RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY REPORT

Report Title: HUMBOLDT COUNTY CUSTODY & CORRECTIONS FACILITIES

Report Date: May 31, 2024

Response by: Board of Supervisors

FINDINGS

The county agrees with Findings numbered 1-5, 9-11, 13-21, 23-27 and 29.

The county partially agrees with Finding 12.

The county disagrees with Findings 22 and 28.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations 2, 6-9, 11-12 and 14-15 will not be implemented.

Recommendations 1, 5 and 13 are in the process of being implemented.

Recommendations number 4 and 10 have been implemented.

Date: August 13, 2024 Signed: _____
Rex Bohn, First District Supervisor & Chair of the Board

Number of pages attached: 10

COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

839 4th Street, Eureka, CA 95501

Telephone (707) 445-7556

INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM

TO: BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

FROM: COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE

SUBJECT: RESPONSE TO 2023-24 GRAND JURY REPORT "HUMBOLDT COUNTY CUSTODY & CORRECTIONS FACILITIES"

DATE: AUGUST 13, 2024

In the Grand Jury Report, "Humboldt County Custody & Corrections Facilities," the Grand Jury has requested that the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors respond to the following findings and recommendations:

Humboldt County Animal Shelter: Findings 1-5 and Recommendations 1-2
Humboldt County Juvenile Detention Center: Findings 9-13 and Recommendations 4-5
Humboldt County Correctional Facility: Findings 14-15 and Recommendations 6-7
Humboldt County Sheriff's Office Coroner-Public Administrator: Findings 16-22 and Recommendations 8-12
Sempervirens Psychiatric Health Facility: Findings 23-24 and Recommendation 13
Sheriff's Work Alternative Program: Findings 25-29 and Recommendations 14-15

The County Administrative Office is proposing the following response as detailed below.

HUMBOLDT COUNTY ANIMAL SHELTER FINDINGS

Finding 1: The Humboldt County Animal Shelter manual is comprehensive, clear, and defines roles and tasks for staff and volunteers. The manual makes it easier for staff and volunteers to understand their job duties.

Response: Agree.

Finding 2: The number of euthanasia's in 1998 of over 4,000 animals was reduced to 78 cats and dogs in 2021. This reduction saves money, reduces stress, and is appreciated by the public.

Response: Agree.

Finding 3: The Humboldt County Animal Shelter roof has been leaking for several years, causing damage to the building. The leaking roof could result in further damage. **(R1)**

Response: Agree.

Finding 4: Outdoor parking lot entry lights are dysfunctional or absent. This lack of lighting leads to safety concerns for staff and clients. **(R2)**

Response: Agree.

Finding 5: Outdoor yard area lighting is dysfunctional or absent. This lack of lighting may lead to fewer evening adoptions. **(R2)**

Response: Agree.

HUMBOLDT COUNTY ANIMAL SHELTER RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: The Humboldt County Sheriff repair the roof. The repair is to be completed by October 31, 2024. For funding recommendations see the wording below Recommendation #2. **(F3)**

This recommendation is in the process of being implemented.

Humboldt County Department of Public Works staff have investigated all options to keep the project below the threshold for public bidding, but increased construction costs have prevented that approach. As a result, staff is now moving forward with the finalization of public bidding documents in order to try to complete the work by Oct. 31, 2024.

Recommendation 2: The Humboldt County Sheriff repair or replace inoperable outside parking, exterior, and visitation lights. This is to be completed by October 31, 2024. For funding recommendations see the wording below Recommendation #2. **(F4, F5)**

> **Funding Recommendation:** The Humboldt County Civil Grand Jury recommends that the Humboldt County Sheriff fund the expenses listed in **R1** and **R2** from existing appropriations in the **current** fiscal year. If current appropriations are not sufficient, the Grand Jury recommends that the Humboldt County Sheriff and the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors, at their next earliest opportunity, pursue additional funding from an appropriate agency, including state or federal agencies.

This recommendation will not be implemented.

This recommendation will be implemented in the future, however, due to limited staffing and resources in the Department of Public Works to apply to the project, this is anticipated to be completed after the recommended date of Oct. 31, 2024.

HUMBOLDT COUNTY JUVENILE DETENTION CENTER FINDINGS

Finding 9: The current staff is dedicated to helping wards make a positive transition into the community after time spent in the Humboldt County Juvenile Detention Center. This positive transition can help prevent recidivism.

Response: Agree.

Finding 10: Several educational and trade programs are offered to the wards, which can help prevent recidivism.

Response: Agree.

Finding 11: Due to a lack of personnel, staff is required to put in mandatory overtime. This lack of personnel can cause burnout and low retention of staff. (**R4)**

Response: Agree.

Finding 12: Juvenile Correctional Officers are paid $3.50 per hour less than Correctional Deputies but with similar responsibilities and training. This lower wage makes it difficult to attract qualified staff. **(R4)**

Response: Partially Agree.

The Humboldt County Probation Department agrees that the low wage for the position of Juvenile Correctional Officers (JCO) makes it difficult to attract qualified staff to this challenging, multi-faceted position. During Fiscal Year 2023-24 the Probation Department worked with the consulting firm MRG, to determine appropriate pay within the Juvenile Correctional Officer (JCO) and Probation Officer career ladders. MRG recommended to increase the entry level JCO pay, and recommended a specific wage that was determined by comparing the JCO classification to that of Correctional Deputy and Deputy Probation Officer. The job duties and skills required for a JCO were weighted against these other two job classifications. The result was a recommended 10% pay increase to the position of JCO I, which reduced the gap between their pay and that of Correctional Deputy to $1.45 per hour. The recommended wage increase was approved by the Board of Supervisors on Jan. 30, 2024 and went into effect the following pay period.

Finding 13: There is no rain gutter in the area leading from the basketball court to the grass area. The lack of a rain gutter can cause staff and wards to get wet, leading to the potential for slip-and-fall accidents and repeatedly soaked clothing. (**R5)**

Response: Agree.

HUMBOLDT COUNTY JUVENILE DETENTION CENTER RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 4: The Humboldt County Board of Supervisors adjust the Juvenile Correctional Officers pay scale to be more competitive with that of Correctional Deputies. This is to take place by July 1, 2025. For funding recommendations see the wording below Recommendation #5. **(F11, F12)**

This recommendation has been implemented.

As noted in the response to Finding 12, during Fiscal Year 2023-24 the Probation Department worked with the consulting firm MRG, to determine appropriate pay within the Juvenile Correctional Officer (JCO) and Probation Officer career ladders. MRG recommended to increase the entry level JCO pay, and recommended a specific wage that was determined by comparing the JCO classification to that of Correctional Deputy and Deputy Probation Officer. The job duties and skills required for a JCO were weighted against these other two job classifications. The result was a recommended 10% pay increase to the position of JCO I, which reduced the gap between their pay and that of Correctional Deputy to $1.45 per hour. The recommended wage increase was approved by the Board of Supervisors on Jan. 30, 2024 and went into effect the following pay period.

Recommendation 5: The Humboldt County Probation Department coordinate with Humboldt County Public Works to install a rain gutter above the walkway to the grass area by October 1, 2024. For funding recommendations see the wording below Recommendation #5. (**F13)**

> **Funding Recommendation:** The Humboldt County Civil Grand Jury recommends that the County Board of Supervisors fund the expenses listed in **R4** and **R5** from existing appropriations in the **current** fiscal year. If current appropriations are not sufficient, the Grand Jury recommends that the Humboldt County Probation Department and the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors, at their next earliest opportunity, pursue additional funding from an appropriate agency, including state or federal agencies.

This recommendation is in the process of being implemented.

The Probation Department has already initiated conversations with the Department of Public Works regarding this recommendation. Public Works has done some initial work in determining what type of gutter system would work for this location in the Juvenile Detention Facility. The Probation Department has funding through Juvenile Facilities Improvement Construction Funding (AB 178), a portion of which has been earmarked for this project.

HUMBOLDT COUNTY CORRECTIONAL FACILITY FINDINGS

Finding 14: The Humboldt County Correctional Facility roof leaks. This leaking results in more maintenance and upkeep and could negatively impact living and working conditions for inmates and staff, as well as incur additional expenses to the County. **(R6)**

Response: Agree.

Finding 15: The wall-mounted parallel bar exercise equipment at the Humboldt County Correctional Facility needs repair. The torn padded section provides a location to hide contraband and may limit some exercise options. **(R7)**

Response: Agree.

HUMBOLDT COUNTY CORRECTIONAL FACILITY RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 6: The Humboldt County Sheriff repair the leaks in the Humboldt County Correctional Facility roof. This repair is to be completed by December 31, 2024. For funding recommendations see the wording below Recommendation #7. **(F14)**

This recommendation will not be implemented.

This recommendation must be implemented by the Sheriff; however, it should be noted that this project will be implemented in the future as the Sheriff's Office budget already has approved funding dedicated to Phase I and Phase II of the jail roof project. The Department of Public Works has confirmed that the initial design work for this project in already in process, but a project of this large scale requires public bidding which is not expected to be completed until after Oct. 31, 2024. Therefore, this recommendation cannot be completed by Dec. 31, 2024.

Recommendation 7: The Humboldt County Sheriff repair the padded parts of the wall-mounted parallel bar exercise equipment, or replace it with new equipment, by no later than October 31, 2024. For funding recommendations see the wording below Recommendation #7. **(F15)**

> **Funding Recommendation:** The Humboldt County Civil Grand Jury recommends that the Humboldt County Sheriff fund the expenses listed in **R6** and **R7** from existing appropriations in the **current** fiscal year. If current appropriations are not sufficient, the Grand Jury recommends that the Humboldt County Sheriff and the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors, at their next earliest opportunity, pursue additional funding from an appropriate agency, including state or federal agencies.

This recommendation will not be implemented.

The Sheriff must implement this recommendation. The Sheriff has noted that this project will be assigned to the Correctional Facility Programs Manager to ensure repairs to the exercise equipment are made.

HUMBOLDT COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE CORONER-PUBLIC ADMINISTRATOR FINDINGS

Finding 16: When attending deaths where other people are also present, the Coroner's Office staff is accompanied by volunteer clergy, who counsel and console traumatized people. This counselling may assist survivors of the deceased during a difficult time.

Response: Agree.

Finding 17: Student interns and community volunteers contribute many hours to the Coroner's Office, allowing paid staff to focus on other necessary duties. This results in interns obtaining valuable clinical experience, and Humboldt County paying less money from its budget for the Coroner's office.

Response: Agree.

Finding 18: The Humboldt County Coroner-Public Administrator does not have a Policy and Procedures Manual for the coroner portion of the job that clearly defines job duties, relying instead on on-the-job training practices. These practices can lead to different interpretations of duties, tasks, and responsibilities. **(R8)**

Response: Agree.

Finding 19: In the autopsy room, there is one bare plywood counter partially covered with contact paper and another with plastic laminate. This can result in contamination of evidence and unsanitary working conditions. **(R12)**

Response: Agree.

Finding 20: All Humboldt County Coroner-Public Administrators use one shared code to enter the locked evidence and property storage area, leaving no way to track and identify who has entered these areas. This use of only one shared code can lead to questions about a clear chain of custody, potentially compromising investigations. **(R9)**

Response: Agree.

Finding 21: In one evidence room the Grand Jury observed a bare wall with exposed electrical wires and components. These exposed electrical components are at risk of damage and may pose a danger to stored property and human safety. **(R11)**

Response: Agree.

Finding 22: The Humboldt County Coroner's Office does not have a central computerized data system listing personal property. This could lead to a lack of accountability for lost or misplaced property. **(R10)**

Response: Disagree.

The Sheriff has confirmed that tracking property and evidence is available within the Coroner's Offices' current records management system. Additionally, the Humboldt County's Information Technology Division has verified that the Sheriff's Office has recently purchased new Public Administrator software.

HUMBOLDT COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE CORONER-PUBLIC ADMINISTRATOR RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 8: The Humboldt County Sheriff create a policy and procedures manual for the coroner portion of the Coroner-Public Administrator position. This manual is to be written and distributed by December 31, 2024. **(F18)**.

This recommendation will not be implemented.

This recommendation must be implemented by the Sheriff. The Sheriff's Office is in the process of creating a Coroner's Office Policy and Procedures manual. This manual is currently in draft form and is anticipated to be completed by Dec. 31, 2024.

Recommendation 9: The Humboldt County Sheriff install a keypad lock to all areas in the Coroner-Public Administrator's Office that store property or evidence. This keypad lock must track and store the information on all people who access these areas by person, time, and date. This recommendation is to be completed by December 31. 2024. For funding recommendations see the wording below Recommendation #12. **(F20)**

This recommendation will not be implemented.

This recommendation must be implemented by the Sheriff. The Department of Public Works has confirmed they have discussed this recommendation with Humboldt County Sheriff's Office staff. Upon review, it was determined that a programmable access control device that reads an authorized employee badge is likely a preferable solution to a keypad. There may also be a need for such a device at the main entry to the facility. A cost estimate for this work will be prepared and reviewed for further consideration by the Humboldt County Sheriff's Office before further action is taken.

Recommendation 10: The Humboldt County Sheriff develop or purchase a computer software system to inventory and track deceased people's personal property that is not criminal evidence. This recommendation is to be completed by July 1, 2025. For funding recommendations see the wording below Recommendation #12. **(F22)**

This recommendation has been implemented.

This recommendation must be implemented by the Sheriff. The Sheriff has confirmed that tracking property and evidence is available within the Coroner's Offices' current records management system. Additionally, as noted in response to Finding 22, Humboldt County's Information Technology Division has confirmed that the Sheriff's Office has recently purchased new Public Administrator software.

Recommendation 11: The Humboldt County Sheriff repair walls in the evidence room to protect exposed electrical components by December 30, 2024. For funding recommendations see the wording below Recommendation #12. (**F21)**

This recommendation will not be implemented.

This recommendation will not be implemented by the Board of Supervisors as it must be implemented by the Sheriff. It should be noted that recommendation is in the process of being implemented. Public Works staff have visited the facility and are working with the Humboldt County Sheriff's Office on the most appropriate and cost-effective solution to the issue and anticipate this work will be completed by Dec. 30, 2024.

Recommendation 12: The Humboldt County Sheriff replace all work surfaces in the autopsy room with stainless steel or a similar non-permeable material. This recommendation is to take place by June 30, 2025. For funding recommendations see the wording below Recommendation #12. **(F19)**

> **Funding Recommendation:** The Humboldt County Civil Grand Jury recommends that the Humboldt County Sheriff coordinate with the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors to fund the expenses listed in **R9, R10, R11, and R12** from existing appropriations in the **current** fiscal year. If current appropriations are not sufficient, the Grand Jury recommends that the Humboldt County Sheriff and

the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors, at their next earliest opportunity, pursue additional funding from an appropriate agency, including state or federal agencies.

This recommendation will not be implemented.

The recommendation must also be implemented by the Sheriff. The Humboldt County Department of Public Works and Humboldt County Sheriff's Office agree that cabinets and countertops are constructed with wood and sanitation could be improved with alternative materials at this location. Public Works staff will need to investigate and document the standards and best practices that can be implemented at the facility, develop cost estimates for the scope of work, and secure funding before this recommendation can be implemented.

SEMPERVIRENS PSYCHIATRIC HEALTH FACILITY FINDINGS

Finding 23 : The Sempervirens Psychiatric Health Facility provides a caring behavioral health staff and programs, resulting in a better quality of life for patients in crisis.

Response: Agree.

Finding 24: Sempervirens Psychiatric Health Facility has a serious shortage of staff, resulting in additional stress on existing staff that may affect patient care. **(R13)**

Response: Agree.

SEMPERVIRENS PSYCHIATRIC HEALTH FACILITY RECCOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 13: The Department of Health and Human Services fill at least half of the vacant positions at Sempervirens no later than January 1, 2025. For funding recommendations see the wording below Recommendation #13. **(F24)**

> **Funding Recommendation:** The Humboldt County Civil Grand Jury recommends that the Humboldt County of Supervisors fund the expenses listed in **R13** from existing appropriations in the **current** fiscal year. If current appropriations are not sufficient, the Grand Jury recommends that the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors, at its next earliest opportunity, pursue additional funding from an appropriate agency, including state or federal agencies.

Response: This recommendation is in the process of being implemented.

The Humboldt County Department of Health & Human Services' (DHHS) Behavioral Health Division has had most vacant positions on Sempervirens in continuous recruitment since the positions became vacant and will continue to do so until all open positions are filled. The department has worked with their Employee Services staff on increasing the recruitment efforts over the past two years. DHHS has allocated designated funds for paid advertisement for key vacant positions such as the Hospital Administrator. Additionally, the department

has worked with Employee Services to speed up the hiring process to bring on prospective applicants more quickly. This effort has included designated hiring panels and better monitoring processes to track the applicant through the entirety of the hiring process to minimize any delays in the hiring process.

Additionally, key leadership staff have increased collaborations with College of the Redwoods (CR) and Cal Poly Humboldt (CPH). These efforts have led to providing paid internships and the eventual hiring of these individuals once they have graduated from their respective programs. The educational programs being focused on are the Registered Nurse programs at CR and CPH as well as the master's in counseling psychology and master's in social work programs at CPH.

DHHS contracts with multiple organizations including Traditions Behavioral Health and Nightingale for medical professional services, including psychiatrists, to ensure that Sempervirens is always in compliance with staffing requirements for a psychiatric health facility. These agreements are costlier than hiring internal staff, however, they are required to ensure good care for patients, as well as to meet state requirements.

And finally, the department is working with the County Administrative Office and other county departments to include plans to construct a new facility that would house Sempervirens and other behavioral health services in the county's updated Facilities Master Plan.

SHERIFF'S WORK ALTERNATIVE PROGRAM FINDINGS

Finding 25: The Humboldt County Sheriff's Work Alternative Program grounds are orderly and generally well-maintained with minimal inmate supervision needed. This results in a good work environment where skills learned by inmates can translate into life skills including farming and construction.

Response: Agree.

Finding 26: The Humboldt County Sheriff's Work Alternative Program produces meat and vegetables for jail meals thus reducing food costs for the Humboldt County Correctional Facility.

Response: Agree.

Finding 27: The Humboldt County Sheriff's Work Alternative Program's Farm invites volunteers to assist. This helps save money and allows the facility to be accepted by neighborhood residents.

Response: Agree.

Finding 28: The Humboldt County Sheriff's Work Alternative Program has a drainage pond several feet below the walking area with minimal fencing between the two. Without adequate fencing to secure this drainage pond, a visitor, officer, or inmate could fall into the pond. **(R14)**

Response: Disagree.

The Humboldt County Sheriff has confirmed that the fencing mentioned in this finding is 3-4 ft. tall wiring

fastened to secured T-bar posts. There is no opening, except for an area that can be opened if access to the drainage area is needed. The Humboldt County Sheriff's Office does not agree that this area poses a hazard to individuals at this location.

Finding 29: The Humboldt County Sheriff's Work Alternative Program is short-staffed, requiring overtime for deputies. There are times when only one deputy is on duty. This can cause exhaustion and stress. **(R15)**

Response: Agree.

SHERIFF'S WORK ALTERNATIVE PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 14: The Humboldt County Sheriff install a secure fence with a locked gate around the drainage pond by no later than July 30, 2025. For funding recommendations see the wording below Recommendation #15. **(F28)**

This recommendation will not be implemented.

This recommendation must be implemented by the Sheriff, however as noted in the response to Finding 28, Humboldt County Sheriff's Office does not agree that this area poses a hazard to individuals at this location and will not be implementing this recommendation.

Recommendation 15: **R15:** The Humboldt County Sheriff ensure that a minimum of six filled Sheriff's Deputy positions are assigned to the Sheriff's Work Alternative Program Farm by December 31, 2024. For funding recommendations see the wording below Recommendation #15. **(F29)**

> **Funding Recommendation:** The Humboldt County Civil Grand Jury recommends that the Humboldt County Sheriff coordinate with the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors to fund the expenses listed in **R14** and **R15** from existing appropriations in the **current** fiscal year. If current appropriations are not sufficient, the Grand Jury recommends that the Humboldt County Sheriff and the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors, at their next earliest opportunity, pursue additional funding from an appropriate agency, including state or federal agencies.

This recommendation will not be implemented.

This recommendation will not be implemented by the Board of Supervisors as it must be implemented by the Sheriff who will determine the best course of action to address this recommendation, however, the Sheriff has noted that this recommendation will not be implemented as it is not reasonable given the county's current budget constraints.