

County Public Buildings

Reason for the report

The 2003/2004 El Dorado County Grand Jury chose to review, inspect and tour a selection of County offices and office buildings per California Penal Code (PC) 925.

Scope of the investigation

The 2003/2004 Grand Jury toured, inspected and interviewed staff at the following County offices and office buildings.

Sites visited

- Agriculture Building, Placerville
- Animal Control, South Lake Tahoe
- Assessors Office, Placerville
- Assessors Office, South Lake Tahoe
- Cameron Park Library
- El Dorado Hills Library
- Records Office, Lake Tahoe
- Sheriff's Parking Lot, Placerville
- Veterans Services Office, Placerville

Background

PC 925 states in part "The grand jury shall investigate and report on the operations, accounts, and records of the officers, departments, or functions of the county including those operations, accounts, and records of any special legislative district or other district in the county created pursuant to state law for which the officers of the county are serving in their ex officio capacity as officers of the districts..."

The Grand Jury as part of its general review chose to review County offices and office buildings, for maintenance, health and safety items, and overall appearances. The Grand Jury found a few areas that needed improvement; overall the buildings and offices were maintained satisfactorily. The areas that needed improvement are listed below.

The Grand Jury would like to thank all the county employees that took the time to show us around and answer our many questions.

AGRICULTURE BUILDING

Findings

1. The heat/air conditioning ceiling vents are dirty.

Response to Finding 1: The respondent disagrees wholly with the finding. The heating and air conditioning ceiling vents are cleaned on a regular basis. The subject vents are clean.

2. The modular building adjacent to the Agriculture Building has a doormat with ragged edges, possibly causing someone to trip and fall.

Response to Finding 2: The respondent disagrees wholly with the finding. Currently, there is no doormat, and thus no tripping hazard, present in the area described. However, the Agriculture Commissioner/Sealer states that such a doormat was present, but has been removed in order to alleviate the potential hazard.

3. The carpet between the public area and office has an open seam.

Response to Finding 3: The respondent disagrees wholly with the finding. Currently, there is no open seam in this area. The Grand Jury may have toured the Agriculture building while work to install an access door was in progress. The completion of the access door project included all repairs to the carpet.

Recommendations

1. The heat/air conditioning ceiling vents need to be cleaned.

Response to Recommendation 1: The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted. The subject vents are clean, and regular maintenance of these vents will continue.

2. Replace the existing doormat.

Response to Recommendation 2: The recommendation has been implemented. A new doormat has been ordered.

3. A carpet strip needs to be installed in the doorway over the open seam.

Response to Recommendation 3: The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted. The carpet in this area is properly fastened. There is no evidence of an open seam.

ANIMAL CONTROL, SOUTH LAKE TAHOE

Findings

1. There is a steep slope to the rear of the building. When there is precipitation, run off goes directly to the building causing flooding or dangerous ice.

Response to Finding 1: The respondent disagrees partially with the finding. The existing facility is located on sloping topography, and drainage could be improved. However, the public does not access this area, and there is an alternate route that staff may use to access the storage area if flooding or ice is present. The alternate route of access is not affected by the conditions described, thus mitigating the assumed concerns. There does not appear to be a danger to the public or staff.

2. The parking lot and driveway are inadequate, they are on a slope causing winter safety hazards due to ice and snow.

Response to Finding 2: The respondent agrees with the finding. Animal Control staff make a concerted effort, working with the Department of Transportation, to provide for regular plowing and salting of the area; however, the sloping topography of the site is difficult to mitigate.

3. There is no handicap access to or inside the building.

Response to Finding 3: The respondent agrees with the finding.

4. The public restroom is located at the rear of the main staff office. This causes cross traffic and disrupts productivity.

Response to Finding 4: The respondent agrees with the finding.

5. There is an inadequate exercise area. Only one animal may exercise at a time.

Response to Finding 5: The respondent agrees with the finding. When the weather is good, there is enough space for more than one animal to exercise at the same time, however there is no means to keep them separated. In inclement weather, the covered exercise space available is only adequate for one animal. Plan options for the impending renovation will consider incorporating a roof over the exercise area. Additional roofed area may become an issue with limited land coverage capabilities under TRPA Regulations.

6. The cement runs stayed wet or damp and did not dry out very well. This is a safety hazard for the public, staff and animals.

Response to Finding 6: The respondent agrees with the finding. Animal Control staff are careful when cleaning the kennels to use non-slip products and remove excess water with squeegees. Designs for the renovation will consider increased ventilation in the kennel area.

7. There are no facilities for larger animals, such as horses, goats, etc.

Response to Finding 7: The respondent agrees with the finding.

Recommendations

1. Erect a retaining wall with a drainage system at the rear of the building to curtail the damage from snow and ice runoff.

Response to Recommendation 1: The recommendation requires further analysis. Staff within the Facilities Design section of General Services is in the process of preparing a design to significantly retrofit the existing facility to better meet the current needs of the facility. \$800,000 has been committed to this process, which is scheduled to begin in the Spring of 2005, and be completed by the Fall. Construction of a new retaining wall will be considered in the design.

2. The parking lot and driveway directly in front of the Animal Control Building should be graded or modified to eliminate excess snow, ice and water accumulation. This would also provide additional parking and easier access.

Response to Recommendation 2: The recommendation requires further analysis. Please see the above response to Recommendation 1. This Recommendation will be considered in the retrofit design.

3. Access to and from the parking lot and the building should be handicap accessible.

Response to recommendation 3: The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future. The plans for the renovations scheduled for 2005 will incorporate handicap parking and access to and from the building.

4. Access to the public restroom should be redirected from the main staff office.

Response to Recommendation 4: The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future. The plans for the renovations scheduled for 2005 will incorporate the relocation of the public restroom adjacent to the public area.

5. Provide additional space for animal exercise.

Response to Recommendation 5: The recommendation requires further analysis. The addition of a roof in the exercise area to enhance use of the area during the winter months will be considered in the plans for the 2005 renovations.

However, the addition of a roof in this area will be subject to the amount of additional land coverage allowed under TRPA regulations.

6. Provide additional ventilation for the animal runs to dry more quickly.

Response to Recommendation 6: The recommendation requires further analysis. This Recommendation will be considered in the retrofit design. Increased ventilation is likely to be one of the improvements incorporated into the design plan for the 2005 renovations.

7. Additional facilities are needed for larger animals.

Response to recommendation 7: The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted. The need to house large animals in South Lake Tahoe is very rare. Animal Control has identified foster homes to meet this need, should it arise. In the case of a lawful seizure of any large animal or animals, the animal(s) would be brought to the shelter in Placerville for housing, or a private facility in Tahoe would be utilized.

ASSESSORS OFFICE, PLACERVILLE

Findings

1. The water fountain located at the front door of the Assessors Office is out of order.

Response to Finding 1: The respondent agrees with the finding.

2. There are five to ten computer monitors stored on the top of a file cabinet. According to staff this equipment has been waiting to be moved for months.

Response to Finding 2: The respondent agrees with the finding.

Recommendations

1. The water fountain needs to be fixed.

Response to Recommendation 1: The recommendation has been implemented. General Services repaired the water fountain in July of 2004.

2. The computer monitors need to be removed.

Response to Recommendation 2: The recommendation has been implemented. The computers have all been removed, declared surplus property, and processed in accordance with County policy.

ASSESSORS OFFICE, SOUTH LAKE TAHOE

Findings

1. Single pane windows are currently installed and insufficient. Staff stated ice has formed on the inside of the windows in winter, and the offices are very cold.

Response to Finding 1: The respondent disagrees partially with the finding. Single pane windows do exist in this building, which houses several departments besides the Assessor's office. There are other factors that affect the temperature of the office. There is currently no supporting data to show that the "office is very cold", nor that other departments have similar complaints.

2. A fire extinguisher in the office had an expired inspection tag.

Response to Finding 2: The respondent agrees with the finding.

3. A sizeable worn spot in the lobby carpet needs to be repaired.

Response to Finding 3: The respondent agrees with the finding.

Recommendations

1. Double pane windows should replace the single pane windows.

Response to Recommendation 1: The recommendation requires further analysis. The building is old and constructed of materials that are currently not available. The costs associated with retrofitting and replacing the windows in this building are unreasonable. The County is currently looking into selling this structure and constructing a new building within the Basin to house this function of County Government. General Services will work with the Assessor's office to install a window barrier or other suitable measures to resolve the issue of excessive heat loss and ice formations on the inside of the windows by January 31, 2005. In addition, General Services will check the heating system to make sure it is functioning properly and make any necessary corrections by October 1, 2004

2. The fire extinguisher needs to be inspected.

Response to Recommendation 2: The recommendation has been implemented. The subject fire extinguisher was properly inspected and tagged in May 2004.

3. The lobby carpet needs be repaired.

Response to Recommendation 3: The recommendation has been implemented. The subject carpet has been removed and replaced with vinyl flooring. This work was completed in January 2004.

CAMERON PARK LIBRARY

Findings

1. The ceilings are very high causing acoustic problems. This problem was raised and verified by library staff. The noise level is distracting and is not conducive to library study.

Response to Finding 1: The respondent disagrees partially with the finding. Acoustical problems in the library are caused by a combination of factors, including the heavy public use of the building and its proximity to a middle school. It is a busy public library branch with many activities going on at the same time, such as children's programs, reference and circulation transactions, computer use, and ringing phones. In addition, the architectural design of the building is open and does not easily accommodate modifications to the ceiling configuration. The recent addition of the quiet room accommodates the needs of the facility.

2. The staff restroom has a leaky toilet and rust is visible on the supply line of the toilet.

Response to Finding 2: The respondent agrees with the finding.

3. Some acoustical tiles in the storage room ceiling were water stained.

Response to Finding 2: The respondent agrees with the finding.

Recommendations

1. The acoustical problem needs to be reviewed, as the Quiet Room affords only a small number of library users the opportunity for quiet study.

Response to Recommendation 1: The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted. Several mitigation measures have been implemented over the ten-year life of the building to improve the acoustics. Fabric banners that assist in sound baffling have been installed, carpet strips have been placed on top of the stacks, and considerable efforts, went into the recent construction of the Library Quiet Room. The room has proved to be adequate for the needs of the library users.

2. The leak in the staff restroom toilet and rust on the supply line need to be repaired.

Response to Recommendation 2: The recommendation has been implemented. The repairs were completed in July 2004.

3. The acoustical tiles that are water stained need to be removed, so the roof can be checked for possible leaks.

Response to Recommendation 3: The recommendation has been implemented. The repairs and inspection of the roof were completed in July 2004.

EL DORADO HILLS LIBRARY

Findings

1. The carpet located in the teacher's check out area is in poor condition with some rippling and loose seams. The carpet poses a safety hazard to users and is a potential liability.

Response to Finding 1: The respondent disagrees wholly with the finding. The library is currently housed in a building operated and maintained by the School District. The Librarian indicates that the carpet is in satisfactory condition and does not pose a safety hazard to users

2. Some acoustical tiles in the ceiling were water stained. This may indicate a possible roof leak.

Response to Finding 2: The respondent agrees with the finding.

Recommendations

1. The carpet in the teacher's check out area needs to be stretched or replaced.

Response to Recommendation 1: The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted. The reported damage to the carpet could not be found, however; any future necessary repairs are the responsibility of the school district. Should the school district, upon further evaluation, determine that repairs are necessary, the Librarian at Oak Ridge High School will need to submit a maintenance request to the school administration that will prioritize the repair with regard to other maintenance projects.

2. The acoustical tiles that are water stained need to be removed, so the roof can be checked for possible leaks.

Response to Recommendation 2: The recommendation will not be implemented because it is unreasonable. Information relative to the condition of the ceiling tiles has been relayed to the School District. This facility is operated and maintained by the School District and is out of the jurisdiction of El Dorado County. In order for corrections to be made, the Librarian at Oak Ridge High School will need to submit a maintenance request to the school administration. Staff will then evaluate the condition of the tiles and roof and prioritize their repair with regard to other maintenance projects.

RECORDER'S OFFICE, LAKE TAHOE

Findings

1. The fire extinguisher is located in an adjacent janitor's office, rather than in the Recorder's office.

Response to Finding 1: The respondent agrees with the finding.

2. There is no fire sprinkler system in place.

Response to Finding 2: The respondent agrees with the finding.

Recommendations

1. The fire extinguisher needs to be relocated to the Recorder's Office, so that it may be accessible to staff.

Response to Recommendation 1: The recommendation has been implemented.

SHERIFF'S PARKING LOT, PLACERVILLE (11/04/03)

Findings

1. The parking lot surface had several pot holes and uneven pavement.

Response to Finding 1: The respondent agrees with the finding.

2. The surface had cracks in the asphalt. There are low spots which accumulate rain, snow and/or ice.

Response to Finding 2: The respondent agrees with the finding.

3. The concrete steps from the Sheriff's Department Building to Building "A" showed cracks and missing material.

Response to Finding 3: The respondent disagrees wholly with the finding. There is a series of stairs from the Sheriffs Office to Building "A." In reviewing the same, none were found to be in the condition as described

4. Steps are not of uniform size, some having a higher than normal rise and longer than normal run. This non-conventional size step could cause misjudgment in descending or ascending.

Response to Finding 4: The respondent disagrees partially with the finding. The steps, now replaced with a ramp, were of non-uniform size. Respondent does not agree with issues identified with misjudgment while descending or ascending.

5. Steps are wider at the top step and narrower at the bottom step. This could cause misjudgment while descending or climbing.

Response to Finding 5: The respondent disagrees partially with the finding. The subject steps have now been replaced with a ramp. Respondent does not agree that prior condition would result in misjudgment.

6. The bottom step is angled unlike the top three steps. This could cause misjudgment while descending.

Response to Finding 6: The respondent disagrees partially with the finding. The subject step has now been replaced with a ramp. Respondent does not agree that prior condition would result in misjudgment.

7. There is a wall on one side of the stairs that further narrows the lower steps.

Response to Finding 7: The respondent agrees with the finding.

8. There is no handrail.

Response to Finding 8: The respondent agrees with the finding.

9. Although three large lights shine on the stairs, the lights are blocked by tree branches or trunks.

Response to Finding 9: The respondent disagrees partially with the finding. The respondent considers the existing lighting adequate.

10. No “direct” lighting was on the stairs.

Response to Finding 10: The respondent agrees with the finding.

11. The entire parking lot is poorly lit.

Response to Finding 11: The respondent disagrees partially with the finding. The respondent does not agree that the parking lot is poorly lighted.

12. The security gate allowing access to the parking lot is non-operable.

Response to Finding 12: The respondent disagrees partially with the finding. Although the open/closure of the gate does not cycle electronically, it is the intent of the Sheriff’s Department to keep the gate open in the current static state. The gate can be opened and closed manually.

Recommendations

1. Fill the pot holes in the parking lot surface.

Response to Recommendation 1: The recommendation has been implemented. The pot holes were filled during the summer of 2004.

2. Seal the asphalt cracks.

Response to Recommendation 2: The recommendation has not been implemented, but will be implemented in the future. Staff within General Services will develop an estimated cost to seal the cracks. The work will be completed by June 30, 2005 as weather and funding permit.

3. Level the pavement to eliminate low spots.

Response to Recommendation 3: The recommendation has not been implemented, but will be implemented in the future. Staff within General Services will develop an estimated cost to level the low spots. The work will be completed by June 30, 2005 as weather and funding permit.

4. Standardize the stair size.

Response to Recommendation 4: The recommendation has been implemented. The stairs have been replaced with a ramp. This work was completed in the spring of 2004.

5. Provide handrail.

Response to Recommendation 5: The recommendation has been implemented. The work on the handrail was completed in the spring of 2004. The respondent does not agree that the existing handrail needs to be extended. The grade on the existing ramp is minor and does not require the extension of the current handrail.

6. Install individual step lights.

Response to Recommendation 6: The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted. The stairs in question have been removed and replaced by a ramp. Additional direct lighting to the area was included.

7. Prune tree branches away from the existing overhead lighting.

Response to Recommendation 7: The recommendation has been implemented. This work was completed in the spring of 2004.

6. Install additional overhead lighting in the parking lot.

Response to Recommendation 8: The recommendation has been implemented. New perimeter lighting has been installed. This work was completed in the spring of 2004. New lighting was also installed when the new ramp was installed.

7. The security gate needs to be repaired and maintained.

Response to Recommendation 9: The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted. This item was discussed with staff within the Sheriff's Department. Based on information provided by that Department, the gate has remained open for the past 15-20 years and it is their desire for the gate to remain in this open position. The gate can be closed and secured manually. There is no need to activate the electronic portion of the same.

Follow up

The Grand Jury made a follow up visit on 03/09/04, the following corrections had been made:

1. A sidewalk with a ramp has been installed, replacing the stairs.
2. A partial handrail has been installed. Full handrail still needs to be constructed.
3. Individual lights have been installed along the ramp.
4. Additional overhead lighting has been installed over the sidewalk area.

VETERANS SERVICES OFFICE

Findings

1. There is no counter to separate the public entering the office, from those desiring to speak in confidence.

Response to Finding 1: The respondent agrees with the finding.

Recommendations

1. A counter should be installed. This would allow conversations and discussions to be conducted in a private setting.

Response to Recommendation 1: The recommendation has been implemented. Work to install a counter was completed in Spring, 2004.