

## **Ventura County Hall of Administration: Safety, Security, and Executive Protection**

### **Summary**

The 2007-2008 Ventura County Grand Jury (Grand Jury) received an agency briefing from the management staff of the County of Ventura General Services Agency (GSA), wherein specific security operations of the County Government Center were discussed.

As a result of this briefing and observations by Grand Jury members, the Grand Jury became aware of several safety and security vulnerabilities within the County Hall of Administration (HOA). The Grand Jury opened an investigation into safety, security, and executive protection practices within the HOA.

The Grand Jury found that security planning, operations, and practices for departments that are headed by an elected official are different from departments that fall under the direct jurisdiction of the GSA.

The Grand Jury concluded that even with increased security, County governmental operations can still maintain an open campus atmosphere.

The Grand Jury recommends an increased coordinated security effort between departments headed by elected officials and GSA. Additionally, the Grand Jury recommends a centralized alert notification system be implemented, whereby all County employees at the Government Center can be quickly notified of significant critical incidents.

### **Background**

The State of California contains fifty-eight counties of which thirteen are considered to be urban in character based on their respective populations. The data derived from the 2006 population showed Ventura County to be the eleventh largest of California's 58 counties.

The County of Ventura Government Center (GC) is situated on 82 acres of land and became operational in 1978. The GC is comprised of four major buildings, one of which is the HOA. The HOA is a 360,000 square foot building which consists of four stories, including the basement. Approximately 1,025 County employees work in the building, which is normally open for business Monday through Friday from 7:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. The east facing glass doors serve as the main public access to the building, with a smaller access on the north end.

The main floor of the HOA contains the interior public entrance to the chamber room of the County Board of Supervisors (BOS). Also contained on the main floor are: public counters for County Assessor, County Clerk and Recorder, and the County Treasurer/Tax Collector/Public Guardian/Administrator. The fourth

floor of the building houses the offices of the County Executive Officer (CEO), BOS, and other agencies.

Security services for the GC are provided by a licensed private patrol guard service (Garda Security), operating under a five-year contract managed by GSA. Security guards assigned to the GC are uniformed but not armed. The security command center is located within the County Hall of Justice. Security cameras within the GC are monitored at this command center. Guards report to a post commander who reports to the GSA County Security Manager. Their primary duty is to observe and report any unusual or criminal activity; they do not take direct action. Guards serve in fixed posts within certain GC buildings and as a visible security presence. They provide for locking and unlocking the buildings and serve as an information resource to the public. Guards also perform random patrol of GC parking lots and are authorized to write County of Ventura parking citations.

If a public law enforcement response is required at the GC, the Ventura Police Department is responsible for incidents occurring outside of GC buildings and the Ventura County Sheriff's Department (VCSD) is responsible for incidents occurring within any GC building.

## **Methodology**

Following a general agency briefing by GSA management, the Grand Jury met with the GSA Facility Maintenance Manager who oversees security at the Government Center. Other senior County managers were interviewed.

Elected officials were interviewed regarding security within their departments. An internet search was completed to identify specific laws or rules pertaining to security and the use of County facilities.

Several site inspections of the HOA were completed by Grand Jury members.

## **Findings**

### Main Lobby/Board of Supervisors Chambers

- F-01.** The east facing main entrance of the County Hall of Administration (HOA) has two entrances. One entrance consists of a manual pull glass door. The other entrance is an automatic glass sliding double door through which most of the traffic occurs. Next to the manual pull glass door is a decal warning sign that warns persons who enter that weapons, e.g., pistols or knives, are not allowed in the building pursuant to §171(b) of the California Penal Code (CPC).
- F-02.** The north entrance consists of two glass manual pull doors that are unlocked during normal business hours. There is no weapon advisory decal affixed at this entrance. There is signage on the door advising the public to use the west facing main entrance.
- F-03.** Located inside the main lobby of the HOA is an information kiosk staffed by a contract security guard during normal business hours.

- F-04.** The location of the kiosk does not allow the guards to have visual screening of persons entering and exiting from either entrance of the building.
- F-05.** The kiosk was observed to be unattended on several occasions.
- F-06.** Multiple observations were made of boxes and rolling carts being brought in and out of the HOA, via both entrances, without security overview.
- F-07.** Ventura County Ordinance 4036 (effective July 1, 1993) regulates the use of County facilities. The ordinance does not address cell phone usage in public meetings in County buildings. Additionally, it does not regulate certain items that could be brought to a public meeting being held in a County building, e.g., amplified sound, food, drink, picket signs, or large posters. [Att-01]
- F-08.** The manual glass entrance doors to the Ventura County Board of Supervisors (BOS) Chambers are located on the main floor of the HOA. There is a small decal affixed to the glass that reads cell phones and pagers are not permitted, and a free standing sign by the doors that prohibits food or drink.
- F-09.** No security screening of individuals entering the chambers via the entrance foyer was conducted during observations of BOS public meetings.
- F-10.** There is no designated person, acting in the capacity of Sergeant-at-Arms, present during BOS public meetings.
- F-11.** The dais where the Supervisors sit is not safeguarded with any protective ballistic shielding.
- F-12.** There are no duress (panic) alarms where the Supervisors sit at the dais.

#### Treasurer/Tax Collector/Public Guardian/Administrator

- F-13.** Offices of the Treasurer/Tax Collector/Public Guardian/Administrator (TTPG) are located in the northeast section of the main lobby of the HOA. There currently are forty-nine employees in this area.
- F-14.** TTPG is responsible for its own security operations and planning in its designated office space and does not coordinate security planning or training with GSA, except for evacuation drills.
- F-15.** TTPG has no written in-house security plan or in-service training, other than for new employees that instructs them what to do during critical incidents, e.g., workplace violence, or an active shooter situation.
- F-16.** A recently implemented department policy addresses cashier cash drawer limits and procedures to be followed in the event of a front counter robbery incident. This procedure has not been shared with the GSA or the VCSD.

- F-17.** Three walk-up counters are located at the offices of the TTPG: the first is located in the Treasury section and is a flat counter approximately 4.5 feet in height with two partitioned transaction sections. The second is a half-door approximately 3.5 feet in height with a transaction shelf for use by the Public Guardian/Administrator. The third is located in the Tax Collector section and is approximately 4.5 feet in height, with 5 individual partitioned transaction stations.
- F-18.** A clear partial protective barrier was recently installed over the counters of the Treasurer and Tax Collector sections.
- F-19.** Duress (panic) alarms are located at two of the main walk-up counters which are linked directly to VCSD. There is no duress (panic) alarm in the personal office of the Treasurer-Tax Collector.
- F-20.** The three entrances into the internal office space of the TTPG consist of waist-high, non-reinforced doors.
- F-21.** TTPG offices employ an in-house security recording camera system. TTPG employees periodically view a six-image screen. This system is independent of GSA.
- F-22.** The TTPG conference room, located near an entrance door, serves as a cash count and balancing room for daily receipts. It is also used to inventory items retained in trust by the Public Guardian. This room is not monitored by a camera.

#### Clerk and Recorder

- F-23.** Offices of the Clerk and Recorder are located in the northwest section of the main floor of the HOA. The staff of the Clerk and Recorder currently consists of fifty-five employees, most of who work on the main floor.
- F-24.** Duress (panic) alarms are located at the front walk-up counter with two more at the front counter supervisors' desks. The personal office of the Clerk and Recorder is also alarmed. These alarms are linked directly to the VCSD.
- F-25.** Clerk and Recorder is responsible for security operations and planning. Security planning and training is not coordinated with GSA except for periodic workplace violence training arranged through the County Human Resources Department.
- F-26.** Clerk and Recorder has an internal security plan for employees. Periodic in-house training on the plan addresses responses to critical incidents occurring within the office. Clerk and Recorder office has a designated emergency escape route should it be necessary to evacuate the workplace.
- F-27.** The Clerk and Recorder has an in-house security recording camera system that is monitored by two designated managers within the office. This system is independent of GSA.

- F-28.** The public counter of the Clerk and Recorder is used for monetary transactions. It is a flat open counter approximately 4.5 feet in height. In front of this main counter is a shelf at the 3 foot level. It contains no protective barrier, such as in the TTPG.
- F-29.** There is no central cash count and balancing room, or other designated single location where the receipts are tallied. Individual employees count receipts at their desks which can be viewed by the public.
- F-30.** When receipts are tallied, an employee carries the receipt bag across the main lobby to the Treasurer's office. No security escort is used.

#### Executive Offices

- F-31.** The fourth floor of the HOA contains many executive offices, including the County Executive Office (CEO) and two for the Board of Supervisors. Currently the public can access the fourth floor via the elevator or by stairs without security restriction.
- F-32.** A flat, waist-high, open counter area is located at the foyer/lobby entrance to the CEO's office. There is a shoulder high entrance door to the CEO's inner office areas. The entrance door has a magnetic locking device that requires a person wanting admittance to be "buzzed-in". After several visits to this area the magnetic locking device was never found to be activated, thus leaving this door unlocked. This foyer/lobby area is not monitored by a camera.
- F-33.** There are no duress (panic) alarms located in the CEO's office areas.
- F-34.** There are no cameras monitoring the inner lobby area of the offices of individual Supervisors, nor are there any duress (panic) alarms in any Supervisor office.

#### General Government Center Security

- F-35.** There is no formalized notification system at any of the four major GC buildings to simultaneously alert all employees of a critical incident.
- F-36.** Elected and appointed department heads have no single County governmental agency coordinating and directing their security policies.
- F-37.** A County Physical Security Council meets bi-monthly to discuss security related issues at all County facilities. The Council includes representatives from VCSD and GSA's Risk Management and Human Resources Departments.
- F-38.** The County's Administrative Policy Manual delineates the BOS Operating Procedures which give the Chair the authority and responsibility to "preserve order and decorum" in public BOS meetings. This is consistent with the intent of the provisions of California Government Code §54957.9.

## Conclusions

- C-01.** Potential security scenarios are preventable events. Ventura County has opted for less visible security systems for their governmental institutions with the goal of maintaining an “open campus” environment. Because of this factor it could not be determined that there is an appropriate level of security that is expected in an urban county. Enhanced and comprehensive security practices and procedures in Ventura County government could ensure that a continued safe environment at the GC is maintained and encouraged. (F-10, through F-12, F-17 through F-19, F-27, F-28, F-31, F-34 through F-38)
- C-02.** The weapon warning signage on the east side main entrance to the HOA is not easily read, because of the decal’s size, color, and placement location on the dark colored glass. (F-01)
- C-03.** The main lobby kiosk in the HOA is primarily intended to be an information station, as indicated by the signage. The security guard’s attention is focused on providing information rather than visually scanning persons entering the building. (F-03 through F-06)
- C-04.** Potential disruptions of governmental meetings could be mitigated by enacting or amending specific ordinance(s) (as opposed to policies) that enhance security and better regulate facility usage. (F-07 through F-12)
- C-05.** Security planning should be comprehensive and consolidated to provide an effective operational interface and implementation. (F-14, F-25, F-35 through F-37)
- C-06.** Lack of a centralized critical incident notification system throughout the GC does not ensure the safety of employees and the public. (F-35 through F-38)

## Recommendations

### Main Lobby/Board of Supervisors

- R-01.** The signage on the east facing main entrance of the HOA reading “no weapons” should be made more visible and easier to read by affixing an opaque white background to the signs, similar to the weapon signage on the lobby doors of the VCSD main jail facility. (C-02)
- R-02.** The north entrance doors to the HOA should have weapon signage affixed to them. Since this entrance is not intended for public use, these doors should be configured as egress only. Access through this door could be provided for authorized employees via a pass card or a key pad. (C-01, C-02)
- R-03.** During normal business hours a marked security screening checkpoint for weapons or other unauthorized items should be set up in the east facing main entrance foyer. Exiting persons could be screened to assure County owned property is not being illegally taken from the building. (C-01, C-03)

- R-04.** The County's policy and procedures relative to security would be strengthened by amending County Ordinance 4036 to include items that should be excluded from public meetings, e.g., unauthorized amplified sound, large picket signs, large posters/banners, food, and drink. The amendment should also address cell phone and pager usage in public meetings. (C-04)
- R-05.** The BOS should request the Sheriff to assign a VCSD deputy to serve as a Sergeant-at-Arms for each public BOS meeting. (C-01, C-04)
- R-06.** The dais where the Supervisors sit in BOS chambers should be modified to incorporate protective ballistic shielding. (C-01, C-04)
- R-07.** A duress (panic) alarm should be installed at the BOS Chairman's position. (C-01, C-04)

#### Treasurer/Tax Collector/Public Guardian/Administrator

- R-08.** The TTPG should develop and disseminate detailed security plans for dealing with critical incidents for all TTPG employees; VCSD and GSA should be involved in the formation of these plans. These plans should be reviewed annually. (C-05, C-06)
- R-09.** TTPG employees should receive in-service security training annually and regular updates. (C-05)
- R-10.** The TTPG should use the security resources of the GSA for video camera monitoring. (C-05)
- R-11.** The TTPG administrator should install a duress (panic) alarm in his office. (C-01)
- R-12.** A security camera should be installed inside the TTPG conference room to electronically monitor cash counting and property inventories. (C-01)
- R-13.** The three entrance doors to the TTPG Department should be made more secure. (C-01)

#### Clerk and Recorder

- R-14.** A protective barrier, such as was recently installed in the TTPG, should be installed at the main public walk-up service counter for the Office of the Clerk and Recorder. (C-01)
- R-15.** The Clerk and Recorder should establish a central cash count/balance room out of public view. (C-01)
- R-16.** A security escort should be used when transporting daily receipts from the offices of the Clerk and Recorder to the Treasurer's Office. (C-01, C-05)
- R-17.** The Clerk and Recorder should use the security resources of the GSA for video camera monitoring of their main floor offices. (C-05)
- R-18.** The Clerk and Recorder should coordinate security planning and operations with GSA. (C-05, C-06)

Executive Offices

- R-19.** The fourth floor of the HOA should have secured access. (C-01)
- R-20.** The foyer/lobby to the County Executive Office (CEO) should be monitored by a security camera. (C-01)
- R-21.** The entrance door to the interior office space of the CEO's lobby should be locked during normal business hours. (C-01)
- R-22.** A duress (panic) alarm should be installed in the reception lobby of the CEO's office. (C-01)
- R-23.** A security camera should be installed in the inner reception lobby of the BOS offices. (C-01)
- R-24.** A duress (panic) alarm should be installed in each BOS office. (C-01)

General Government Center Security

- R-25.** A centralized notification system should be implemented to simultaneously alert all employees of critical incidents in each building of the GC. (C-04 through C-06)
- R-26.** County departments headed by an elected official, such as the TTPG and the Clerk and Recorder, should have a representative attend the bi-monthly County Physical Security Council meetings. (C-04, C-05)
- R-27.** All County employees working for a department headed by an appointed or elected official should receive the same security and awareness training. Specialized training should be provided by security professionals as designated and approved by the VCSD. (C-01, C-04 through C-06)

## **Responses**

Responses Required:

Board of Supervisors, County of Ventura  
(R-01 through R-07, R-18 through R-27)

Clerk and Recorder, County of Ventura (R-14 through R-18, R-26, R-27)

Sheriff, County of Ventura (R-05 and R-27)

Treasurer/Tax Collector/Public Guardian/Administrator, County of Ventura  
(R-08 through R-13, R-26, R-27)

Responses Requested:

General Services Agency, County of Ventura  
(R-01 through R-07, R-18 through R-27)

## **Attachments**

Att-01 Ventura County Ordinance Number 4036

**Attachment-01**  
**Ventura County Ordinance Number 4036**

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**Ordinance Number**

4036

**Date Adopted**

6/22/1993

**Subject**

VENTURA COUNTY ORDINANCE REGULATING THE USE OF COUNTY  
FACILITIES (EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 1993)

**Comments**

ORDINANCE NO. 4036AN ORDINANCE REGULATING THE USE  
OF COUNTY FACILITIES  
(Effective July 1, 1993)

The Board of Supervisors of the County of Ventura ordain as follows:

The following Ordinance No. 4036 is hereby enacted and incorporated into the Ventura County Ordinance Code as sections 6650-6657 of Chapter 6, Division 6:

Section 6650 - **PURPOSE OF REGULATIONS** - The purpose of this Chapter is to provide for the regulation of pedestrian walkways and the general use of the grounds and facilities adjacent to and/or servicing Ventura County government office buildings and other facilities owned used or leased by the County of Ventura. Regulation hereunder shall be for the purpose of providing for the appropriate use of County facilities for the benefit of persons engaged in business with the County or County employees.

Section 6651 - **DIRECTOR SHALL REGULATE USE** - The Director of the Ventura County General Services Agency shall determine the appropriate and most efficient utilization of those County facilities under his direction and control.

Section 6652 - **PEDESTRIANS HAVE RIGHT OF WAY** - All pedestrians shall have the right of way at all times everywhere on the parking facilities of the County of Ventura and drivers of all vehicles shall exercise due caution when approaching and passing pedestrians on those facilities.

Section 6653 - **ACTIVITIES RESTRICTED TO SPECIFIC AREAS** - Specific activities such as golf, football, baseball, etc., are not allowed except as specifically provided for in designated and/or marked areas or facilities.

Section 6654 - **PROHIBITION ON SKATEBOARDS, ROLLER SKATES, ETC.** - No person shall ride or propel any skateboard, roller skates, coaster, toy vehicle or similar device on or along any parking facility, pedestrian walkway, or grounds of the County of Ventura.

Section 6655 - **RESTRICTION UPON PLACEMENT OF ADVERTISING UPON AUTOMOBILES** - No person shall place upon or within any automobile, parked upon County property, any commercial advertisement, circular, newspaper, handbill or other such document without the express permission of the owner of the vehicle or Director of General Services Agency or his/her designated agent. The purpose of this section is to minimize the littering of County property and the resultant expense in removing such litter.

Section 6656 - **LEASH REQUIREMENT** - All dogs, when on County property, shall be leashed and the leash controlled by the owner or the owner's representative. The foregoing shall not apply if the dogs are securely confined in a vehicle or if the dog is a seeing eye or physically disabled guide dog.

Section 6656-1 - **Removal of animal waste** - Owners shall ensure that any and all feces left by their dog(s) while on County property are immediately removed, unless the owner is physically unable to do so.

Section 6657 - **ENFORCEMENT** - Any violation of sections 6651 through 6656 shall constitute an infraction and be subject to a fine in the amount of \$30.00.

PASSED AND ADOPTED this 22nd day of June, 1993, by the following vote:

AYES: Supervisors

LACEY, VANDERKOLK, KILDEE and HOWARD,

NOES:

NONE

ABSENT: SUPERVISOR

FLYNN,

Susan K. Lacey  
CHAIR, BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

ATTEST:

RICHARD D. DEAN, County Clerk,  
County of Ventura,  
State of California, and ex officio  
Clerk of the Board of Supervisors  
thereof.

By Roberta Rodriguez  
Deputy Clerk



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