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July 12, 2022

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To: Michael Familia, Foreperson, YCGJ
P.O. Box 2142
Woodland, California 95776

To: Honorable Daniel M. Wolk
Superior Court of California, County of Yolo
1000 Main Street
Woodland, California 95695

Re: 2019-2020 Yolo County Grand Jury Report: Monitoring Compliance with the 2017-1018 Yolo County Grand Jury Recommendations

Foreperson Familia and Honorable Daniel M. Wolk:

The following is the response of the Yolo County Sheriff's Office to the findings in the 2021-22 Grand Jury report titled, "Cancelled Visitation Policies at the Monroe Detention Center." The report additionally included recommendations that my office will respond to at a later date.

Findings

F-1 The Sheriff's Office has failed to provide an online visitation scheduling system despite appropriated funding by the Yolo County Board of Supervisors in 2018. The Sheriff's Office committed that scheduling would be available by the end of 2020. This constitutes a broken pledge.

F-2 The Sheriff's Office has failed to provide a video visiting system despite appropriated funding by the Yolo County Board of Supervisors in 2018. This constitutes a broken pledge.

F-3 The Sheriff's Office stated in February 2020 that inmates would be able to access new visitation options and not lose any visitation access during the transition. Within a month, the Sheriff's Office cancelled all social visits and has not made any efforts to reinstate these visits.

F-4 The Sheriff's Office's public statements erroneously state that social visitation is permitted. In fact, no system is in place to permit such visitation. This contradiction misleads the public.

"Honored to Serve"

Response

The Civil Grand Jury's most recent report, "Cancelled Visitation Policies at the Monroe Detention Center," fails to appreciate the difficulties, complications, and complexities placed on the Yolo County Jail as a result of the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic. In a somewhat myopic fashion, the report notes that a "February 2020 pledge to maintain [social] visitations [for inmates] was broken without notice one month later..." Of course, the COVID-19 pandemic began in March 2020.

Throughout the pandemic, the primary focus of the Yolo County Jail has been the health, safety and wellbeing of our inmates. Unprecedented safety measures were needed to best ensure the safety of our inmates and staff alike. Unlike other businesses or government operations, the Yolo County Jail is severely limited in its capacity to implement safety measures given the nature of a secured facility. Many safety measures employed by businesses or other government operations are not feasible within a jail. The primary, and most integral, safety measure for keeping our inmates safe, was and continues to be, taking every possible measure to prevent COVID-19 from entering the jail. To that end, throughout the pandemic the Sheriff's Office regularly conferred with the Yolo County Health Officer regarding safety protocols and procedures, including matters concerning visitation. The Yolo County Health Officer, on numerous occasions, has lauded the efforts and dedication of the Sheriff's Office in maintaining the health, safety, and wellbeing of our inmates.

Further, while it is unfortunate that the implementation of the jail's online visitation scheduling system and video visitation system were delayed due to complications related to the COVID-19 pandemic; such was the case with nearly every other public work or project. Notably, the Civil Grand Jury itself took a hiatus for part of the 2020-2021 term. In fact, the Supervising Judge for the Civil Grand Jury explained that, "Due to the life-threatening pandemic cause[d] by COVID-19...the Court is not able to safely complete the 2020-21 Grand Jury candidate orientation or subsequent Grand Jury Draw."

After assessing the current state of the pandemic, and in consultation with the Yolo County Health Officer, in person non-contact social visitation resumed on April 25, 2022. While we anticipate a further "return to normal" regarding jail practices and procedures, the County is committed to taking necessary steps to ensure the safety, health and wellbeing of our inmates.