



WILLITS POLICE DEPARTMENT and HOLDING CELLS
July 5, 2006

Summary

In accordance with duties required, the Grand Jury visited the Willits Police Department (WPD) and the Holding Cells located at 125 East Commercial Street in Willits.

Background

California Penal Code §919(b) states "The Grand Jury may inquire into the condition and management of the public prisons within the county." The Grand Jury also has a general authority to review city affairs under Penal Code §925(a).

Methods

On several occasions the Grand Jury interviewed members of the Willits Police Department during on-site visits.

Findings

1. The budget of the WPD provides for a staff of one Chief, three Sergeants, ten Patrol Officers, one Community Service Officer, five Dispatchers, and one administrative assistant.
2. At the time of the Grand Jury's visit, three patrol officer positions were vacant, two of them unfilled and one unfunded. One dispatcher position was unfilled.
3. The Administrative Assistant is in cross training for Dispatcher.
4. There currently is neither a female nor a bi-lingual Patrol Officer.
5. Housing and quality of life are important considerations when recruiting personnel for WPD.
6. According to the California Board of Corrections Inspection Report of 2005, the Willits Police Department Holding Cells were out of compliance because not all required Policies and Procedures were included in the Jail Manual.
7. On occasion there are not enough officers to adequately staff the Holding Cells and still respond to calls.

8. General Orders (operating procedures) for the WPD are being revised with funding provided by Redwood Empire Municipal Insurance Fund.
9. Currently one staff person is qualified to be a Custodian in the Evidence Room; other staff are undergoing training.
10. Transportation of prisoners to the County Jail or another facility is carried out within one hour.
11. At the time of the Grand Jury's visit All Holding Cells were clean and facilities were found to be in working order.
12. WPD does not possess Tasers.
13. The Emergency Plan for the City of Willits was last revised in 1998.
14. Total drug arrests are up by approximately 300% over the last five years.

Recommendations

The Grand Jury recommends that:

1. the WPD comply with the regulations of the California Board of Corrections and update the Policy and Procedure Manual for the WPD Holding Cells. (Finding 6)
2. the WPD actively recruit for bi-lingual and female patrol officers. (Finding 4)
3. the Willits City Council fund and fill vacant positions. (Findings 2, 7)

Comments

A fully staffed Willits Police Department would ensure an increase in safety and protection.

Response Required

Willits City Council (all findings and recommendations)
Willits City Manager (all findings and recommendations)
Chief, Willits Police Department (all findings and recommendations)