

Press Release

Date: June 5, 2023

To: News Editor and Media

The Yolo County Grand Jury today issues its first report of the 2022-23 term.

The report concerning the City of Davis addresses the practices and policies of the City's street tree maintenance programs.

The Summary section, which explains why the Grand Jury undertook the investigation and summarizes important issues, findings, and recommendation, provides as follows:

SUMMARY

The 2022-23 Yolo County Grand Jury (Grand Jury) received a complaint about Davis (City) street tree maintenance. This report addresses issues of street tree care connected with Chapters 15 and 37 of the Davis Municipal Code (DMC).

The complaint filed with the Grand Jury asserted that some City street trees planted on private property were in poor condition because property owners were not aware of their duty to water these trees. The City's failure to enforce this duty might then result in added costs to the city due to having to remove trees that died prematurely. The Grand Jury has found that the City has not developed an effective education program to inform private property owners of this duty. Further, the City has failed to provide any incentive to the property owners to incur the expense of watering the City-owned trees.

The Grand Jury researched the [2018 Measure H, \(1\)](#) which renewed a park maintenance parcel tax to support City-owned trees and parks for an additional 20 years. The Grand Jury found that, contrary to voter intent, the Davis City Council deleted "street trees" from the categories approved to receive the benefits of this parcel tax. Instead, the City inserted "street lighting" when adopting [Ordinance 2521, \(2\)](#) implementing Measure H.

Finally, the Grand Jury found that the organizational structure of the Davis tree program is fragmented, and it is not clear who is responsible for management and oversight of the street trees. The City needs to correct or clarify [DMC Chapter 37](#) (3) to accurately specify which City officers, commissions or committees have responsibility to direct each element of the new Davis [Urban Forest Management Plan](#). (4)

The Yolo County Grand Jury, composed of County residents under the direction of the California Superior Court for Yolo County, issues reports on the effectiveness, efficiency, and transparency of local government. Local governments respond to the Grand Jury's findings and recommendations.

New Grand Jury reports, as well as reports for past terms, and forms for filing a grievance with the Grand Jury, may be reviewed at the Yolo County Grand Jury web site <https://www.yolocounty.org/living/grand-jury/yolo-county-grand-jury-reports> [file://yolo-store01/DEPTSHARE/GrandJury/2021-2022 Grand Jury/00 DRAFT REPORT SUBMISSION/5 Press Release Reports/Yolo County Grand Jury reports](file://yolo-store01/DEPTSHARE/GrandJury/2021-2022%20Grand%20Jury/00%20DRAFT%20REPORT%20SUBMISSION/5%20Press%20Release%20Reports/Yolo%20County%20Grand%20Jury%20reports)

Very truly yours,

Steven A. Oldham

Steven A. Oldham, Foreperson
2022-23 Yolo County Grand Jury