

SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA, COUNTY OF SIERRA 100 Courthouse Square, 2 nd Floor P.O. Box 476 Downieville, CA 95936 (530) 289-3698	FOR COURT USE ONLY FILED SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA COUNTY OF SIERRA FEB 28 2025 <i>mi</i> EXECUTIVE OFFICER & CLERK By: T. PRINCE, DEPUTY CLERK
IN THE MATTER OF 2024 Sierra County Grand Jury	
MINUTE ORDER	

HONORABLE CHARLES H. ERVIN, JUDGE PRESIDING

The County Clerk is hereby directed to file the **Sierra County Grand Jury 2024 Final Report**, attached hereto.

I HEREBY CERTIFY the foregoing to be a full, true and correct copy of an order entered on the minutes of said Superior Court of the State of California, County of Sierra, this 28th day of February 2025.

ATTEST my hand and seal of the Superior Court of the State of California, County of Sierra, this 28th day of February 2025.

SIERRA SUPERIOR COURT

By *mi*
 Tosha Prince, Deputy Clerk

Cc: Heather Foster
 Sierra County Clerk
 Courthouse
 Downieville, CA 95936

**A
Report to the
People
of
Sierra County
California**



2024 Sierra County
Grand Jury Report

MEMBERS OF THE 2024 GRAND JURY

Carrie Blakley, Foreperson
Colicia Palmer, Pro Tem/Secretary
Sandy Sanders, Communication Officer
Lee Brown
Joyce DeCechio
Hannah Ford
Julie Herod
David Mueller
Bruce Palmer

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INTRODUCTION TO THE 2024 SIERRA COUNTY GRAND JURY REPORT

Even though the Constitution of the United States originally contained no reference to a grand jury, the Fifth Amendment to that founding document states, in part:

“No person shall be held to answer for a capital, or otherwise infamous crime, unless on a presentment or indictment of a Grand Jury...”

In California, Article I, Section 23 of the state constitution mandates:

One or more grand juries shall be drawn and summoned at least once a year in each county.

It is based on these mandates, and on our individual and collective conviction that a grand jury, acting morally and ethically under the law, serves the people of Sierra County as a much needed and honorable agency of oversight of government, that we undertook our work throughout this year.

As you will note in this report, this Grand Jury interacted with several people in a variety of capacities. We here express our gratitude to each of these persons for their willingness to work with the Grand Jury, and for the input they gave to our various investigations and quests for information and knowledge.

Additionally, we express our gratitude to those persons who trusted the grand jury process enough to lay complaints before us, believing that we would honor their confidentiality and their grievances. It is our hope that each of these persons feels that the Grand Jury treated their complaints with respect and honest effort.

Finally, we express our gratitude to the people of Sierra County for the opportunity to serve them as members of this Grand Jury. It has been a humbling experience to take up the responsibility laid before us. It is our hope that the members of the Sierra County community feel that they have been well-served by this Grand Jury and we encourage those who are able to do so to consider serving on a Grand Jury in the future.

CHAPTER 1: COUNTY GOVERNMENT

The California Penal Code 925 states:

The grand jury shall investigate and report on the operations, accounts, and records of the officers, department, or functions, of the county. The investigations may be conducted on some selective basis each year.

This Grand Jury understands that mandate to mean that its responsibility entails evaluating and reporting on the regular functioning of county departments and officers, as well as investigating and reporting on any extraordinary circumstances within county departments or involving county officers.

To this end, this Grand Jury invited the heads of several county departments to share with the Grand Jury the normal operations of their respective departments. These were not investigations into these departments, but merely an opportunity for the members of the Grand Jury to learn how the county government operates on an everyday basis.

SECTION 1.1: DEPARTMENTAL ORIENTATION

In order to educate itself as to the normal functioning of Sierra County government, this Grand Jury invited the heads of several departments to make presentations to the Grand Jury about the workings of their various departments. These presentations included information regarding staffing, finances, operations, practices, and policies that direct the functioning of their departments.

The departments and department heads involved in this orientation process were:

Board of Supervisors: Lee Adams, Supervisor District 1

Public Works/Transportation: Bryan Davey, Director of Transportation

The Grand Jury expresses its gratitude to each of these persons for taking the time to meet with the Grand Jury, and for helping to orient the Grand Jury as to the normal functioning of government in Sierra County.

CHAPTER 2: SHERIFF'S HOLDING FACILITY

While Sierra County does not have a jail, they do have a daytime holding facility located in the Sierra County Sheriff's Office. Prisoners who are sentenced in the Sierra County Superior Court serve their local sentences at the Wayne Brown Correctional Facility. Moreover, the Sierra County Grand Jury received written assurances that all needs of all prisoners are being met.

CHAPTER 3: WITHDRAWAL OF COURT OFFICE SUPPORT

For this portion of our report, the following Penal and Government codes govern the interaction and responsibilities of the Court Office and the Grand Jury:

Penal Codes: 869, 890.1, 899, 900, 911, 912, 914, 915, 933, 934, 938.4.
Government Code: 77200

On May 30, 2024, the Court Office exercised its legal right to only support the Grand Jury during the juror selection process. This change was made without any prior notification to the Grand Jury foreperson. This decision was communicated to the foreperson when a request for support was denied and would no longer be provided.

This abrupt withdrawal of support brought the Grand Jury's work to a halt. Due to the confidential nature of conducting the business of the Grand Jury and the lack of dedicated, secure technology previously provided by the Court Office, the Grand Jury found themselves in need of a secure office, copier/scanner, email address and a Post Office Drawer among other items to continue their work. The Grand Jury website has been updated to reflect the changes.

We would like to thank the following for their assistance:

-Sheriff Fisher graciously allowed the Grand Jury the use of an office in the basement of the Sheriff's Office until December 31, 2024.

-Board of Supervisors for their on-going involvement in reviewing this abrupt change and the long-term challenges created.

-The California Grand Jury Association provided assistance for navigating this transition.

-Other Department heads for their assistance in seeking for future office space necessitated by this change.