



**COUNTY OF SAN MATEO**  
**Inter-Departmental Correspondence**

County Manager's Office

**DATE:** August 16, 2004

**BOARD MEETING DATE:** August 31, 2004

**TO:** Honorable Board of Supervisors  
**FROM:** John L. Maltbie, County Manager  
**SUBJECT:** 2003-04 Grand Jury Responses

**Recommendation**

Accept this report containing responses to 2003-2004 Grand Jury recommendations on the following: Narcotics Arrests, San Mateo County Jails, and Food Inspection in San Mateo County.

**Discussion**

The 2003-2004 Grand Jury issued reports on Narcotics Arrests on June 2, 2004; San Mateo County Jails on June 3, 2004; and Food Inspection in San Mateo County on June 10, 2004. The County is mandated to respond to the Grand Jury within 90 days from the date that reports are filed with the County Clerk and Elected Officials are mandated to respond within 60 days. The report pertaining to Narcotics Arrests requires direct responses from the Sheriff and the District Attorney. The report pertaining to San Mateo County Jails requires a direct response from the Sheriff.

**Vision Alignment**

This response to the Grand Jury's findings and recommendations keeps the commitment of responsive, effective and collaborative government through goal number 20: Government decisions are based on careful consideration of future impact, rather than temporary relief or immediate gain.

## Narcotics Arrests

### Findings:

We agree with the findings of the Grand Jury and appreciate acknowledgment of the fine work done by the Narcotics Task Force. We too, recognize the value of centralizing resources to address narcotics crime and share the Grand Jury's conclusion that the CNTF does an outstanding job. The Task Force is consistently professional and effective in the job it does. We support the collaborative approach employed by the Task Force and continue to explore further opportunities for shared service delivery in appropriate functional areas.

### Recommendations:

- 1. All City Councils and the Board of Supervisors should ensure that current funding levels for CNTF are maintained and, if possible, increased to fund the three vacant positions by adjusting priorities in city and County budgets.**

**Response:** Concur that current funding levels should be maintained. Disagree regarding an increase based on limited available resources.

- 4. All City Councils and the Board of Supervisors should review their budget priorities to determine if more money could go to their respective law enforcement agencies for proactive policing and crime prevention programs.**

**Response:** Concur. This review happens annually. Given present fiscal constraints it is unlikely additional funds will be allocated.

## San Mateo County Jails

### Findings:

We generally agree with the findings of the Grand Jury and share its concern about jail overcrowding. To address this problem, the Board has initiated a Task Force with representatives from Court, Sheriff's Office, District Attorney's Office, Probation Department, Private Defender Program and the County Manager's Office to study the reasons for the rise in jail population and identify solutions. The Task Force will study jail population trends, explore alternatives to incarceration utilized in other counties, and evaluate the need for a new Women's Correctional Center. The Board will consider the results of the Task Force study and take steps to improve the living/working environment in the County's jail facilities. We share the Grand Jury's opinion regarding the professionalism and effectiveness of jail staff and appreciate the Grand Jury's remarks.

### Recommendations:

- 1. The Board of Supervisors and the Sheriff should develop and implement plans for reducing the populations or expanding capacity at the Maguire Correctional Facility and the Women's Correctional Center.**

**Response:** Disagree in part. Such a plan can only occur with the active involvement and support of the Courts. The Board has established a Task Force on Jail Overcrowding composed of representatives from the Court, Sheriff's Office, District Attorney's Office, Probation Department, and Private Defender Program. One component of the Task Force charge is to examine the need for a new Women's Correctional Center.

- 4. The Board of Supervisors and the Sheriff should immediately develop a plan to replace the existing Women's Correctional Center with a new facility with adequate space to meet the California Board of Corrections standards and incorporating room for multiple classes, more opportunities for work inside the facility, and childcare in an expanded visiting area.**

**Response:** Disagree. There are currently insufficient resources available for such an undertaking. However, the Jail Overcrowding Task Force will be examining the need for replacement of the Women's Correctional Center and should such need be identified steps will be taken to begin planning for the replacement.

- 5. The Board of Supervisors and the Sheriff should create a program to allow women inmates to pursue work opportunities outside the facility.**

**Response:** Concur. The Board supports the commercial baking program the Sheriff has put in place to help female inmates prepare for and pursue work opportunities outside the facility. The Board-established Jail Overcrowding Task Force will evaluate both the physical space needs and Court support for a work furlough program for female inmates as part of its study.

- 6. The Board of Supervisors and the Sheriff should develop a plan for a minimum security facility for women.**

**Response:** Concur. Agree to study.

## Food Inspection in San Mateo County

### I. Food Safety Inspection Process

#### Findings:

Concur. The Division staff will continue to provide food inspection services throughout the county, begin action on each recommendation, as detailed below, and begin working with the Public Health Education Unit and consumer focus groups to improve public awareness surrounding food safety.

#### Recommendations:

1. **The Board of Supervisors should instruct the Director of Health Services to develop a better multimedia public awareness program by November 1, 2004 that will provide to the public information it needs to avoid becoming ill at home or in the community by eating food that has been improperly handled, cooked or served. The program should regularly provide the public information about:**

- **Food safety laws and local codes established to protect the public**
- **Safe handling and storage of food at home and at work**
- **Common food safety and handling myths**
- **Food facility inspections (how and why they occur, how facilities are rated and results reported, how results can be obtained and interpreted, food facility closures and re-openings, etc.)**
- **Current relevant topics of interest**
- **How the public and food facility workers can report suspected food borne illnesses, raise concerns, file complaints and seek additional information.**

**Response:** Concur. The Division has begun implementing this recommendation and will continue to work with the Public Health Education Unit and consumer groups to evaluate various outreach strategies, options and budgets.

2. **The Board of Supervisors should direct the Director of Health Services to:**

- 2.1 **Redesign and enlarge the Seal by September 1, 2004 to:**
- **provide better visibility;**
  - **prominently display the rating assigned by inspectors;**
  - **advise the reader that the latest inspection report is available for review at the facility and the County;**
  - **direct the reader to the Food Inspection Results Online web page;**
  - **advise the reader of the other related County websites;**
  - **continue to note the date of inspection and phone number of the Food and Consumer Protection Unit of the Environmental Health Services Division.**

**Response:** Concur. This recommendation will be implemented as follows. The seal design and content will be updated to provide concise and clear information to the consumer. In addition, the Division will propose a County Ordinance requiring that upon issuance of the inspection report, the owner/operator of the food facility shall post the most recent report in a location clearly visible and readable by the general public and patrons entering the establishment.

**2.2 Develop uniform inspection guidelines immediately, to assure that:**

- **Seals in all food facilities are obviously and similarly displayed;**
- **The latest inspection reports can be conveniently viewed by the public at any time.**

**Response:** Concur. This recommendation has been implemented by including these items within the Division's standardization and audit protocol.

**2.3 Use a news release to inform the public of the guidelines established in 4.14.2 above and post them on the County website.**

**Response:** Concur. This recommendation will be implemented by preparing a press release and including the release in the "Hot Topics" section of the Division homepage. Staff is uncertain what "4.14.2" refers to.

**2.4 Develop a handout that inspectors must give to owners and/or managers of food facilities that explains their responsibilities to post inspection results and to provide upon request, a copy of their latest inspection report.**

**Response:** Concur. This recommendation has been implemented through a handout that was prepared and distributed in 2002, explaining the requirement to provide a copy of the latest inspection report. The handout will be updated and made available to those businesses that are unaware of the requirement. Successful implementation of recommendation 2.1 above will require the inspection report to be posted in plain view.

**2.5 Evaluate and consider the advisability of adopting an A, B, C grading system by November 1, 2004.**

**Response:** Concur. This recommendation of grading food establishments has been evaluated and considered several years ago as a proposal to the Board of Supervisors. Staff continues to confer with representatives of Los Angeles, Riverside and San Diego Counties to identify food program improvements gained by implementing a facility grading system. At this time, staff believe that the posting of a single grade to inform the public as to the safety of a food establishment is one-dimensional and does not provide the public with the information they need to make an informed decision. By providing access to past inspection results on the Internet and implementing the other Grand Jury recommendations, the public will be given more information and insight into the Division's activities and the ability to evaluate risk based on personal choices.

**2.6 Develop procedures and practices by October 1, 2004 that will provide for:**

- **periodic rotation of the County's food inspectors;**
- **annual unannounced inspections of mobile food dispensing trucks and carts.**

**Response:** Concur in part. The recommendation for rotation requires further analysis. Currently, the food inspections are performed by three teams of staff, with each team responsible for a geographic area of the county. These teams share inspectional load within their area and provide peer review and coverage throughout the geographical area. Additionally, routine program audits and standardization by program supervisors adequately addresses any concerns of inappropriate activity of the staff. Unannounced inspections of mobile food trucks and carts are currently performed with plans to expand these inspections in 2005.

**2.7 Review the Food Program Official Inspection Report form to allow Inspectors to indicate thereon that information is posted as required and that a copy of the latest inspection report is on hand.**

**Response:** Concur. This recommendation will be implemented and included during the next printing of the Official Inspection Report.

## **II. Food Safety and Inspection Website and Public Information**

### **Findings:**

Concur. Providing useful public consumption of data and information that is designed and intended to monitor compliance and enforcement, and designing web pages for a wide range of end-user skills and abilities, has created some unique challenges. The Division is dedicated to continually reevaluate and improve both the form and function of our public information portals.

**3. The Board of Supervisors should direct the Director of Health Services to:**

- 3.1 Review immediately all food safety and inspection web pages to assure that the information entered is accurate.**

**Response:** Concur. This recommendation has been implemented and the Division will periodically perform such reviews.

- 3.2 Review immediately the Food Inspector's Results Online web page database to insure that it lists the correct names and addresses of all food facilities that must be inspected.**

**Response:** Concur. This recommendation will be implemented by creating a quality assurance/quality control program that will include standardized naming criteria and updating our database.

**3.3 Review immediately other county web sites to obtain alternative examples of how food safety and inspection websites are structured.**

**Response:** Concur. This recommendation has been implemented and is included as a standard role for the Program Supervisor, IT Analyst and Director. Prior to the issuance of the Grand Jury report, we have reviewed web pages for New York City, Santa Clara County, Seattle/King County and many others.

**3.4 By January 1, 2005 design and implement a new more "user friendly" Food Inspection Results Online Web site that provides:**

- **Better instructions for its use.**
- **Easier access to other food safety and handling information on other Health Services Agency and Environmental Health Services Division web pages.**
- **A more flexible search feature that allows users to search by:**
  - **name, address, city, type of facility and food served;**
  - **A limit on how long information will remain on the site;**
  - **Simultaneous posting of information posted on the Repeat Major Violator List, Food Facility Closure and Administrative Hearings web pages.**

**Response:** Concur. This recommendation will be implemented. Staff will work with the Public Health Education Unit and community focus groups to seek recommendations and consider such features as:

- **Enhanced instruction, "Getting the most out of the Food Inspection Results." What does it mean? An inspection is a snapshot in time; use the history as an indicator for evaluating the state of the establishment.**
- **Use the five-year record retention as the limit for inspection data on the website.**
- **Link the Repeat Major Violator, Food Facility Closure and Administrative Hearing pages directly to the Food Inspection Results.**

**3.5 By September 1, 2004, resolve all problems that prevent the implementation of the automation of on-site entry of inspection data.**

**Response:** Concur. The Division is committed to implement this recommendation; a recent upgrade to our database software will allow implementation plans to once again move forward.

**3.6 By November 1, 2004, implement the automation of on-site entry of inspection data along with electronic transfer of the data into the database.**

**Response:** Concur. The pilot field evaluation will be implemented by November 1, 2004. During the planning phases, every effort was made to anticipate and address various scenarios encountered by field staff. Nevertheless, it is anticipated that additional changes in workflows and procedures may be identified during the pilot phase. These changes may delay full implementation

until the Summer of 2005. Remaining food staff will begin training upon completion of the pilot phase so that full implementation can occur as soon as all issues have been resolved.