the Paralegal. Both are tremendous assets to the City's roster and their dedication and work ethic have resulted in demonstratable changes in the City Attorney's Office during their short time here.

The 2024-2025 Civil Grand Jury determined no further action is needed.

R2.2: By October 1, 2024, the office of the City Attorney should develop and utilize standardized agreements to streamline the review and approval processes.

9-12 Agency response: *The recommendation has been implemented.*

The City Attorney strongly believes in the efficiencies that stem from having standardized agreements. To this end, the City Attorney has created templates for various agreements that are routinely used by the City, such as professional service agreements, airport leases, and improvement agreements. These forms are now in the process of being converted to fillable PDF documents, to further streamline the review and approval processes. The City Attorney's Office will continue to develop additional templates, as appropriate. In addition to creating templates, the City Attorney has implemented a new procedure in which templated agreements (as long as no changes are being proposed to such forms) no longer have to come to the City Attorney's Office for initial "document review". This new procedure will greatly streamline internal approval processes.

11-22 Supplemental Response: *The City has an internal "public folder" to which all City staff have access. In this public folder, the City Attorney's Office has placed templates, since 2022, the following routinely used procurement agreements: professional service agreements, master professional service agreements, and general service agreements. The foregoing templates were updated in July 2024. In July 2024, we also added two different templates for "piggyback" agreements for vendors sourced through cooperative purchasing programs. These procurement agreements are utilized citywide. In addition to procurement agreements, in July 2024, we updated templates for offsite improvement agreements, subdivision improvement agreements, and conditional improvement agreements, which are heavily used by the City's Land Development Engineering unit. At the same time, we added new templates for grants of easements, irrevocable offers of dedication, and grants of fee title. In early September 2024, we placed in the public folder updated templates for our routinely used airport agreements, such as hangar leases and use permits.*

The 2024-2025 Civil Grand Jury determined no further action is needed.

R2.3: By October 1, 2024, the City of Tracy should budget for and hire additional City Attorney staff.

9-12 Agency response: *The recommendation requires further analysis.*

In recent history, the City Attorney's Office has had 3 legal positions (City Attorney, Assistant City Attorney, and Deputy City Attorney) and 1 administrative position (Legal Secretary). In addition to improving forms and processes to help with the workload, in the Fall of 2023, the City Attorney recommended that the City Council create a new Paralegal position in the office. The City Council agreed with the recommendation, and this position is now filled by a paralegal with decades of experience. The addition of the new paralegal has provided significant assistance to the office. As there is currently a vacancy in a key position (Assistant City Attorney), the decision to budget for and hire additional staff is best determined once this key position is filled again. The City anticipates being able to make that decision within the next 6 months.

The 2024-2025 Civil Grand Jury determined no further action is needed.

R2.4: By October 1, 2024, the Code of Conduct regarding the hiring of outside counsel should be amended to allow other city officials to hire outside counsel if the City Attorney is unable to perform their duties, or if the legal issue being addressed gives the appearance of a potential conflict of interest.

9-12 Agency response: *This recommendation will not be implemented.*

As noted in Finding 2.4, the State has tasked the City Attorney of a general law city to provide all requisite legal services to all city officials and that requirement has been codified in the Tracy Municipal Code. To the extent that a conflict exists, the City Council, as a body, retains the power to engage separate legal counsel with respect to those specific matters in which a conflict exists. The City Council has exercised this power in the past.

Further, the determination of whether the City Attorney is "able to perform their duties" is a contractual matter between the City Council and the City Attorney. The City Attorney has an employment contract with the City. This contract articulates the responsibilities of the City Attorney and the process by which the City Council, the other contracting party, may determine the City Attorney is failing to perform such responsibilities. Other City officials should not be involved in this contractual relationship.

The 2024-2025 Civil Grand Jury determined no further action is needed.

R2.5: By October 1, 2024, the City Attorney should be given training in personnel management. The City Attorney's actions should be consistent with the League of California Cities: Counsel and Council Guide: <https://www.calcities.org/docs/default-source/city-attorneys/cc-counsel-council-2022-ver4.pdf>

In particular Principal 5:

"The city attorney should conduct himself/herself at all times in a professional and dignified manner, interacting with all elected officials, city staff, members of the public, and the media with courtesy and respect."

9-12 Agency response: *This recommendation has not yet been implemented. The City Attorney embraces opportunities to improve personnel management skills, especially as such training is not typically provided to practicing attorneys. The City Attorney will work with the Human Resources Department to identify suitable courses and begin to implement the recommended action by October 1, 2024 (to the extent such courses are available by then).*

The 2024-2025 Civil Grand Jury determined no further action is needed.

R3.1: By December 31, 2024, the City of Tracy shall establish a confidential process for employee complaints against council-hired staff. The process should include a third-party vendor to assure complete confidentiality.

9-12 Agency response: *The recommendation has been implemented.*

As noted above, the City has several methods of receiving formal, informal, and anonymous complaints. It strives to respond to such complaints expeditiously. The City has an established process for employee complaints against all employees, including council-hired staff, through its Whistleblower Administrative Policy. In addition, the City of Tracy's "Whistleblower Hotline and Employee Protection Line" is monitored by a third-party vendor. However, the City will endeavor to provide additional employee training on the processes available.

The 2024-2025 Civil Grand Jury determined no further action is needed.

Disclaimers

Civil Grand Jury reports are based on official court-approved responses. However, the Civil Grand Jury is precluded by law from disclosing such evidence except upon the specific approval of the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court, or another judge appointed by the Presiding Judge (Penal Code Section 911, 924.1 (a), and 929. Similarly, the Civil Grand Jury is precluded by law from disclosing the identity of witnesses except upon an order of the court for narrowly defined purposes (Penal Code Sections 924.2 and 929).

One member of the 2024–2025 San Joaquin County Civil Grand Jury was recused from all phases of this report.

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2024-2025 San Joaquin County Civil Grand Jury



Follow-up Report to the 2023-2024 Second Look: Cold Cases in San Joaquin County: On the Back Burner Case # 0318

Preface

This report contains the responses to the 2023-2024 San Joaquin County Civil Grand Jury report on cold cases within San Joaquin County. It focuses on the findings and recommendations made during this period and includes the responses from the relevant agencies.

The discussions, findings, and recommendations of the 2024-2025 Civil Grand Jury are in black-framed text boxes.

Complete copies of the original report and the agency responses may be found on the San Joaquin County Civil Grand Jury website at: <https://www.sjcourts.org/civil-grand-jury/>.

Background

In April 2018, Sacramento police arrested Joseph James DeAngelo, 72, as a suspect in the infamous “Golden State Killer” investigation. Investigators believed DeAngelo to be the serial killer responsible for at least 13 homicides and more than 50 rapes in California between 1974 and 1986. The breakthrough came when investigators found a DNA match to a distant relative through GEDmatch.com, a public genealogy website, which ultimately led to the arrest of DeAngelo. This historic use of genetic genealogy in criminal investigations sparked widespread fascination with unsolved crimes, attracting media attention and public interest. The case also contributed to a broader trend, as similar investigative techniques led to subsequent arrests in other unsolved homicide, missing persons, and sexual assault cases across the United States.

Cold cases typically involve unsolved homicides or sexual assaults with no active investigation or viable leads after five years. Missing person cases with suspicious circumstances are also classified as cold cases, as they may involve serious felonies or homicides.

Each year, the San Joaquin County Civil Grand Jury investigates and reports on law enforcement matters, including police practices, juvenile justice, public protection, probation, and detention facility inspections.

In 2018-2019, the Civil Grand Jury released a report titled *Cold Cases in San Joaquin County: On the Back Burner*. The report included ten recommendations, all accepted by law enforcement agencies.

The 2023-2024 San Joaquin County Civil Grand Jury Law and Justice Committee sought to assess the impact of the 2018-2019 report by evaluating the status of cold case investigations in the county today. As part of this effort, they published a follow-up report titled *Second Look: Cold Cases in San Joaquin County: On the Back Burner Case #0318*.

Both reports are available on the San Joaquin County Civil Grand Jury website at <https://www.sjcourts.org/divisions/civil-grand-jury>.

Note: The Lathrop Police Department was established in June of 2022, so it was not a part of the original Civil Grand Jury investigation. As a result, it was not included in the Second Look review. The Civil Grand Jury spoke with the Lathrop Police Department and was told there were no cold cases in the city. The department stated its commitment to cooperating with the District Attorney's Office concerning cold cases and assisting other local law enforcement agencies when needed.

Summary

The recommendations of the 2023-2024 Civil Grand Jury are currently being implemented. Law enforcement agencies across San Joaquin County are committed to addressing cold cases and providing closure to victims' families. Local law enforcement and the District Attorney's Office have responded that cold cases are now a focal point for their departments.

Law enforcement agencies invest significant resources in reviewing their cold cases, dedicating countless hours to investigations, interviews, following leads, and identifying gaps in evidence. There is often no suspect or usable evidence (or even a body), and criminals have become increasingly adept at evading detection. At other times, investigators actively pursue leads but cannot disclose details publicly. The goal is to gather sufficient evidence to secure a conviction. Cases are routinely evaluated, though resolving cold cases remains rare, so much so that any success often receives national attention.

Once fully operational, the Cold Case Task Force, led by the District Attorney's Office, will facilitate information sharing and strategic planning to advance cold case investigations in San Joaquin County. By bringing fresh perspectives, the Task Force seeks to reinvigorate case resolutions.

The 2024-2025 Civil Grand Jury affirms the establishment of this Task Force, recognizing its potential to strengthen law enforcement efforts in San Joaquin County. The task force aims to significantly improve cold case resolution rates through resource sharing, advanced technology, and innovative tactics.

Methods of Follow-up Investigation

- 2018-2019 San Joaquin County Civil Grand Jury Report, “Cold Cases in San Joaquin County: On the Back Burner Case #0138.”
- 2019-2020 San Joaquin County Civil Grand Jury Follow-up Report, “Cold Cases in San Joaquin County: On the Back Burner Case #0318.”
- 2023-2034 San Joaquin County Civil Grand Jury Report, “Second Look: 2018-2019 San Joaquin County Civil Grand Jury Report, Cold Cases in San Joaquin County: On the Back Burner Case #0318.”
- Presentations by all county law enforcement agencies.
- Interviews with the District Attorney’s Office and the San Joaquin County Sheriff’s Office.
- Internet searches of cold cases and DNA evidence challenges.

2023-2024 Recommendations and 2024-2025 Findings

The 2023-2024 Civil Grand Jury found that local law enforcement did not fully implement the 2018-2019 recommendations in most cases. Key barriers included leadership changes, a lack of commitment, and disruptions caused by the pandemic. However, the San Joaquin County Sheriff’s Office demonstrated notable progress by expanding its cold case unit, assigning investigators to focus on unresolved cases, and developing a spreadsheet/database to track their progress.

As a result, the 2023-2024 Civil Grand Jury recommended the Sheriff’s Office lead the proposed Cold Case Task Force. In addition, local agencies were asked to respond to the 2018-2019 recommendations.

| Respondent | # | Recommendation | Responses | Grand Jury Conclusion |
|----------------------|-----|-----------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| Board of Supervisors | 1.0 | Implement 2018-19 Recommendations | Implemented | No further action |
| | 1.1 | Task Force Formed & Implemented | Implemented | No further action |
| DA's Office | 1.0 | Implement 2018-19 Recommendations | Implemented | No further action |
| | 1.1 | Task Force Formed & Implemented | Implemented | No further action |
| | R1 | Plan, Prioritize, Track | Implemented | No further action |
| | R2 | Expand Definition | Implemented | No further action |
| | R4 | Staffing | Implemented | No further action |
| | R6 | Create Task Force | Implemented | No further action |
| | R7 | Implement Task Force | Implemented | No further action |
| | R8 | Sign Agreement | Implemented | No further action |
| | R9 | Partner w/ Crime Lab | Implemented | No further action |
| | R10 | Family Contact Policy | Implemented | No further action |
| Sheriff's Office | 1.0 | Implement 2018-19 Recommendations | Implemented | No further action |
| | 1.1 | Task Force Formed & Implemented | Implemented | No further action |
| | R1 | Plan, Prioritize, Track | Implemented in 2018-19 | No further action |
| | R2 | Expand Definition | Implemented in 2018-19 | No further action |
| | R3 | Staffing | Implemented in 2018-19 | No further action |
| | R8 | Sign Agreement | Implemented in 2018-19 | No further action |
| | R10 | Family Contact Policy | Implemented in 2018-19 | No further action |
| Escalon PD | R1 | Plan, Prioritize, Track | Implemented | No further action |
| | R2 | Expand Definition | Implemented | No further action |
| | R8 | Sign Agreement | Implemented | No further action |
| | R10 | Family Contact Policy | Implemented | No further action |
| Lodi PD | R1 | Plan, Prioritize, Track | Implemented | No further action |
| | R2 | Expand Definition | Implemented | No further action |
| | R8 | Sign Agreement | Implemented | No further action |
| | R10 | Family Contact Policy | Implemented | No further action |
| Manteca PD | R1 | Plan, Prioritize, Track | Implemented | No further action |
| | R2 | Expand Definition | Implemented | No further action |
| | R8 | Sign Agreement | Implemented | No further action |
| | R10 | Family Contact Policy | Implemented | No further action |
| Ripon PD | R1 | Plan, Prioritize, Track | Implemented | No further action |
| | R2 | Expand Definition | Implemented | No further action |
| | R8 | Sign Agreement | Implemented | No further action |
| | R10 | Family Contact Policy | Implemented | No further action |
| Stockton PD | R1 | Plan, Prioritize, Track | Implemented | No further action |
| | R2 | Expand Definition | Implemented | No further action |
| | R5 | Staffing | Implemented | No further action |
| | R8 | Sign Agreement | Implemented | No further action |
| | R10 | Family Contact Policy | Implemented | No further action |
| Tracy PD | R1 | Plan, Prioritize, Track | Implemented | No further action |
| | R2 | Expand Definition | Implemented | No further action |
| | R8 | Sign Agreement | Implemented | No further action |
| | R10 | Family Contact Policy | Implemented | No further action |

R1.0: By October 1, 2024, all Law Enforcement Agencies review and implement the recommendations of the 2018-2019 Civil Grand Jury Report “Cold Cases in San Joaquin County: On the Back Burner” Case #0318.

Board of Supervisors Response: Partially agree; requires further analysis and timeframe for further determination within six months. In discussion with the County Administrator's Office, the District Attorney's Office, and the Sheriff's Office, the County agrees with the 2018-2019 recommendations. The parties are committed to creating a Cold Case Task Force with the District Attorney's Office as the lead agency as outlined in the 2018-2019 Recommendation No. 6 (R6). As the Cold Case Task Force is implemented, the parties will be better able to determine the timeline required to implement the Grand Jury's recommendations.

Sheriff's Office Response: The Sheriff's Office has received and reviewed the 2023-2024 San Joaquin County Civil Grand Jury's Report on the Second Look of the 2018-2029 San Joaquin County Civil Grand Jury Report – Cold Cases in San Joaquin County: On the Back Burner Case #0318.

Based on this report, the Grand Jury acknowledged and commended the San Joaquin County Sheriff's Office for following through on their recommendations. I appreciate [Sheriff's Office] their acknowledgement on this matter as the expansion of the Cold Case Unit was one of my main priorities when coming into office in 2019.

District Attorney's Office Response: The 2023-2024 Civil Grand Jury's recommendation 1.0 is simply a restatement of the 2023 to 2019 Civil Grand Jury recommendations. Those are responded to below accordingly.

The 2024-2025 Civil Grand Jury determined no further action is needed.

- **R1:** Each law enforcement agency in San Joaquin County develop a plan to define, prioritize, and digitally track cold case investigations.

District Attorney Response: The District Attorney's Office agrees with recommendation #1 and will accomplish this goal through the county wide task force.

City of Escalon Response: Chief Michael Borges drafted a Cold Case Policy that was implemented in February of 2020.

City of Lodi Response: This recommendation has been met. LPD digitally tracks all cold case investigations and utilizes emerging DNA testing techniques. As of the date of this report, every cold case has been analyzed to determine whether there is

physical evidence in need of DNA or genetic testing. All available items have been tested. Cold cases are digitally assigned to each detective's investigative "dashboard." LPD cold cases are distributed among all detectives and a supplemental report detailing their efforts is created on at minimum an annual basis.

City of Manteca Response: *Manteca Police Department policy 600.9 states the following: 600.9 COLD CASES; In accordance with section 600.5 of this policy the following definitions shall apply. Cold cases shall refer to all cases where all known leads have been exhausted, the statute of limitations has not expired, or the case has been submitted to the District Attorney and declined, and no new information is available to re-submit the case to the District Attorney. Serious cold cases shall mean any missing persons case, where the person is missing under suspicious circumstances, unsolved homicide or sexual assault where all known leads have been exhausted, the statute of limitations has not expired, or the case has been submitted to the District Attorney and declined, and no new information is available to re-submit the case to the District Attorney. In the event of any new information, new technological advancements or when time permits, the Investigations Supervisor should assign investigators to review and investigate any serious cold cases that meet this criteria. Families of serious cold case victims should be kept apprised of any new developments in their case, as practicable and will not jeopardize the case, violate department policy or infringe upon suspect rights.*

While this policy does not specifically outline how these cases are tracked, the Manteca Police Department does have a digital file of all homicides which notates which are considered a cold case. To further comply with the Grand Jury's recommendations, the Manteca Police Department will expand the digital tracking of cold case files to include not only homicide but include missing persons with suspicious circumstances and sexual assault (forcible rape and attempted forcible rape). This digital tracking will be operational by 1-1-2025.

City of Ripon Response: *In response, the City Council agrees with the Grand Jury's Findings and Recommendation R1. In 2019 the Police Chief adopted, and the City Council hereby supports, Department Order #600 entitled "Cold Case Investigations".*

Pursuant to this Order, the Department will utilize its computerized Records Management System database to define, prioritize and digitally track cold case investigations using emerging DNA testing techniques.

City of Stockton Response: *As provided in the 2019 response, the respondent agrees with this recommendation. The Stockton Police Department (SPD) defines cold case investigations as open cases in which all workable investigative leads*

have been exhausted. The SPD places the highest priority on safeguarding the lives of all those in the community we serve.

The SPD also remains committed to being on the cutting edge of technology. Accordingly, the SPD will place the highest priority on cold cases in which there has been a loss of life and where physical and/or forensic evidence that can be analyzed exists. The SPD will also place a priority on other types of cold cases in which physical and/or forensic evidence exists. The SPD tracks the status of their cases in its Tiburon Records Management System.

City of Tracy Response: *This recommendation has been implemented. The Tracy Police Department acknowledges and accepts the definition of “Cold Case” which was adopted by all San Joaquin County law enforcement agencies. The Tracy Police Department will prioritize and investigate “cold cases” based on new investigative leads or evidence. The Tracy Police Department maintains a digital list of all cold cases. These case files are maintained digitally by the Tracy Police Department. The list is also tracked by the General Investigation’s Sergeant and Records Supervisor in an excel spreadsheet.*

The 2024-2025 Civil Grand Jury determined no further action is needed.

All law enforcement agencies within San Joaquin County have defined cold cases and established processes to digitally track cold case investigations. The agencies regularly triage cases to identify those with the highest potential for resolution. Solving cold cases remains a priority for law enforcement agencies.

The Sheriff’s Office has developed a spreadsheet/database that categorizes homicides, missing persons, sexual assault, and unidentified victims. This spreadsheet/database cross-references cases with commonalities and identifies potential connections. It contains critical headings such as DNA results, bullet identification, possible suspects, and other key information to help advance investigations.

The District Attorney’s Office is interested in exploring ways for individual law enforcement agencies to share their cold case data. The Cold Case Task Force plans to examine the feasibility of establishing a common database for all agencies to access and update.

- **R2:** Each law enforcement agency in San Joaquin County expand its definition of “cold case” to include missing persons with suspicious circumstances, and sexual assault (forcible rape and attempted rape), in addition to homicide.

District Attorney Response: *The District Attorney's Office agrees with recommendation #2 and will work towards a common, county-wide task force definition of "Cold Case". The current definition is attached and should assist further dialogue on an agreed upon definition.*

“A cold case is an unsolved crime previously reported to law enforcement agency and the agency determined the investigative leads were exhausted. The initial investigation of the cold case failed to result in the identification of a suspect, the arrest of a suspect, the referral of the case to the district attorney's office or the filing of criminal charges by the district attorney's office. Due to the passage of time, the development of evidence of other crimes, and/or the lack of further investigative leads, the law enforcement agency is no longer actively investigating the crime. These cases are deemed open investigations.

For the purposes of cold case definition, "cold cases" include unsolved homicides, missing persons with suspicious circumstances, and sexual assault, specifically Penal Code Section 261.”

City of Escalon Response: *This was a part of the policy drafted by Chief Borges.*

City of Lodi Response: *This recommendation has been met. LPD's cold cases include missing persons with suspicious circumstances and sexual assaults in addition to homicides.*

City of Manteca Response: *Manteca Police Department policy 600.9 states the following: 600.9 COLD CASES In accordance with section 600.5 of this policy the following definitions shall apply. Cold cases shall refer to all cases where all known leads have been exhausted, the statute of limitations has not expired, or the case has been submitted to the District Attorney and declined, and no new information is available to re-submit the case to the District Attorney. Serious cold cases shall mean any missing persons case, where the person is missing under suspicious circumstances, unsolved homicide or sexual assault where all known leads have been exhausted, the statute of limitations has not expired, or the case has been submitted to the District Attorney and declined, and no new information is available to re-submit the case to the District Attorney. In the event of any new information, new technological advancements or when time permits, the Investigations Supervisor should assign investigators to review and investigate any serious cold*

cases that meet this criteria. Families of serious cold case victims should be kept apprised of any new developments in their case, as practicable and will not jeopardize the case, violate department policy or infringe upon suspect rights.

It is the opinion of the City this policy already complies with the Grand Jury's recommendation.

City of Ripon Response: *In response, the City Council agrees with the Grand Jury's Finding and Recommendation R2. In 2019, the Police Chief adopted, and the City Council hereby supports, Department Order #600-01 entitled "Cold Case Investigations". Article II of said Department Order includes a new definition of "Cold Case Investigations" which is consistent with Recommendation R2.*

City of Stockton Response: *As in 2019, the respondent agrees with this recommendation. The SPD's current definition of "cold case" includes all the above types of cases, including missing persons with suspicious circumstances and sexual assault (forcible rape and attempted rape), in addition to homicide.*

City of Tracy Response: *This recommendation has been implemented. A cold case is an unsolved crime previously reported to a law enforcement agency and the agency determines investigative leads were exhausted. The initial investigation of the cold case failed to result in the identification of a suspect, arrest of a suspect, the referral of the case to the District Attorney's Office and/or the filing of criminal charges by the District Attorney's Office. Due to the passage of time, the development of evidence of other crimes, and/or the lack of further investigative leads, the law enforcement agency is no longer actively investigating the crime. These cases are deemed "open" investigations. The Cold Case Task Force expanded "Cold Cases" to include unsolved homicides, missing person cases with suspicious circumstances, and sexual assaults (forcible and attempted rape), where no suspect was identified.*

The 2024-2025 Civil Grand Jury determined no further action is needed.

The Sheriff's Office implemented this recommendation after the 2018-2019 report.

- **R3:** The San Joaquin County Sheriff utilizes budget options and staffing reassignments as necessary to provide the equivalent of at least three full-time Sheriff's Detectives dedicated solely to cold case investigations.

The 2024-2025 Civil Grand Jury found this recommendation had been implemented after the 2018-2019 report and determined no further action is needed.

The San Joaquin County Sheriff's Office is budgeted for four full-time detectives and one sergeant in its Cold Case Unit. The unit currently has three active detectives and one vacant position.

Typically, investigators assigned to a cold case unit have years of experience analyzing cases methodically and thoughtfully. However, the slow pace of investigations and the low success rate in solving these cases can be mentally and emotionally taxing.

- **R4:** The San Joaquin County District Attorney utilizes budget options and staffing reassignments as necessary to provide the equivalent of at least two full-time District Attorney Investigators dedicated solely to cold case investigations.

District Attorney Response: This recommendation has already been implemented.

The 2024-2025 Civil Grand Jury determined no further action is needed.

The San Joaquin County District Attorney's Office is budgeted for two investigators dedicated exclusively to cold cases. In October 2024, the DA's Office hired staff with experience in creating a familial and genetic database.

- **R5:** The City of Stockton utilize budget options and staffing reassignments as necessary to provide the equivalent of at least three full-time Police Detectives dedicated solely to cold case investigations.

City of Stockton Response: The respondent partially agrees with this recommendation. Immediately following the 2014 passage of Measure A, the SPD developed a long-range staffing expansion plan to replenish the sworn positions lost during the financial crisis and municipal bankruptcy, which included replenishing staff within the Investigations Division. Due to unforeseen circumstances, along with some anticipated attrition, a number of staff continue to be redeployed from investigative units to Field Operations/Patrol.

The PD currently has two part-time assignments dedicated to cold case investigations. In addition, the SPD's team of twenty-four investigators assigned to active cases are all trained on cold case investigative techniques and work with the cold cases staff to appropriately monitor and transition cases to active status as new workable leads are discovered.

With the reauthorization of Measure A in 2024, the SPD continues to remain committed to recruitment and retention, which includes consideration of dedicated full-time staff assignments like cold case investigations, as the strategic staffing plans allows, however these particular assignments have yet to happen due to many new hires still in training.

The 2024-2025 Civil Grand Jury determined no further action is needed.

- **R6:** The San Joaquin County District Attorney's Office develop a plan for a Cold Case Task Force to facilitate collaboration in investigating and prosecuting cold cases for all law enforcement agencies in San Joaquin County.

District Attorney Response: *As of October 2024, San Joaquin County law enforcement agencies entered into a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement for the establishment of the Cold Case Task Force. Since its inception, there have been numerous meetings with the Sheriff's Department, the Stockton Police Department, and the Department of Justice Crime Analyst. These meetings are held in person and/or via telephone.*

The 2024-2025 Civil Grand Jury determined no further action is needed.

The San Joaquin County District Attorney's Office has established a Cold Case Task Force, which is currently in its early stages of development.

In October 2024, the District Attorney's Office, Sheriff's Office, Stockton Police Department, and the Department of Justice Crime Analyst began meeting to formalize a Cold Case Task Force. Formal meetings started in February 2025 and will be held monthly.

- **R7:** The San Joaquin County District Attorney's Office establish a Cold Case Task Force for all law enforcement agencies in San Joaquin County.

District Attorney Response: As of October 2024, San Joaquin County law enforcement agencies entered into a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement for the establishment of the Cold Case Task Force. Since its inception, there have been numerous meetings with the Sheriff's Department, the Stockton Police Department, and the Department of Justice Crime Analyst. These meetings are held in person and/or via telephone.

The 2024-2025 Civil Grand Jury determined no further action is needed.

The 2024-2025 Civil Grand Jury found the San Joaquin County Administrator, District Attorney, and Sheriff determined the District Attorney's Office would be the most suitable agency to lead the task force. Since October 2024, the San Joaquin County District Attorney's Office, the Stockton Police Department, and the Department of Justice have been meeting to establish a Cold Case Task Force.

The Cold Case Task Force is still in its early stages of development. Formal meetings for all local law enforcement agencies began in February 2025 and will be held regularly.

For years, San Joaquin County agencies have actively networked with law enforcement nationwide through monthly Chiefs' Meetings, countywide task forces, and participation in regional, state, and national professional groups. These collaborations have helped the county adopt successful practices from other jurisdictions, enhancing local law enforcement efforts.

- **R8:** Each law enforcement agency in San Joaquin County signs a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with the newly formed Cold Case Task Force.

District Attorney Response: All local agencies were asked to sign the agreement and all complied. There are no agencies that have not, nor are there any agencies that declined to participate. The following agencies have signed the agreement: San Joaquin County District Attorney, San Joaquin County Bureau of Investigations, San Joaquin County Victim Witness Division, Stockton Police Department, Escalon Police Department, Lodi Police Department, Manteca Police Department, Ripon Police Department, Tracy Police Department, California Department of Justice, San Joaquin County Sheriff's Department, and Lathrop Police Department.

City of Escalon Response: *The Escalon Police Department is a signatory on the San Joaquin County Cold Case Task Force that went into effect October of 2024.*

City of Lodi Response: *This recommendation has been met. LPD has signed and participates with the countywide Partnership and Cooperation Agreement.*

City of Manteca Response: *Currently the Manteca Police Department does not have funding to dedicate personnel to a Cold Case Task Force. The Manteca Police Department would be willing to work closely with the Cold Case Task Force to maintain a good working relationship and to consistently investigate cold cases.*

Note: The 2024-2025 Civil Grand Jury confirmed the Manteca Police Department signed the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement.

City of Ripon Response: *In response, the City Council agrees with the Grand Jury's Finding and recommendation R8. In 2019, the Police Chief adopted, and the City Council hereby supports, Department Order #600-01 entitled "Cold Case Investigations". Relative to Recommendation R8, Department Order 600-01 states: "In the pursuit of successful collaboration, the Ripon Police Department will sign a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with the newly formed San Joaquin County Cold Case Task Force.*

City of Stockton Response: *The respondent partially agrees with this recommendation. The SPD will review and earnestly consider joining any new regional cold case task force, within our available capacity and resources. The SPD believes this type of Task Force is most effectively used for those cases which cross jurisdictional boundaries.*

Note: The 2024-2025 Civil Grand Jury confirmed Stockton PD has been involved in the organization of the Cold Case Task Force and will participate in its regular meetings.

City of Tracy Response: *This recommendation has been implemented. The Cold Case Task Force Partnership & Cooperation Agreement drafted by the previous San Joaquin County District Attorney's Office was signed by the Tracy Police Department Chief, Sekou Millington, and became effective on March 31, 2020. Tracy Police Departments' participation in the task force consists of submitting our "Cold Case"*

list to the San Joaquin County District Attorney's Office and investigating our own "Cold Cases" as new leads or evidence exist.

The 2024-2025 Civil Grand Jury determined no further action is needed.

All law enforcement agencies in San Joaquin County, as well as the regional California Department of Justice Crime Lab, the San Joaquin County Bureau of Investigations, and the San Joaquin County Victim Witness Division, have signed the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement for the establishment of a Cold Case Task Force.

- **R9:** The newly formed Cold Case Task Force partner with the regional CA-DOJ crime laboratories to facilitate the timely and necessary testing of all DNA evidence for cold case investigations.

District Attorney Response: *The District Attorney's Office has always partnered with the California DOJ crime lab in Ripon, and other DOJ labs throughout the state. We continue to work collaboratively with the Department of Justice and maintain regular contact with them. However, this office has no input into the laboratory resources (personnel, certification or equipment) of the State of California. While the necessity of relevant testing is transmitted to Cal-DOJ, we are often subject to timing issues beyond our control.*

The 2024-2025 Civil Grand Jury determined no further action is needed.

The Civil Grand Jury found while the County has no authority over the California Department of Justice (Cal-DOJ). However, the regional Cal-DOJ has signed the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement and has a representative on the Cold Case Task Force.

Federal and state laws govern the collection, testing, and retention of DNA evidence. The Cal-DOJ has established suitable testing procedures to ensure that DNA results are admissible in court proceedings. However, the Cal-DOJ cannot analyze specific markers associated with familial connections. After the Cal-DOJ completes its analysis, local agencies may conduct further testing as needed.

Because of high demand, DOJ labs often face months-long delays in processing results. The FBI is exploring DNA testing options, including familial analysis, but

challenges remain. Existing DNA systems lack integration, and limited evidence can make multiple testing impossible.

Recent advancements in evidence-testing technology are proving invaluable to investigators. Private labs offer quicker results, but their high costs and the need for additional verification can complicate admissibility in court proceedings.

To address these challenges, grants are available for local agencies to purchase advanced equipment. The Sheriff's Office recently obtained a Rapid DNA machine that delivers results within hours. This portable device is accessible to all local law enforcement agencies.

Each Rapid DNA test kit costs \$1,200, and any "hits" must be verified through Cal-DOJ testing for accuracy. Since Rapid DNA test results do not integrate with existing databases, the county is developing its own DNA evidence database for criminal investigations in San Joaquin County.

- **R10:** Each law enforcement agency in San Joaquin County develop a procedure and practice for periodically contacting the family members of cold case victims.

District Attorney Response: *The District Attorney's Office has a current practice and procedure of maintaining contact with family members of any case. Staff members of the District Attorney's victim witness division and representatives from the victim advocacy groups within the community continue to maintain a system of periodic contact. It should be noted that continual contact with family members regarding a pending cold case that has little or no significant leads or significant chance of apprehending the person responsible, has proven at times to be detrimental to the psychology of the victim's next of kin and should be dealt with very carefully.*

City of Escalon Response: *This was a part of the policy drafted by Chief Borges.*

City of Lodi Response: *This recommendation has been met. LPD maintains a practice of periodically contacting family members or next of kin of cold case victims. This occurs at the beginning of each year during "Cold Case Week" in which the department actively solicits information through social media by highlighting select cases and contacts family members to attempt to locate new leads or information.*

LPD actively participates with the Luis G. Alvarez Rewards For Justice Foundation. This Lodi-based group raises funds to provide rewards to those whose tips to the police lead to arrests of unsolved homicides.

City of Manteca Response: *Manteca Police Department policy 600.9 states the following: 600.9 COLD CASES In accordance with section 600.5 of this policy the following definitions shall apply. Cold cases shall refer to all cases where all known leads have been exhausted, the statute of limitations has not expired, or the case has been submitted to the District Attorney and declined, and no new information is available to re-submit the case to the District Attorney. Serious cold cases shall mean any missing persons case, where the person is missing under suspicious circumstances, unsolved homicide or sexual assault where all known leads have been exhausted, the statute of limitations has not expired, or the case has been submitted to the District Attorney and declined, and no new information is available to re-submit the case to the District Attorney. In the event of any new information, new technological advancements or when time permits, the Investigations Supervisor should assign investigators to review and investigate any serious cold cases that meet this criteria. Families of serious cold case victims should be kept apprised of any new developments in their case, as practicable and will not jeopardize the case, violate department policy or infringe upon suspect rights.*

It is the opinion of the City this policy already complies with the Grand Jury's recommendation. It is also the opinion of the City that wishes of the family should be respected and this policy should be adhered to on a case by case basis.

City of Ripon Response: *In response, the City Council agrees with the Grand Jury's Finding and Recommendation R10. In 2019, Police Chief adopted, and the City Council hereby supports, Department Order #600-01 entitled "Cold Case Investigations". Relative to Recommendation R10, Department Order 600-01 establishes a procedure and practice for maintaining periodic contact with family members or cold case victims.*

City of Stockton Response: *The respondent agrees with this recommendation. The SPD currently maintains a database of all homicide cases and ensures contact is made with the primary family liaison on a regular basis. Specifically, the SPD contacts the primary family liaison no less than once a month for no less than one year. The SPD maintains monthly contact with the primary family liaison beyond that timeframe if the case remains active. Once the case is deemed "cold," the primary family liaison is advised, and the SPD continues to maintain contact with the primary family liaison no less than once per year. The SPD plans to institute this same basic strategy on other types of cold cases once adequate staffing is realized.*

City of Tracy Response: *This recommendation has been implemented. Tracy Police Department's General Investigations Unit will conduct yearly audits of Cold Cases (Homicides, Sexual Assaults, Missing Persons) and revisit the cases to look for new leads. Detectives will contact the victim or the victim's family to keep them updated on any new information.*

The 2024-2025 Civil Grand Jury determined no further action is needed.

Law enforcement agencies in San Joaquin County have a policy to maintain contact with the families of cold case victims. The frequency of contact is determined on a case-by-case basis, as there is often no new information to share, and reaching out may cause emotional distress.

R. 1.1: By October 1, 2024, the task force should be formed and implemented with the San Joaquin County Sheriff's Office as the lead agency.

Board of Supervisors Response: *Disagree, this recommendation will not be implemented. The County Administrator's Office, the District Attorney, and the Sheriff met to discuss the Grand Jury's recommendations and findings. The County agrees a Cold Case Task Force would be beneficial. After discussions, the County team determined that due to jurisdictional issues, the Cold Case Task Force is better suited to be led out of the District Attorney's Office.*

District Attorney Response: *Task Force Formation: As of October 2024, San Joaquin County law enforcement agencies entered into a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement for the establishment of the Cold Case Task Force. Since its inception there have been numerous meetings with the Sheriff's Department, the Stockton Police Department and the Department of Justice Crime Analyst. These meetings are held in person and/or via telephone.*

Initial Tasks and Focus: At our February meeting, we will discuss establishing a common database for all agencies to access and update. We also will share ideas to utilize social media posts to generate tips in our cases. Formal meetings are scheduled to begin February 13th and will be held monthly, on the second Thursday of every month.

Sheriff's Office Response: *After meeting with members of the San Joaquin County District Attorney's Office and County Administrator's Office, we have agreed that a Cold Case Task Force would be beneficial to San Joaquin County. However, due to*

jurisdictional issues, we feel that it would be best to have the District Attorney's Office serve as the lead agency of the Task Force.

The San Joaquin County Sheriff's Office will work with the District Attorney's Office and all other agencies to ensure the formation of a successful Task Force, to include making available any personnel, equipment and databases that will be needed.

The 2024-2025 Civil Grand Jury determined no further action is needed.

The San Joaquin County District Attorney's Office has established a Cold Case Task Force. The San Joaquin County Board of Supervisors, District Attorney, and Sheriff determined that the District Attorney's Office was best suited to lead the task force.

Disclaimer

Civil Grand Jury reports are based on documentary evidence and the testimony of sworn or admonished witnesses, not on conjecture or opinion. However, the Civil Grand Jury is precluded by law from disclosing such evidence except upon the specific approval of the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court or another judge appointed by the Presiding Judge (Penal Code Sections 911, 924.1 (a), and 929). Similarly, the Civil Grand Jury is precluded by law from disclosing the identity of witnesses except upon an order of the court for narrowly defined purposes (Penal Code Sections 924.2 and 929).

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2024- 2025 San Joaquin County Civil Grand Jury



Second Look: 2019-2020 San Joaquin County Civil Grand Jury Report Illegal Dumping: Talking Trash, Case #0519



Picture taken October 24, 2023

Brief History of the Investigation

The 2019-2020 Civil Grand Jury investigation and subsequent follow-ups documented the complex issue of illegal dumping in San Joaquin County. These reports have produced multiple findings and recommendations, necessitating responses from the County Board of Supervisors and the City of Stockton. The City of Stockton expressed its willingness to participate in all the recommendations.

Subsequent Civil Grand Juries produced three follow-up reports:

- The 2021-2022 Civil Grand Jury made several attempts to verify the formation of the Task Force and the resolution of the recommendation.
- The 2022-2023 Civil Grand Jury confirmed that the Task Force was established and that several meetings had been held to address the issue of illegal dumping. Other recommendations were implemented, yet several remained unresolved.
- Members of the 2023-2024 San Joaquin County Civil Grand Jury observed trash dumped in several areas around the county and the City of Stockton. They attempted to report the dumpsite via the advertised Trash Hotline, GOREquest. After several attempts to get a response, they discovered that the hotline had changed. Eventually, the Civil Grand Jury members were able to report the dumpsite using the new phone app, MySanJoaquin. This led them to question whether the previous Civil Grand Jury Report had any impact or if the responsible agencies had reverted to inefficient past practices.

Responses to 2023-2024 Recommendations

| Respondent | # | Recommendation | Response | Grand Jury Conclusion |
|----------------------|-----|----------------------------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| City of Stockton | 1.1 | Task Force should meet regularly | Implemented | No further action |
| Board of Supervisors | 1.1 | Task Force should meet regularly | Disagreed | No further action |
| City of Stockton | 1.2 | Adopt illegal dumping ordinance | Implemented | No further action |

R1.1: By November 1, 2024, the City/County Task Force should meet on a regular basis.

City of Stockton Response: For several years, the SPD has participated in the San Joaquin County Strike Team Task Force, meeting weekly to address both illegal dumping and homeless encampment clean-up efforts. This group includes representatives from Caltrans, San Joaquin Sheriff's Office, Stockton Police Department, Railroad, other local municipalities, and additional. As it relates to illegal dumping specifically, this task force works collaboratively to identify locations in need of service or resources, then coordinates resource delivery or service as needed.

Board of Supervisors Response: Disagree. The County Illegal Dumping Task Force appropriately and effectively meets on an as needed basis.

On August 23, 2022, the Board of Supervisors specifically directed the County Illegal Dumping Task Force to implement the 3 E's Plan¹ to Address Illegal Dumping in a data driven way.

The County departments participating in the Task Force are accountable for tasks identified in that plan and for meeting plan goals in accordance with the timeline presented. Many of the tasks are dependent on data trends which take time to gather and analyze.

For background, in June 2020 the County formed an informal County and City task force to combat illegal dumping. That group met a number of times in 2020 and 2021, however, ultimately, efforts for a joint task force were not successful. Although the cooperation and communication continue, on October 26, 2021, the Board of Supervisors formally convened the Illegal Dumping Task Force and directed it to bring forward a County illegal dumping ordinance (B-21-654). On August 23, 2022, as stated

¹ Environment, Economy, and Equity of Sustainability as spelled out in the General Plan.

above, the Board directed staff to implement the 3 E's plan and introduced the illegal dumping ordinance. On September 13, 2022, the Board adopted that ordinance; County Ordinance Title 5, Division 11, Chapter 1 - Illegal Dumping. On May 23, 2023, County Task Force members presented an update to the Board of Supervisors on the effectiveness of the illegal dumping ordinance and progress on the 3 E's Plan.

The Task Force is currently meeting as needed to continue to monitor ordinance effectiveness and accomplish the goals that were identified as commencing in 2024, including revamping the "Clean San Joaquin" website, exploring methods to incentivize residents to install video cameras to assist with illegal dumping investigations and enforcement, and examining ways to assist residents with cleanup costs if they file a crime report stating that they were victimized by illegal dumping.

The 2024-2025 Civil Grand Jury has determined to take no further action.

The Task Force has collaborated with the County Administrator's Office to install billboards addressing illegal dumping. Currently:

- Seven billboards have been installed across San Joaquin County.
- There are Public Service Announcements on four radio stations in San Joaquin County.
- Videos about illegal dumping are in various stores and gas stations throughout the County.



Billboard Photo Courtesy of San Joaquin County Administrator's Office, printed with permission

R1.2: The Stockton City Council shall adopt an illegal dumping ordinance by December 31, 2024.

City of Stockton Response: At the September 10, 2024, public meeting of the Stockton City Council, the Stockton Police Department (SPD), in coordination with the Public Works Department, City Attorney, and City Manager, will present for Council consideration and approval, an ordinance adding Chapter 8.104 to the Stockton Municipal Code (SMC) regarding Illegal Dumping. Should the Illegal Dumping ordinance be adopted by the City Council on September 10, 2024, the City Manager will submit to the Grand Jury, a copy of the ordinance with related authority and Council approval. If on September 1, the Council sends the ordinance back to staff for revision, the Stockton Police Department commits to providing the City Council with appropriate revisions for consideration and adoption no later than December 31, 2024.

Addendum to City of Stockton Response (9/13/24): Exhibit 5, to the previous response dated September 4, 2024, provided a complete and final response to Illegal Dumping R1.1, but indicated that the City would provide the Grand Jury with additional information regarding R1.2, pending Council action. On September 10, 2024, the Stockton City Council approved Ordinance and Resolution 2024-09-10-1601², implementing the City's new Illegal Dumping Ordinance and corresponding fees.

The 2024-2025 Civil Grand Jury has determined to take no further action.

Disclaimers

Civil Grand Jury reports are based on documentary evidence and the testimony of sworn or admonished witnesses, not on conjecture or opinion. However, the Civil Grand Jury is precluded by law from disclosing such evidence except upon the specific approval of the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court or another judge appointed by the Presiding Judge (Penal Code Sections 911, 924.1 (a), and 929). Similarly, the Civil Grand Jury is precluded by law from disclosing the identity of witnesses except upon an order of the court for narrowly defined purposes (Penal Code Sections 924.2 and 929).

² See <https://www.sjcourts.org/divisions/civil-grand-jury/civil-grand-jury-reports-by-year/>, City of Stockton's 9/13/24 Response to the 2023-24 Civil Grand Jury's Second Look at 2019-2020 Case No. 0319 on "Illegal Dumping: Talking Trash," Attachment A.

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San Joaquin County 2024 - 2025 Civil Grand Jury



Follow-up Report to the 2023-2024 Second Look: Micke Grove Zoo: Honoring the Past, Securing the Future Case #0218

Preface

This report contains responses to the 2023-2024 San Joaquin County Civil Grand Jury's Second Look at Micke Grove Zoo (MGZ). It serves as an update, focusing on the Civil Grand Jury's suggestions during this period. The responses from the Office of the County Administrator (approved by the Board of Supervisors on August 13, 2024) are included in this report, along with information collected by touring the MGZ and meeting with General Services and MGZ staff in February 2025.

Recommendations from the 2024-2025 Civil Grand Jury are in text boxes framed in black.

Complete copies of the original reports and the agency responses are available on the San Joaquin County Grand Jury website at: <https://www.sjcourts.org/civil-grand-jury/>.

Background

Since 2018-2019, the San Joaquin County Civil Grand Jury has investigated Micke Grove Zoo six times in response to formal complaints:

- **2018-2019 Original Investigation**

In 2018-2019, the San Joaquin County Civil Grand Jury produced two reports on Micke Grove Zoo: one addressing the Parks and Recreation Department's overall budget and another focusing solely on the MGZ's operation. The Civil Grand Jury attributed the MGZ's decline to inadequate staffing, insufficient funding, and a lack of clear strategic direction. It recommended eight key improvements to provide immediate benefits and establish a long-term plan.

- **2019-2020 Follow-up Report to 2018-19 Investigation**

The 2019-2020 Civil Grand Jury followed up on the 2018-2019 recommendations. They noted that while the Parks and Recreation Department had fulfilled some recommendations, more time was needed to complete others. The Civil Grand Jury recommended that MGZ complete a Policy and Procedure Manual; develop a five-year master plan; evaluate funding opportunities; and partner with a third party to assist with fundraising, education, and management.

- **2020-2021 Second Follow-up Report to 2018-2019 Investigation**

The 2020-2021 Civil Grand Jury confirmed three remaining recommendations had been met. Specifically, a Policy and Procedure Manual was completed, and the County Board of Supervisors approved a five-year master plan. However, renegotiating the operating agreement with the Micke Grove Zoological Society (now the San Joaquin Zoological Society) became unlikely due to ongoing litigation between the parties. The 2020-2021

Civil Grand Jury stated, “*The single outstanding recommendation regarding the process of seeking accreditation is still under evaluation.*”

- **2021-2022 Third Follow-up Report to 2018-2019 Investigation**

The 2021-2022 Civil Grand Jury confirmed that the General Services Department presented an accreditation plan to the Board of Supervisors on December 14, 2021. No further recommendations were made.

- **2023-2024 Second Look at the 2018-2019 Report**

In 2023-2024, a citizen’s complaint prompted a Second Look at Micke Grove Zoo to evaluate the County's commitment to its strategic plan and revitalization efforts. The Civil Grand Jury concluded the County needed to demonstrate its commitment to the MGZ for it to remain open and offered suggestions for supporting the MGZ instead of providing formal recommendations. We will refer to the suggestions as 2023-2024 recommendations.

2024-2025 Civil Grand Jury Finding 1.0: After reviewing previous Civil Grand Jury reports and MGZ’s 2021-2026 Strategic Plan, attending a presentation by officials, and touring the MGZ, the 2024-2025 Civil Grand Jury found a renewed commitment to revitalizing the MGZ.

Recommendation 1.0: By October 1, 2025, the Board of Supervisors will continue efforts to restore and expand MGZ and secure accreditation.

Brief History of Micke Grove Zoo

Micke Grove Zoo began as a vision of William and Julia Micke. In 1938, they donated 64 acres of valley and live oak trees to San Joaquin County as a community park. In 1957, Mr. Micke built the MGZ in memory of his wife, establishing an extensive collection of animals and a trust fund to sustain both Micke Grove Park and MGZ.

In the late 1980s, substantial improvements were made to MGZ. The improvements resulted in it receiving accreditation from the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) from 1990 to 2006. Over time, large animals were not replaced because of the care and maintenance needed. The AZA and the United States Department of Agriculture require a higher level of care and accommodations. To meet these requirements and maintain its accreditation, MGZ 's animal collection shifted to smaller animals displayed in renovated exhibits. As the facility began to age, MGZ faced significant challenges with infrastructure and exhibit repairs and upgrades once again.

In 2005, the Micke Grove Zoo applied for reaccreditation by the AZA but was deferred, citing concerns. In March 2006, accreditation was denied because of insufficient progress in addressing the problems. Since then, San Joaquin County has made minimal progress toward replacing and/or repairing exhibits to provide the appropriate accommodations for existing and future animals.

2023-2024 Findings

Last year, the 2023-2024 Civil Grand Jury found:

- The adopted five-year Micke Grove Zoo Strategic Plan was behind schedule.
- County leadership demonstrated no sense of urgency to complete the Plan.
- The Board of Supervisors and Parks Department failed to provide adequate leadership, staffing, and funding to complete the strategic plan within the board-approved schedule.
- The vacant MGZ Director position led to a lack of leadership to ensure progress in completing the Strategic Plan elements.
- The County failed to develop a comprehensive five-year budget for the completion of the tasks to meet the timelines laid out in the adopted Strategic Plan.
- The annual five percent withdrawal from the Micke Trust for support of parks and MGZ often exceeded the annual trust income, reducing the trust's principal.
- The issue of the previous Board of Supervisors' withdrawals from the trust above the specified trust income had not been rectified.

The 2023-2024 Civil Grand Jury warned that Micke Grove Zoo was at a critical crossroads.

Without a demonstrated commitment from the San Joaquin County Board of Supervisors to

revitalize the MGZ, closure would become a real possibility. However, if the Board valued the MGZ as a vital community asset, it must:

1. Commit the required budget dollars to expedite the completion of the MGZ Strategic Plan.
2. Provide adequate staffing to operate the MGZ.
3. Stop the Micke Trust withdrawals above the annual Trust income.
4. Outsource the ongoing day-to-day management and operation of MGZ.

Responses to 2023-2024 Recommendations

| Respondent | # | Recommendation | Response | Grand Jury Conclusion |
|----------------------|---|---|---|----------------------------------|
| Board of Supervisors | 1 | Commit resources to complete Strategic Plan | Implemented | See 2024-2025 Recommendation 2.0 |
| Board of Supervisors | 2 | Staffing | Implemented | No further action |
| Board of Supervisors | 3 | Stop excessive Micke Trust withdrawals | Implemented | No further action |
| Board of Supervisors | 4 | Outsource management and operations | Disagreed. Will do day-to-day in-house; in talks with third party to do fundraising | No further action |

2023-2024 Recommendation #1: Commit the required budget dollars to expedite the completion of the MGZ Strategic Plan.

8/24 Agency Response: *The County is committed to providing ongoing resources necessary, including General Fund contributions to complete the projects outlined in the Strategic Plan, sustaining and improving the zoo for future generations. The General Services Department (GSD) will continue to work with the County Administrator's Office to identify funding sources and maintain a fiscally sustainable budget. The Board of Supervisors is committed to the zoo remaining open.*

A major goal of the Five-Year Strategic Plan is to attain accreditation from the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA). The Micke Grove Zoo will be entering the AZA Pathway Toward Membership (Pathway) program which provides coaching from AZA-

accredited zoos to assist with the formal accreditation application process. Staff anticipates that the application for the Pathway Program will be submitted on or before August 16, 2024. There are two important components in attaining accreditation with the AZA. The first consists of creating/updating and implementing a comprehensive set of policies and procedures for zoo operations. Zoo staff has completed approximately 60% of the policies and procedures and anticipates that this initial effort will be finalized by December 1, 2024. The second component calls for developing a comprehensive maintenance schedule for the zoo. To that end, the Parks and Recreation Division is developing a comprehensive maintenance schedule specific to the zoo. It is anticipated that this schedule will be completed and fully implemented on or before November 1, 2024.

Lastly, the Parks and Recreation Division plans to update the Five-Year Strategic Plan prior to 2026 and will consider developing a long-term master plan for up to 20 years. This endeavor would likely take a year or more to develop.

2024-2025 Civil Grand Jury Finding 2.0: The Civil Grand Jury found the Board of Supervisors is committed to County Parks and MGZ, as reflected in the County's five-year Capital Improvement Plan, which began in fiscal year 2023-2024. The county's 2024-2025 budget also allocates \$10 million to county Parks, including \$1 million specifically earmarked for MGZ. These investments will support infrastructure upgrades such as fencing, electrical improvements, and water/sewage systems. Additionally, on February 5, 2025, an extra \$66,500 was allocated for a new van, as well as a site survey and conceptual design for a future primate exhibit.

MGZ has been accepted into the AZA Pathways Program. A representative has visited MGZ and provided a list of items that must be accomplished before accreditation can be considered. The list is expected to take three years to complete. Once MGZ is accredited, it can expand its species collection, beginning with a high-priority orangutan exhibit at the entrance.

Parks and Recreation has hired a public relations firm to boost the promotion of County Parks and the MGZ, starting with updating websites and placing billboards throughout the county. MGZ also plans to reinvigorate its educational program, reintroduce and create new community events, and expand opportunities such as animal-themed birthday parties.

Recommendation 2.0: By October 1, 2025, the Board of Supervisors will direct the Parks Department to identify and develop additional revenue streams, such as concessions, a gift shop, and special events, to help the MGZ become financially self-sustaining.

2023-2024 Recommendation #2: Provide adequate staffing to operate the Zoo.

Agency Response: *The zoo currently has 10 full-time allocated positions. Where appropriate, this staff is augmented by staff from other GSD Divisions. For example, the Facilities Management Division provides resources for maintenance/repair of the facility, and the Capital Projects Division provides resources for capital improvement projects. Staffing resources are analyzed each year as part of the annual budget process and additional positions are requested when needed.*

The 2024-2025 Civil Grand Jury determined no further action is needed.

In June 2024, the County hired a Zoo Manager with decades of experience, including navigating the accreditation process. A new Parks and Recreation Director with extensive management expertise started in late February 2025. MGZ is fully staffed and has added an Education Coordinator to implement visitor programs.

2023-2024 Recommendation #3: Stop the Micke Trust withdrawals above the annual Trust income.

Agency Response: *The County's Micke Grove Trust Fund (#16705) receives funds each year for the operation and maintenance of Micke Grove Park from the William G. Micke Trust Under Will administered by Wells Fargo as trustees. [The table below] shows the annual income in the William G. Micke Trust Under Will as compared to the mandatory 5% annual contribution to the County's trust fund.*

In January 2021, the Parks and Recreation Division was notified by the trustee at Wells Fargo that the trust had been overpaying distributions and began a systematic reduction in funds until the payments were in line with the 5% mandatory distributions under the terms of the trust. Therefore, the 2020-2021 distribution was reduced to \$280,000. Additionally, the 2021-2022 distribution was reduced to \$230,000 with the 5% distribution resuming in 2022-2023. The adopted Parks and Recreation budget continues to only utilize trust funds specifically designated for maintenance and operations and is a balanced budget.

| WILLIAM G. MICKE TRUST UNDER WILL ANNUAL INCOME vs ANNUAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE PARKS & RECREATION BUDGET | | |
|--|---|------------------------|
| Fiscal Year | Increase/(Decrease) in Trust Fund Value | Contribution to County |
| 2016-2017 | \$525,601 | \$307,000 |
| 2017-2018 | (\$46,437) | \$315,000 |
| 2018-2019 | \$1,027,931 | \$300,000 |
| 2019-2020 | (\$97,067) | \$315,000 |
| 2020-2021 | \$1,983,665 | \$280,000 |
| 2021-2022 | (\$1,246,233) | \$230,000 |
| 2022-2023 | \$793,652 | \$344,547 |
| 2023-2024 | \$1,028,919 | \$305,973 |

The 2024-2025 Civil Grand Jury determined no further action is needed.

The Civil Grand Jury found that beginning with the 2025-26 fiscal year, MGZ will have a dedicated budget separate from the Parks and Recreation funds.

2023-2024 Recommendation #4: Outsource the ongoing day-to-day management and operation of the Zoo.

Agency Response: *The County disagrees with this approach and continues to advocate for a relationship with a non-profit advisory organization to provide fund-raising, promotion, and advocacy for the zoo.*

The 2024-2025 Civil Grand Jury determined no further action is needed.

The Civil Grand Jury found San Joaquin County working to repair its relationship with the San Joaquin Zoological Society. It aims to secure a contract that includes fundraising and collaboration on capital projects. Education and daily operations will be handled internally.

Plans Going Forward: Building a Better Micke Grove Zoo

2024-2025 Grand Jury Finding 3.0: The new Parks and Recreation Director's first task will be to develop a Master Plan for the county's parks, including MGZ. The plan will explore expanding MGZ's footprint to accommodate more exhibits beyond the current 100 species, building an animal-themed mini golf course, and sourcing a new train for the existing tracks.

Recommendation 3.0: By October 1, 2025, the Board of Supervisors will direct General Services to present a Master Plan for the county’s parks, which includes MGZ.

- San Joaquin County General Services has partnered with a vendor to reopen the gift shop. Plans to redesign and upgrade the snack bar to attract new vendors will provide much-needed access to concessions for all park visitors. Meanwhile, efforts are underway to revive popular community events, such as holiday celebrations, and offer new programs, such as animal-themed birthday parties and other family activities.
- Once the ongoing infrastructure projects are completed, the team will shift focus to initiatives that will have a noticeable impact on MGZ itself, enhancing the visitor experience and animal care.

Disclaimer

Civil Grand Jury reports are based on documentary evidence and the testimony of sworn or admonished witnesses, not on conjecture or opinion. However, the Civil Grand Jury is precluded by law from disclosing such evidence except upon the specific approval of the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court or another judge appointed by the Presiding Judge (Penal Code Section 911. 924.1 (a) and 929). Similarly, the Civil Grand Jury is precluded by law from disclosing the identity of witnesses except upon an order of the court for narrowly defined purposes (Penal Code Sections 924.2 and 929).

Response Requirements

| Responding Agency | Finding and Recommendation | Respond By |
|----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------|
| Board of Supervisors | F1.0, R1.0 | October 1, 2025 |
| | F2.0, R2.0 | |
| | F3.0, R3.0 | |

California Penal Code Sections 933 and 933.05 require that specific responses to all findings and recommendations contained in this report be submitted to the Presiding Judge of the San Joaquin County Superior Court within 90 days of receipt of the report.

Note: If the responder is an elected official, the response must be sent within 60 days of receipt.

Mail or hand deliver a hard copy of the response to:

Honorable Gus C. Barrera II, Presiding Judge
San Joaquin County Superior Court
180 E Weber Ave, Suite 1306J
Stockton, California 95202

Also, please email a copy of the response to Mr. Irving Jimenez, Staff Secretary to the Civil Grand Jury, at civilgrandjury@sjcourts.org.

LAW AND JUSTICE

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Law and Justice Summary





**San Joaquin County Sheriff's Office
Boating Safety Unit
December 2024**

2024-2025 San Joaquin County Civil Grand Jury



Law & Justice Summary

California Penal Code sections 919(a) and 919(b) authorize the Civil Grand Jury to inquire into the condition of jails and public prisons operated by the state, county, and cities within San Joaquin County. The 2024-2025 San Joaquin County Civil Grand Jury (SJCGJ) Law Enforcement activities included presentations from law enforcement agencies, tours of jails and detention facilities in the county. SJCGJ members conducted ride-a-longs with various law enforcement agencies.

Presentations

The 2024-2025 Civil Grand Jury received presentations from the following law enforcement agencies in the county:

- Escalon Police Department
- Lathrop Police Department
- Lodi Police Department
- Manteca Police Department
- Mary Graham Children's Shelter
- Ripon Police Department
- San Joaquin County Juvenile Detention
- San Joaquin County District Attorney
- San Joaquin County Sheriff's Office

- Stockton Police Department
- Stockton Unified School District Police Department
- Tracy Police Department

Highlights

Escalon Police Department

- Measure P passed, providing additional funding (estimated between \$800K and \$1.3 million) to increase wages for Escalon police officers.

Lathrop Police Department

- The Department recently opened its first animal rescue center and a Records/Evidence facility.
- In January 2025, the Department hired additional full-time officers to create a new traffic enforcement unit with three motorcycle officers and a sergeant.

Lodi Police Department

- Lodi is the only city in San Joaquin County with a jail.
- The jail can house 24 inmates and has two detox cells (one male and one female).
- Detainees charged with misdemeanors may be cited and released.
- Current capital projects include a new animal shelter and indoor/outdoor gun range.

Manteca Police Department

- The Department plans to install 20 red light cameras at five intersections. Warnings will be given for one month, and then formal citations will be issued.
- The Department has implemented strategies for homeless issues by creating partnerships with His Way Refuge Center and San Joaquin County Behavioral Health.
- With the passage of Measure Q, the Department's new facility has been approved and is expected to be completed in December 2027. The total project cost is \$56,157,791.



Mary Graham Shelter: Follow-up on Civil Grand Jury Reports

The Civil Grand Jury attended a presentation and tour of the Mary Graham Children's Shelter (MGCS). The MGCS was the focus of investigations in SJCGJ 2012-2013 and a follow-up report in 2022-2023 (Good Intentions Are Failing San Joaquin County's At-Risk Children). SJCGJ reported several issues that persisted with additional recommendations in the SJCGJ 2022-2023 report. Those recommendations have been implemented with positive results in the calls for assistance from the San Joaquin County Sheriff's Office. In 2022, the number of calls logged to the San Joaquin County Sheriff was 13,000. That number dropped to 778 in 2023 and was further reduced to 584 in 2024. The reduction in calls is attributed to improved procedures, staffing, and communication with the Sheriff's Office, including an on-site officer. No issues were identified during the tour.

Ripon Police Department

- The Department's mission is to make Ripon one of the safest communities in California through proactive policing and community partnerships. Their vision includes fostering a family-oriented work environment to improve public safety and employee well-being.
- The City Council has established a staffing ratio of 1.5 officers per 1,000 residents.
- The Police Explorer Program for students aged 14 to 21 is popular with those interested in criminal justice and law enforcement careers. The program allows young men and women to experience how a police department operates. Explorers assist police personnel. Participants are required to volunteer 16 hours a month, in addition to volunteering at the Almond Blossom Festival, the 4th of July event, National Night Out, and Main Street Day. There are currently 16 Explorers in the program.

San Joaquin County District Attorney

- Approximately 15,000 cases are filed annually. There are 90 attorneys (84 deputy attorneys and six attorneys in managerial roles).
- Twenty-two attorneys (ten handle misdemeanors and twelve handle felonies) are responsible for 70% of the cases, many settled through probation, diversion, or drug programs.
- Four part-time attorneys are dedicated to prison resentencing cases.
- Four attorneys are assigned to juvenile cases.
- An ongoing challenge is filling the vacant Deputy DA positions due to a shortage of applicants.

San Joaquin County Sheriff's Office

- Federal funding of \$838,600, obtained with Congressman Harder's assistance, will support the development of the San Joaquin County Sheriff's Office's new Real-Time Crime Center. This funding improves the capacity to respond to and prevent crime effectively.

Stockton Police Department

- City Manager's Office, in collaboration with the Stockton Police Officers Association, agreed to use 65% of Measure A funds to provide more retention and recruitment.
- Congressman Harder, a member of the House Appropriations Committee, announced he secured \$963,000 in federal funding for the Stockton Police Department's (SPD) Public Safety Program. Congressman Harder secured the funding through a Community Project Funding (CPF) grant to purchase a license plate reader (LPR) system and other equipment to protect police officers and fight crime.

Tracy Police Department

- A \$225,000 federal grant funded 46 Flock Cameras (automatic license plate cameras) installed at 15 intersections to combat crime.
- Tracy PD has secured a \$391,400 federal grant, with the assistance of Congressman Harder, to create a "Real-Time Crime Center¹" manned by Reserve Officers and

¹ Real-Time Crime Center (RTCC) seeks to optimize the likelihood of immediate law enforcement intervention during ongoing criminal activities. A RTCC serves as a centralized facility within a police department(s), utilizing technology and data analysis to provide support to officers in the field. These centers collect, analyze, and distribute real-time data, including video feeds from surveillance cameras, license plate readers, and other relevant information, to enhance situational awareness and aid in responding to ongoing incidents.

Crime Scene Officers. The Flock Cameras are linked with multiple law enforcement agencies.

- Red Light Cameras have been installed in high-risk intersections, and additional cameras are planned. The cameras' efficiency could reduce the need for additional traffic patrol officers.
- In October 2024, Tracy created a training facility providing a 360-degree interactive environment.
- Over the next two years, the Department plans to replace four Ford Explorers with five electric patrol vehicles. This will be financed through a \$955,000 federal grant obtained with Congressman Harder's assistance.

Civil Grand Jury Ride-a-longs

- Escalon PD
- Lathrop PD
- Tracy PD
- Stockton PD
- San Joaquin County Sheriff's Boating Safety Unit (BSU)



SJC Sheriff's Office Boating Safety Unit, December 2024

Facilities Toured by the San Joaquin County Civil Grand Jury

Penal Code 919 (b) mandates the Civil Grand Jury to inquire into the condition and management of the detention facilities within the County. (*indicates mandates oversight)

- Lodi Jail*
- Mary Graham Children's Shelter
- California Health Care Facility*
- San Joaquin County Jail*
- San Joaquin County Juvenile Detention Facility (Peterson Juvenile Hall)*

.

EYES ON SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY

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**Growth... City of Mountain
House**

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**Education... San Joaquin
County Office of Education**

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**Registration...
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2025

YEARS OF GROWING GREATNESS



Jean Kylo Tunyol
Mountain House High School
Winner 2025 Mock Trial Art Contest
(San Joaquin County Office of Education, page 137)

2024-2025 San Joaquin County Civil Grand Jury



Eyes on San Joaquin County

Introduction

During the 2024–2025 term, the San Joaquin County Civil Grand Jury conducted comprehensive reviews of various county departments, educational institutions, and public offices. This gave jurors insights into the operations and challenges faced by these entities. While the Civil Grand Jury traditionally focuses on areas needing improvement, this section highlights instances of innovation, effective management, and positive developments observed throughout the county. The following details three areas that exemplify these positive attributes:

Growth...

The City of Mountain House

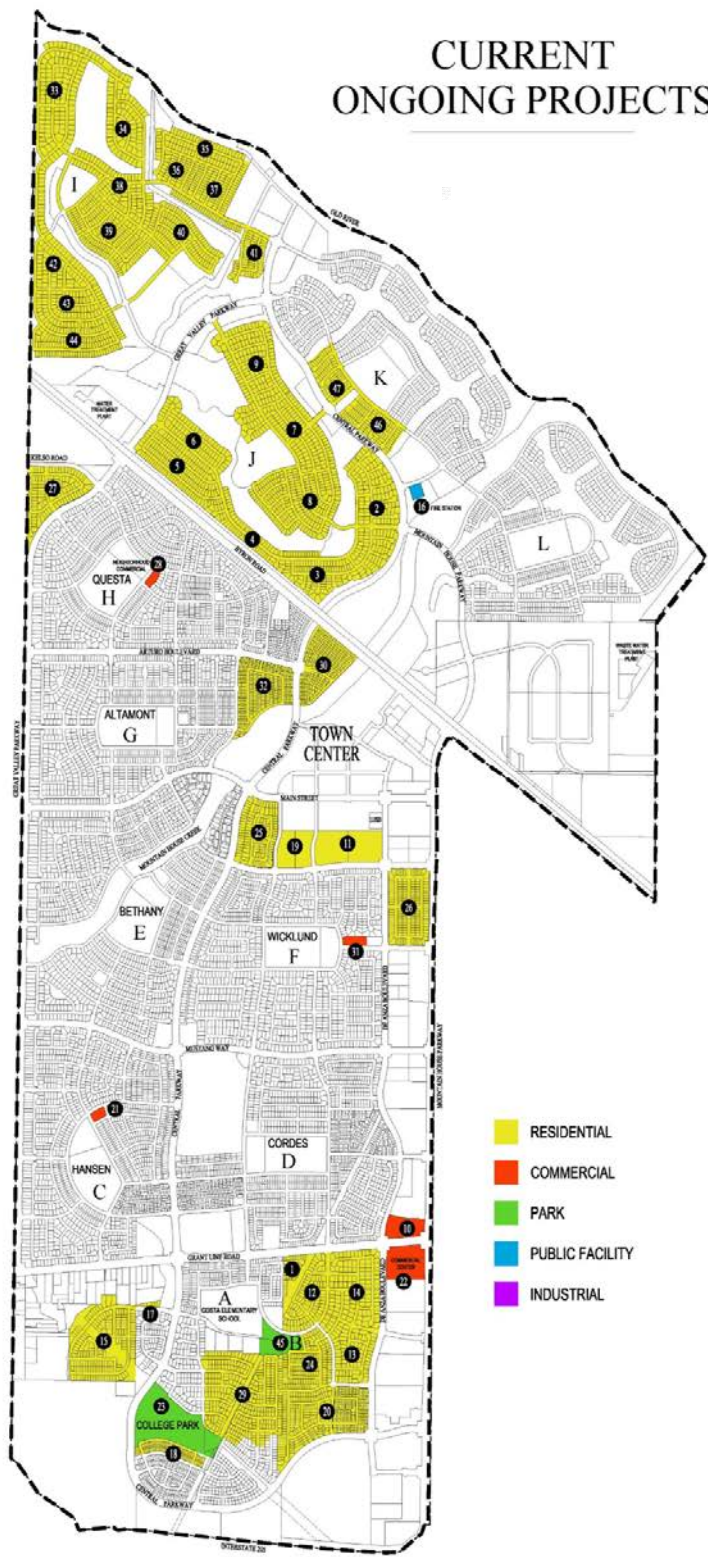
Education...

San Joaquin County Office of Education

Registration...

San Joaquin County Registrar of Voters

CURRENT ONGOING PROJECTS



- RESIDENTIAL
- COMMERCIAL
- PARK
- PUBLIC FACILITY
- INDUSTRIAL



DATE: February, 2025
 EMAIL: mountainhouseplanning@sjgov.org
 ADDRESS: 251 Main Street, Mountain House, CA 95391

MOUNTAIN HOUSE



Eyes on San Joaquin County Growth...

City of Mountain House San Joaquin County's Newest City



On March 5, 2024, the citizens of the Community Service District (CSD) of Mountain House (MH) overwhelmingly approved cityhood, with 90.81% voting in favor. This milestone occurred 28 years after the CSD was first established. MH became the 483rd city in California and the first newly incorporated city since Jurupa Valley in 2011. It is now the eighth incorporated city within San Joaquin County (SJC). The City of Mountain House celebrated its first day of cityhood on July 1, 2024.

The 2024-2025 San Joaquin County Civil Grand Jury believed the city's rapid growth warranted public attention. This report discusses how MH evolved into an incorporated city and examines the key areas defining its development.

During the 2008 recession, MH was labeled the most “underwater” community in America, with 90% of homeowners owing more on their mortgages than their homes were worth. Average home values plummeted from \$550,000 in 2007 to a low of \$285,000 in 2009.

MH has made a remarkable recovery. As of November 2024, some home values in zip code 95391 have surpassed \$1 million, reflecting an increase of nearly 70% since February 2020, according to Zillow. This marks the largest rise in home values of any zip code in Northern California. While prices remain lower than those in the Bay Area, this increase signifies a substantial recovery and has ignited new construction and commercial investment.

This report will focus on the following key areas:

- The Mountain House Master Plan
- City Government
- Community Demographics
- Education
- Transportation
- Law Enforcement
- Business Growth

Glossary

ACE- Altamont Corridor Express
AP – Advanced Placement courses
BART – Bay Area Rapid Transit
BOS - San Joaquin County Board of Supervisors
CFA – Comprehensive Financial Analysis
CSD - Community Service District
CTE – Career Technical Education
K-8 - Kindergarten - 8th grade
LAFCo – Local Agency Formation Commission
LUSD – Lammersville Unified School District
MH - Mountain House
MHHS – Mountain House High School
Rail Authority - Tri-Valley San Joaquin Valley Regional Rail Authority
RTD – Rapid Transit District
SJC – San Joaquin County

Background: The 1994 Mountain House Master Plan

Mountain House is a planned development spanning over 4,600 acres located in the Altamont corridor on the outskirts of San Joaquin County, next to Alameda County. Initially

envisioned in 1994 as a self-sufficient master-planned community, MH aims to provide employment, services, and recreation accessible via local and regional transit. It consists of 12 neighborhoods, each featuring a kindergarten through eighth-grade (K-8) school that feeds into one community high school, alongside small commercial areas organized around a neighborhood center.

Mountain House's Master Plan revolves around a fundamental framework consisting of:

- As of 2025, the Mountain House Master Plan is projected to have 30,000 residents, with a full community build-out of 45,000 residents expected within the rest of the decade.
- At full community build-out, the primary goal is to create 16,815 jobs, allowing individuals from all economic levels to live and work within its boundaries.

With the goal of creating a lifestyle that relies less on automobiles, MH intends to offer activities within the local community and the surrounding 12 neighborhoods. This will be accomplished through local and regional transit, emphasizing a bicycle and pedestrian-friendly environment with an urban center that fosters community activities and supports high-density retail, commercial, civic, office, and residential development.

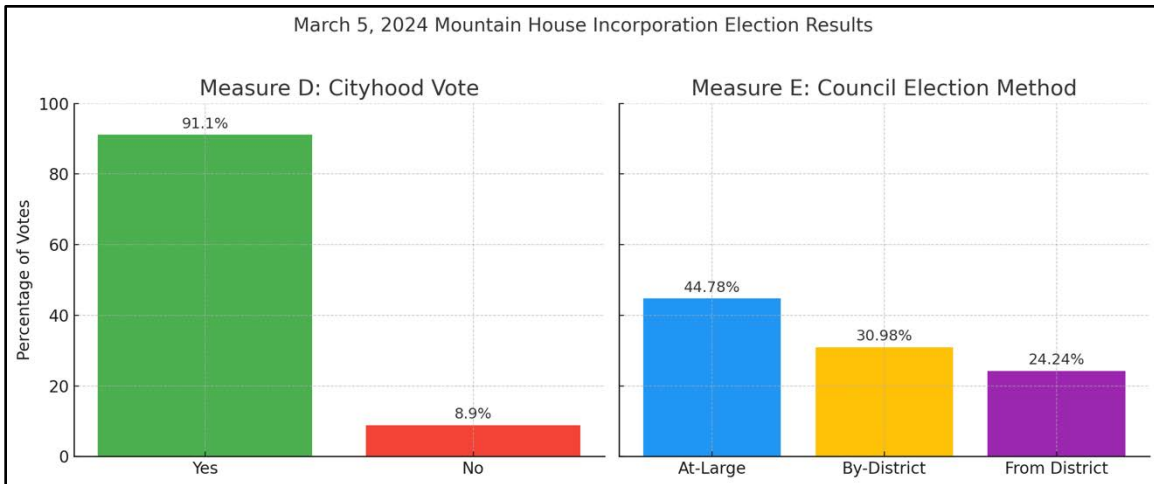
For more information on the Mountain House Master Plan, see

<https://www.mountainhouseca.gov/departments/planning>

City Government and Incorporation

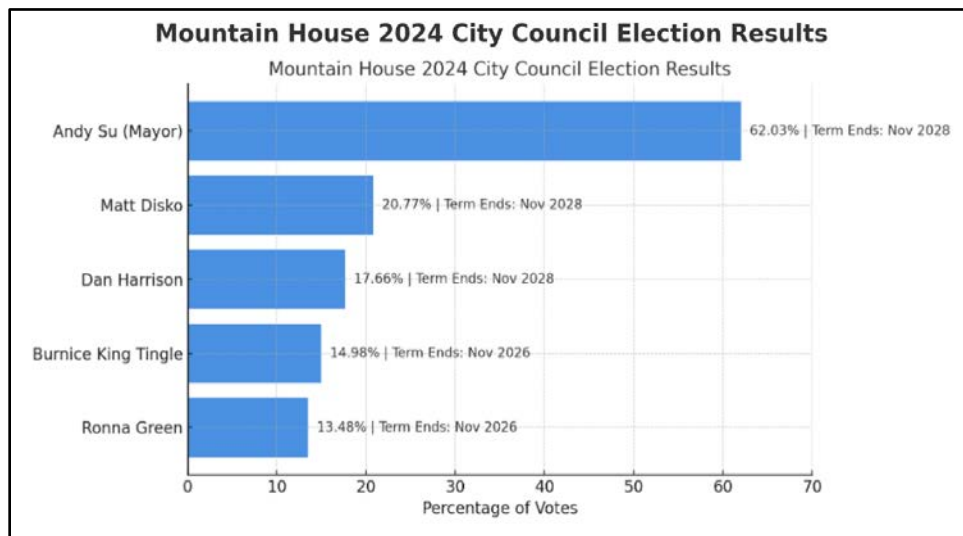
Two measures shaped Mountain House's path to cityhood:

- Measure D established Mountain House as an independent, self-governing city. With Measure D's approval, control of tax revenues shifted from San Joaquin County to Mountain House, which was then incorporated as a city to cover the cost of city services.
- Measure E established an at-large election process for the City Council, allowing all residents to vote for every council member.



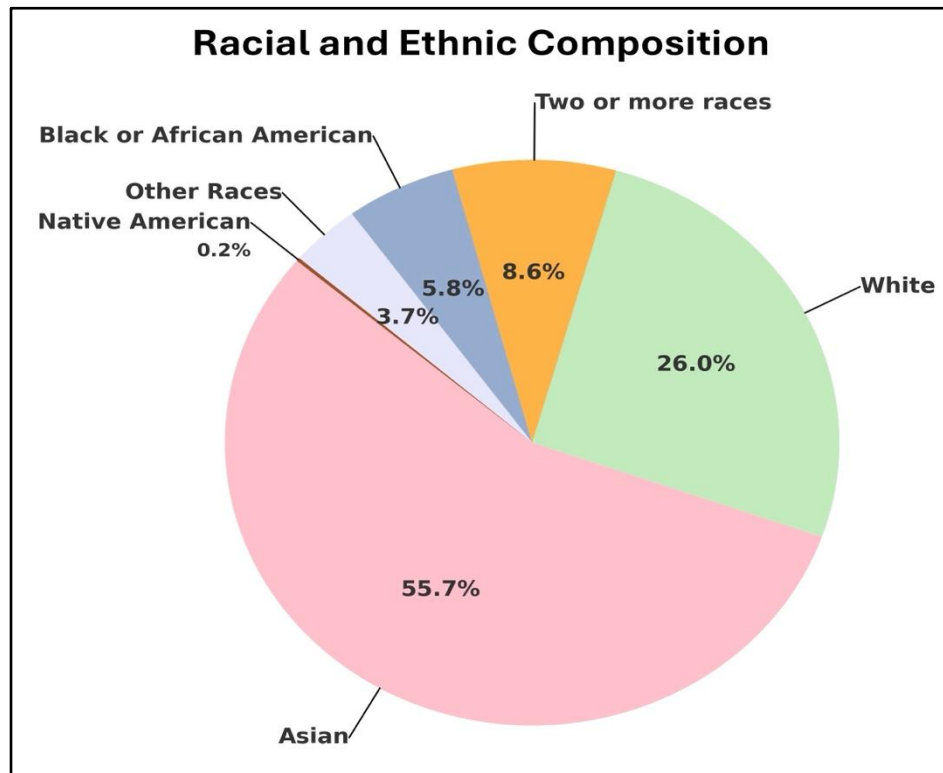
CITY COUNCIL ELECTIONS

Mountain House operates under a Council-City Manager governing system. The mayor serves as the chief executive, while the council constitutes the legislative body. The City Manager is responsible for overseeing day-to-day operations. Council members are limited to two consecutive terms.

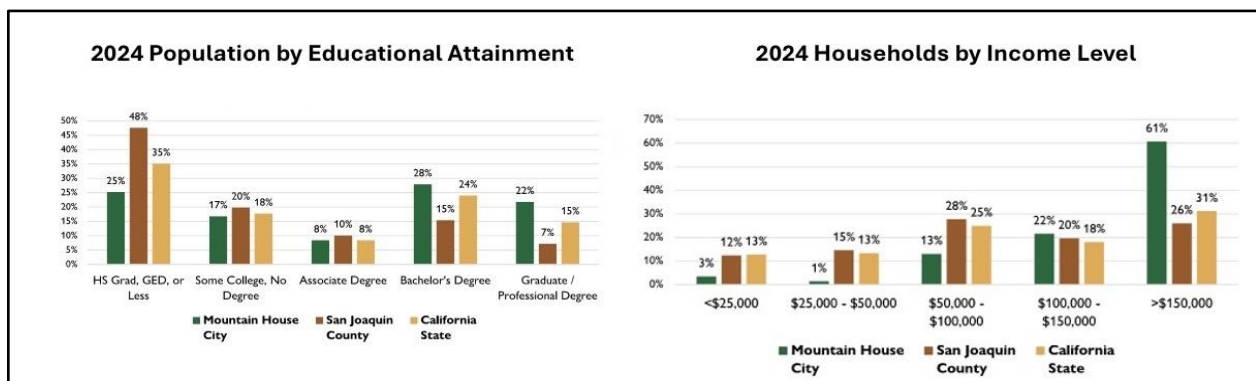


Community Demographics

On July 1, 2024, Mountain House had an estimated population of 28,825, with a median age of 34.1 years.



Mountain House has one of the most highly educated and income-earning populations in the County.



<https://data.census.gov/all?q=Mountain+House+CDP,+Californinia?g=160XX00US0649582&utm>

Education

Lammersville Unified School District (LUSD), began in 1876 as a single rural school and has expanded dramatically since the launch of the Mountain House Master Plan. The first new school opened in the Wicklund neighborhood in 2004, followed by Bethany, Questa, and then the Altamont K-8 schools. To accommodate continued growth, the district became unified, allowing it to establish Mountain House High School (MHHS).

Lammersville Unified's educational philosophy is: *We believe that learning should be based on mastery of content and that personalization of learning should be a priority.*

Mountain House currently has eight elementary schools, with three more K-8 schools anticipated because of the construction of Neighborhoods I, J, and K, each designed to accommodate 900 students. The total student enrollment for 2024–2025 is projected to be 8,038 (5,613 in grades K-8 and 2,425 in grades 9-12).

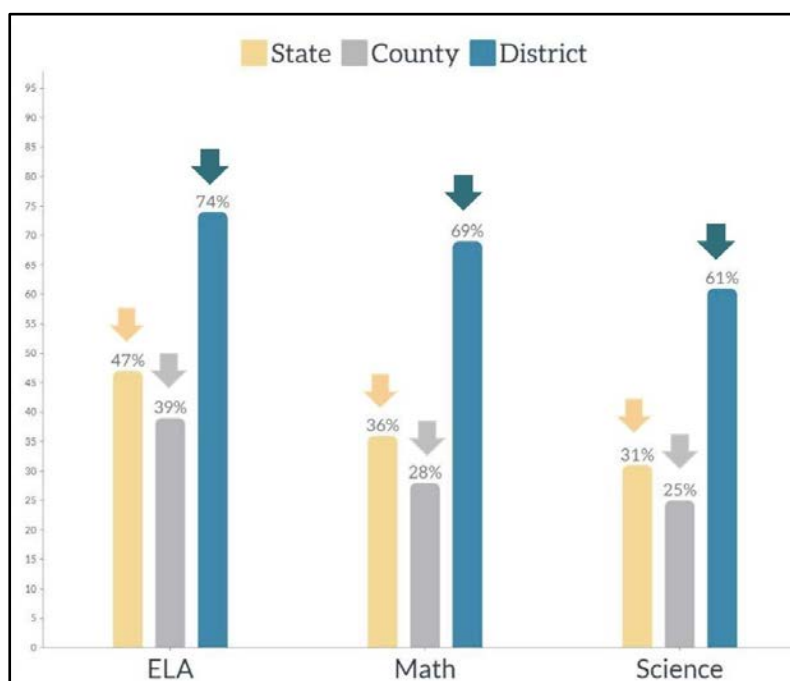
LUSD Funding Sources

| | | |
|----------------------|-------------|-------------------------|
| State | 83% | \$90,839,052.00 |
| Federal | 2% | \$1,891,280.00 |
| Local Revenue | 9% | \$9,693,824.00 |
| Other Local | 6% | \$6,738,245.00 |
| Total | 100% | \$109,162,401.00 |

The LUSD schools have consistently performed above average within the county and state. The district provides its students with many award-winning programs from the Early College Pathway Program to Project Lead the Way, Science Olympiad, Mock Trial, Speech and Debate, Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA), Visual and Performing Arts (VAPA), and Career and Technical Education (CTE) Pathways: Biomedical, Engineering, Computer Science, Culinary Arts, as well as an award-winning competitive sports program. There are currently over 100 active clubs at MHHS.

In 2024-25, LUSD expanded its music curriculum to include string instruments, accelerated math programs, and school sports teams at K-8 Schools.

The California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) serves as the benchmark for state academic performance. The 2024 scores reveal that LUSD schools are top performers in the county and state across all academic areas: English language arts/literacy (ELA), math, and science. Students in LUSD perform at levels comparable to high-performing school districts in the East Bay¹. For the 2023-2024 school year MHHS students had a 99% graduation rate.



In contrast to the declining enrollments in many districts across the state, LUSD anticipates steady growth. Enrollment for the 2025-2026 school year has exceeded the projected 8,000 students, with approximately 2,450 attending MHHS. Each K-8 school can accommodate up to 900 students.

¹ East Bay schools: Alameda, Dublin, Fremont, Livermore Valley, Pleasanton, and San Ramon Valley.

To support this growth, construction is underway at MHHS to add 15 new classrooms, administrative offices, and two science labs (biology and chemistry) by August 2025. These improvements will enable the district to support a seven-period school day, allowing students to pursue additional electives, career technical education (CTE), and Advanced Placement (AP) courses. Approximately 70% of high school students currently take advantage of these extended learning opportunities.

The construction of MHHS was accomplished through a two-phase funding strategy involving developer loans (currently being repaid) and a state public bond measure. Mountain House continues to experience significant growth with the expansion in the North Byron Road area (Neighborhoods J, I, and K), where more than 4,000 residences are projected during the 2030s.

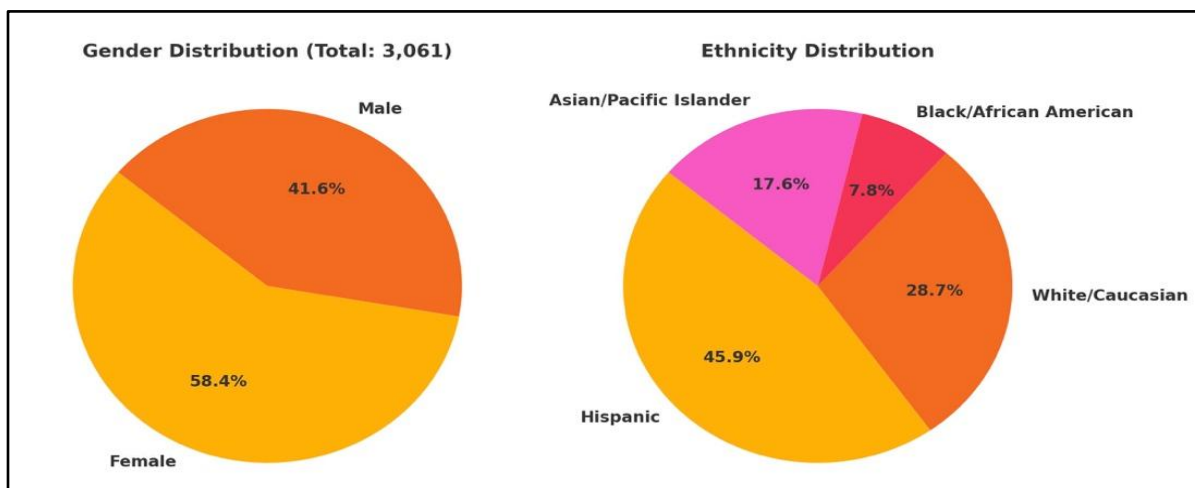
The original Mountain House Master Plan anticipated a high school that would accommodate a maximum of 2,400 students. Currently, Mountain House High School has an enrollment of 2,425. With the development of three K-8 schools north of Byron Highway, LUSD expects approximately another 675 high school students in the upcoming years. At that point, MHHS could reach or exceed its manageable facility capacity.

Neighborhood L was originally designated as a 1,480-home senior-living community without a K-8 school. With the conversion of 610 home-site units to market-rate units, Neighborhood L is now projected to have 400 K-8 students without a school in this neighborhood. Neighborhood L does not have any designated bond funds available to build a K-8 school; the 400 students will attend school in either Neighborhood J or K.

As a result of converting the Neighborhood L homesite, LUSD received 19 additional acres for use by the MHHS. It is likely that further construction may be necessary to accommodate students in Neighborhoods J, I, and K.

Delta College – South Campus: Mountain House

San Joaquin Delta College opened the South Campus in Mountain House in 2009, moving from a smaller facility in the City of Tracy. The campus grew from six to nineteen classrooms on a 126-acre site. Initial enrollment increased from 2,100 to 2,700 students each semester.



The college provides access to general education and workforce training programs, supporting traditional, online, and adult learners. The college also offers two programs that allow MHHS students to take college courses before graduation. The Dual Enrollment Program enables high school students to take college courses at their high school while earning college credits. The college’s Early Start program offers transferable college credit courses at Delta College’s campus. Students do not pay tuition or fees for either program.

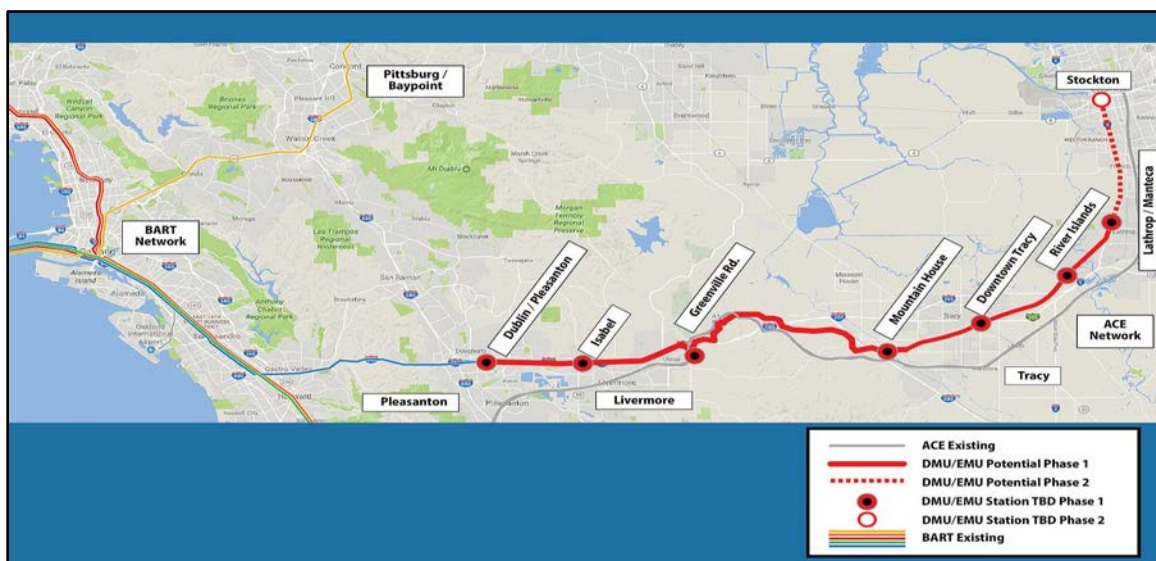
Transportation and Regional Connectivity

Mountain House is situated along the Altamont corridor, where commuting between the Northern San Joaquin Valley and the Bay Area is common. Approximately 100,000 Bay Area workers travel daily through this corridor, many commuting more than 90 minutes each way. These long-distance travelers, often called “super-commuters,” are drawn by more affordable housing in communities like Mountain House, despite jobs being concentrated

in the higher-cost Bay Area. This trend is expected to increase as cities in Northern SJ continue to grow; traffic over the Altamont Pass is projected to increase by 60% by 2040.

To address the increasing traffic burden, the Tri-Valley San Joaquin Valley Regional Rail Authority (Rail Authority) was established in 2017 through California Assembly Bill 758. The Rail Authority includes representatives from 15 local governments and agencies. Mountain House is represented on this board by a City Councilmember.

The Rail Authority is responsible for developing the Valley Link Project, which connects the Dublin/Pleasanton BART station and the Altamont Corridor Express (ACE) train. This project includes 42 miles of track and seven stations, with one located in Mountain House.



The Valley Link project is envisioned as a model for sustainability. It will feature zero-emission, hydrogen-powered trains and an on-site hydrogen production facility that could also support regional transit fleets and commercial vehicles. The project's objective is to reduce vehicle travel by over 141 million miles each year.

At a recent Board of Directors meeting, those leading the project development informed the Rail Authority that there are expected delays of years, if not decades. Initially, the project was projected to cost an estimated \$1.9 billion; however, costs are now projected to exceed \$4 billion, marking an increase of 40% in capital construction costs. Additionally, the timeline for the start of construction has been extended, with the first phase not beginning until 2028.

Fixed-route public transit is limited. Currently, Mountain House's only public transportation is Rapid Transit District (RTD) – Van Go! This shuttle service is an on-demand ride-share service that provides one-way transportation within four designated zones: Lodi-Lockeford, Stockton-Linden, Tracy/Mountain House-Lathrop, and Manteca-Ripon-Escalon. Van Go! operates on both weekdays and weekends, similar to other ride-share services that offer one-way transportation. Past services (e.g., from Wicklund Elementary) connected MH with Tracy. Due to low ridership, these services were discontinued, which included transportation to Tracy's commuter bus station and connectivity to the Dublin BART station.

There is no direct bus service between MH and Tracy. The City of Tracy operates the TRACER bus service, a public transportation system that serves the local Tracy area with 11 bus lines. The proximity of the two cities, which are less than 10 miles apart, presents an opportunity for MH to grow beyond its "bedroom community" footprint. Improved public transportation remains essential.

On February 27, 2025, Mountain House was awarded \$1,372,251 in Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality grant funds from the San Joaquin Council of Governments (SJCOG) for an Electric Vehicle Charging Station Project at Town Hall. This project includes 10 high-capacity EV chargers and two solar carports with battery storage. The City is currently securing the necessary approvals to allocate these funds and begin implementation.

Financial Structure and Revenue

When the BOS approved MH as a master-planned community in 1994, it stipulated that the County would neither finance nor subsidize infrastructure construction. Under the MH Master Plan, developers were required to construct essential utility infrastructure—including water, sewer, and stormwater facilities—before any building permits could be issued. To fund these improvements, the Mountain House Community Services District established agreements with the developers, allowing them to be reimbursed for their investments. These reimbursements are collected through utility bills, identified as “debt services.”

Before its incorporation, Mountain House operated as a Community Services District (CSD) governed by San Joaquin County. The County made land use decisions and collected most tax revenues, including the city’s share of the sales tax. Mountain House was responsible for public safety, parks, community facilities, and 18 other functions but lacked autonomy over essential planning and financial matters.

To qualify for incorporation, the San Joaquin Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo) conducted a Comprehensive Financial Analysis (CFA) to determine if MH could sustain city operations with its own revenue base. In September 2023, the LAFCo Board formally approved incorporation by adopting Resolution 23-1526.

Upon its incorporation on July 1, 2024, MH gained full control of budgeting, land use, and city planning. It now receives a direct share of sales and property tax revenue and qualifies for funding streams that are only available to incorporated cities.

Mountain House previously received 15.7% to 17.6% of the countywide 1% tax rate. Under a new agreement with the County, the city’s share increases by 3.795%, raising it to 19.53% - 21.43%. Mountain House also receives:

- A guaranteed share of San Joaquin County’s Measure K sales tax is allocated for road maintenance.
- A full 1% share of local sales tax.
- State funding only available to cities.
- To ensure financial sustainability, the city also relies on four voter-approved special taxes, enacted in 1996:
 - Roads and transportation
 - Public safety services
 - Parks, recreation, and community facilities
 - Public works

For residential properties, the tax rate is based on the living area and parcel size. Non-residential rates are assessed using the total building area. Rates increase each year due to inflation, capped at four percent.

Cityhood has enabled Mountain House to retain and reinvest a greater portion of its locally generated revenue. It now independently funds essential services, manages growth, and makes strategic decisions about the community’s future.

That one percent tax is distributed as follows:

| | |
|--|--------------|
| County General | 20.2% |
| County Library | 1.6% |
| Lammersville Unified Schools | 19.2% |
| S.J. Delta Comm. College | 3.6% |
| County Office of Education | 1.5% |
| Tracy Cemetery | 0.5% |
| SJC Flood Control | 0.2% |
| SJC Mosquito Abatement | 0.7% |
| Byron-Bethany Irrigation | 10.7% |
| Mountain House CSD² | 15.7% |
| ERAF – Educational Revenue Augmentation | 26.1% |

At present, MH has three primary revenue sources:

- **Special Tax Assessments:** An annual special tax of just under one dollar per square foot on all buildings, including residential and commercial properties. This tax represents two-thirds of the city’s annual tax revenue.

² The CSD still exists to manage the Master Restrictions (rules for the community).

- **Property taxes:** The benefits arise from substantial property tax revenues, given the median home value of \$726,000.
- **Enterprise Funds:** These funds primarily come from utility fees and are expected to increase by \$6.2 million (35%) over the next five years, due to utility rate adjustments and further residential growth.

Mountain House anticipates a \$12.2 million increase over the next five years, due to the following:

- **Residential Growth:** Approximately 1,500 to 2,000 new residential units will contribute to both property tax and special assessment revenues.
- **Utility Rate Adjustments:** Annual inflation adjustments to utility fees will contribute to revenue growth.

<https://www.mountainhouseca.gov/govenment/finance/budget-documents>

Public Safety

Mountain House has a contract with the San Joaquin County Sheriff's Office for law enforcement services at an annual cost of \$3,304,825 for the period of 2024-2025. The contract ensures support from the department's full range of resources. A total of 11 full-time officers are directly assigned to MH, including seven Deputy Sheriffs, one Motor Deputy, one School Resource Officer, a Sergeant, and a Lieutenant. The current contract period runs from July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2029. Additionally, the City has contracted for 21 License Plate Reading FLOCK Cameras, which are installed at the community's entrances and exits, with 16 cameras currently operational. These tools are available to law enforcement to assist in community policing.

This arrangement has been in place since Mountain House was a CSD. Given the significant costs related to establishing an independent police department, it is unlikely that the city will pursue a standalone department in the near future. Crime data is available at:

<https://www.mountainhouseca.gov/residents/public-safety-sheriff-and-fire>

Business Growth

The Master Plan envisioned 12 neighborhoods, each centered around parks, schools, and small commercial areas. It also included a centrally located Town Center, a designated commercial center, office spaces, and industrial parks, which are expected to generate approximately 16,000 jobs. Currently, fewer than 1,500 jobs are available within the city limits. With that vision in mind, MH has been focused on enhancing business development.

Since the opening of a Safeway grocery store in 2022, which acts as an anchor for other small businesses and restaurants in the City Market retail center, there have been additional areas of business growth.

Two major developments have been approved and are under construction or in developmental stages. The Mustang Square shopping center, located at the intersection of Grant Line and Mountain House Parkway, includes an Arco gas station, a car wash, an AM/PM convenience store, and a 7,000 square-foot building that will include a sit-down restaurant and additional businesses, along with two drive-through restaurants. The Wicklund Crossing neighborhood commercial site was approved in January 2025 and will house a sports and retail building.

Beginning in fiscal year 2025-2026, the city will launch an economic development program, with proposed funding to initiate its first Economic Development Strategic Plan, which will serve as a guide to attract commercial, retail, and employment-generating businesses. The city's intent is to enhance the local economy to provide essential services to its residents while creating residential employment opportunities. In the interim, the City is working with the San Joaquin Partnership, a regional nonprofit economic development organization, to begin community outreach and enhance the city's visibility in the regional area.

The City has partnered with the Mountain House Chamber of Commerce to collaborate on local business growth, support community networking, and city events.

www.mountainhousechamber.com

Method of Investigation

The San Joaquin County Civil Grand Jury compiled information for this report through public document research, local government meetings, interviews, and presentations by City and County officials.

Materials Reviewed

Board of Supervisors Office: <https://www.sjgov.org/>
City of Mountain House: <https://www.mountainhouseca.gov/>
City of Mountain House Master Plan
City of Mountain House Financial Transparency: February 10, 2025
City of Mountain House: 2024 Environmental Document & Notice Determination
Lammersville United School District: lammersvilleschooldistrict.net
General Plan Amendment, Master Plan Amendment, February 2025 - MacKey & Somps
Mountain House New Town: Sch#1990020776
Mountain House Housing Review – Minter Harnish Hansford Consultants Final Report
Mountain House Matters: <https://mhmatters.net/>
NY Times: nytimes.com
San Joaquin Community College District: <https://www.deltacollege.edu/>
San Joaquin County: <https://www.sjgov.org/>
San Joaquin LAFCo: <https://www.sjlafco.org/>
San Joaquin County: 2015-2023 Housing Element Public Hearing Draft Nov 2025
San Joaquin Regional Transit District: <https://sanjoaquinrtd.com/>
The Record: <https://www.recordnet.com/>
Tracy Press: <https://www.ttownmedia.com/>
Tri-Valley San Joaquin Valley Regional Rail Authority: valleylinkrail.com
Tri-Valley San Joaquin: Board of Supervisors Meeting Packet, May 14, 2025
Valley Link Rail: valleylinkrail.com
Zillow.com

Findings

F1: Mountain House continues to be a “bedroom community” as the Valley Link Project offers only future benefits that rely on ongoing regional coordination and State and Federal funding/investment.

F2: Mountain House remains an isolated community due to a lack of local transit options.

F3: The incorporation of Mountain House has allowed the city to retain a greater share of revenue and to make local land decisions.

F4: Mountain House’s high-performing schools and rapid population growth present opportunities and challenges for infrastructure.

F5: Mountain House continues to pursue retail and commercial opportunities to offer essential services and retail options for its residents.

F6: Mountain House continues to promote economic growth to increase employment opportunities within the city’s boundaries.

Recommendations

R1: By October 1, 2025, the City Council should pursue regional and state partnerships to advance transportation projects such as Valley Link.

R2: By October 1, 2025, the City Council should explore partnering with the City of Tracy or another entity to improve connectivity to the local Tracy area, ACE, and BART transit systems, as well as within its city limits.

R3: By October 1, 2025, the City Council should continue to evaluate law enforcement and public safety staffing needs, along with infrastructure requirements, as the city's population increases.

R4: By October 1, 2025, the City Council should engage in proactive planning and funding for K-8 schools and Mountain House High School construction and educational programs to accommodate the expected student growth.

R5: By October 1, 2025, the Lammersville Unified School District Board of Governors and City Council should maintain proactive planning and funding for K-8 schools and the construction and educational programs of Mountain House High School to meet the expected student growth.

R6: By October 1, 2025, the City Council should identify additional funding opportunities to support the future growth of Mountain House High School.

R7: By October 1, 2025, the City Council should prioritize retail and commercial development to increase tax revenues and create employment opportunities within its city limits.

Disclaimer

Civil Grand Jury reports are based on documentary evidence and the testimony of sworn or admonished witnesses, not on conjecture or opinion. However, the Civil Grand Jury is precluded by law from disclosing such evidence except upon the specific approval of the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court or another judge appointed by the Presiding Judge (Penal Code Sections 911, 924.1 (a), and 929). Similarly, the Civil Grand Jury is precluded by law from disclosing the identity of witnesses except upon an order of the court for narrowly defined purposes (Penal Code Sections 924.2 and 929).

Request for Responses

California Penal Code Sections 933 and 933.05 require that specific responses to all findings and recommendations contained in this report be submitted to the Presiding Judge of the San Joaquin County Superior Court within 90 days of receipt of the report.

Note: If the responder is an elected official, the response must be sent within 60 days of receipt.

Mail or hand deliver a hard copy of the response to:

Honorable Gus C. Barrera II, Presiding Judge
San Joaquin County Superior Court
180 E Weber Ave, Suite 1306J
Stockton, California 95202

Also, please email a copy of the response to Mr. Irving Jimenez, Staff Secretary to the Civil Grand Jury, at civilgrandjury@sjcourts.org.

Eyes on San Joaquin County Education...



SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION

Mission and Purpose

The San Joaquin County Office of Education's (SJCCE) mission is to "Educate, Innovate, and Inspire to build a bright future for San Joaquin County."

SJCCE's strategic plan, *Building to Serve*, focuses on five priorities:

- Recruiting top talent, investing in professional growth, and encouraging feedback.
- Delivering exceptional customer service with integrity while maintaining high standards of knowledge and resources.
- Ensuring access and opportunity for all students and staff.
- Using data to drive countywide academic strategies and practices.
- Cultivating workforce-ready graduates through programs and partnerships.

Areas of Responsibility

SJCCE supports public education in San Joaquin County by:

- Providing fiscal oversight and support to school districts.
- Offering professional development and educator training.
- Acting as a liaison between the California Department of Education and local districts.
- Ensuring compliance with state education mandates.
- Overseeing alternative education, juvenile court schools¹, and special education.

¹ Juvenile Court Schools are county-operated schools providing education to students detained in juvenile justice facilities. The San Joaquin County Office of Education operates a Juvenile Court School at the

SJCOE works with 14 school districts and charter schools, serving about 153,000 students. It also partners with public agencies, businesses, and colleges.

Organizational Structure

SJCOE is governed by two entities: the Superintendent of Schools and the Board of Education.

- **Superintendent of Schools:** Oversees operations and educational services, elected every four years during statewide elections.
- **County Board of Education:** Five members are elected by trustee areas to serve six-year terms, along with a non-voting student trustee who is elected annually by peers. The Board establishes policies and approves budgets but does not supervise the Superintendent.

SJCOE provides regional services, special education, alternative education, juvenile court schools, and fiscal oversight. The Superintendent is accountable to voters, while local district superintendents report to their school boards.

Local districts are responsible for managing daily school operations, including staffing, curriculum development, and facility maintenance. SJCOE assists these districts and ensures compliance with state laws and financial accountability.

Educational Programs and Services

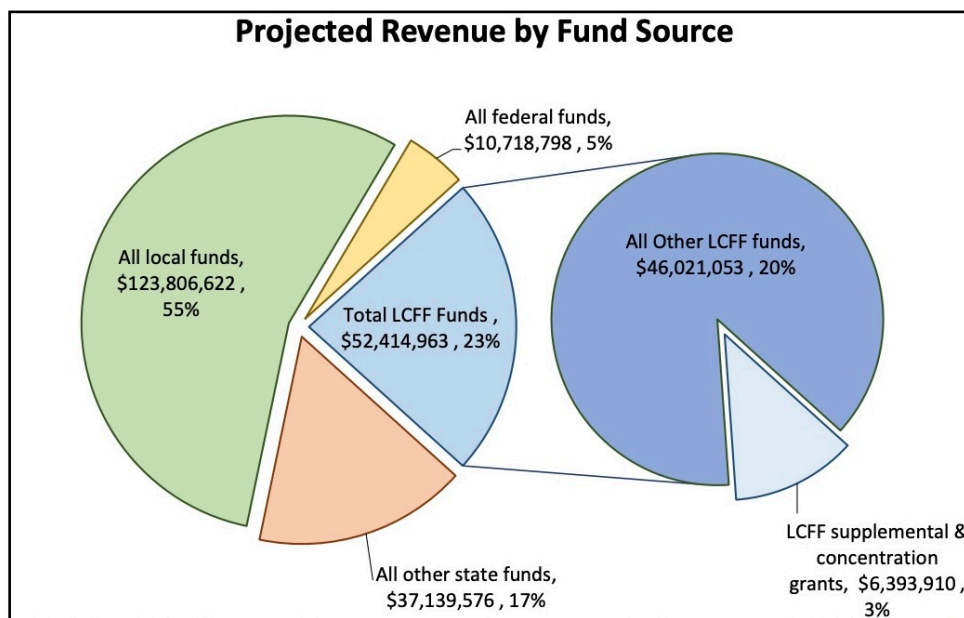
SJCOE offers programs ranging from early childhood to adult workforce training, addressing diverse educational needs. Later in this report, we highlight three examples that illustrate SJCOE's innovative and hands-on approach to education: the FabLab, Discovery ChalleNGe Academy, and Mock Trial.

For a full list of programs, visit: <https://www.sjcoe.org/>.

county's Juvenile Justice Center, ensuring youth in custody continue their education and have access to academic, behavioral, and support services. Juvenile Court Schools is the official term used in California Education Code (Section 48645) and by the California Department of Education.

SJCOE Funding

Budget Overview for the 2024-2025 School Year



This chart shows the total general-purpose revenue San Joaquin County Office of Education expects to receive in the coming year from all sources.

(Printed with permission from the SJCOE LCFF Budget Overview for Parents)

SJCOE's funding comes from state, federal, and local sources. These funds support SJCOE's operations, which include educational programs, administrative services, and oversight functions.

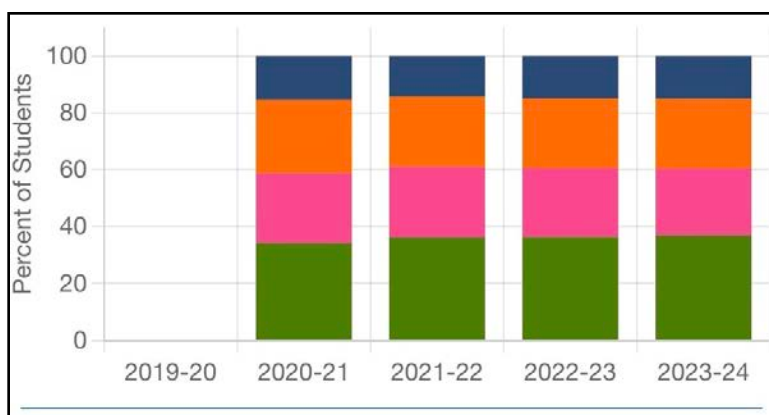
While SJCOE manages its own budget, it also plays a role in distributing certain funds to school districts, particularly for specialized programs. For instance, SJCOE serves as the administrative unit for the Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA), overseeing the distribution of special education funds to participating Local Education Agencies (LEAs) in accordance with specific allocation plans.

Additionally, SJCOE provides fiscal oversight and support to the school districts in San Joaquin County, ensuring they manage their budgets effectively and comply with state regulations.

Overall Academic Performance of Students in San Joaquin County

As of 2023–2024, all but four districts in San Joaquin County scored below the state averages in English Language Arts (ELA) (31.85%) and Math (10.25%). Jefferson Elementary, Lammersville Unified, Oak View Union, and Ripon Unified scored above the state average on both the ELA and Math tests. These tests are administered to students in grades 3 through 8 and 11. The state averages are ELA 47.04% and Math 35.54%.²

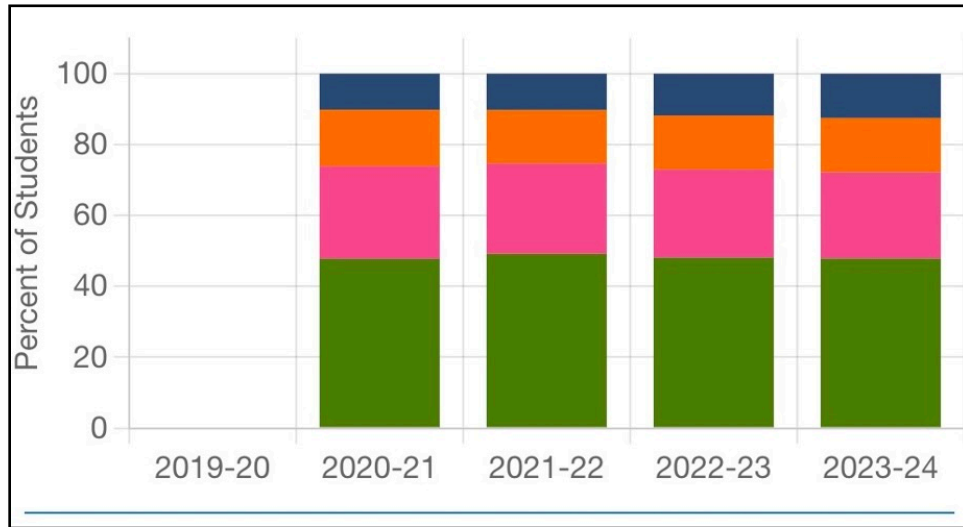
CAASPP English Language Arts/Literacy



| | 2019-20 | 2020-21 | 2021-22 | 2022-23 | 2023-24 |
|------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Std Exceeded Level 4 | N/A | 15.34 % | 14.24 % | 14.90 % | 14.98 % |
| Std Met Level 3 | N/A | 25.88 % | 24.70 % | 24.57 % | 24.50 % |
| Std Nearly Met Level 2 | N/A | 24.49 % | 24.80 % | 24.12 % | 23.56 % |
| Std Not Met Level 1 | N/A | 34.29 % | 36.26 % | 36.42 % | 36.97 % |

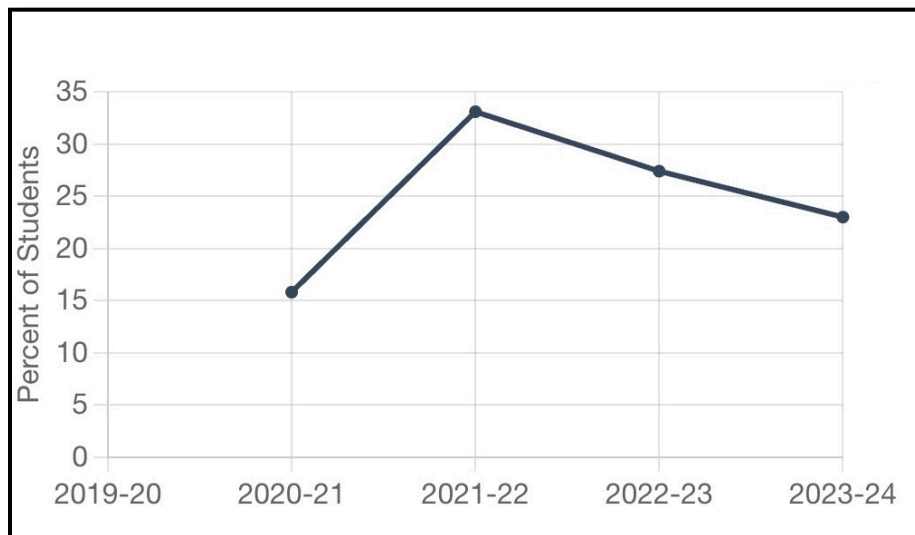
² State level report data includes all students from both traditional and charter public schools in all districts. Due to the pandemic, CAASPP tests were not administered in 2019-2020 and the tests were optional in 2020-2021. Normal administration resumed in 2021-2022. Additionally, the state did not report chronic absenteeism data for 2019-2020. <https://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/>

CAASPP Mathematics



| | 2019-20 | 2020-21 | 2021-22 | 2022-23 | 2023-24 |
|------------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| <div></div> Std Exceeded Level 4 | N/A | 10.25 % | 10.32 % | 11.83 % | 12.57 % |
| <div></div> Std Met Level 3 | N/A | 15.85 % | 14.96 % | 15.22 % | 15.25 % |
| <div></div> Std Nearly Met Level 2 | N/A | 26.11 % | 25.56 % | 24.88 % | 24.32 % |
| <div></div> Std Not Met Level 1 | N/A | 47.8 % | 49.16 % | 48.07 % | 47.86 % |

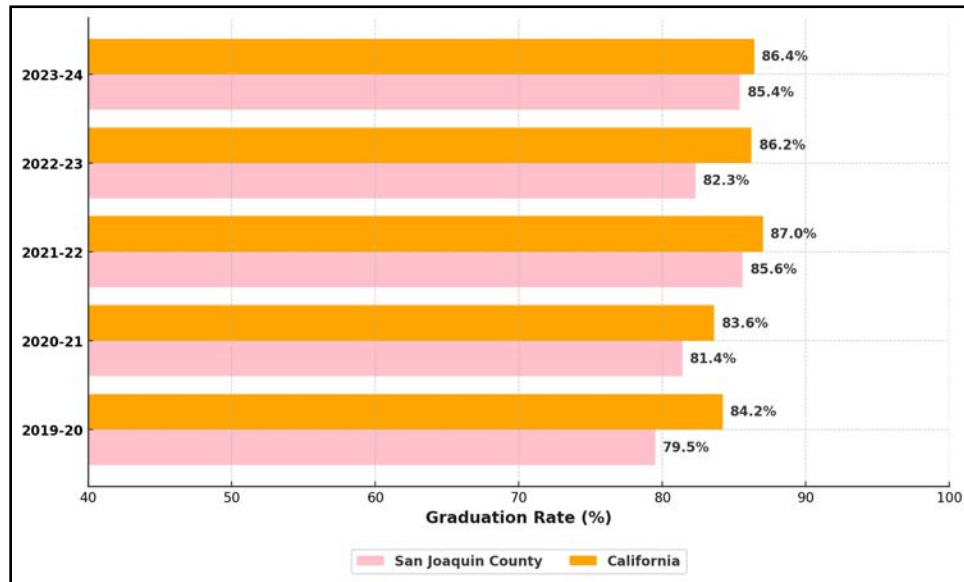
Chronic Absenteeism



This graph displays the percentage of students in San Joaquin County who have missed more than 10 percent of the school year, indicating chronic absenteeism.

High School Graduation Rates³

In 2023-2024, San Joaquin County ranked 48th out of 58 counties in California in the percentage of students who graduated from high school. San Joaquin County's high school graduation rate for all traditional public and charter schools was among the lower third in the state during that period.



SJCOE attributes these academic challenges to:

- High poverty, housing instability, and food insecurity, which can affect attendance.
- Unequal resources and support services across districts.
- Increased absences and mental health needs post-pandemic.
- Low participation due to scheduling conflicts, transportation, language, and trust concerns.
- Shortages of credentialed teachers, counselors, bilingual educators, and special ed specialists.
- New programs (e.g., community schools, expanded career technical education) may take time to show measurable results.

³ Graduation data is collected by “cohort,” which tracks students who begin school in the same academic year (9th grade) over four years to determine how many graduated on time and within that period.
<https://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/>.

Review of the 2024–2025 Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP)

The Civil Grand Jury reviewed SJCOE’s 2024–2025 LCAP, which identifies graduation rates, chronic absenteeism, suspension rates, English learner progress, and college and career readiness as key performance metrics. SJCOE’s LCAP applies to the county-operated schools and programs under its direct jurisdiction, including Community Schools⁴, Juvenile Court Schools, and county-level special education services. The LCAP does not include the 14 independent school districts in San Joaquin County, as each district develops its own plan under state law. The following summarizes critical findings from the LCAP:

- Graduation rates for Community Schools improved from 41% (2022–2023) to 60% (2023–24). Court Schools increased from 37.5% to 60%.
- Chronic absenteeism has decreased at Community Schools from 46% to 35%; Foster Youth at 61.9% (2022–2023).
- Suspension rates dropped to 10% at Community and Court Schools (2022–2023). Goals include reducing suspensions for African American students and English Learners by 10% by 2026–2027.
- A little over 24% of English learners made progress toward proficiency (2023–2024), while the reclassification rate⁵ stands at 25%, which is below state targets.
- Half of a percent of students completed both A–G requirements⁶ and a Career Technical Education (CTE) pathway (2023). Additionally, 11.56% of 11th graders met standards in English Language Arts, while 3.76% met standards in Math.
- Dropout rates for Community Schools decreased from 46% to 35%; Court Schools maintained a rate of 35%.
- The LCAP includes funding for truancy interventions and mental health services. Achievement gaps and low college and career readiness continue to persist.

⁴ Community Schools is the term used by the California Department of Education to describe county-run alternative education programs for students who cannot attend traditional district schools due to behavioral, legal, or disciplinary issues. According to California’s Education Code, school districts are responsible for the education of expelled students.

⁵ Reclassification rate refers to the percentage of English learners who are determined to be proficient in English and are reclassified as Fluent English Proficient (RFEP) based on criteria such as assessment scores, teacher evaluation, parent input, and academic performance.

⁶ A–G Requirements are the set of high school courses California students must complete with a grade of C or better to qualify for admission to University of California (CA) and CA State University schools.

For a complete list of goals, metrics, and outcomes, refer to the SJCOE 2024–2025 Local Control and Accountability Plan:

https://sjcoepublicprodwest2.blob.core.windows.net/attachments/LCAP/District/2024-25/sjcoe_final2024_lcap.pdf

Program Spotlight: SJCOE’s Commitment in Action

In recent years, SJCOE has partnered in community initiatives promoting substance abuse prevention and youth wellness. These included youth-led programs like Friday Night Live, the “Drop the Drugs” campaign, and the distribution of Narcan to school sites. While current program activity has not been assessed, these examples reflect a countywide commitment to student safety and mental health.

The Mock Trial, FabLab, and Discovery ChalleNGe Academy programs exemplify SJCOE’s commitment to innovative, inclusive education. Each program offers students unique opportunities to gain skills, build confidence, and explore future careers, which fulfill the agency’s mission to educate, innovate, and inspire.

Findings

F1: SJCOE’s Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) for 2024–2025 identifies persistent challenges in graduation rates, chronic absenteeism, and college and career readiness for students in county-operated schools.

F2: Year-over-year improvements have been observed in graduation rates and absenteeism in Community and Court Schools.

F3: The overall academic performance in San Joaquin County School Districts remains below the state averages in English Language Arts and Math, according to the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) results.

F4: SJCOE has identified multiple factors contributing to low academic performance and below-average graduation rates including poverty, housing instability, inconsistent access to instructional supports, chronic absenteeism, low family engagement, and a shortage of credentialed personnel.

The FabLab: Hands-On STEM Learning

<https://sjcoefablab.org/>



Adult learners participate in an environmental education presentation in the SJCOE FabLab
(Photo courtesy of SJCOE Instagram)

The San Joaquin County Office of Education FabLab offers a state-of-the-art makerspace. In this hands-on learning environment, students and educators develop essential STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) skills for success in today's world.

The FabLab features advanced tools, including 3D printers, laser and vinyl cutters, over 100 computers, and a large collection of Legos for building robots and other prototypes. Students gain real-world experience in electronics, coding, robotics, woodworking, and 3D printing. They not only develop technical skills but also gain confidence, teamwork abilities, and exposure to potential STEM careers.

FabLab activity stations include:

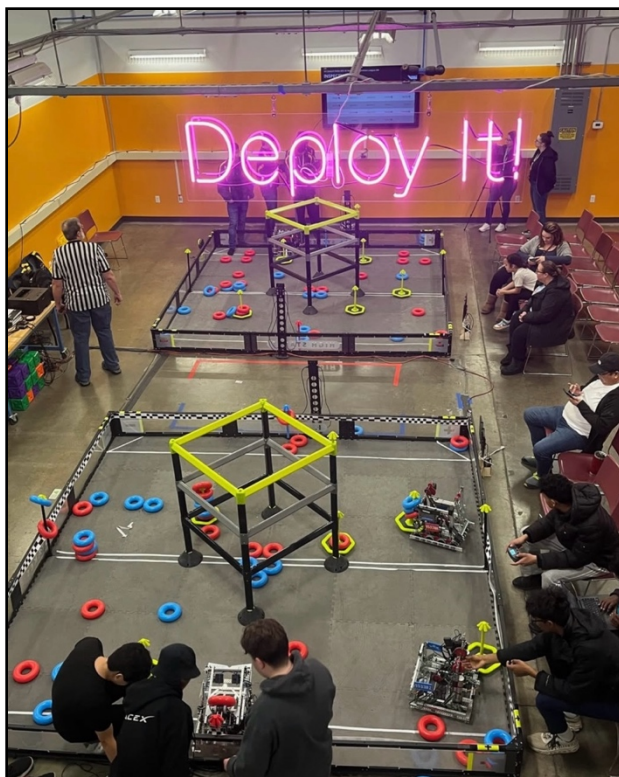
- **Coding:** Programming and software development
- **Artificial Intelligence (AI):** Concepts in machine learning and automation
- **Data Analytics:** Methods and tools for collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data
- **Robotics:** Designing, building, and programming functioning robots
- **3D Design and Printing:** Everything from digital blueprints to actual prototypes

With a full calendar of field trips, competitions, summer camps, and continuing education opportunities, the FabLab serves as a hub for STEM education across San Joaquin County. From kindergarten through high school, students explore age-appropriate challenges. Younger learners experiment with simple algorithms, mazes, and structural designs, such as bridge-building. Older students take on advanced projects in competitive robotics, AI programming, and environmental engineering and design.

The FabLab also hosts special events, such as the Girls' Coding Collaboration, where students apply their coding skills to engineering challenges. Two SJCOE-sponsored robotics leagues provide students with opportunities to compete locally and qualify for state-level tournaments.

Week-long summer camps are offered for grades 1 through 12, with topics ranging from introductory robotics and coding to forensic biotechnology. To support educators, the FabLab provides professional development opportunities that enable teachers to incorporate STEM tools and strategies into their classrooms. These camps are extremely popular and fill up quickly.

SJCOE also operates a mobile FabLab, bringing makerspace experiences and hands-on STEM learning directly to schools throughout San Joaquin County, particularly those with limited access to resources.



Students participate in hands-on activities in the FabLab
(Photo courtesy of SJCOE Instagram)

Findings

F1: The FabLab offers access to modern tools, including 3D printers, laser and vinyl cutters, robotics kits, and over 100 computers, creating opportunities for students to gain practical experience in science, technology, engineering, and math.

F2: Through activities in coding, artificial intelligence, robotics, data analytics, and 3D design, students not only build technical expertise but also develop problem-solving, collaboration, and communication skills.

F3: The FabLab offers professional development opportunities to educators, equipping them with strategies to incorporate hands-on STEM learning and technology into their classrooms.

F4: Access to FabLab programming is expanded through a mobile FabLab, which delivers makerspace experiences directly to schools, including those in underserved areas.

Discovery ChalleNGe Academy: Supporting At-Risk Youth Through Structure, Academics, and Mentorship

<https://iamdiscovery.org/>



On February 27th, the Civil Grand Jury toured Discovery ChalleNGe Academy

Program Overview

The Discovery ChalleNGe Academy (DCA) is a 22-week, tuition-free⁷, residential program at the Sharpe Army Depot in Lathrop, California, designed for 16- to 18-year-old students at risk of academic failure or dropping out. DCA is a partnership with the California National Guard and the San Joaquin County Office of Education (SJCOE). The program offers students from Northern California the opportunity to earn high school credits, improve life and job skills, and develop the discipline and self-confidence necessary for long-term success. The program is available to California students who are drug-free, have no felony convictions, and are willing to commit to the structured expectations of the academy.

⁷ There are some costs prior to entering the program: getting a physical, TB test, and Notary signature for the Power of Attorney. There is also a packing list that candidates are asked to bring with them that can vary between \$250 - \$500. However, CDA will not deny a student who is unable to bring items from the supply list. The National Guard has items to help supplement the needs of students.

DCA is part of the National Guard Youth ChalleNGe Program, which operates 37 academies nationwide. The program is jointly funded by the Department of Defense (75%) and participating state governments (25%). Since opening in 2017, DCA has served over 1,576 cadets, awarded 345 high school diplomas, and raised participants' average GPA from 1.39 to 3.45.

Program Highlights

- Students can earn as many as 67 high school credits.
- Eighty-four percent of cadets complete the 22-week program.
- Cadets fulfill a minimum of 40 hours of community service, contributing over 54,000 total hours to date.

In addition to academic instruction, cadets participate in physical fitness training, attend field trips, and develop essential life skills, including hygiene, emotional regulation, and responsible citizenship. Gender-segregated classes and a tightly controlled daily schedule help minimize distractions and promote discipline.

SJCOE's Role and Educational Oversight

SJCOE oversees the entire educational component of Discovery ChalleNGe Academy. It employs six credentialed teachers and ensures that all academic courses align with California standards. SJCOE is accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), which guarantees that credits are transferable and count toward graduation or GED completion.

DCA operates as an alternative high school under SJCOE's jurisdiction, where cadets attend classes from Monday to Friday. They take six courses each term, with two terms in every cycle. Five credits are awarded for each class with a passing grade (A through D). Students also earn five PE credits and two elective credits for their community service hours. By completing the 22-week program, students can earn up to 67 high school credits. Additional credits may be granted for extracurricular activities, including field trips, presentations, and leadership roles such as student council or yearbook staff. If students

do not earn their high school diploma at DCA, they can transfer the 67 credits to their home school.

Special Education Services

Students with learning disabilities receive support from a Special Education teacher and an instructional assistant, with services guided by Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). Accommodations include tutoring, audiobooks, extended time for tests and assignments, and modified instruction to ensure academic success.

Core Program Components

DCA's curriculum and daily routines focus on eight core program components developed according to the National Guard Youth ChalleNGe framework:

1. Academic Excellence

About 20% of cadets earn a high school diploma while at DCA. The remainder return to their home school or apply to enroll in California Job Challenge⁸. DCA does not offer a General Educational Development (GED) certificate or a California High School Proficiency Exam (CHSPE) letter.

Academic growth is evaluated using the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE), which indicates average gains of 1.5 to 2.0 grade levels each cycle. The California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) tests are administered to 11th and 12th grade students. The results are compiled with all county alternative school data.

2. Life Coping Skills

Workshops address substance abuse, anger and stress management, budgeting, and emotional self-regulation, helping cadets build resilience and self-awareness.

3. Job Skills

Cadets learn to write resumes, complete job applications, and prepare for interviews. Workshops on career readiness and goal setting are offered.

⁸ The California Job Challenge (CAJC) program is a no-cost, five-and-a-half-month residential academy located in Los Alamitos for graduates of California's Youth ChalleNGe Academies. It offers career and technical education and college credit in fields such as automotive technology, welding, construction pre-apprenticeship, and certified nursing assistant certificate. <https://cajc.us>

4. **Health and Hygiene**

The program provides lessons on nutrition, personal hygiene, sexual health, and mental well-being.

5. **Responsible Citizenship**

Cadets learn about civic responsibility through community service projects.

6. **Leadership/Followership**

Cadets live in a structured, military-style environment defined by rank, uniforms, and peer accountability.

7. **Service to Community**

Cadets must complete a minimum of 40 hours of community service, including participation in disaster relief efforts and supporting local community events.

8. **Physical Fitness**

Daily physical training fosters confidence, collaboration, and discipline.

Admissions and Structure

The eligibility requirements include:

- Must be between the ages of 16 and 18 at the start of the program.
- Must be drug-free (confirmed through testing).
- Cannot have felony or pending criminal charges.
- Must be a California resident and U.S. citizen.

Entry is voluntary and is on a first-come, first-served basis; however, only eligible applicants are selected. No priority is given to any applicant. Approximately half of the students are SJC residents. Two 22-week terms are offered each year, commencing in January and July. Student schedules run from 5:00 a.m. to 8:30 p.m., seven days a week.

Enrollment Expansion and Challenges

Plans to expand enrollment include an additional 50 cadets. Several challenges affect recruitment: the increased availability of alternative programs, post-COVID hesitancy toward residential programs, and growing mental health concerns. To address these

issues, SJCOE has hired a community liaison to partner with the National Guard Outreach Department.

Mentorship and Long-Term Outcomes

Cadets enter a 13-month post-residential mentorship phase designed to help graduates transition to life outside of DCA, secure job placements, pursue further education, and enlist in the military. DCA reports:

- An 85% placement in employment, education, or training.
- A 20% reduction in federal assistance enrollment among graduates.

According to the U.S. Department of Justice, students who do not complete high school are significantly more likely to be incarcerated.

Discovery ChalleNGe Academy has a per-cadet cost of approximately \$27,000. In comparison, the average annual cost of juvenile detention is about \$40,000 per youth. Studies, such as those from the RAND Corporation⁹, estimate programs in the National Guard Youth ChalleNGe network yield an estimated return of \$2.66 for every dollar spent. A 53-minute video offers an in-depth look at student life and progression through the program: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SQUfFHdpC50&t=39s>.

Findings

F1: DCA improves academic outcomes for at-risk youth.

F2: The program continues to operate below full capacity due to recruitment challenges. SJCOE has hired a community liaison to partner with the National Guard Outreach Department to expand enrollment.

F3: DCA offers a cost-effective intervention for at-risk youth facing potential academic failure.

⁹ RAND's study of ChalleNGe programs serves as the basis for an annual report to Congress by collecting and analyzing site-level data on enrollment, completion rates, credentials awarded, standardized test performance, community service participation, post-program placement, and funding and staffing metrics.

The San Joaquin County Mock Trial Program: Bringing the Law to Life

<https://www.sjcoe.org/services-and-support/sea>

For over 20 years, the San Joaquin County (SJC) Mock Trial program has introduced high school students to the American judicial system through simulated courtroom experiences. The program is co-sponsored by the San Joaquin County Office of Education (SJCOE) and the San Joaquin County Bar Association, with additional support from the San Joaquin County Superior Court and Teach Democracy (formerly the Constitutional Rights Foundation). The competition allows students to develop critical thinking, public speaking, and legal reasoning skills while experiencing the realities of courtroom proceedings.

Students portray attorneys, witnesses, courtroom artists, and journalists as they prepare and argue a fictional case. The 2025 case, *People v. Gold*, involved a campaign-related kidnapping allegation and included a pretrial motion¹⁰ on the admissibility of a statement made while in police custody. Students analyzed legal documents, built arguments, and presented their cases before judges and attorneys throughout the competition.

This year, 200 students from 13 high schools in SJC participated in the six-round event held in February. Stockton Early College Academy (SECA) earned first place in the 2025 competition, advancing to represent the County at the California Mock Trial Finals in Los Angeles. Tracy High School placed second, followed by Mountain House High School, third, and San Joaquin County Office of Education's Venture Academy, fourth.

Individual awards were presented to recognize outstanding performances in both attorney and witness roles. Special honors included:

- A \$500 scholarship awarded by the San Joaquin County Bar Association

¹⁰ A pretrial motion is a legal request for a judge's ruling before trial.

- A two-week, all-inclusive pre-college experience at the University of the Pacific, valued at \$3,500

Thirty-two counties competed at the state level. Although SECA did not place, its long-time coach, who is retiring after many years of service, was honored as California's Adult Advocate of the Year.

To increase participation, the Office of Student Engagement and the Arts (which oversees Mock Trial) plans to contact individual high school principals to invite them to participate. Interested schools will have the opportunity to attend an informational meeting to learn more about the program. The cost for each participating school is \$425.

The Art of Mock Trial: Sketching Justice

An art component of the Mock Trial offers students the opportunity to participate in the program as courtroom sketch artists. Each artist submits a drawing inspired by a scene from their team's Round 2 competition. The winning student artist attends the state finals. The winner, Jean Kylo Tunyol from Mountain House High School, is featured on the Eyes on San Joaquin County cover page, while the other five artists are featured below in no particular order:



Ava White from Ripon High School



Daniella Chavez from Able Charter School



Araya Underdue from Aspire Langston Hughes Academy



Willow Russell from Able Charter



Shrootee Thatte from Tracy High School

Through Mock Trial, students gain practical experience in civic engagement and legal literacy, inspiring many to pursue careers in law, public service, or education.

Findings

F1: The San Joaquin County Mock Trial program provides valuable experiential learning in legal processes, civic engagement, and critical thinking.

F2: The 2024-2025 Civil Grand Jury acknowledges the program's collaborative sponsorship and ongoing efforts to expand participation across county schools.

Sources

- <https://caaspp-elpac.ets.org/>
- <https://data1.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/>
- <https://www.sjcoe.org/>
- <https://iamdiscovery.org/>

- <https://www.caschooldashboard.org/>
- <https://newsroom.courts.ca.gov/news/california-high-school-students-compete-become-2025-state-mock-trial-championship-team>
- <https://www.nationalmocktrial.org/about/general-information/>
- <https://www.makerspaces.com/what-is-a-makerspace/>
- <https://sjcoefablab.org/>
- <https://data1.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/>
- <https://sjcoepublicprodwest2.blob.core.windows.net/attachments/mocktrial/Mock%20Trial%20Rules.Agreement%2024.25.pdf>
- <https://www.sjcoe.org/services-and-support/sea>
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- sjcoepublicprodwest2.blob.core.windows.net+3sjcoe.org+3sjcoepublicprodwest2.blob.core.windows.net+3
- <https://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/>

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Civil Grand Jury reports are based on documentary evidence and the testimony of sworn or admonished witnesses, not on conjecture or opinion. However, the Civil Grand Jury is precluded by law from disclosing such evidence except upon the specific approval of the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court or another judge appointed by the Presiding Judge (Penal Code Sections 911, 924.1 (a), and 929). Similarly, the Civil Grand Jury is precluded by law from disclosing the identity of witnesses except upon an order of the court for narrowly defined purposes (Penal Code Sections 924.2 and 929).

Eyes on San Joaquin County Registration...

Registrar of Voters Office



Introduction

Election integrity is in the national spotlight. The San Joaquin County Civil Grand Jury decided to take a closer look at the Registrar of Voters (ROV). The Civil Grand Jury attended two presentations from ROV staff, toured the department, attended poll worker trainings, examined operations before and after the 2024 Presidential Election, and observed polling locations on Election Day.

This report is to inform the public about the processes and safeguards in place and to assess the Registrar's performance in light of past incidents and increased public scrutiny. The findings are based on observations, interviews, and a review of state and federal law.

Division of Authority: Federal, State, and Local Roles in Elections

Elections in the United States are decentralized, with responsibilities divided among federal, state, and local authorities.

- **Federal Government:** Establishes broad protections but does not directly manage state or local elections.
- **California State Government:** Establishes detailed election procedures, including voter registration rules, ballot handling, and certification deadlines. The California Secretary of State oversees local compliance.
- **County Registrar of Voters:** Conducts local, state, and federal elections, including the management of voter registration, maintaining accurate voter rolls, distributing and verifying ballots, staffing polling places, certifying results, and safeguarding election integrity.

This approach guarantees consistent standards while remaining responsive to the needs of local communities.

The San Joaquin County ROV operates under the authority of the California Elections Code. It must comply with federal legislation, including the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the National Voter Registration Act of 1993, and the Help America Vote Act of 2002. Oversight is also provided by the California Secretary of State.

2024 Election: Voting by the Numbers

Voter Turnout

| Category | Value |
|-------------------|---------|
| Eligible Voters | 516,865 |
| Registered Voters | 378,801 |
| Ballots Cast | 267,627 |
| Turnout Rate | 70.68% |

How People Voted

| Voting Method | Type | Ballots Counted | % of Ballots Cast |
|------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| Vote-by-Mail | U.S. Mail | 105,194 | 39% |
| | Drop Boxes | 76,722 | 29% |
| | Registrar's Office | 678 | 0.25% |
| | Dropped at Polling Sites | 34,200 | 13% |
| | TOTAL Vote-by-Mail | 216,794 | 81% |
| In-Person Voting | Early Voting | 1,933 | 0.72% |
| | Election Day Voting | 48,900 | 18% |
| | TOTAL In-Person Voting | 50,833 | 19% |

Voting Systems in California: Vote Centers vs. Polling Places

California approved the Voters Choice Act of 2016, allowing counties to choose between two primary voting models:

- **Precinct-Based Model:**
 - Voters are assigned to specific neighborhood polling places.
 - Voting typically takes place only on Election Day.
- **Vote Center Model (Voter's Choice Act counties):**
 - Voters may cast their ballots at any voting center in the county.
 - Centers open 3 to 10 days prior to Election Day.

According to the latest available data, 25 out of 58 California counties (43%) still utilize the traditional precinct-based voting system. The remaining 33 counties (57%) have adopted the Voter's Choice Act (VCA) model, which replaces conventional polling places with vote centers.

In 2019, the San Joaquin County Board of Supervisors voted to maintain traditional neighborhood polling places after gathering public input and consulting with the Registrar of Voters.

Early Voting in San Joaquin County

San Joaquin County voters who wish to cast their ballots in person before Election Day may do so only at the Registrar of Voters' Office during regular business hours.

For voters seeking alternatives to in-person early voting, the county provides other options:

- **Vote-by-Mail:** All registered voters receive a ballot by mail¹, which can be returned by mail, dropped off at any polling location, brought to the ROV office, or placed in an official ballot drop box. Mail-in ballots must be postmarked on or before Election Day and received no later than seven days after the election.
- **Ballot Drop Boxes:** There are 25 official drop box locations throughout San Joaquin County. The county elections official announces the drop box locations publicly at least 30 days before each election. They are available daily until Election Day at 8:00 PM, when they are locked and covered.

Polling Place Operations and Training

San Joaquin County operates 171 polling locations, each staffed by trained volunteers and election officials. In response to complaints and procedural concerns, in 2024, the Registrar introduced a three-part training model for poll workers. The program includes instructional videos, live demonstrations, and hands-on practice with equipment and procedures. It is designed to improve consistency, confidence, and service across polling locations.

Ballot Handling, Verification, and Counting

Ballots are received by mail, drop boxes, or in-person delivery. Upon arrival, they are logged and tracked. Each envelope undergoes signature verification. If a mismatch is identified, the voter is notified and given time to address the issue.

¹ California began mailing a ballot to all registered voters during the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2021, Assembly Bill 37 (AB 37) made this practice permanent and expanded the use of ballot drop boxes statewide.

Provisional ballots are used when eligibility is uncertain and are counted only after verification.

Because California allows ballots postmarked by Election Day to arrive up to seven days later, the 30-day canvass period offers time to complete signature curing², provisional validation, and a mandatory 1% manual audit.

In 2024, San Joaquin County provided ballot scanning machines at polling locations for voters dropping off their mail-in ballots. These machines ensure immediate error detection, enhance the accuracy of vote recording, and streamline the vote-counting process, thereby increasing overall confidence in election integrity.

Although voter use of the scanning machines was limited, the ROV plans to improve public awareness and actively encourage greater use and trust in the machines to enhance voter confidence in the system's security and accuracy.

Safeguarding Voter Rolls

The ROV uses data from the Department of Motor Vehicles, the Office of the Secretary of State, and vital records to maintain up-to-date registration lists. Prior to each election, a report flags addresses with ten or more registered voters. Staff investigates each location to prevent fraud or clerical errors.

An incident occurred in 2024 involving an elderly voter who was mistakenly removed from the rolls based on inaccurate information suggesting he was deceased. Once the ROV became aware of the error, it was corrected, and the 102-year-old Army veteran was able

² Signature curing is the process of notifying voters when their mail-in ballot signature is missing or does not match their voter registration record and gives them an opportunity to correct it by a deadline so their ballot can be counted.

to vote in the election. The incident underscores the importance of maintaining thorough, multi-source voter list updates.

Response to Publicized Election Fraud Incident

Following a publicly reported case of election fraud from 2020 involving a former Lodi City Council member, the Registrar of Voters strengthened internal safeguards. According to news reports, multiple ballots were found to be improperly registered to a single address, raising concerns about the accuracy of the voter rolls.

In response, the ROV took the following actions:

- Pre-election audit of addresses for properties with 10 or more registered voters
- Expanded community engagement through an Election Advisory Committee
- Closer coordination with law enforcement and public agencies to safeguard the election process.

Public Outreach and Voter Education

The Registrar's outreach team engages with the public in various ways:

- Participates in community events and civic fairs
- Conducts voter registration drives at schools and community centers
- Offers pre-registration for teenagers aged 16 and 17
- Assists newly naturalized citizens in understanding their voting rights

To keep the community informed, the ROV offers:

- Quarterly newsletters
- Active social media updates
- Online ballot tracking through "Where's My Ballot?"
- A hotline for voter fraud

Security and Transparency

The Civil Grand Jury noted the security practices during the processing of ballots, including:

- Restricted access to sensitive workstations through keycodes and cable-locked hardware
- Passwords and keys are stored separately in a locked safe
- Continuous video surveillance and retention policies for footage

Policies and practices continue to improve election security. For example, in the November 2024 election, the placement of drop boxes was evaluated using past data, which led to the relocation of several boxes to maximize voter convenience. Additionally, all 25 drop boxes were reinforced, secured into the ground, and monitored by 24/7 live-stream cameras. Furthermore, on Election Night, final ballot pickups and polling place transports were escorted by Sheriff's deputies.

The department welcomes election observers, offers facility tours, and provides data to encourage transparency and voter confidence.

Election Observers

California law allows election observers to monitor nearly every aspect of the election process. In San Joaquin County, observers may view ballot receipt, signature verification, equipment testing, tabulation, and the post-election manual audit. Observers are required to check in with election staff and follow established guidelines. Their presence contributes to transparency and public trust.

Technology Investments and Future Improvements

In addition to introducing scanning machines to reduce mail-in ballot processing time, the ROV continues to modernize its operations. IT security staff oversee systems that support ballot tracking, internal audits, and digital backups. Improvements are continuously under consideration, including upgraded ballot imaging systems and expanded training on cybersecurity best practices.

Findings

F1: The ROV complies with all legal requirements and has taken meaningful steps to improve transparency, voter outreach, and ballot integrity.

F2: Response to public incidents has resulted in improvements to security protocols.

F3: New technologies, such as ballot scanning stations, have reduced post-election processing time.

Sources

- California Secretary of State’s Office (<https://www.sos.ca.gov/>)
- Federal Role in Local Elections (<https://bipartisanpolicy.org/explainer/visualize-federal-role-elections/>)
- <https://www.kcra.com/article/world-war-ii-veteran-mistaken-for-dead-voting/64247406>
- <https://www.recordnet.com/story/news/courts/2024/01/04/ex-lodi-councilman-shakir-khan-to-serve-two-years-after-plea-deal-da/72112231007/>
- San Joaquin County Registrar of Voters public documents and website materials (<https://www.sjgov.org/departments/rov/home>)
- Interviews with San Joaquin County Registrar of Voters staff (2024–2025)
- Direct observations by the 2024–2025 San Joaquin County Civil Grand Jury

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Civil Grand Jury reports are based on documentary evidence and the testimony of sworn or admonished witnesses, not on conjecture or opinion. However, the Civil Grand Jury is precluded by law from disclosing such evidence except upon the specific approval of the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court or another judge appointed by the Presiding Judge (Penal Code Sections 911, 924.1 (a), and 929). Similarly, the Civil Grand Jury is precluded by law from disclosing the identity of witnesses except upon an order of the court for narrowly defined purposes (Penal Code Sections 924.2 and 929).

Two members of the 2024–2025 San Joaquin County Civil Grand Jury were recused from all phases of this report.

SUMMARY

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2024-2025 Recommendations

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Photo Credits





2024- 2025 San Joaquin County Civil Grand Jury



Recommendations

Old System, New Costs: Linne Estates

| Respondent | # | Recommendation | Response Date |
|----------------------|---|--|--------------------|
| Board of Supervisors | 1 | Explore feasibility of intertie with City of Tracy | By October 1, 2025 |
| | 2 | Consider consolidating WWTP into one facility | By October 1, 2025 |
| | 3 | Plan to replace or upgrade facilities | By October 1, 2025 |
| | 4 | Plan to install true SCADA system | By October 1, 2025 |
| | 5 | Plan for current and projected discharge | By October 1, 2025 |
| | 6 | Assess feasibility of satellite office in the south county | By October 1, 2025 |

City of Stockton Follow-up

| Respondent | # | Recommendation | Response Date |
|-----------------------|-----|---|--------------------|
| Stockton City Council | 1.1 | Cease enabling outside influences | By October 1, 2025 |
| | 1.2 | Adopt rules for unlawful threatening communications | By October 1, 2025 |
| | 1.3 | Policy on election transparency | By October 1, 2025 |
| | 2.3 | Policy regarding notifying Civil Grand Jury of Brown Act violations | By October 1, 2025 |
| | 3.1 | Hire third party to investigate Ethics Hotline | By October 1, 2025 |

Micke Grove Zoo Follow-up

| Respondent | # | Recommendation | Response Date |
|----------------------|---|---|--------------------|
| Board of Supervisors | 1 | Continue efforts to restore and expand MGZ and secure accreditation | By October 1, 2025 |
| | 2 | Pursue revenue streams to help the MGZ become financially self-sustaining | By October 1, 2025 |
| | 3 | Develop a Master Plan for the county's parks, which includes MGZ. | By October 1, 2025 |

Eyes on San Joaquin County - Growth... Mountain House

| Respondent | # | Recommendation | Response Date |
|--|---|---|--------------------|
| Mountain House City Council | 1 | Pursue partnerships to advance transportation projects | By October 1, 2025 |
| | 2 | Improve access to local areas | By October 1, 2025 |
| | 3 | Evaluate public safety needs to accommodate population growth | By October 1, 2025 |
| | 4 | Plan for accommodating expected student growth | By October 1, 2025 |
| Lammersville Unified School District Board and Mountain House City Council | 5 | Plan and fund for construction and programs at local schools. | By October 1, 2025 |
| Mountain House City Council | 6 | Explore funding opportunities for high school expansion | By October 1, 2025 |
| | 7 | Pursue retail and commercial development | By October 1, 2025 |

Request for Responses

California Penal Code Sections 933 and 933.05 require that specific responses to all findings and recommendations contained in this report be submitted to the Presiding Judge of the San Joaquin County Superior Court within 90 days of receipt of the report.

Note: If the responder is an elected official, the response must be sent within 60 days of receipt.

Mail or hand deliver a hard copy of the response to:

Honorable Gus C. Barrera II, Presiding Judge
San Joaquin County Superior Court
180 E Weber Ave, Suite 1306J
Stockton, California 95202

Also, please email a copy of the response to Mr. Irving Jimenez, Staff Secretary to the Civil Grand Jury, at civilgrandjury@sjcourts.org

Photo Credits

Front Cover:

The photograph of the Sandhill Cranes was taken along Brack Tract in San Joaquin County by a local photographer who wishes to remain anonymous.

Sandhill Cranes hold special significance in San Joaquin County, one of the few places in California where these iconic migratory birds return in large numbers each winter. The region's wetlands, farmlands, and protected habitats, particularly around the Delta and the southern edge of the Cosumnes River Preserve, provide ideal wintering grounds. Each year, thousands of cranes migrate from as far north as Alaska, making San Joaquin County a critical stop along the Pacific Flyway and a premier destination for conservation and birdwatching.

For further information, visit the [Phil Isenberg Sandhill Crane Reserve](#) in Woodbridge, California.

Inside Front Cover:

Photograph of the San Joaquin County Courthouse by Ulmer Photo.

Lemur and Gekko:

Photos provided by Micke Grove Zoo.

Back Cover:

This sunset image was captured on McDonald Island in the San Joaquin River Delta. The blooming almond trees in the foreground were nearing the end of their flowering season, with Mount Diablo visible in the distance. The photograph was taken by a local photographer who wishes to remain anonymous.

Mock Trial Sketches:

Artwork from the Mock Trial Competition was printed with permission from the artists and their parents or guardians.

Additional Photography:

Unless stated otherwise, all other images were captured by members of the 2024–2025 San Joaquin County Civil Grand Jury.

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