



## ***Report on the County Clerk and Assessor's Office***

### ***SUMMARY***

As part of its obligation to conduct periodic reviews of County agencies, the Grand Jury performed an oversight of the Office of the County Clerk and Assessor.

### ***BACKGROUND***

According to the mission statement of the Clerk and Assessor, "The combined offices are responsible for a wide range of services. Our mission is to carry out the legal requirements in a manner resulting in equitable and fair treatment of all County Taxpayers, to maintain and preserve the public's records in a secure and easily accessible environment for retrieval by the public and to promote public confidence in the administration of fair and impartial elections." The office performs an extensive and varied number of functions on behalf of the County and its residents, including maintenance of property and voter rolls, assessment of real and personal property, issuing of licenses, recording of births and deaths, and the conduct and tallying of local, state, and national elections.

### ***METHODOLOGY***

The Grand Jury visited the Clerk/Assessor's Office and conducted interviews of office personnel. It reviewed documents pertaining to the organization and performance of the duties of the office.

### ***FINDINGS***

1. The office of the Clerk has a total permanent staff of nine.
2. Staff turnover is higher at the lower paid, entry level positions than among more senior personnel.
3. To the fullest extent possible, functions of the Clerk's Office are computerized in a very technology-intensive environment.
4. A portion of the document processing fees goes to pay for up-to-date technology.
5. The remainder of revenues from the Office goes into the County General Fund.
6. Requests for information and documents are met in a timely fashion.



7. Despite a considerable increase in recent years in the volume of work, the Clerk's Office has functioned without an increase in staffing for the last 20 years.
8. The conduct of County elections by the Clerk's Office has gone smoothly despite the increasing complexity of the process.
9. The conduct of elections depends heavily on a well-organized group of temporary hires.
10. Election results, sent by modem from the polling places, are now available almost immediately after the closing of the polls at the Clerk's Office and the Mendocino County website.
11. Safeguards for a fair election process appear to be both adequate and appropriate.
12. Between elections voting machines are warehoused in two separate facilities, one of which has a leaky roof.
13. The Assessor's Office has an authorized staff of 24 permanent workers and supervisors.
14. The Assessor's Office is increasingly computerized, enabling it to handle the workload much more efficiently.
15. Shortage of staff in the Assessor's Office, particularly those with specific skills, is a serious problem, leading to a grievous overburdening of existing personnel.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. The Grand Jury recommends that the Board of Supervisors require the Department of Human Resources to perform desk audits for workers in the Clerk/Assessor's office to determine the appropriateness of current salaries for those jobs. (Finding 2)
2. The Grand Jury recommends that election machines be stored in one secure, structurally sound facility. (Finding 12)
3. The Grand Jury recommends that further efforts to address the shortage of adequately skilled employees in the Assessor's office be undertaken. (Finding 15)

### **COMMENTS**

The astute use of technology by the office of the Clerk/Assessor has mitigated the effect of budget cuts that have had such a negative impact on many County agencies. The Grand Jury commends the administration of the office for both the overall efficiency and helpfulness demonstrated in the workplace.



County of Mendocino  
Grand Jury

Post Office Box 629  
Ukiah, CA 95482  
(707) 463-4320

***RESPONSES REQUIRED***

Mendocino County Board of Supervisors  
Mendocino County Clerk/Assessor

***RESPONSES REQUESTED***

Director of Human Resources  
Director of General Services