

El Dorado County Grand Jury 2011-2012

Consolidation of City and County Services Case Number GJ-11-010

Reason for Report

The Grand Jury is charged by law to look for cost savings and inefficiencies in government.

Background

Cities were established to address specific needs that existed at the time of their creation, using the resources that were available. The 1850's Gold Rush saw the arrival of thousands of new citizens, and with them new problems. These new outposts formed communities that needed services. Assistance was several days away by horseback. As a result, citizens banded together to appoint law officers, fire chiefs, and bodies or councils to manage these new, local services.

Today, cities throughout California and our nation are facing financial crises, yet the last option that is considered is consolidation of city and county services. While the ability to handle large quantities of data and communication has grown dramatically, the potential consolidation of once needed smaller units into larger ones seems to go unnoticed. In business, consolidation is one of the first issues to be looked at for efficiency and cost savings. Consolidation of city and county offers inherent efficiencies.

The resistance to the idea of consolidation seems to be met with two major objections: history, "we have always done it this way"; and the notion of "local control." Modern technology makes consolidation possible; however, this seems to go unnoticed. Consolidation of services means major cost savings with an actual increase in services.

Methodology

Documents:

Placerville Budget Report
South Lake Tahoe Business Plan

Interviews:

El Dorado County Sheriff
Placerville City Manager
Placerville Financial Manager
Placerville Mayor Pro Tempore
South Lake Tahoe City Manager
South Lake Tahoe Mayor

Facts/Findings

1. The five City of South Lake Tahoe Council Members are paid \$452/month. With health insurance, retirement benefits and expenses, the total cost equates to \$201,000 annually.
2. The South Lake Tahoe City Clerk's Office, which exists to serve the City Council, has an annual budget of \$332,252.
3. The cities of South Lake Tahoe and Placerville have combined police budgets of over \$3 million. Administrative costs would be reduced and/or eliminated if the El Dorado County Sheriff's Department were to oversee law enforcement.
4. The combined budgets of the two cities is over \$50 million. The County of El Dorado maintains duplicate departments with existing offices in Placerville and South Lake Tahoe.
5. There would be substantial cost savings with consolidation of city and county services.

Recommendations

1. The Grand Jury recommends that South Lake Tahoe City Council and Manager should perform a city services review by comparing the actual cost of city services versus the cost of the county absorbing these services.
2. The Grand Jury recommends that South Lake Tahoe City Council and Manager make the results of the city services review available for public comment.
3. The Grand Jury recommends that Placerville City Council and Manager should perform a city services review by comparing the actual cost of city services versus the cost of the county absorbing these services.

4. The Grand Jury recommends that Placerville City Council and Manager make the results of the city services review available for public comment.
5. The Grand Jury recommends that the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors collaborate with the City Councils and Managers of South Lake Tahoe and Placerville and El Dorado County Department Heads in order to discuss the benefits of consolidation of city and county services
6. The 2011-2012 Grand Jury recommends that the 2012-2013 Grand Jury continue the investigation to discuss the benefits of consolidation of city and county services.

Responses

Responses to both the findings and recommendations in this report are required by law in accordance with California Penal Code §933 and §933.05. Address responses to: The Honorable Suzanne N. Kingsbury, Presiding Judge of the El Dorado County Superior Court, 1354 Johnson Blvd., South Lake Tahoe, CA 96150.

This report has been provided to:

2012-2013 Grand Jury
El Dorado County Board of Supervisors
Placerville City Council
Placerville City Manager
South Lake Tahoe City Council
South Lake Tahoe City Manager