

THE NEW YREKA POLICE DEPARTMENT FACILITY

A FORTRESS WORTH THE WAIT

SUMMARY

For many years the Yreka City Police facility was located in the old Carnegie Library Building on West Miner Street. This building dates back to the early 1900's, is a historic landmark, but was showing its age and was not really suitable for a modern police department. The Siskiyou County Civil Grand Jury has inspected the facility several times covering over 12 years and found it inadequate for the task being asked of it. In 2017, the City of Yreka gave final approval for a new "state of the art" structure located on Fairlane Road in Yreka.

The Civil Grand Jury was invited to tour and inspect the new facility and review police operations in Yreka. Arrangements were made with senior staff to meet at 9:00 a.m. on March 5, 2019 at the new building at 1400 Fairlane Road. The visit included a review of normal operating procedures, budget, current and developing issues, improvements, and anticipated changes for the future.

BACKGROUND

The new police facility was formerly used as various businesses with the city purchasing the building and property for \$800,000. The initial planning called for extensive modifications to the building itself along with the surrounding property. The acquisition and construction costs were estimated at \$1.5 million which grew to nearly \$4 million when completed. This included a local grant valued at \$1.5 million with the remainder coming from a government loan.

An article entitled "Planning for Real Estate Acquisition and Relocation" presented in the 2016 Grand Jury Report, identified that the failure to adequately plan for the project could result in delays, funding problems, negative publicity, political, and even legal action. This project suffered from all of these issues. Finally, in 2018 government funding in the form of a loan was obtained, plans

were approved, and the renovation began. In early 2019, the new facility became operational.

METHODOLOGY

In attendance were members of the Civil Grand Jury who inspected the physical layout of the facility. This included emergency procedures, communications, administration, records storage, maintenance, security, and day to day operations. The department objective is to provide the best possible law enforcement support for the City Of Yreka. They feel that the new facility will greatly aid in this goal. Senior staff was on hand to conduct the tour and answer any questions or concerns.

DISCUSSION

The physical layout of the facility from the street looks like a fortress, but without a moat or drawbridge. There is a high stone wall surrounding the building with two gates for entry and exit. There is very little public parking which requires on-street parking for most visitors. Public access to the building requires entry into a secured lobby with fortified walls and bulletproof glass.

Staff parking inside the gated area for patrol, tactical, and personal vehicles is excellent and secure. This is a giant step forward from the old facility which was completely open to the public. Officers and staff described damage to their personal vehicles at the former facility and are appreciative of the security and safety offered by the new location.

Electronics and communications have taken a giant leap forward when compared with the old building. There is a secure state of the art area that is not located in a basement subject to flooding and water damage as in the old structure. The lack of sand bags keeping water out is a welcome change. There is a modern encrypted radio system for officers and staff to ensure secure communications within the department. This will eliminate scanners being able to track law enforcement in the area.

There is also an impressive dispatch area. It has numerous screens for viewing live local camera feeds. A large area contains desks for volunteers, animal control, and extra dispatchers. The old stacks of boxes have been replaced by a modern rolling file storage system.

There is a well laid out emergency operations room complete with electronic, audio, and video access. The only thing that appears missing is a detailed map of the city on the wall complete with water, sewer, telecom, and other reference information. While it is possible to do this electronically, maps are often found in operations centers in other agencies. It is nice to be able to bring resources to a specific spot as quickly as possible and having a map on the wall can make that easier.

Offices, working areas, and briefing rooms are helpful for staff to conduct business as needed. Key staff members can enjoy their own space without sharing the multi-use room that was required in the old building. There is a well laid out kitchen, locker-room, showers, gym, and armory. These additions go a long way towards making things operate in a smooth and orderly manner.

Patrol, staff, and emergency vehicles are provided a covered parking area to keep them operational, last longer, and easily accessible. An armored tactical vehicle is available as needed and staged for rapid deployment.

Normal electrical power is backed up by a large capacity generator which can be brought online as needed. Communications and electronics equipment is shielded to prevent damage which can be a common occurrence with backup power.

The new building was originally designed and built to accommodate automotive repair and maintenance type operations. The modifications to retrofit the facility into a modern police station were extensive. The walls and ceilings had to be reinforced to include ballistics protection. Electrical facilities had to be strengthened, and many other improvements made. If necessary, the 911 dispatch center is capable of dispatching CALFIRE, sheriff's department, and other

agencies as well. Should the facility be compromised in an emergency, the department has the ability to dispatch from anywhere with a Wi-Fi connection.

Adequate space for future growth and the ability to expand will always be a problem with any facility. This property sits on a corner lot and is using virtually every bit of space available. Vacant property to the South and East of the facility is not owned by the city and if developed will eliminate any potential for expansion. There has been some discussion of moving the Yreka Fire Department to a new location, near the YPD, where it can grow and expand. As long as the adjoining property is not developed, a window of opportunity still exists. The City had the opportunity to purchase this property but did not do so.

Law enforcement operations were discussed to ensure that public safety is always the number one goal of government. The officers and staff are dedicated public servants who are driven to provide the best service possible. With over fifty miles of streets and roadways, it is a challenge.

Currently the department is staffed with 14 officers (the Chief, 1 lieutenant, 3 Sergeants, and 9 Patrol), 7 Dispatchers (2 part time), 1 Animal Control Officer (who does double duty for parking control), and some part time help for reports and evidence. The patrol department is currently short one officer but could easily justify more sworn staff to include investigators. It is not easy to find and recruit suitable candidates despite a significant signing bonus.

The department maintains a 24/7 patrol schedule with an emphasis in law enforcement. School safety is given significant emphasis and the department engages in ongoing coordination with the schools at all levels. Contact with educators and administrators is also an ongoing process to ensure everything that can be done is being done.

The ever growing homeless situation, alcohol, and drug use is a problem often taking up 50% of the officer's time on patrol. Yreka sits on the I-5 corridor and moderate weather brings large numbers of homeless through the area who often stay for long periods of time. Mental health and drug issues involving the homeless population further contribute to the problem. This puts a severe strain

on police, ambulance, and medical personnel who have to provide service for them. Businesses throughout the area are also affected. They often complain about the impact the homeless and drug users have on their business and customers.

The new facility has the capability to monitor security cameras placed throughout the city. Screens in the dispatching area constantly display output from these cameras. Any computer in the facility can access them. This greatly enhances citizen safety, since the police can now monitor and respond to a crime in process without the need for a 911 call.

FINDINGS

F1: The new facility has very limited public parking.

F2: The new facility is located in an area of limited expansion with very little room for future growth. The city had the opportunity to purchase the property to the south of the facility but declined to do so.

F3: After a long, tedious planning and construction process, the new Yreka Police Station is a dramatic and much needed upgrade from the old station. This is a new and efficient facility that not only has boosted staff morale, but will greatly improve the safety and security of the citizens of Yreka.

RECOMMENDATIONS

R1: At a minimum, the parking area at the front of the facility and along Davis Street should be marked and reserved for police department visitors, similar to the way parking was restricted at the old facility.

R2: The City of Yreka should consider purchasing the adjoining property before it is developed. The owners of the undeveloped property to the south of the facility should be contacted. This property needs to be part of the city's long term plan.

REQUEST FOR RESPONSES

Pursuant to Penal Code section 933.05, the Siskiyou County Civil Grand Jury requests the City of Yreka and the Yreka Police Department address the findings and recommendations in this report and take action as appropriate.

Reports issued by the Civil Grand Jury do not identify individuals interviewed. Penal Code section 929 requires that report of the Grand Jury not contain the name of any person or facts leading to the identity of any person who provides information to the Grand Jury.