

SHERIFF - CORONER



COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ

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Board of Supervisors
County of Santa Cruz
701 Ocean Street
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

REPORT BACK ON THE INMATE WELFARE FUND

On September 12, 2000, your Board approved the annual itemized report of revenues and expenditures for the Inmate Welfare Fund (IWF). At that time, your Board requested that we report back on the IWF fund balance in relation to plans for program expansion at County detention facilities and to provide information on the source of the fund balance dollars, which are generated primarily through the sale of commissary items and telephone calls made by the inmates.

IWF FUND BALANCE AND EXPANSION OF PROGRAMS

Funds from the IWF support a variety of educational, health and recreational programs that benefit the individuals housed at County detention facilities. As was recently reported to your Board, the fund now has a balance of \$655,902. These funds accumulated more quickly than we had anticipated, particularly in the past few years when it has been difficult to meet even basic staffing needs which would allow us to pursue expanded programming opportunities.

However, as we reported to your Board in September, the Sheriff's Department is developing an expanded program of classes and activities for inmates this year. For example, education in computer technology will be enhanced through the purchase of new computers for the Blaine Street facility. Existing programs provided through Santa Cruz Adult Education, the County Office of Education and community-based organizations such as the Pajaro Valley Prevention and Student Assistance will be expanded as will Chaplain services. Furthermore, the IWF supports additional positions that will be key to implementing new programs. One such position, the Inmate Programs Director, is being classified by the Personnel Department at this time. We also plan to hire a Main Jail Programs Manager. We anticipate that some of these hires will be civilian positions, hopefully resulting in more successful recruitment efforts.

Not only does the IWF support programs for inmates, but it is also the source of funds for capital improvements to support inmate welfare such as the two classrooms that were built recently at the Rountree minimum security facility. IWF funds might also be considered for currently

unfunded projects that would benefit inmates such as renovation of the building adjacent to the Water Street Jail to house the Work Release Program.

As a result of these anticipated expenditures, we estimate spending or encumbering approximately \$169,785 in excess of projected revenues this fiscal year. The existing IWF will enable us to accomplish our program goals for FY 00/01 and 01/02 and also maintain a source of funding for future projects as well as unanticipated expenditures. We will continue to monitor the IWF in relation to program expansion plans to ensure that a balance is achieved between program funding needs and commissary and telephone charges to inmates, the primary sources of revenue for the IWF.

TELEPHONE CALLS

Telephone calls by inmates are a significant source of revenue for the IWF. Inmate telephone systems are offered by a number of telephone companies including Evercom Systems, Inc., the firm contracting with the County.

Inmate telephone systems are expensive. Not only are they supported by a relatively small inmate population, but for security purposes, specific measures are taken including operator assistance on all calls. These specialized services are reflected in the rates. For example, Evercom charges \$3.25 for a five minute local phone call placed at 2:00 in the afternoon. Calls are made collect by the inmates. The receiver is billed according to rates set by the Federal and State Regulatory Guidelines on behalf of the Sheriff's Department, with the exception of all calls made from the booking/holding rooms or to the Public Defenders office which are made at no charge. Thus, rates at our facilities are comparable to those of other correctional facilities in northern California. Presently, just over forty percent of the funds collected through phone calls are returned to the IWF.

COMMISSARY SALES

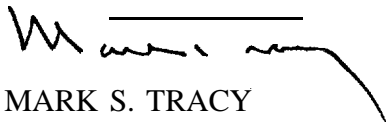
The sale of commissary items is another source of IWF funds. Swanson Services Corporation was awarded the County's contract through a competitive bidding process. We recently completed a sample cost comparison of some of our commissary items with several local vendors and with other County jail facilities. Our pricing is right in line with those of other counties. Commissary prices are also very similar to those offered at local 7-11 stores since individual packaging of relatively small quantities is common to both operations. In our random sample, just over one-half of commissary items were priced slightly under those at 7-11 and the remaining items over. At the extremes were Top Ramen which costs \$.23 less at 7-11 and Ivory soap which costs \$.26 more. As expected, commissary prices are usually higher than those of larger retail stores such as Longs and Safeway. However, our survey showed that some items, including essentials such as reading glasses, bar soap and a small shampoo can actually be purchased for less through the commissary.

In determining the cost of these items to inmates, the Sheriff's Department attempts to offer affordable prices while ensuring that sales and the commission made on sales adequately support the IWF. A commission is not paid on stamps, stamped envelopes or the essential items

included in the free pack that is available to all inmates who have less than \$3.00 on their account. The IWF currently receives just under 40% of commissary sales. Considering that commissions contribute significantly to IWF programs, we believe that we are achieving an overall balance between the cost of commissary items and IWF needs.


It is therefore Recommended that your Board accept and file this report on the Inmate Welfare Fund.

Sincerely,



MARK S. TRACY
Sheriff-Coroner

Recommended:



SUSAN A. MAURIELLO
County Administrative Officer

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