

Grand jury report outlines issues with Animal Shelter

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Calaveras County's Animal Services department is ill-prepared to transition into its new \$15 million shelter, according to findings issued last week by the county's Civil Grand Jury.

As the county's Board of Supervisors was approving a \$10 million loan June 9 to help finance construction of a new shelter, the grand jury issued its report titled "Calaveras County Animal Services, Road Map to a Modern Shelter: Policies and Procedures."

The grand jury's report followed an investigation that included multiple interviews with Animal Services staff and management, as well as an inspection of the department's facility in San Andreas.

Over the years, previous grand juries had highlighted the dire need for a new animal shelter to replace facilities that fell short of current standards of animal care.

The grand jury made 10 recommendations to address problems that included:

- Lack of centralized, organized, and up-to-date policies and procedures.
- Out-of-date job descriptions.
- Failure to conduct annual staff performance reviews.
- Lack of adequate job training, protective gear, safety equipment, a Use of Force policy and crisis training for Animal Services officers.
- Excessive time spent transporting animals to medical appointments due to a lack of in-house veterinary services.
- Failure to obtain available grants for spay and neuter programs.
- Shelter operating over its animal population capacity.

Under state law, the Board of Supervisors must respond to the grand jury report within 60 days. The grand jury also invited a response from Lisa Medina, director of Calaveras County's Environmental Management Agency, which oversees Animal Services. Medina has 90 days to respond.

The Calaveras Civil Grand Jury encourages the public to share concerns about county, municipal, school and special-district operations at its online complaint form at forms.calaverasgov.us/Grand-Jury.