

COUNTY OF MADERA

ASSESSOR'S OFFICE

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Thomas P. Kidwell, Madera County Assessor

RECEIVED

MAY 11 2011

JURY DIVISION
SUPERVISOR

May 5, 2011

The Honorable Mitchell Rigby, Presiding Judge
Madera County Superior Court
209 W. Yosemite Avenue
Madera, CA 93637

Dear Judge Rigby,

Please find enclosed my response to the 2010-2011 Madera County Grand Jury Final Report on the Madera County Assessor's Office.

I am grateful for the diligent efforts made by the Grand Jury on behalf of the citizens of Madera County and for their professionalism in the conduct of their review of my office, and I am pleased by their report.

The Grand Jury recognized the initiative that my staff has taken to develop computer applications beneficial in our work that other counties now also enjoy. They recognize that the office is "well organized," and that staff are "knowledgeable, proficient and effective." The Grand Jury also recognized the difficulties we faced upon the simultaneous retirement of many long-term staff, as the County tried to re-balance its budget mid-year when faced with a fiscal emergency not of its own making, and recommended measures to remedy the deficiencies they identified, many of which we had already implemented.

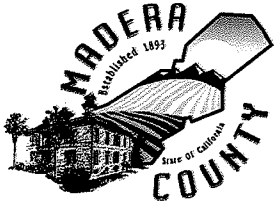
Please feel free to contact me should there be any questions in this regard.

Sincerely,

Thomas P. Kidwell
Madera County Assessor

Enclosure: Assessor's Response to the 2010-2011 Madera County Grand Jury Final Report - Madera County Assessor's Office

cc: Lawrence A. Haugen, Foreman, 2010-2011 Madera County Grand Jury
Madera County Board of Supervisors
Madera County Administrative Officer



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**Assessor's Response to the
2010-2011 Madera County Grand Jury Final Report
Madera County Assessor's Office**

May 5, 2011

Mindful that whatever money is spent in the current fiscal year will not be available to roll over into the County's budget for next fiscal year, and also mindful that many circumstances have changed since the Grand Jury members conducted their interviews of my staff and I concerning the office and its procedures, my response to the recommendations made by the 2010-2011 Madera County Grand Jury Final Report is as follows:

The Grand Jury recommends that the Assessor utilize a portion of the budget allocation for extra help to hire a temporary experienced residential appraiser to assist with Prop 8 reviews and reassessments.

The majority of the Proposition 8 (Decline in Value) reviews have already been completed without the need for extra help, so this recommendation will not be implemented this year.

The Grand Jury recommends that the Assessor and appraisers be recognized and commended for their initiative and proficiency in developing in-house computer programs which are sought after by other counties.

I am grateful that the Grand Jury recognizes the achievements of my staff, and I take every opportunity to remind my staff of the respect they've earned from their peers in other Counties for what they've accomplished and shared.

The Grand Jury recommends that, to the extent funding is available, the Assessor employ willing retirees to train current clerical staff.

I had implemented this recommendation, in advance of it being made, by asking the newly-retired Assessment Office Manager to return on a part-time, temporary basis to assist in training select staff, and she graciously consented to do so out of loyalty to the office and its need.

The Grand Jury recommends that the Assessor make Megabyte training an immediate priority for the Assessment Office Manager.

Training is a continuous requirement that we fulfill through a variety of methods for all staff. In addition to asking the previous Office Manager to return to assist in training, as noted above, both on-site and online training classes will be made available without additional charge by Megabyte under a proposed new contract amendment, and extensive manuals and reference books are maintained within the office for training purposes. Therefore, we have implemented this recommendation and will continue to do so as opportunities arise.

The Grand Jury recommends that the County retain Megabyte as its property tax program so long as it is cost effective and meets the County's needs.

I concur with this recommendation and have included this in my budget proposal to the Board of Supervisors for next fiscal year, as noted above.

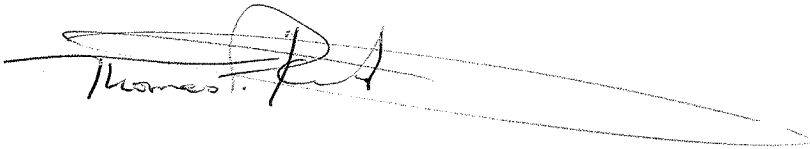
The Grand Jury recommends that the Assessor and the Board Clerk work together to obtain a cost effective and efficient automated system for tracking assessment appeals.

I concur with this recommendation. The Board Clerk's and my staff have been examining alternative systems that would achieve this goal, including a modification of our existing tracking system with the assistance of the Information Technology Department which shows great promise. Once we have determined which system would best meet our needs, we will recommend that system to the Board of Supervisors for their approval, as necessary.

The Grand Jury recommends that the County consider the staggering of furlough days for employees, as is done in the County Recorder's Office and Information Technology Department, so that offices are consistently open and accessible to the public.

The implementation of countywide employee furloughs was a measure implemented by the Board of Supervisors due to fiscal emergency. As my office is functionally related to the Auditor and Tax Collector Offices, we mutually try to maintain the same operating hours as well as conform to the hours of the majority of other departments within the County as the Board of Supervisors has directed. I believe that the Board of Supervisors will give this matter further consideration in the upcoming budget discussions.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Thomas P. Kidwell", is written over a long, thin horizontal line that extends across the page.

Thomas P. Kidwell
Madera County Assessor