



County of Ventura  
COUNTY CLERK AND RECORDER

PHILIP J. SCHMIT  
County Clerk and Recorder

JAMES B. BECKER  
Assistant County Clerk and Recorder

TRACY D. SAUCEDO  
Assistant Registrar of Voters

DAVID G. VALENZUELA  
Manager, Clerk and Recorder Operations

Date: May 20, 2008

To: Members, Ventura County Grand Jury

From: Philip J. Schmit *James B. Becker*  
County Clerk and Recorder

Subject: County Clerk and Recorder Responses to "Ventura County Hall of Administration: Safety, Security, and Executive Protection" 2007-08 Ventura County Grand Jury Report

The following are the County Clerk and Recorder's responses to the March 28, 2008 "Ventura County Hall of Administration: Safety, Security, and Executive Protection" 2007-08 Ventura County Grand Jury Report:

Findings

**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 55 employees, most of whom work on the main floor."**

We agree partially. Public offices of the Clerk and Recorder are located in the northwest section of the main floor of the Hall of Administration. Most of the Clerk and Recorder staff do work on the main floor.

We respectfully disagree that the staff of the Clerk and Recorder currently consists of 55 employees. The County Clerk and Recorder staff currently consists of 59 regular employees: 43 in the Clerk and Recorder's Office and 16 in the Elections Division.

**F-24: "Duress (panic alarms) are located at the front walk-up counter with two more at the front counter supervisor's desks. The personal office of the Clerk and Recorder is also alarmed. These alarms are linked directly to the VCSD."**

We agree partially. A total of seven panic alarms are installed in the Clerk and Recorder's Office, including in the offices of the elected County Clerk and Recorder and the Clerk and Recorder Operations Manager.

We respectfully disagree that these panic alarms are linked directly to the Ventura County Sheriff's Department. The panic alarms are linked directly to GSA Security. However, on the rare occasion that we have activated a panic alarm in the past, Ventura County Sheriff's deputies responded in under 90 seconds.

**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."**

We agree partially. The County Clerk and Recorder (along with GSA Security) is responsible for security operations and planning. All County Clerk and Recorder staff do attend mandatory Workplace Security Training every two years.

We respectfully disagree that security planning and training is not coordinated with GSA. GSA Security has provided, as needed, specialized planning and training to Clerk and Recorder staff regarding planned demonstrations by outside groups at the Clerk and Recorder's Office. We request specialized security resources and/or training from GSA Security and the Ventura County Sheriff's Department if and when we identify a need. Further, all of our video signals from our seven cameras in our main floor offices are transmitted directly to GSA Security on a 24/7 basis. GSA Security monitors the signals and produces a digital back-up.

**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."**

We agree wholly.

**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."**

We agree partially. Two Clerk and Recorder senior managers do monitor the security camera system.

We respectfully disagree that the security recording camera system is independent of GSA. Although the cameras are installed in the Clerk and Recorder's Office, all of our video signals from the seven cameras in our main floor offices are transmitted directly to GSA Security on a 24/7 basis. GSA Security monitors the signals and produces a digital back-up.

**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."**

We wholly agree. No protective barrier is utilized for the following reasons: (1) A protective barrier is not reasonable due to sufficient security measures already being in place at the public walk-up service counter (i.e., seven panic alarms connected directly to GSA Security, seven cameras installed in the Clerk and Recorder's Office monitored by two Clerk and Recorder senior management staff and by GSA Security, and the location of the HOA Security Kiosk just outside our public lobby entrance; (2) Cash drawers are mounted on the bottom of the work surfaces away from public access; (3) It is our belief that a protective barrier could create a false sense of security for staff (the protective barrier can still be scaled by an irate customer) and could actually contribute to a reduced security awareness on the part of staff; and (4) We have no past experience with violent customers that would warrant installation of a protective barrier.

**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."**

We agree partially. Individual counter clerks do initially count receipts from their cash drawers after 4 p.m. (earlier with rare exception) at their desks. However, the public lobby door is closed and locked daily at 4 p.m. If any customers at all would be remaining in the public lobby after 4 p.m., it would be very few. The majority of receipts are in the form of checks or escrow account payments involving no actual exchange of cash. In addition, five of our seven cameras monitor the public lobby/entrance and seven panic alarms are available to staff in the office. All cameras and panic alarms are monitored by GSA Security.

We respectfully disagree that there is no central cash count and balancing room or other designated single location where the receipts are tallied. The office safe and central fiscal section (including where the final receipt reconciliation process occurs) is in a separate area that cannot be viewed from the public lobby and is outside of public view.

**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."**

We agree wholly. No security escort is utilized for the following reasons: (1) The distance from the Clerk and Recorder's office door to the Treasurer's counter is only approximately 10 steps; (2) This area is in direct view of the security guard stationed in the HOA Security Kiosk a few feet further away; (3) Cameras located in the Treasurer's office monitor transactions at the Treasurer's public counter; (4) The Clerk and Recorder staff person who transports the daily receipts is not visible until he actually

exits the door and then for less than five seconds before he reaches the Treasurer's counter; (5) The Clerk and Recorder staff person makes one trip daily with cash receipts at random times; and (6) The cost for a few seconds of additional security in addition to what GSA Security and the Treasurer's office already provide would be prohibitive.

### **Recommendations**

**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)"**

We respectfully will not implement because this recommendation is not warranted or reasonable for the following reasons: (1) A protective barrier is not reasonable due to sufficient security measures already being in place at the public walk-up service counter (i.e., seven panic alarms connected directly to GSA Security, seven cameras installed in the Clerk and Recorder's Office monitored by two Clerk and Recorder senior management staff and by GSA Security, and the location of the HOA Security Kiosk just outside our public lobby entrance; (2) Cash drawers are mounted on the bottom of the work surfaces away from public access; (3) It is our belief that a protective barrier would create a false sense of security for staff (the protective barrier can still be scaled by an irate customer) and could actually contribute to a reduced security alertness on the part of staff; and (4) We have no past experience with violent customers that would warrant installation of a protective barrier.

**R-15: "The Clerk and Recorder should establish a central cash count and balance room out of public view. (C-01)"**

We respectfully will not implement because this recommendation is not warranted or reasonable for the following reasons: (1) Although individual counter clerks initially count receipts from their cash drawers after 4 p.m. (earlier with rare exception) at their desks, the public lobby door is closed and locked daily at 4 p.m. If any customers at all would be remaining in the public lobby after 4 p.m., it would be very few; (2) The majority of receipts are in the form of checks or escrow account payments involving no actual exchange of cash; (3) Five of our seven cameras monitor the public lobby/entrance and seven panic alarms are available to staff in the office; (4) All cameras and panic alarms are monitored by GSA Security; (5) A central cash count and balancing room (including the office safe and central fiscal section) already exists in a separate area that cannot be viewed from the public lobby and is outside of public view; and (5) Space constraints and efficient workload flow do not allow all the individual counter clerks to initially count receipts from their cash drawers in this very confined fiscal area.

**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 and C-05)"**

We respectfully will not implement because this recommendation is not warranted or reasonable for the following reasons: (1) The distance from the Clerk and Recorder's office door to the Treasurer's counter is only approximately 10 steps; (2) This area is in direct view of the security guard stationed in the HOA Security Kiosk a few feet further away; (3) Cameras located in the Treasurer's office monitor transactions at the Treasurer's public counter; (4) The Clerk and Recorder staff person who transports the daily receipts is not visible until he actually exits the door and then for less than five seconds before he reaches the Treasurer's counter; (5) The Clerk and Recorder staff person makes one trip daily with cash receipts at random times; and (6) The cost for a few seconds of additional security in addition to what GSA Security and the Treasurer's office already provide would be prohibitive.

**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)"**

We have previously implemented. All of our video signals from the seven cameras in our main floor offices are transmitted directly to GSA Security on a 24/7 basis. GSA Security monitors the signals and produces a digital back-up.

**R-18: "The Clerk and Recorder should coordinate security planning and operations with GSA. (G-05 and C-06)"**

We have previously implemented. All County Clerk and Recorder staff attend mandatory Workplace Security Training every two years. We have coordinated security planning and operations with GSA Security on multiple occasions related to planned demonstrations by outside groups at the Clerk and Recorder's Office. We request specialized security resources and/or training from GSA Security and the Ventura County Sheriff's Department if and when we identify a need. The Clerk and Recorder's Office also has seven panic alarms installed that transmit signals to GSA Security. On the rare occasion that we have activated a panic alarm in the past, Ventura County Sheriff's deputies responded in under 90 seconds. Further, all of our video signals from the seven cameras in our main floor offices are transmitted directly to GSA Security on a 24/7 basis. GSA Security monitors the signals and produces a digital back-up.

**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 and C-05)"**

We will obtain the schedule for the County Physical Security Council meetings and implement immediately by sending a County Clerk and Recorder representative to these meetings.

**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 VCSD. (C-01, C-04 through C-06)"**

We have previously implemented. All County Clerk and Recorder staff attend mandatory Workplace Security Training every two years. GSA Security has provided, as needed, specialized training to Clerk and Recorder staff regarding planned demonstrations by outside groups at the Clerk and Recorder's Office. We request specialized security resources and/or training from GSA Security and the Ventura County Sheriff's Department if and when we identify a need.

I appreciate the opportunity to respond to this report. Please contact me at 654-2266, or Jim Becker at 654-2293, if you have any questions or require additional information. Thank you.

c: Marty Robinson, CEO  
Paul Derse, CEO  
Dorothea Forde, CEO  
Rosalind Harris, GSA