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Yolo County history in jeopardy as archives decay, Grand Jury reports

Grand Jury makes seven recommendations to improve Yolo County libraries

Yolo County's historical records are decaying and disintegrating in an inadequately temperature- and humidity-controlled building in northwest Woodland, according to a Yolo County Grand Jury report released today.

The Grand Jury recommended that the Board of Supervisors approve funding this fiscal year for a large-scale modern scanner and digital asset management system that would allow documents to be digitized and stored online where they would be safe from further environmental damage, including fire and flooding, and easier for the public to search, view and copy.

The Grand Jury also called on the archives coordinator, county librarian and county supervisors to ensure that work is on track to achieve the goals set forth in the Yolo County Library Facilities Master Plan 2018-2035, prepared last year. That plan recommends mitigating environmental problems at the current Yolo County Archives and Records Center, at 226 Buckeye Street in Woodland, by 2025, including repairs to the HVAC system. The plan recommends finding permanent new quarters for the Archives by 2035.

Archives staffing also should be increased to allow for expanded public access, the Grand Jury concluded. Currently the Archives is open to the public only on Tuesdays from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. and Thursdays from noon to 4 p.m.

The Archives contains thousands of documents, including official records of the Board of Supervisors, the County Clerk/Recorder, Superior Court, and the Board of Education, as well as tax rolls, naturalization and immigration records, and property deeds. It also contains diverse subject collections concerning schools, towns, churches, businesses, and cemeteries as well as maps, photographs, yearbooks, community and family collections, and newspapers.

Archives staff provide research assistance to county departments as needed, and up to 30 minutes of free research for members of the public. Patrons also have free access to ancestry.com and more than 5,000 digital newspapers at the Archives.

2017-2018 YOLO COUNTY GRAND JURY NEWS RELEASE

“The Archives and Records Center is a county treasure,” said Judy Wohlfrom, foreperson of the 2017-18 Yolo County Grand Jury. “Our investigation found significant problems that should be addressed to ensure this irreplaceable resource remains available for future generations.”

The Grand Jury’s report, “Improving the Yolo County Libraries and Archives,” identified several other issues impacting local libraries, including use of libraries by homeless, indigent and mentally ill individuals for non-library purposes such as bathing and napping.

To address this and other issues, the Grand Jury offered four additional recommendations:

- Provision of a full- or part-time social worker to assist staff at the county’s nine libraries in dealing with homeless, substance-abusing and mentally ill individuals and families who appear at libraries
- Posting of a code of appropriate behavior at all libraries
- Easing the parking shortage at the Davis library
- Fast-tracking construction of a new library serving the Southport area of West Sacramento

The full report will be posted online on the Grand Jury’s website:

<http://www.yolocounty.org/business/community/grand-jury/yolo-county-grand-jury-reports>

About the Yolo County Grand Jury

The Yolo County Grand Jury is made up of 19 citizens selected by the Yolo County Superior Court. Jurors serve one-year terms that conclude on June 30 each year. In addition to advising the county District Attorney on whether to bring indictments in select criminal cases, the Yolo County Grand Jury also conducts an annual inquiry into the condition and management of public jails and serves as a citizen watchdog over public offices and agencies within the county.

Yolo County residents who are interested in participating on the Grand Jury may learn how to apply at www.yolocounty.org/business/community/grand-jury.

How to file a complaint with the Grand Jury

Residents who have a complaint or concern about a public official or entity can download an application here: <https://yolocountyca.seamlessdocs.com/f/CitizensComplaintForm>. Complaint forms are also available at the county courthouse, county jail facilities and local libraries, or can be requested by calling (530) 406-5088 or writing to the Grand Jury, P.O. Box 2142, Woodland, CA 95776. Completed complaint forms, including any relevant evidence, should be mailed to P.O. Box 2142, Woodland, CA 95776 or emailed to grandjury@sbcglobal.net.