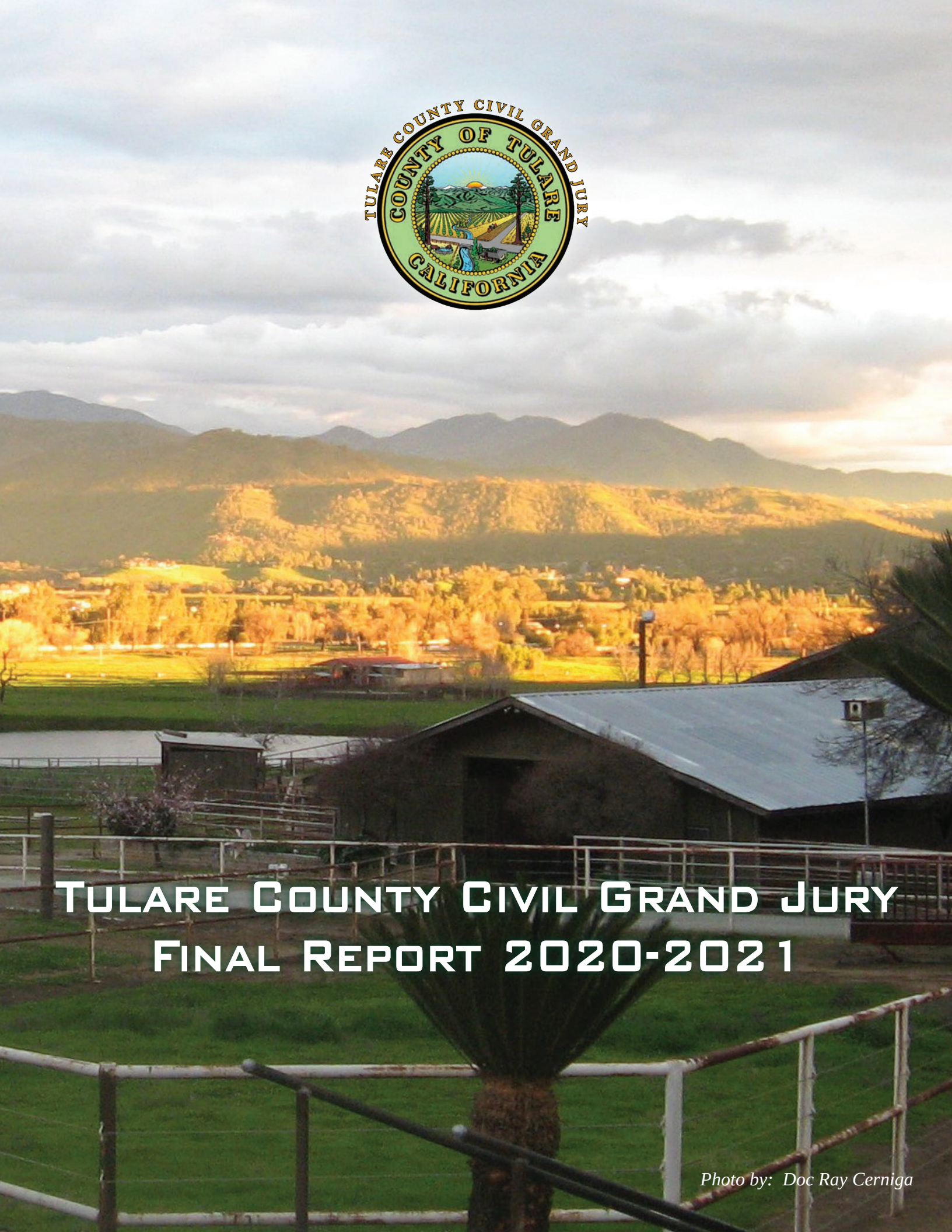

Tulare County Civil Grand Jury
Final Report 2020-2021

Photo by: Doc Ray Cerniga

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2021-2022
TULARE COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY

Photo by Alesa Hefner

Front row left to right:
Cheryl Blevins, Nicholas Sherwood (Foreman), Joel Harris, Alfred Williams, Ray Cerniga, Kimberlei Davis and Janice Pineda. Back row left to right: John Sammis, Laurie Avila, Jeff Clarkson, and Ron White
Not pictured: Judie Casey (Pro-Tem)

LETTER FROM THE JUDGE

Superior Court of the State of California

Stephanie Cameron
Court Executive Officer/
Jury Commissioner

COUNTY OF TULARE
ADMINISTRATION
221 S. Mooney Blvd., Room 303
Visalia, California 93291
Telephone: (559) 730-5000
Facsimile: (559) 737-4290

Nocona Soboleski
Assistant Court Executive Officer

JUDGES' COMMENTS

On behalf of the entire bench of the Tulare County Superior Court, I want to sincerely thank the 2020-2021 Civil Grand Jury for all the work they have performed on behalf of the citizens of Tulare County. Once again another Civil Grand Jury's term has been completed. Your efforts are especially appreciated during these difficult times. With the recent pandemic challenges and hurdles, the Civil Grand Jury remained diligent and worked hard to complete their duties.

Civil Grand Jurors always assume a great deal of responsibility whenever they agree to be a part of a year's panel. They willingly do this as volunteers without any purpose other than to insure that governmental agencies and individuals are properly performing their duties. The taxpayers of Tulare County were well served by all the time and effort put forth by this Civil Grand Jury. Our Court is especially grateful for the efficient manner in which this year's Civil Grand Jury performed these tasks and the overall cooperation and respect they showed to each other.

Much is misunderstood by the general public as to the functions and purpose of the Civil Grand Jury. It is empowered by statutory authority to investigate local governmental agencies and process citizen complaints involving local government issues. No other agency or group has mandate to be a "watch-dog" to insure that our local government works effectively, efficiently, and to the best interest of all citizens. We need responsible, dedicated people such as those on this year's Civil Grand Jury to serve in the future. If you would like to volunteer to do meaningful work for our community, we invite you to apply for service on Civil Grand Jury by contacting the Superior Court at (559) 730-5000 x1359 and ask for an application.

In closing, Tulare County Superior Court applauds each member of this Civil Grand Jury for your dedication to service on behalf of all citizens who live in Tulare County.

Juliet L. Boccone
Assistant Presiding Judge

LETTER FROM THE FOREMAN

Tulare County Civil Grand Jury
5963 South Mooney Boulevard
Visalia, CA 93277

(559) 624-7295 • Fax (559) 733-6078

Honorable Judge David Mathias
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court
State of California
County of Tulare

Honorable Judge Juliet L. Boccone
Supervising Judge of the Grand Jury
State of California
County of Tulare

Dear Judge Mathias and Judge Boccone,

I am honored to present on behalf of the 2020/2021 Tulare County Civil Grand Jury its Final Report, pursuant to the California Penal Code 933. This report was created by overcoming unique and difficult challenges brought about by the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Obstacles such as a reduced period of empanelment, the grand jury would normally operate from July to June. The 2020/2021 jurors served from mid-October 2020 to mid-August 2021 ten months instead of 12 months. COVID-19 prevented inquiries into a number of county and city agencies due to them being closed or operating with emergency staff. The 2020/2021 TCCGJ started with 16 members instead of 19 and within 2 months our number had been reduced to 14 members. Since April of this year, we have been operating with only 12 members which is the required number of members for a legal quorum that is necessary to enact any official action by the jury.

I take this opportunity to thank Judge Mathias, Judge Boccone, and Superior Court Executive Secretary Ellen Kennedy for their support and guidance.

Members of the jury extend their gratitude to , Alison Pierce and the team at the Tulare County Counsel's office for their direction and wisdom, also to the County Printing Service for their aid with our final report.

To the Grand Jury Clerk Annette Jones, I echo the voices of all the members of this jury when I say, "We would not been able to get it done without you." Thank you for all you do for us every day.

It has been a great Privilege and Honor to have served as, Forman of the 2020/2021 TCCGJ, and served with the 11 hardworking and dedicated member who have met their sworn duties and responsibilities in their service to the citizens of Tulare County.

Respectfully,

Nicholas Sherwood, Foreman
2020-2021 Tulare County Civil Grand Jury

grnd_jury@co.tulare.ca.us • www.co.tulare.ca.us

GRAND JURY RESPONSE 2019-2020 COMPLIANCE REVIEW

OVERVIEW OF GRAND JURY RESPONSE DUTIES:

The Tulare County Civil Grand Jury (TCCGJ) is impaneled annually to act as the public's watchdog by investigating and reporting on the affairs of county agencies, local governments, school districts and special districts within Tulare County. TCCGJ reviews complaints brought by citizens and internally initiates investigations about perceived government irregularities. As a fact-finding body, the TCCGJ makes constructive recommendations to a wide range of local governmental problems. This is done by reviewing and evaluating policies and procedures, methods and systems utilized to determine if more efficient and economical programs can be employed. TCCGJ is authorized to, and in some cases must, do the following:

- Inspect and audit books, records, and financial expenditures to ensure that public funds are properly accounted for and legally spent
- Examine the books and records of any nonprofit organization receiving local public funds
- Inquire into the conditions and management of jails and detention facilities
- Inquire into any charges of willful misconduct of County and local officials or employees

TCCGJ does not investigate private entities, nonprofit organizations not funded by the county, state or federal agencies, courts, school curricula, personnel issues, pending litigation, or other matters not connected with local governments.

TCCGJ annually issues a final report which contains specific reports addressing one or more issues. California Penal Code §933(c) requires responses from governing agencies, Tulare County Board of Supervisors, city and county government entities, schools, special districts, certain non-profit corporations, and other entities. This ensures these entities have performed their function in a lawful, economical, and efficient manner. Each report contains information such as the background regarding the subject matter, reasons for the investigation, the procedures followed in obtaining information, findings, conclusions, and recommendations. All required responders must reply in writing to each finding and recommendation in the specific report within a specified period.

ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMITTEE:

1. Reviewed responses to the 2019-2020 Grand Jury Final Report

2. Inquired into the status of implementation of the 2017-2018 Grand Jury recommendations

3. Reviewed relevant California Government and Penal Codes

4. Compiled statistics regarding the responses

The 2019-2020 TCCGJ required responses from the following agencies and reports:

1. City of Visalia Transit Division and Tulare County Area Transit
   - BUSES GETTING FROM HERE TO THERE

2. General Services Agency Director and Property Management Division Director
   - GIVE ME LAND LOTS OF LAND

3. Tulare County Office of Education
   - GRADUATION: NOTHING TO DO WITH CAASPP TEST SCORES

4. Health and Human Services Agency
   - SPECIAL NEEDS, SPECIAL ATTENTION

5. Tulare County Sheriff
   - TULARE COUNTY SHERIFF OFFICE; FROM HORSES TO HELICOPTERS

6. Tulare Public Cemetery Board and Tulare County Board of Supervisors
   - TULARE COUNTY PUBLIC CEMETERY DISTRICT

7. Lower Tule Irrigation District and Pixley Irrigation District and Goshen Community Services District
   - "MORE MONEY ON TIME" DELIQUENT ACCOUNTS IN SPECIAL DISTRICTS

DATA REVIEWED:

1. There were 7 TCCGJ reports published requiring 12 agencies to respond in the 2019-2020 Final Report.

2. There were 32 findings and 17 recommendations in the 2019-2020 Final Report that required responses from the agencies listed above.

3. Four of the 12 agencies disagreed with findings in the 2019-2020 Final Report.

SUMMARY:

Entities responding to a report shall do so in accordance with California Penal Code §933.05.

The 2019-2020 Final Report and responses may be found on the Tulare County Civil Grand Jury website: http://tularecounty.ca.gov/grandjury

REVIEW OF 2017-2018 IMPLEMENTATION

TCCGJ annually issues a final report addressing one or more issues requiring responses from various agencies in Tulare County. All required responders must reply in writing to each finding and recommendation in the specific report. The 2017/2018 Grand Jury Final Report included 10 reports with 18 recommendations and 3 reports with no recommendations. The TCCGJ is obligated to follow up and verify implementation of recommendations made in these past reports.

METHOD OF FOLLOW UP:

1. Clarification letters were sent to the designated responders.
2. Reviewed websites and confirmed updates were completed.
3. Reviewed updated documents and responses.
4. Performed a site visit.

SUMMARY:

The 2017-2018 TCCGJ reports required responses from the following agencies:

1. Tulare County Health and Human Services Agency (TCHHSA) – "It's Reigning Cats and Dogs Animals Are In Control" This report recommended that TCHHSA continue to explore improvement options at Tulare County Animal Shelter (TCAS). TCAS continues to focus on their mission for expanded services as a result of the remodel completed in 2016.

2. Kaweah Healthcare District- "Kaweah Delta's Emergency" This report recommended completion of all aspects of their three-phase, two-year expansion project of their emergency department services and capacity, which they responded was completed in 2021.

3. Tulare County Health and Human Services Agency (TCHHSA) and Tulare County Association of Governments (TCAG) - "Homeless, Health, and Sanitation" This report recommended they investigate transportation accessibility to services and resources for the homeless. TCAG presented the issue to their Board of Governors in August 2018. They identified several related programs already dealing with the issues of providing transportation for the homeless.

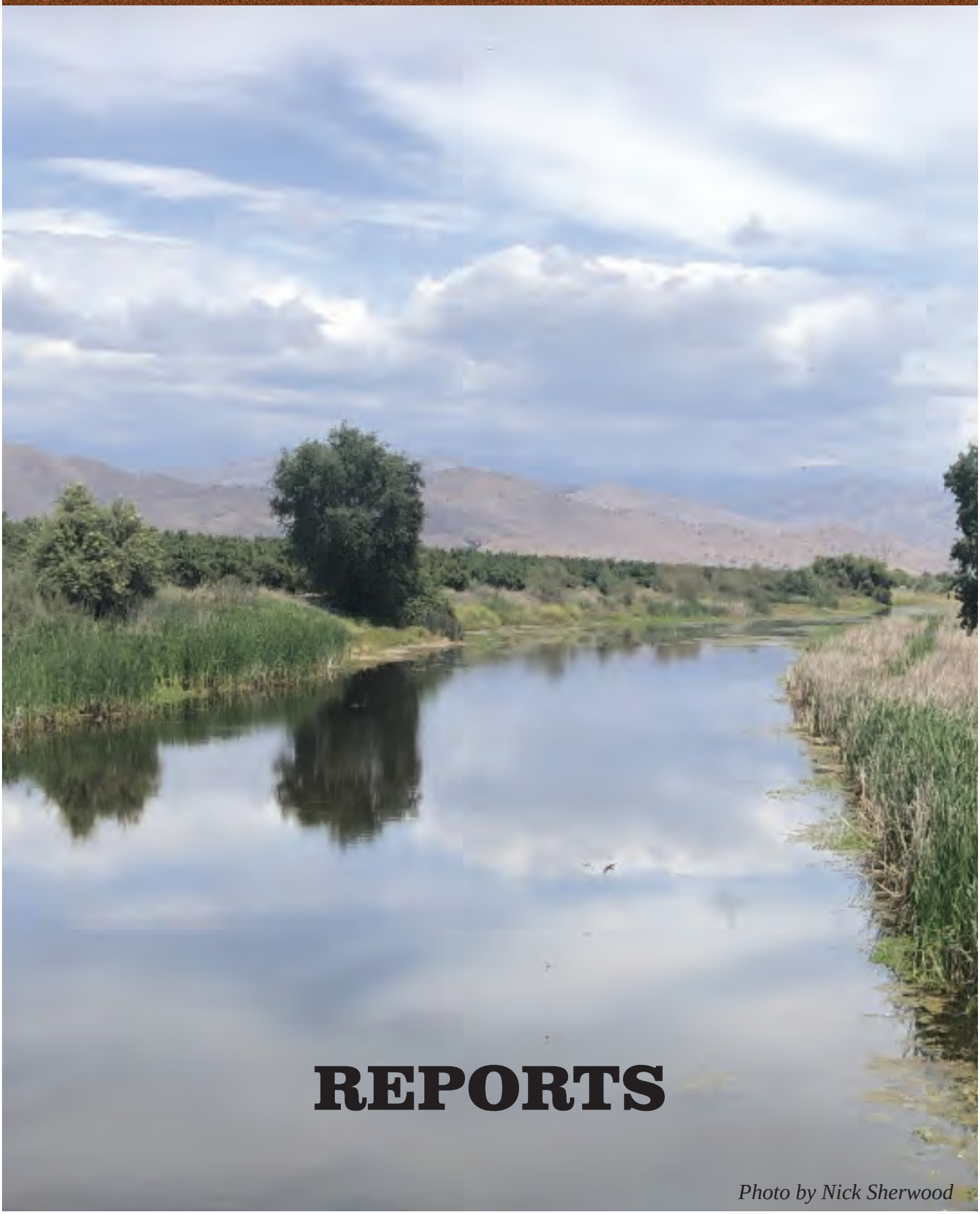
4. Tulare County Probation Department and Tulare County Board of Supervisors – "Pay Up and Recover" This report recommended that probationers be informed that Tulare County Probation Accounting and Collections Department (TCPACD) will report delinquent accounts to the national credit bureaus. TCPACD is unable to implement this recommendation due to legal issues. This report also recommended TCPACD conduct a feasibility study to determine what amount a single collector can recoup and if additional collectors would increase collection rates.
   The TCPACD did implement the feasibility study. However, due to significant legislative action impacting the TCPACD, the feasibility study could not be utilized.

5. Superintendent of Pleasant View School - "A Pleasant View of Discipline" This report recommended that the district disciplinary form add a line for the principal signature and a date be included on the form and that the timeline for the parents receiving the form be a shorter timeline. The school district superintendent responded that the signature line had been added and a shorter timeline was initiated along with adding many new services and tools.

6. Tulare County Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) and Tulare County Board of Supervisors (TCBOS) – "Show Me The Records!!!" This report recommended that the CAO establish separate files for each California Privacy Rights Act (CPRA) request and a date-based tracking system for each request received. It was also recommended to inform requestors of CPRA required procedures. Per the TCBOS, all recommendations have been implemented. Per the CAO, all recommendations have been implemented.

7. Tulare County Sheriff's Office (TCSO) - "Visions of Protection" This report recommended that the TCSO continue to pursue technological advancements to protect and serve Tulare County, which they continue to do.

Instructions were provided to all entities from which responses were required. All entities responded in accordance with California Penal Code §933.05.



REPORTS

Photo by Nick Sherwood

FOR YOUR VIEWING PLEASURE

BACKGROUND:

Woodville, a small agricultural community, is located west of Porterville, about 21 miles south of Visalia. Woodville was the first settlement in Tulare County and served as the original Tulare County seat when the county was founded in 1852. The Woodville Public Utilities District (WPUD) is a utility company that provides public services for about 1,700 residents. The WPUD was established in 2004, with an estimated annual revenue of approximately $661,000 and a staff of eight. The Tulare County Civil Grand Jury (TCCGJ) reviewed the WPUD's compliance with the Ralph M. Brown Act of 1953, an act of the California State Legislature, that guarantees the public's right to notice of the agenda and time of meeting. Thereby, the public can be aware of content, attend, and participate in meetings of local and legislative bodies.

REASON FOR INVESTIGATION:

The TCCGJ received a complaint on October 1, 2020 about a possible violation of the Brown Act at the WPUD.

METHOD OF INVESTIGATION:

1. Interviewed complainant.

2. Conducted onsite review of posting.

3. Reviewed relevant documents.

FACTS:

1. The Brown Act was enacted to govern open meeting laws of governing bodies.

2. Per CA Government Code § 54954.2(a)(1) "At least 72 hours prior to a regular meeting, an agenda shall be posted which contains a brief general description of each item to be transacted or discussed at the meeting."

3. The Brown Act provides for closed sessions regarding the appointment, employment, evaluation of performance, discipline, or dismissal of a public employee. §54957(b)(1)

FINDINGS:

F1. Upon investigation, the WPUD was following the Brown Act requirements.

F2. During site review of the WPUD Office, it was established that the agenda posting was available during business hours but was restricted from close inspection by a locked gate after normal business hours.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

R1. The TCCGJ recommends that the WPUD provide viewable agendas with less restriction after business hours. An additional unobstructed posting area to view the agendas should be provided outside the locked gate.

REQUIRED RESPONSES:

1. Woodville Public Utilities District (F2, R1)

Disclaimer

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EMPOWERING TODAY'S YOUTH BY EXPLORING LIFE CHANGING OPTIONS

BACKGROUND:

The first Police Activity League (P.A.L.) was established in 1914 in New York City. The Tulare County Sheriff 's P.A.L. was incorporated in 1993 by Sheriff Bill Wittman. P.A.L. involves youth 10 to 14 years of age.

REASON FOR INVESTIGATION:

The Tulare County Civil Grand Jury (TCCGJ) initiated an investigation to inform the public about the P.A.L. and how it operates to provide positive alternative activities for today's youth.

METHOD OF INVESTIGATION:

1. Presentation by the Tulare County Sheriff's Office. (TCSO)

2. Reviewed documents.

FACTS:

1. The program is a 100 percent self-funded nonprofit organization, 501(c) (3), with donations received from the public sector.

2. Planned activities require $ 60,000.00 to $70,000.00 annually.

3. As the result of COVID-19 restrictions, the Big Green, which is an online mentoring program, was created in 2020 by TCSO.

4. The P.A.L. Program is administered by TCSO's Youth Services Activity Unit which is staffed by five members.

P.A.L. activities for male and female youth include:

- Football program
- Christmas party
- Annual Pismo Beach State Park camping trip
- Travel basketball
- Soccer skills camp
- Fall bowling league
- Basketball skills camp
- Summer basketball league
- Trip to Sierra K-9 trials
- Trap Shoot competition

5. Free transportation is available to the participants of the P.A.L. program.

FINDINGS:

F1. One of the goals of the P.A.L. is to develop trust and respect for law enforcement and therefore youth are less likely to participate in illegal activities.

F2. Since free transportation is available to and from activities, the program is made more accessible to youth who would otherwise be unable to attend.

F3. To provide awareness of the challenges and dangers youth are facing, classes are available not only

for youth, but for parents and those working with youth. Examples of issues addressed include bullying, gang awareness, human trafficking and cyber safety as well as setting positive goals.

CONCLUSION:

The TCSO is fully involved in the development of our youth which is over and above their responsibility for law enforcement.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

R1. TCSO continue with their P.A.L. program to further develop favorable relationships between youth and law enforcement.

REQUIRED RESPONSES:

Tulare County Sheriff's Office

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TULARE COUNTY SENIOR EXPLORER PROGRAM PREPARING OUR YOUTH

BACKGROUND:

In 1935, senior Boy Scouts were called Explorer Scouts for the first time and organized into Explorer Crews as part of a Boy Scout Troop. It was not until January 01, 1959 that the Explorer Program officially became its own program under the auspices of, but separate from, the Boy Scouts of America. In 1963 the Orange County Sheriff's Department became the first agency in the country to establish a Law Enforcement Explorer Post when it formed Post # 449.

Since 1852, The Tulare County Sheriff's Office (TCSO) has worked in partnership with the community to improve quality of life through professionalism and trust. The TCSO chartered their Explorer Post #2355 on March 1, 1982. This program, which is self-funded, continues to this day.

REASON FOR INVESTIGATION:

The Tulare County Civil Grand Jury (TCCGJ) initiated an investigation to inform the public of how the TCSO Senior Explorer Program (SEP) is preparing our local youth ages 14 through 20 for a potential law enforcement career and community service.

The TCSO SEP is based on five areas of emphasis:

a. Career Opportunities
- Develop potential contacts that broaden employment opportunities.
- Boost self-confidence and achieve success at school and work.

b. Life Skills
- Develop physical and mental fitness.
- Experience positive social interaction

c. Citizenship
- Encourage the skill and desire to help others.
- Gain a keen respect for the basic rights of others.

d. Character Education
- Help make ethical choices.
- Help them fulfill their responsibility to society.

e. Leadership Experience
- Acquire leadership skills necessary to fulfill their responsibilities.

METHOD OF INVESTIGATION:

1. A presentation by the TCSO.
2. Reviewed documents.
3. Reviewed internet sites.

FACTS:

1. Explorers meet monthly at the TCSO substation nearest to their home.
2. Meetings focus on community service, ethics, and their importance to law enforcement.
3. A goal of the SEP is to prepare youth for successful completion in the Police Academy.
4. Scholarships are available, but not limited, to the SEP graduates who attend the Police Academy in pursuit of a career in law enforcement.
5. The Sence Foundation interviews all candidates and determines the amount of the scholarship to bequeath to each candidate.
6. Scholarship recipients apply with an understanding that if selected they will be given a conditional offer by the TCSO and sign a three-year employment contract.
7. The SEP budget is self-funded through contributions from the community.
8. The total number of youth involved in the SEP prior to the COVID-19 pandemic was reported to be approximately 60 Explorers.
9. Currently 35 employees of TCSO were at one time Explorers, some include current Lieutenants, Sergeants, Detectives and Deputies.

FINDINGS:

F1. During COVID-19 to present there are approximately 30 Explorers enrolled.

F2. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic negatively impacted the SEP.

F3. It is not known how many youth have gone through SEP since its inception.

F4. Based upon the number of current TCSO staff who were at one time Explorers, the program has proven to be a viable pathway to a career in law enforcement.

CONCLUSION:

The TCSO is committed to the development and education of our youth to prepare them for a successful and productive career.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

R1. TCSO continue their SEP with Tulare County youth.

REQUIRED RESPONSES:

Tulare County Sheriff's Office

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MONITORING...SO WHAT??

BACKGROUND:

Special districts are established to oversee and govern essential needs of their community. A few examples are water districts, public utilities, memorial, and cemetery districts. Upon the establishment of a special district by the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO), the Tulare County Board of Supervisors (TCBOS) has sixty days in which it will be determined if they will be the governing body of the special district or if the local community citizens will be selected for the board. The Tulare County Civil Grand Jury (TCCGJ) has a due diligence to address any possible code and law violations and report such findings to the residents of the involved districts. It is the duty of the TCCGJ to provide oversight and investigate any deviation from the government codes set forth by the State of California.

REASON FOR INVESTIGATION:

The TCCGJ reviewed the Special Districts Monitoring Report (SDMR) from the Tulare County Auditor-Controller Office indicating numerous Tulare County special districts not operating in accordance with various State and local government codes.

METHOD OF INVESTIGATION:

1. Interview
2. Reviewed documents
3. Internet search

FACTS:

1. A role of the Tulare County Auditor-Controller is to monitor special districts finances to assure that districts are financially solvent. The annual, or in some cases, two (2) years audits are to be filed with the State Controller Office and the County Auditor-Controller Office per California Government Code (CGC) §26909.

2. Each special district is to have financial audit reports conducted by either the County Auditor Controller or a Certified Public Account (CPA) per CGC §26909.

3. A special districts monetary fund, which is kept locally, is limited to a $1,000.00 per the CGC §53952. The CGC provides a means through a resolution passed by the Board of Directors and approved by the TCBOS exempting the special districts regarding the $1,000.00 limit.

4. The County Auditor-Controller provides a copy of the SDMR to the TCBOS.

FINDINGS:

F1. During the review of the SDMR by the TCCGJ it was revealed that a number of special districts were in violation of CGC §59352.

F2. Further review of the SDMR revealed funds held by special districts outside the county treasury were over 1.4 million dollars as of June 30, 2019.

F3. The TCCGJ determined that many of the special districts in violation of the above codes are not made aware of the deficiencies or issues noted in the SDMR.

CONCLUSION:

1. The SDMR is too limited in its distribution.
2. It appears there is no penalty levied to the special districts for non-compliance with CGC.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

R1. The TCCGJ recommends that upon completion of the SDMR, the Tulare County Auditor-Controller should notify any special district found to be in violation of CGC §53952.

R2. The TCCGJ recommends that upon completion of the SDMR, the Tulare County Auditor-Controller should notify any special district found to be in violation of CGC §26909.

REQUIRED RESPONSES:

1. Tulare County Auditor-Controller

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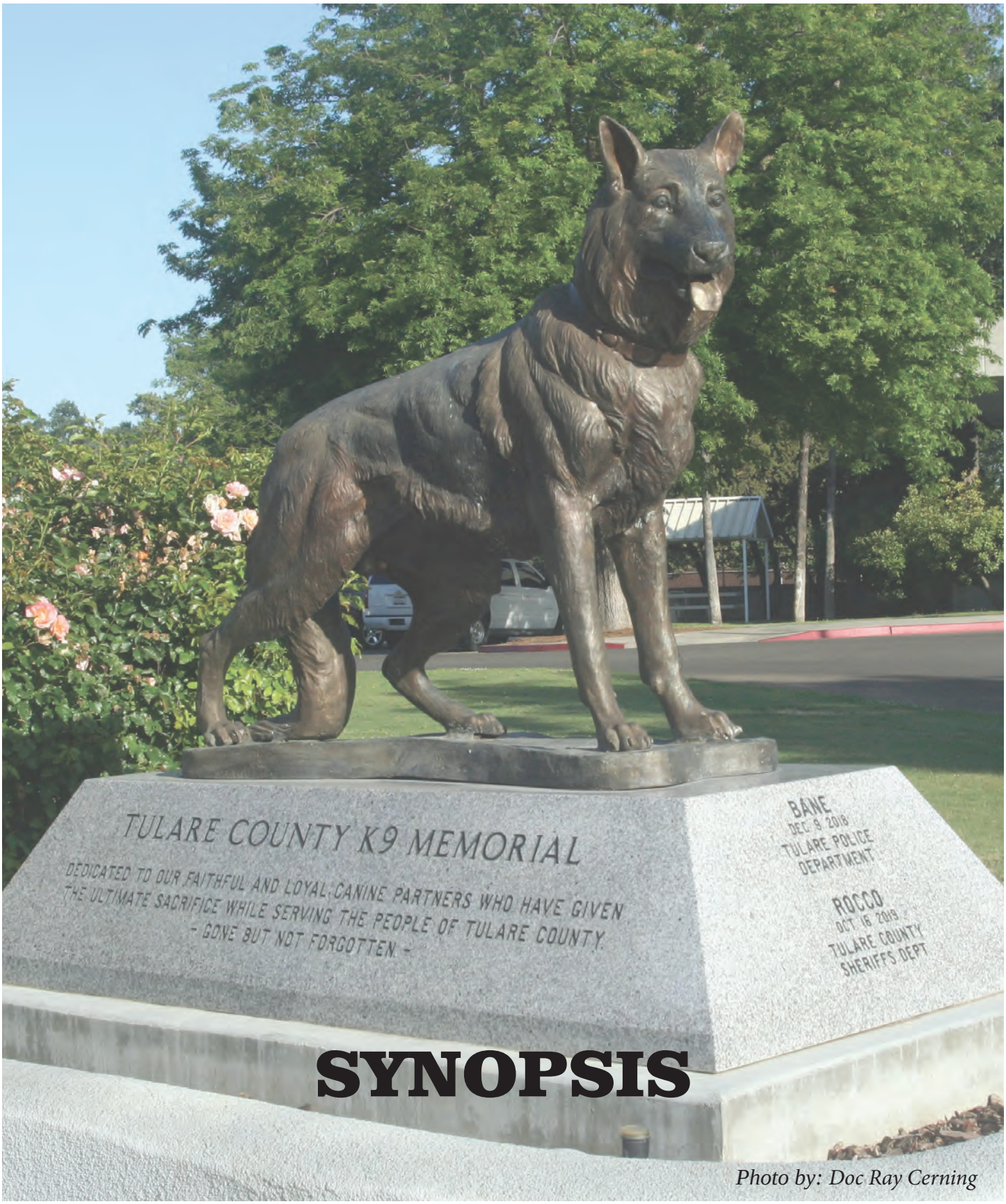
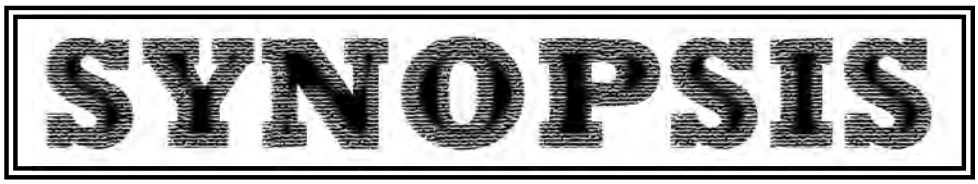


SYNOPSIS

Photo by: Doc Ray Cerning

Synopsis of Complaints and Investigations

An inquiry begins with a citizen's complaint submitted to the Tulare County Civil Grand Jury (TCCGJ) or with a jury-initiated investigation (JII). If it is determined that the citizen's complaint or a JII does not warrant a more in-depth investigation, a brief summary (synopsis) is completed.



Complaint #2

Opened 10/1/2020 - Closed 11/13/2020

The Tulare County Civil Grand Jury (TCCGJ) received a complaint from a private citizen concerning fraud in a county agency. The TCCGJ considered the allegations and after further investigations, no further action was warranted.

Complaint #3

Opened 10/1/2020 - Closed 3/12/2021

A complaint was received concerning citizen safety and faulty infrastructure in a housing development. During the investigation, it was discovered that there is pending litigation on these issues. Therefore, the Tulare County Civil Grand Jury (TCCGJ) can take no further action.

Complaint #4

Opened 10/1/2020 - Closed 11/20/2020
The Tulare County Civil Grand Jury (TCCGJ) received a complaint from a private citizen concerning a road improvement project. The TCCGJ conducted an interview, reviewed documentation, and it was determined that no further action was warranted.

Complaint #5

Opened 10/19/2020 - Closed 12/11/2020

The Tulare County Civil Grand Jury (TCCGJ) received a complaint from a private citizen regarding harassment by a local law enforcement agency. After interviewing the complainant and further investigation, no further action was taken.

Complaint #6

Opened 10/16/2020 - Closed 10/19/2020

The Tulare County Civil Grand Jury (TCCGJ) received a complaint about a Tulare County agency from an anonymous source concerning personnel assignment and supervisors being forced to lower performance evaluation scores tied to career development pay. The complaint was closed and the TCCGJ elected instead, to examine policies and procedures related to assignment and responsibilities of each rank in the agency being investigated.

Complaint #7

Opened 10/19/2020 - Closed 12/11/2020
The Tulare County Civil Grand Jury (TCCGJ) received a complaint from a private citizen regarding harassment by a local law enforcement agency. After interviewing the complainant and further investigation, no further action was taken.

Complaints #8 & #9

Opened 10/18/2020 - Closed 10/30/2020
The Tulare County Civil Grand Jury (TCCGJ) received separate complaints from 2 private citizens concerning a public cemetery district. The TCCGJ addressed similar concerns in its 2019/20 report. It was determined that no further action was warranted.

Complaint #10

Opened 10/20/2020 - Closed 1/18/2021

The Tulare County Civil Grand Jury (TCCGJ) received a complaint from a private citizen concerning excessive noise originating at a fruit packing facility. The TCCGJ interviewed governing agencies and determined that no further action was warranted.

Complaint #11

Opened 10/20/2020 - Closed 5/28/2021

The Tulare County Civil Grand Jury (TCCGJ) received a complaint from a private citizen concerning a family dispute involving youths. Since verification could not legally be confirmed, the TCCGJ could take no further action.

Complaint #12

Opened 10/18/2020 - Closed 11/06/2020

The Tulare County Civil Grand Jury (TCCGJ) received a complaint from an inmate in jail regarding inmate housing. Since the complaint was out of the jurisdiction of the TCCGJ, no action was taken.

Complaint # 13

Opened 10/18/2020 - Closed 11/06/2020

The Tulare County Civil Grand Jury (TCCGJ) received a complaint from a private citizen regarding harassment by a local police department. No further action was taken by the TCCGJ because of potential litigation by the complainant.

Complaint # 14

Opened 10/21/2020 - Closed 11/18/2020

The Tulare County Civil Grand Jury (TCCGJ) received a complaint from a citizen concerning a school district. After an interview of the complainant, no further action was warranted.

Complaint # 15

Opened 11/04/2020 - Closed 4/09/2021

The Tulare County Civil Grand Jury (TCCGJ) received a complaint from an individual regarding possible mismanagement by a law enforcement agency. After interviewing the complainant, law enforcement agency personnel, and reviewing documents, no further action was taken.

Complaint #16

Opened 12/4/2020 - Closed 2/26/2021

A complaint was received concerning improper use of funds. This issue was previously addressed by the Tulare County Civil Grand Jury (TCCGJ) and was included in the 2019/2020 final reports. The TCCGJ will not re-address the issue.

Complaint #17

Opened 1/18/2021 - Closed 2/26/2021

The Tulare County Civil Grand Jury (TCCGJ) received a complaint from a private citizen regarding procurement of a police report from a local police department. The TCCGJ attempted unsuccessfully to contact the complainant after multiple attempts. The complaint was closed.

Complaint #18

Opened 1/22/2021 - Closed 5/21/2021

The Tulare County Civil Grand Jury (TCCGJ) received a complaint concerning living conditions in an apartment complex managed by a Tulare County agency. After a site visit and interview, it was determined no further action was required.

Complaint #19

Opened 3/19/2021 - Closed 5/7/2021

The Tulare County Civil Grand Jury (TCCGJ) received a complaint from a private citizen concerning misuse of public funds and unethical business practices concerning a school district. The TCCGJ interviewed the complainant, reviewed documentation, and determined that no further action was warranted.

JII-B

Opened 11/20/2021 - Closed 4/9/2021

The Tulare County Civil Grand Jury (TCCGJ) initiated an investigation concerning a public cemetery district management and finances. After reviewing documents and interviewing management, it was decided to not proceed with the inquiry.

JII-C

Opened 11/2/2020 - Closed 2/1/2021

The Tulare County Civil Grand Jury (TCCGJ) initiated an investigation concerning use a memorial building. The TCCGJ reviewed correspondence and documentation which specifies the building is privately owned. No further action was taken; not in the purview of the TCCGJ.

JII-F

Opened 3/05/2021 - Closed 4/09/2021

The Tulare County Civil Grand Jury initiated an investigation concerning a community service district's operation. After interviewing management and reviewing requested documents, it was decided not to proceed with the inquiry.

JII-G

Opened 03/12/21 - Closed 06/04/21

The Tulare County Civil Grand Jury (TCCGJ) opened a jury-initiated investigation (JII) on any elected officials' legal purview. After investigation, it was decided that there is no legal obligation for any elected official to perform any function that they may be entitled to perform. That being the case, the TCCGJ closed their investigation with no further action.

JII-H

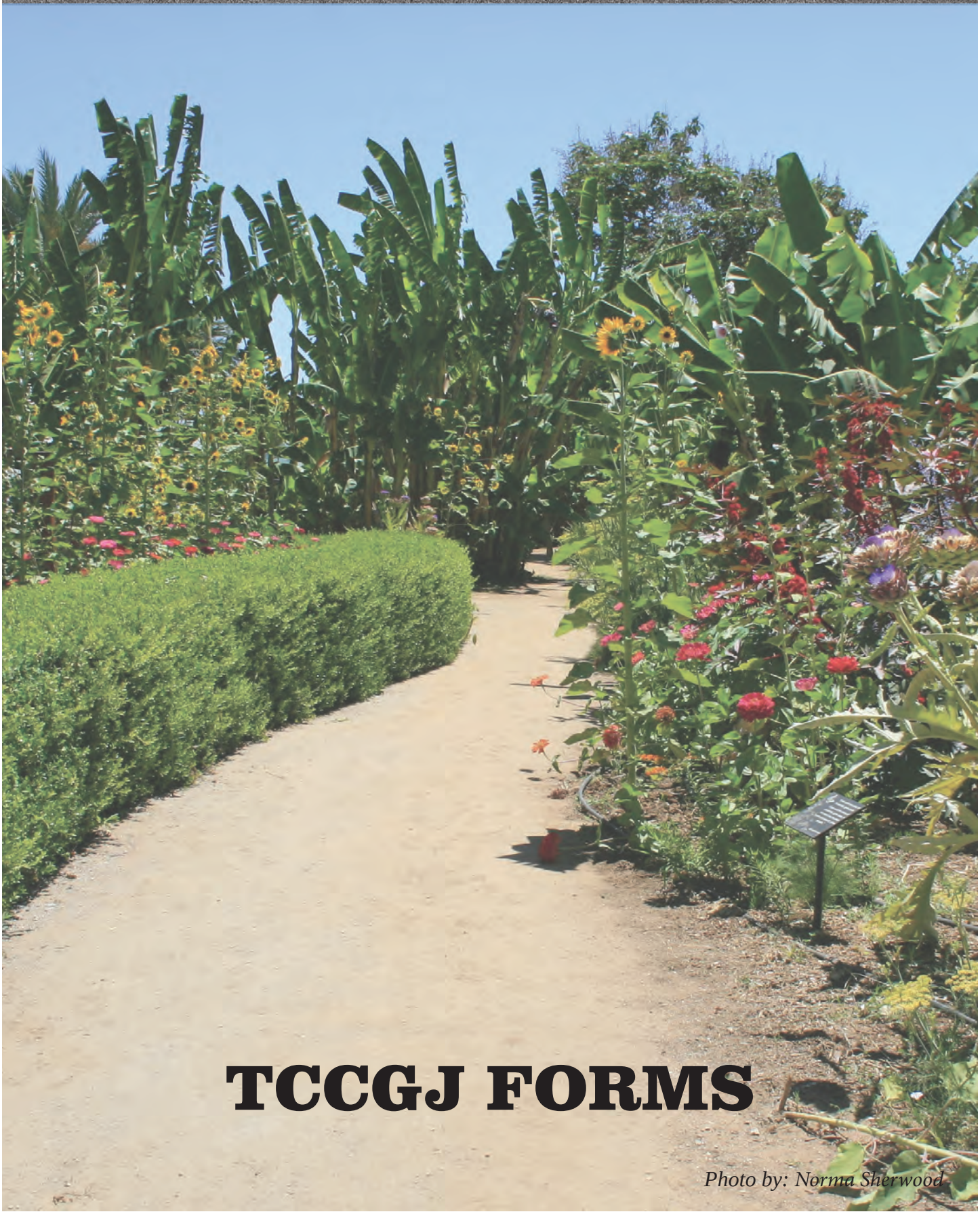
Opened 3/8/2021 - Closed 3/29/2021

The Tulare County Civil Grand Jury (TCCGJ) initiated an investigation concerning farming operations on publicly owned land. The TCCGJ reviewed documents and observed a presentation by public officials. Due to litigation, the investigation was closed.

JII-I

Opened 4/09/2021- Closed 4/30/2021

The Tulare County Civil Grand Jury (TCCGJ) opened an investigation into a division of a county agency regarding available support and service to the public. After review and a presentation from the agency, the TCCGJ closed the investigati



TCCGJ FORMS

Photo by: Norma Sherwood

CITIZEN COMPLAINT FORM

The Civil Grand Jury of Tulare County, in an attempt to carry out its duties, encourages Tulare County residents to report concerns relating to local and county government and the conduct of public officials. Please note: Tulare County Civil Grand Jury has no jurisdiction over State or Federal Agencies, Courts, Judicial Officers or private companies and organizations.

We recognize that many citizens are reluctant to put details of their concerns in writing. Please bear in mind that your name will never be used by the Civil Grand Jury. All Civil Grand Jury members are bound by an oath of secrecy. Civil Grand Jury documents, including this form, are never available to anyone outside the Civil Grand Jury and cannot be subpoenaed.

For an investigation to be initiated, the Civil Grand Jury must consider the validity of each request. Therefore, please include any pertinent correspondence, documents, dates, names and facts. If necessary, you may be asked to participate in an absolutely confidential interview with members of the Civil Grand Jury

Name	
Address	
Telephone Number	
Email	

Give a brief summary of the problem (i.e., agency involved, person(s) to be questioned, dates, etc.). If necessary, attach additional pages. All documents submitted become the property of the Civil Grand Jury and will not be returned.

Your signature:_____ Date:_____

Return this form to:
Tulare County Civil Grand Jury
5963 S Mooney Blvd,
Visalia, CA 93277
559-624-7295 Fax 559-733-6078 • Grnd_jury@co.tulare.ca.us

Last update: August 28, 2020

TULARE COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY APPLICATION/QUESTIONNAIRE 2022-2023

2022-2023 CIVIL GRAND JURY

This jury service differs from jury duty as a trial juror. Your participation is voluntary and it is considered to be a privilege to be chosen to serve on the Civil Grand Jury.

The Civil Grand Jury is composed of 19 active panel members who meet, form committees, investigate and report on the operations, accounts and records of the officers, departments and functions of the county. Service on the panel is from July 1st through June 30th and requires approximately 10-12 hours per week during the fiscal year.

Please complete the application/questionnaire and return it to Room 303, Visalia Courthouse. This questionnaire will assist the Judges of the Superior Court in compiling a list of nominees, which fairly represents a cross-section of our community. Your personal information is confidential and will only be used by the Judges of the Superior Court to assure that the group nominated represents various age groups, economic and social backgrounds. Your application will still be considered even though you may leave some of the questions unanswered.

If there is anything you would like us to know feel free to attach additional information, if necessary.

Your prompt attention to the completion and return of the questionnaire will be greatly appreciated.

Any questions, please call: (559) 730-5000 ext. 1359

Fax application to: (559) 737-4290

Email application to: administration@tulare.courts.ca.gov

Court's website is: www.tularesuperiorcourt.ca.gov

DUTIES OF THE CIVIL GRAND JURY

Civil Grand Jurors serve a one (1) year term from July 1st through June 30th. The jury panel consists of nineteen (19) persons who are assigned to various committees plus three (3) alternates. It is understood that Civil Grand Jurors may be absent for reasonable periods for vacations. During your term as a Civil Grand Juror you would be excused from trial jury service in the State Courts.

The Civil Grand Jury is a time-honored component of our Anglo-American legal system. Civil Grand Jurors are selected citizens of the county who are expected to exercise sound judgment in reviewing and commenting upon the actions of governmental agencies.

Essentially, the Civil Grand Jury operates as an investigative agency performing a two-fold function. First, the Civil Grand Jury has powers and duties with respect to the oversight of public offices, officers, and transactions. Designated State and all County and special District agencies that serve Tulare County are routinely reviewed and critiqued by the Civil Grand Jury in its annual and interim reports.

Secondly, the Civil Grand Jury has powers and duties with respect to inquiry into possible public offenses, misconduct in office by public officers and determining whether to return indictments charging the commission of felonies.

The Tulare County Civil Grand Jury selection process will be conducted May - June annually. The process involves completing this questionnaire and being interviewed by the designee of the Presiding Judge of the Tulare County Superior Courts. After selection, the designee of the Presiding Judge will further instruct jurors of their duties. Throughout its term, the Civil Grand Jury may request advice on legal matters from the District Attorney and County Counsel.

TULARE COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY APPLICATION/QUESTIONNAIRE

Pursuant to California Penal Code section 893, the following questions must be answered:

STATUTORY QUALIFICATIONS: (Place a check in the appropriate box)

No	Yes	Are you a citizen of the United States?
No	Yes	Are you eighteen years of age or older?
No	Yes	Have been a resident of Tulare County for at least one year prior to the date of this application?
No	Yes	Are you in possession of your natural faculties? Are you of ordinary intelligence and of sound judgment and fair character?
No	Yes	Do you possess a sufficient knowledge of the English language?

STATUTORY DISQUALIFICATIONS: (Place a check in the appropriate box):

No	Yes	Are you serving as a trial juror in any court of this State? If Yes, County _____
No	Yes	Have you been discharged as a grand juror in any court of this State within one year prior to the date of this application? If Yes, County_____
No	Yes	Have you ever been convicted of malfeasance in office or any felony or other high crime?
No	Yes	Are you currently serving as an elected public official?
_____	(initial here)	I am interested in serving on the Tulare County Civil Grand Jury for the fiscal year **2022-2023** and I understand the time commitment required.

If you answered **NO** to any **STATUTORY QUALIFICATIONS** or you answered **YES** to any **STATUTORY DISQUALIFICATIONS**, you do not qualify. There is no need to continue or to return the questionnaire.

IF QUALIFIED, please continue and complete the questionnaire, returning it to Court Administration – Rm 303

CALIFORNIA RULES OF COURT, Rule 10.625, regarding certain demographic data relating to regular grand jurors.
{Please check the appropriate box to the following}
(A) Age range, please check the appropriate box: ☐ 18-25 ☐ 26-34 ☐ 35-44 ☐ 45-54 ☐ 55-64 ☐ 65-74 ☐ 75 and over (B) Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female
(C) Please indicate your ethnic origin by **circling one** of the following (may select more than one):
American Indian or Alaska Native Asian Black or African American Hispanic/Latino
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander White Other (please specify)_____
Decline to Answer
Place of Residence by Supervisorial District: ☐ District 1 ☐ District 2 ☐ District 3 ☐ District 4 ☐ District 5

THIS QUESTIONNAIRE IS TO ASSIST THE JUDGES OF THE SUPERIOR COURT IN COMPLETING A LIST OF NOMINEES WHICH FAIRLY REPRESENTS A CROSS-SECTION OF OUR COMMUNITY.
SOME OF THE QUESTIONS THAT MAY SEEM PERSONAL ARE NECESSARY IN ORDER TO ASSURE THE JUDGES THAT THE GROUP THEY NOMINATE, FROM WHICH THE FINAL NAMES WILL BE DRAWN, REPRESENTS VARIOUS AGE GROUPS, ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND ETHNIC BACKGOUNDS.

PLEASE PRINT LEGIBLY

1. Full Name:_____ Date of Birth: _____
   (First) (Middle) (Last)
2. Address (Phys.):_____ City:_____ Zip +4:_____
   Address (Mail): _____ City:_____ Zip +4:_____
   Residence Phone: ( ) _____ Business Phone: ( ) _____
   Cell Phone: ( ) _____ Fax Number: ( ) _____
   Email Address: _____
3. Occupation: _____
   Employer: _____
   If retired, previous occupation _____
4. Can you afford the time required to be a Civil Grand Juror (approximately 10-12 hours per week)?_____
   If not, briefly state why not: _____
5. Do you have any physical or mental condition which would interfere with your ability to function as a Civil Grand Juror? _____ If yes, explain briefly _____
   What accommodations would the Court need to provide to accommodate your physical or mental impairment?
   _____
6. Education (Circle highest grade completed):
   6 (or less) 7 8 9 10 11 12 College: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   Name of schools attended and degrees or certification attained:_____
   _____
7. Clubs or organizations: List any civic, service organizations or any volunteer work to which you belong.
   _____
   _____
8. Spouse / Domestic Partner Name: _____
   Occupation: _____
   If retired, list previous occupation you retired from _____
   Employer: _____
9. Are you or any immediate family member an appointed or elected public officer of any public agency? _____
   If yes, explain: _____
10. Are you currently involved in any litigation (law suits) in this county? _____
11. Are you or any of your immediate family members employed by the County of Tulare or any school district within the county? _____
    If yes, where? _____
12. Do you have any significant problems reading or understanding the English Language? _____
13. Do you have any suggestions, comments or other matters you would like to bring to the judges attention in connection with your application?_____
14. Please tell us about any special skills or abilities that you have which the judges should know about in considering your application? _____
    _____
15. Please tell us why you are interested in serving on the Tulare County Civil Grand Jury. (Please attach additional pages as needed) _____
    _____

16. Describe any background experience or skills you have which would be helpful to grand jury service (i.e., computer skills, leadership skills, or experience writing/editing reports, working in groups, or conducting investigations or interviews.)

_____

_____

Mail to: **Attention: Civil Grand Jury**
Tulare County Superior Court
221 S. Mooney Blvd., Room 303
Visalia, CA 93291

Or Fax to: (559) 737-4290

Or email to: administration@tulare.courts.ca.gov

NOTE: Applicants for nomination as a member of the Tulare County Civil Grand Jury are subject to investigation by an appropriate law enforcement agency as to the statutory qualifications for service and the applicant's ability and suitability for service.

In support of my application for selection as a member of the Tulare County Civil Grand Jury, I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing information is true and correct.

Signed:_____ Date: _____

Photo by: L. Trask