

# GRAND JURY

## County of Yolo

P.O. Box 2142

Woodland, California 95776

530-406-5088

grand-jury@sbcglobal.net

***FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE***

**May 31, 2011**

### **YOLO COUNTY GRAND JURY ISSUES REPORT ON WOODLAND FIRE DEPARTMENT EMERGENCY SERVICES FEES**

The City of Woodland initiated an emergency services cost recovery fee (Ordinance No. 1506) in 2009 that disproportionately impacts its taxpayers and visitors based on the type of insurance they carry. City Ordinance No. 1506 deprives “responsible” parties of their due process rights, as the billing process does not provide proper notice or a formal method of contesting findings of responsibility. City Ordinance No. 1506 is a form of double taxation for Woodland property taxpayers. The City has only received about 20% of the recovery fee revenues it anticipated when the program was started. The recovery fee is poor public policy. The Grand Jury recommends the discontinuation of enforcement or repeal of the ordinance.

Last year’s Yolo County Grand Jury studied Ordinance No. 1506 and published a report a year ago, not long after the emergency services cost recovery plan was implemented. In that report, the Grand Jury raised concerns about the basis for fees, the agreement with the billing agent Fire Recovery USA (FRUSA), and the recovery rate. The City of Woodland responded to the report in September 2010, disagreeing with some of the Grand Jury’s conclusions while acknowledging the program fell short of its revenue goals. Nonetheless, the City stated it was satisfied with the revenue from the program. This year’s report goes into more depth of about the public policy issues and challenges the City’s position that any funds recovered amount to “found money”.

The Yolo County Grand Jury functions as a citizen “watchdog” organization to review the operations and performance of county and city governments, school districts, and special districts. Based on these assessments, the Grand Jury publishes its findings and may recommend constructive action to improve the quality and effectiveness of local government.

The public can access the full Woodland Fire Department report and the City of Woodland’s response to last year’s report at the Grand Jury website: <http://www.yolocounty.org/index.aspx?page=780>. Also available on the website are the nine reports the Yolo County Grand Jury has already released this year. The Grand Jury will release the remainder of this year’s investigative reports and the final published volume of all twelve reports on June 30.

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Contact: Kathleen Stock, Yolo County Grand Jury Foreperson