

2025-2026 Tuolumne County Civil Grand Jury

Behind the Devastation: Tuolumne County Community Development Department

June 26, 2026



"Code enforcement is the thin line between orderly development,
maintenance of property values, environmental protection,
and land-use anarchy."

California Association of Code Enforcement Officers

SUMMARY

The Tuolumne County Community Development Department (CDD), which is responsible for, among other things building permitting and inspections, experienced significant staffing disruption during calendar year 2025. During the 2024 Board of Supervisors' election campaign, one candidate publicly advocated for substantial changes within CDD. Descriptions of the proposed changes, as characterized to the Grand Jury, ranged from departmental "restructuring" to a "decimation" of existing operations. Following the candidate's election to the Board of Supervisors and Board-mandated budget cuts, significant personnel changes occurred within CDD. The relationship between CDD staff and the Supervisor have become increasingly contentious, ultimately resulting in permitting matters related to the Supervisor's projects being handled outside the County following an amendment to the County's Conflict-of-Interest policy. Concurrently, as staff departures increased, citizen complaints regarding the Supervisor's High School Road project intensified. This report chronicles the sequence of events and the resulting impacts on County operations and public confidence.

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GLOSSARY

BOS – Tuolumne County Board of Supervisors

CAO – County Administrative Officer

CBO – Chief Building Official

CDD – Tuolumne County Community Development Department

COI – Conflict of Interest

FPPC - Fair Political Practices Commission

Granite Land Holdings LLC – A limited liability company registered in California for which Mike Holland is listed as the Chief Executive Officer, Manager and Registered Agent for the Service of Process.

Granite Building & Development Inc. – A California general corporation for which Mike Holland is listed as the Chief Executive Officer, Chief Financial Officer, and Registered Agent for Service.

High School Road Project – A complex of 8 large storage buildings that Granite Land Holdings is developing in Jamestown.

Mr. Holland/Supervisor Holland – This report identifies Mike Holland as Mr. Holland for actions that occurred prior to him becoming a member of the Board of Supervisors and as Supervisor Holland for actions that occurred after he became a member of the Board of Supervisors.

OpenGov – a cloud-based government administration platform used by local governments to manage permitting, licensing, planning, code enforcement, budgeting, procurement, and other administrative functions. Tuolumne County implemented the OpenGov Permitting and Licensing system to modernize and centralize permit processing activities previously managed through legacy software systems.

TRAKiT - a community development software package commonly used by local governments for: building permits, planning applications, code enforcement, inspections, permit tracking. This system was used by CDD prior to implementation of OpenGov.

TUD – Tuolumne Utilities District

BACKGROUND

As a result of the review of the Conflict-of-Interest policy addition to the Governance Manual, multiple citizen complaints, and several local news articles, the Grand Jury performed a comprehensive investigation into CDD and their oversight of the development of a property at 17411 High School Road, owned by a member of the Board of Supervisors.

The Tuolumne Community Development Department manages the County's building permitting process, ensuring that development aligns with local Ordinance Codes and state regulations in unincorporated areas of Tuolumne County. According to its mission, CDD works with the community to promote public health, safety, and sustainability while balancing agricultural, environmental, and economic priorities. The department consists of various divisions that work together to accomplish this mission, including Community and Housing, Environmental Health, Land Use and Natural Resources (also known as Planning), and Building and Safety (which is comprised of Building and Code Compliance).

To provide context for this report, the typical permitting process for a commercial development project is outlined below:

- Prior to acquiring a property, the developer normally meets with Planning and Building Department staff to determine whether the proposed development complies with applicable Planning and Building Code requirements. If the proposal does not fully conform to code, alternative approaches may be identified, discussed, and mutually agreed upon.
- The developer conducts a due diligence evaluation of the property prior to purchase.
- Following completion of due diligence, the developer proceeds with the acquisition of the property.
- The developer then prepares all materials required for submission of a planning application. These materials typically include, but are not limited to, a comprehensive property survey, site plans detailing proposed improvements, and all supporting documentation required for the application review process.
- The submitted application is circulated for review amongst relevant County departments and agencies, including but not limited to Planning, Land Use, the County Assessor, Building, Engineering, Fire, Environmental Health, and other public entities with jurisdiction over aspects of the project.
- If the project is found to be compliant with all applicable codes and regulations, the Planning Department issues a Site Development Permit, including appropriate Conditions of Approval.

- If the project is found noncompliant with applicable codes, revisions are required.
- As part of the review process, adjacent property owners are notified and provided an opportunity to comment on the proposed development.
- Following completion of revisions and the public notification process, a Site Development Permit, with appropriate Conditions of Approval, may be issued by the Planning Department.
- Upon issuance of the Site Development Permit, the developer proceeds to complete all required tasks identified therein. These tasks include, but are not limited to, preparation of construction documents by a qualified professional and completion of all administrative requirements associated with the permit.
- Construction documents are subsequently submitted to the Building Department for review and issuance of a Building Permit.
- Upon issuance of the Building Permit, construction may proceed, subject to inspections as required by applicable state and local codes.
- Upon completion of construction and satisfaction of all applicable requirements, including payment of required fees, the Building Department issues a Certificate of Occupancy authorizing use of the project. This certificate may only be issued by the county in which the project is located. For example, only Tuolumne County has the authority to issue a Certificate of Occupancy for a project physically located within Tuolumne County.

When optimally running and widely used, the permit process aims to avoid financial penalties, increase public safety, bring in revenue, and is part of the process of properties increasing in value. Permits are a revenue generator and source of building records; local laws cannot be less restrictive than State laws as State agencies will enforce the law with monetary fines. In March of 2017 Tuolumne County paid over \$131,000 to the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board for storm-water runoff violations at the law and justice center that violated erosion and sediment control permit requirements. Enforcement of policy and legal property rights is critical for a county that wants to be pro-growth and improve public trust and transparency.

METHODOLOGY

During its investigation, the Grand Jury conducted more than 70 hours of interviews with individuals possessing knowledge relevant to the matters under review, including representatives from the following categories:

- Current and former CDD employees
- Current Tuolumne County employees from the CAO's office, Human Resources, and other relevant County departments
- Current and former members of the Office of the Tuolumne County Counsel
- Subject matter experts from two water districts
- Subject matter experts from Tuolumne County Fire Department
- Employees from Amador County and Calaveras County
- Local contractors and construction professionals
- Members of the public with relevant knowledge or involvement
- All members of the Tuolumne County Board of Supervisors

In addition to witness interviews, the Grand Jury conducted an extensive review of documents, policies, records, and other materials relevant to the investigation, including:

- Review of all Board of Supervisor meetings for calendar years 2025 and 2026, with particular attention to discussions involving the CDD
- Review of public statements and quotations attributed to Board members in local media reporting
- Review of the Tuolumne County Board of Supervisors Governance Manual
- Review of Tuolumne County Ordinance Code and other related County policies and procedures
- Review of Tuolumne Utilities District meeting recordings, agendas, committee materials, and minutes and committee recordings, Agendas, and Minutes (although the Grand Jury did not conduct an investigation of the District itself)
- Review of relevant provisions of the California Building Code and applicable regulations governing fire protection, water systems, and related state regulatory requirements
- Completion of a facility tour of the Community Development Department
- Completion of a site visit of the High School Road Project including the hydrant location
- Review of permit applications, internal notes, and related project documentation contained within the County's OpenGov permitting system for calendar years 2025 and 2026 for projects

The Grand Jury utilized these interviews, observations, and records to evaluate the sequence of events, the application of County procedures and regulations, and the overall effectiveness of administrative oversight related to the matters examined in this report.

Maintaining the integrity of the investigation and producing an unbiased report was of the utmost importance. As such, all witnesses were admonished, and the Grand Jury spoke with people on all sides of the issue. Admonished witnesses were advised that all Grand Jury proceedings are conducted in secret session, that they should not reveal what was discussed (except as directed by the Court), and that a violation of the admonition is punishable as contempt of Court. In accordance with Penal Code § 911 and 924, the Grand Jury members are similarly required to maintain secrecy of all Grand Jury proceedings and investigations forever, even after a report has been released. Further, all members of the Board of Supervisors were treated equally: all were subpoenaed to ensure their cooperation with the Grand Jury and were all given the opportunity to re-schedule their interview if needed.

DISCUSSION

STAFFING LOSSES WITHIN THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

The Community Development Department Prior to January 2025

The Grand Jury interviewed current and former employees of CDD, several of whom had many years of experience with the department. CDD staff described that prior to 2025 CDD as a tight-knit family. The director utilized a staff-focused management style, with the idea that unhappy staff would equate to unhappy customers. To promote a positive and comfortable working environment, they had implemented over the years their own blend of team-building activities such as unique holiday traditions and team breakfasts. Employees enjoyed coming to work and trusted their fellow staff members. They also felt that they received the support they needed from management within the department as well as prior Boards of Supervisors.

CDD switched from TRAKiT to OpenGov after the program was approved for purchase by the Board of Supervisors on November 19, 2019. The new program launched to the public in September 2023. The new system assisted Tuolumne County in earning the California Department of Housing and Community Development's pro-housing designation in 2024, which continues to bring grant funding to the county in 2026. The Grand Jury found that employees, third party contractors, and the public have adapted to the new system and it is tracking project permits adequately. For this investigation, OpenGov provided records that allowed the Grand Jury to extract data about past and current permit approval, fees, fines,

and processes for various projects. County employee emails were less available to review due to the county's 90-day retention policy making the data from OpenGov invaluable.

The Grand Jury was advised that California law generally provides substantial protections to public agencies and employees performing discretionary regulatory functions. For example, California Government Code § 818.6 limits public entity liability arising from the failure to conduct, or the inadequacy of, inspections. Similarly, public employees are generally afforded immunity for discretionary actions taken within the scope of their official duties. Nevertheless, employees reported uncertainty regarding the extent of those protections and expressed concern that decisions perceived as inconsistent with applicable laws, regulations, or established procedures could subject them to professional, legal, or personal consequences.

During interviews, CDD staff felt that prior to 2025 there were experts available within the department who understood the laws and code they were available to contact with questions about enforcement issues. When asked about the past, staff were in consensus that management handled difficult situations well and in compliance with the Ordinance Code. Within the department, dealing with conflicts with the public was understood to be part of the job description, but they trusted management and escalated problems to the Director if needed. However, current and former employees noted that they were uncomfortable with the trend of more discretion being given to people who were not as knowledgeable, certified, or accredited to do work that was required to maintain operations at the CDD as the department began to lose staff. This once again reflects how much staff trusted directors and managers prior to 2025 and how trust and confidence in their own authority decreased as the department began to downsize. Indeed, concerns expressed by CDD staff about public safety generally only applied to projects initiated or actively in process in late 2025 and 2026, not to projects approved in the past. Prior to the staffing decimation in 2025, CDD staff were confident that the department enforced all state and local laws, which mitigated the County's risk as well as ensured safety of the public by preventing hazardous construction from proceeding in Tuolumne County.

Prior to 2025, CDD staff had a long working relationship with Mr. Holland in his private capacity as a contractor and business owner. This relationship was tumultuous and strained long before he was elected to the Board of Supervisors. A few of his many projects required ministerial interpretation and allowances from past CDD directors going back two decades or more. An example of this tumultuous relationship was documented in 2017 local news articles regarding CDD threatening to revoke a permit for one of Mr. Holland's businesses due to unpaid traffic mitigation fees and non-compliance with terms of a land-use agreement. The Board of Supervisors held a public hearing to consider Mr. Holland's appeal,

ultimately deciding to reverse the revocation of the Conditional Use Permit so long as the project was brought into compliance with the original conditions of the permit within 45 days. Situations such as this have led to both sides having difficulty working together.

Budget Cut Impacts on Morale and Staffing

In January 2025, the Board of Supervisors directed department heads to make 15% budget reductions for non-public safety services to address a forecasted \$6 million budget shortfall. At the time, CDD had 32 allocated positions according to internal records. On March 4, 2025, two positions were eliminated – Code Compliance Investigator (filled at the time) and Housing Development Specialist (vacant at the time) – and two positions were frozen – Accountant (vacant at the time) and Senior Building Inspector (vacant at the time). On June 17, 2025, four additional vacant positions were eliminated within CDD, including two Planners, an Administrative Technician, and another Code Compliance Investigator. Additionally, prior to June 2025, three Administrative Technician relief positions had also been eliminated (these are not included in the formal allocated position list). Finally, on September 23, 2025, a grant-funded Administrative Technician position, which was then vacant, was also eliminated. (However, the non-grant-funded Administrative Technician position may not have actually been eliminated. There are discrepancies in the allocated position list that was included in the September 23, 2025 meeting packet.) Also in the September 23rd meeting, the Assistant CDD Director position was replaced in the budget by a Chief Building Official. By the end of calendar year 2025, three relief and six to seven allocated positions were eliminated while two allocated positions were frozen to meet the required 15% budget cuts for CDD.

However, as early as April 2025, the CDD Director reported to the BOS in a public meeting that three employees had already resigned in anticipation of additional budget reductions. These departures occurred before any formal staffing reductions were implemented and reflected growing concern among employees regarding the department's future stability. Ultimately, eight of the nine positions eliminated or frozen had only recently been vacated due to resignation or retirement. Current and former CDD employees who were interviewed by the Grand Jury confirmed that there was a general fear of budget cuts in 2025, causing many to leave, or consider leaving, before their positions were formally eliminated.

Conduct and Public Comment Impacts on Morale and Staffing

In September 2023, Mr. Holland announced his candidacy for District 1 Supervisor on the BOS. Given his personal difficulties getting projects approved through CDD, Mr. Holland was vocal on the campaign trail about the need to review policy and process to encourage growth

in the County and efficiency within government. This included potentially restructuring the CDD. Due to the public nature of these comments, Mr. Holland's platform on the campaign trail, and his history with the department, CDD staff soon started to become concerned about the future of the department. Mr. Holland eventually won the seat and was sworn in as a member of the BOS in January 2025. Members of the department and the public described their interpretation of Mr. Holland's outspoken negative opinion of the department to the Grand Jury, and the term "decimate" was used multiple times to describe his intent.

On March 4, 2025, the Board of Supervisors discussed modifying the building hours of the Albert N. Francisco Building, which was an item brought forward by Supervisor Holland. At the time of the discussion, the building hours were Monday through Thursday from 08:00 A.M. to 03:00 P.M. and by appointment on Fridays. However, the operational hours of CDD typically began much earlier to align with the needs of their primary customers (contractors), but they were still available to the public Monday through Friday. The exception to this was the Environmental Health division staff, who kept standard operational hours because the primary customers they served had different needs. The CDD Director gave a presentation explaining the difference between building hours and operational hours, and how the majority of public interactions tended to occur via the phone or OpenGov. During the presentation, the Director requested that a decision not be made about the change in hours until there was more clarity on the impact of upcoming budgetary staffing changes. However, if the change were to happen sooner, it was recommended by staff to open the front desk to the public earlier to align with the operational hours and needs of their primary customers but maintain building closure on Friday. In this meeting, the Board of Supervisors directed staff to bring back a resolution to formally change the building hours from Monday through Friday from 08:00 to 04:00 P.M effective July 1, 2025, with a one-year evaluation period.

On June 17, 2025, an item was heard by the Board about changing CDD's operational hours to align with the proposed building hours and included the requested resolution to formally codify the change of building and operational hours effective August 1, 2025. Due to the loss of staff, the CDD Director recommended not approving the resolution as it would impact the department's ability to maintain the existing level of service and would undermine the Board's goal of improving efficiency within CDD. There was some confusion from Board members about the procedure to formally codify the change in hours, the discrepancy in the effective date, and why the resolution was only for CDD when there are multiple departments in the building. It was stated that it was unusual for a department head to bring forth a resolution that they don't agree with, which is why a standalone resolution was brought forth for CDD. The CAO clarified that each department in the building could bring

forth its own resolution to adjust its operational hours to align with building hours, or one resolution could be approved that would cover the entire building. Contrary to CDD staff's recommendation, the Board ultimately decided to move forward with a resolution to update the building hours for all departments in the Albert N. Francisco building to Monday through Friday from 08:00 A.M. to 04:00 P.M effective July 1, 2025, with a one-year evaluation period. They did not utilize the resolution that was included in the agenda and therefore tabled the official vote until the June 24, 2025 Board of Supervisors meeting so the resolution could be adjusted accordingly.

On March 18, 2025, Supervisor Holland delivered a presentation titled "*Maybe Time for a New Approach*" during the Board Reports section of a regular BOS meeting. The presentation compared the Tuolumne County CDD to the Amador County Community Development/Building Department and included statistics regarding permit processing times, staffing levels, and departmental budgets. The presentation implied that Amador County operated more efficiently with fewer staff and resources. However, it was unclear which Amador County departments or divisions were included in the metrics. The Grand Jury later confirmed that the Tuolumne County figures included Environmental Health, Code Compliance, and Housing divisions, while comparable divisions were not clearly identified for Amador County.

On April 22, 2025, the CDD Director publicly responded to the presentation during a subsequent Board meeting. She explained that after consulting with Amador County officials and reviewing permit data, Tuolumne County processed significantly more permits in 2024 than Amador County, approximately 2,276 permits compared to Amador's 983. She further explained that many permits processed in Amador County consisted of relatively simple projects, such as decks, water heaters, and solar installations, which typically require shorter review periods than more complex permits commonly handled by Tuolumne County. The Director acknowledged that permit processing timelines were an area for improvement but disputed the implication that the departments were directly comparable.

Based on the evidence reviewed, the Grand Jury found Supervisor Holland's presentation to be misleading because it compared departments with materially different structures, workloads, and responsibilities. To imply that the Amador County CDD does more with less staff and budget, or has better processes than Tuolumne County, was an inaccurate conclusion based on the statistics included in the presentation. Interviews conducted by the Grand Jury also indicated that CDD staff were concerned the public would be misinformed regarding how Tuolumne County's CDD operates and performs its duties.

Directly following the presentation about Amador County, the Board of Supervisors went into closed session for their second performance evaluation of the CDD Director. While the presentation was framed as a broader policy discussion, the timing and context creates a reasonable perception that it could have crossed into evaluating the Director's performance. The Brown Act requires meetings to be open unless a specific exception applies (Gov. Code § 54953) but permits closed session meetings for employee performance evaluations unless the employee requests a public session (Gov. Code § 54957(b)(1)).

Taking these facts and applying the law, the Grand Jury finds a reasonable inference that a portion of the CDD Director's employee evaluation, which was agendized as a closed session item, occurred during an open session Board member's report that was poorly veiled as a policy discussion. The Grand Jury found no evidence that the employee requested any portion of their evaluation to be completed in open session. Such conduct raises the appearance of a Brown Act violation and the risk that the line between policy discussion and personnel evaluation was unlawfully blurred. The Grand Jury notes that the CDD Director ultimately submitted her resignation in July 2025.

This type of behavior is one that the Board was warned against committing by the 2024-2025 Grand Jury, who cautioned the Board of Supervisors to avoid even the appearance of violating the Brown Act. Moreover, this sequencing of events raised a secondary concern regarding the consistency and fairness of the personnel evaluation process, given that no other such presentation was made prior to other agendized, closed session employee evaluations before or since that of the prior CDD Director.

The Grand Jury further notes that the presentation was delivered during the Board Reports section of the meeting rather than as a separately agendized discussion item. Board Reports are generally intended for brief informational updates and are not typically used for lengthy presentations criticizing specific county departments or advocating substantial policy positions. Because the matter was not separately noted on the agenda, the affected department was not afforded a meaningful opportunity to prepare a response or provide contextual information during the meeting itself. Moreover, members of the public were deprived of a meaningful opportunity to be present and provide public comment. Several witnesses described the timing and manner of the presentation as intimidating and detrimental to staff morale. No formal policy changes, measurable performance standards, or implementation plans resulted from the presentation, leaving the public with the appearance that the criticism was directed primarily at department leadership rather than broader policy reform efforts.

Further increasing the mistrust between CDD staff and Supervisor Holland, sometime between January and July 2025, Supervisor Holland was part of a group touring the CDD Department's floor in the Albert N. Francisco Building on Yaney Street looking for additional office space for the Sheriff's Office. Supervisor Holland had been vocal about wanting to get County employees out of rented space and into County-owned buildings and thus wanted to see for himself the availability of space. The tour of the CDD Department was one of several stops at County-owned buildings. However, the CDD Director and staff were not aware this tour would be occurring nor what its purpose was. Most of the tour group didn't interact with staff but were overheard talking about the use of offices that were still occupied. While the purpose of the visit was legitimate, many were extremely uncomfortable and perceived it as a purposeful act of intimidation.

Given Supervisor's Holland's public comments and personal history with the department, many in CDD felt that the department had a "target" on it once he became a Supervisor. At least three senior employees resigned because they felt it was personal, and the only way for the pressure to come off the department was for them to leave. Their departures resulted in a significant loss of institutional knowledge and leadership, leaving the department understaffed, increasing workloads on remaining staff, and contributing to a substantial decline in employee morale.

Other Contributing Factors Influence Morale and Staffing

Compounding the staffing loss, there has been recent pressure on CDD from business groups who supported and interacted closely with the Board of Supervisors. As an example, in a Town Hall focused on business initiative of the Tuolumne County Chamber of Commerce on May 22, 2025, Supervisor Grier talked about eliminating hurdles to receiving building permits and streamlining the process. He also talked about County budget cuts and noted that the last thing they wanted to do is impact services. However, Supervisor Holland was more specific, stating there was redundant work done by staff members, and the board members made several public statements about how hard it was to get development projects built, citing "endless regulations".

Impact of Staffing Cuts and Declining Morale

Overall, CDD lost at least 13 positions and/or staff due to budget cuts and culture problems, a more than 40% overall reduction compared to the 24/25 allocated positions, as shown in organization chart form in Appendix A. The budgetary implications were vastly greater than the 15% cut that was mandated. The remaining staff feel like they are in survival mode, such that stress, decreased productivity, and burnout are very real concerns. This trend is not

likely to improve, as several of the remaining employees are on temporary leave as of early 2026.

In August 2025 following the CDD Director's resignation, the Board began discussing the timeline and sequence of events for filling that position and potential restructuring the department. It was agreed that the Board was not the right group to determine how to restructure the department; however, it was unclear whether to hire an interim Director, whether it would be worthwhile to utilize an executive recruitment firm to find suitable candidate or attempt to recruit with in-house resources, and how the restructuring would impact hiring this position. After receiving input from the CAO, Human Resources Director, and members the public, and following much deliberation the Board elected to utilize an executive recruitment firm to identify an interim CDD Director who would assist in developing proposals for departmental restructuring. The Board anticipated that a subsequent recruitment for a permanent Director would be conducted by County Human Resources staff. However, that strategy was revised to hire the Director position immediately and skip an Interim position when the County became aware of individuals interested in the position. Should the current recruitment effort prove unsuccessful, the County may utilize an executive recruitment firm to expand the search for qualified applicants. To the Grand Jury's knowledge, this change of strategy was put into effect outside of any public meetings.

To ensure that the department could continue to meet the minimum service goals until key positions were filled, the County employed several strategies to keep the department running. Using third-party contractors paid for with salary savings from unfilled positions was the most heavily utilized strategy. The County already had existing contracts in this area but is now currently seeking an additional provider. A contract for professional services for Building Department plan reviews, inspection services, Chief Building Official, and Code Compliance was pending award at the time of writing this report. Additionally, staff are utilizing artificial intelligence software called Ichi, which is specific to code compliance. This innovative technology has helped improve permit turnaround time and provided staff with a resource to validate information; however, the efficiencies gained due to these innovations has not been able to compensate for the reduction of staff, increased workloads, and the loss of institutional knowledge. Finally, there have been a few acting/underfilling assignments to current county staff, namely for the CDD Director and Chief Building Official.

Due to the immediate operational needs of the department and the limited availability of qualified replacements, the CAO agreed to serve as Acting CDD Director and Acting CBO in August 2025. At the time of appointment and still currently, the CAO did not possess the technical background, certifications, or professional experience typically associated with or

required by these positions. He does occasionally ask for outside support when making technical or Ordinance Code-based decisions. While holding the CAO, Acting CDD Director, and Acting CBO positions, he was also holding several additional positions including the Acting OES Director and Acting I.T. Director. In addition, the CAO has also been going out in the field to respond to Code Compliance issues. During the Grand Jury's investigation, another individual eventually took over as the Acting Chief Building Official, taking some of the burden off the CAO. The Grand Jury acknowledges and appreciates the CAO and CDD staff's willingness to step up and support the County in any way necessary, but we question how effective a single person can be when asked to fill so many diverse roles with heavy workloads.

The County has struggled to find qualified candidates to fill the vacancies within CDD. The pay is commonly cited as a deterrent for potential employees and has also been a concern for existing employees. Work in the local private sector reportedly pays better than the County. Members of the union that represents many CDD workers spoke out at the December 8, 2025, Board meeting stating the new employee contract was not a good deal, but they felt they had to take it because the alternative was worse. Staff also said that salaries had not increased to cover the cost of living for many years and take-home pay had or would be, in-effect, decreasing due to increased employee-paid health insurance costs. In addition to the poor pay, several interviewees stated that they didn't feel like the Board of Supervisors supported them, or would support them if discretionary decisions were made. They felt abandoned by the Board, describing a work environment where pleas for assistance often went unanswered, leading to low morale, high turnover, and an unhealthy work environment.

Finally, the County has a public relations problem that is making it difficult to fill some higher-level positions across the County. It is quite common for employees who have left the County to find similar employment with other Counties, or for individuals in similar positions across Counties to communicate with each other. Potential candidates for executive positions will commonly watch the publicly available material, such as Board of Supervisor meetings. Multiple witnesses attested to Tuolumne County's bad reputation as an employer. Therefore, the perception of how well our county government functions has a strong impact on its ability to hire.

This has all led to several failed recruitments for the vacant positions within CDD. Once there have been a certain number failed recruitment attempts based on the position, the County has a policy that a hiring incentive can be added to the recruitment. Most, if not all, of the recruitments for vacancies within CDD have had the hiring incentive added. Key vacancies that need to be filled are the CDD Director, Chief Building Official, Principal Plans

Examiner, Building Inspector, and Code Compliance Investigator. At the time of writing, several candidates had been interviewed by the Board of Supervisors for the CDD Director position, but no official determination has been made. A recruitment was opened for the Principal Plans Examiner, but no recruitments were open for the Chief Building Official or Code Compliance Investigator. This is likely due to the potential restructuring effort that has been discussed for the department, which will be led by the new CDD Director upon hiring. At the time of publishing this report, the CDD Director position has remained open for more than eleven months.

Implications of an Understaffed Community Development Department

There is a potential cause for concern when executive leadership is not qualified to make decisions or enforce Ordinance Code-specific aspects of the role. It is entirely possible to be a successful leader without being a subject matter expert yourself - this is generally referred to as General Management. However, success of this model relies on having a team composed of subject matter experts and leveraging the collective intelligence within the team. While the remaining CDD staff are doing the best they can with the resources available to them, the lack of mid- and high-level supervisory subject matter experts with the experience, confidence, and seniority to make executive decisions calls into question the potential liability that the County has been exposed to while CDD has been so understaffed.

A recent example illustrates the consequences of insufficient or unqualified staffing within CDD in the department's failure to adequately address and protect the easement rights of TUD. A homeowner and contractor failed to submit a permit for the building of a garage that was built into a hillside that contained a water pipeline. A permit application was submitted after the garage had been completed. The contractor failed to call 8-1-1 to identify the water lines even after being instructed to do so by TUD staff. CDD was not aware of the garage until a permit application was submitted. However, the permit was retrofitted and approved by CDD based on the existing conditions, although it still encroached on TUD's easement. More experienced staff would know to question the integrity of the soil around the pipe, value access to evaluate and repair the pipe in the future, and put the rights of the entire neighborhood to TUD water above the lesser desires of property owner. Approving a garage that was built into a public utility's easement creates a difficult situation between TUD and the homeowner as to when, how, and how much it will cost the homeowner to resolve the issue by redirecting the pipe instead of removing their structure. This also highlights a concerning trend of individuals not applying for permits appropriately either due to lack of awareness, mistrust in CDD, or a flippant disregard of the importance of Ordinance Code compliance. Numerous individuals stated to the Grand Jury they were afraid someone would get seriously hurt, in the case of digging without calling 8-1-1, as underground gas

lines, power lines, and water pipes under high pressure pose a threat to public safety if hit. To be clear, calling 8-1-1 does not notify the CDD that work is being done, it is a free service to encourage safety and there are fines for not calling. Calling 8-1-1 is a condition on all county permits involving digging. In response to witnessing unpermitted work such as this, TUD developed a flowchart to clearly respond to easement encroachment issues, included in Appendix B. Similar flowcharts could assist the public in understanding CDD procedures.

Moving CDD and the County Forward

In addition to needing very knowledgeable and skilled individuals to fill the high-level vacancies or spearhead more training, there are no currently established metrics to measure success within CDD. The Grand Jury found that CDD's switch to the OpenGov system for permitting provides sufficient data to allow the County to track processes and metrics. However, a lack of direction and time to create and track metrics means there is no factual basis to identify opportunities for improvement or measure where progress has already occurred. Proactively identifying areas for improvement and making this information available to the public increases transparency and will help improve public perception of the department.

The Tuolumne County Planning Department outlines the building permitting process on its website, which includes application submittal and review, permit issuance, and inspections. It is important to recognize the wide range of permit applications the department manages. While most permits are ministerial and approved quickly, this Grand Jury report focused on the lengthier, more complex permits required for new construction. A complaint submitted to the Grand Jury was that the permitting process can be long, causing delays to the proposed project timeline. In most cases though, the process seems to function fairly smoothly, especially since the implementation of OpenGov. The duration of the permitting process is influenced by multiple factors, including the level of involvement of County and government agencies, regulatory reviews, and procedural requirements. A significant portion of the timeline can also be attributed to delays on the applicant's side, as applications often remain in their possession while they gather necessary information or fulfill requirements. Those delays are not always visible to the public, leading to a perception that the process is solely prolonged by CDD. The transparency offered with the OpenGov software tracking provides the opportunity to document and clarify delays within the permitting process. However, when asked about average permit approval timelines by type, CDD staff stated they were unable to summarize, saying they are all very different. Nonetheless, other City and County governments, such as the City of Somerton, Arizona, have successfully categorized the types of permits they review and have developed timeframes for processing each type of permit, which can be found in Appendix C. The City

of Somerton does not utilize OpenGov for their permit applications; however, the Grand Jury was provided reports and data extracts from OpenGov that contain the same types categories, approval information, and other relevant data that would be needed to analyze and develop average approval times for various types of permits. Therefore, given direction and resource availability, these types of guidelines could similarly be developed specific to permit approval times in Tuolumne County.

Unless closely following County government activity, the current state of staffing in CDD is not readily apparent as none of the public-facing organization charts have been updated. Updating this information and potentially putting a disclaimer on their website and OpenGov, could help provide the public with more realistic expectations for the department. This, as well as the suggestions outlined above, will help improve the department's messaging to the general public, and provide greater transparency about how the department functions and the guidelines they are required to follow.

Generally speaking, it is more cost effective to retain existing employees than to recruit, onboard, and train new employees. Workforce studies estimate employee replacement costs of 50% to 200% of annual salary, depending on the employee's level, training requirements, and specialized knowledge. The loss of employees with institutional knowledge also carries a price including lost productivity and morale. Therefore, the County overall needs to focus on retaining and building talent within its ranks as a long-term cost-saving measure and promote organizational resilience. The Tuolumne County Board of Supervisors Governance Manual includes employee development as one of the key values that the Board of Supervisors should be maintaining and promoting. However, when asked about what the Board and the County are doing on this front, Supervisors' responses ranged from complete deflection, to the opinion that the Board should not be involved in the minutia of employee management, to the acknowledgment that there is a culture problem within Tuolumne County's local government. It was said that there is currently a culture of fear, where Supervisors are naming and making hostile comments about staff, and where department heads are afraid to speak up. It was said that if the Board undermines the work that staff do, it undermines staff's trust in the Board; that trust has been damaged. As a result, the current and future Boards face the significant challenges of rebuilding employee trust, restoring confidence in County leadership, and demonstrating to prospective employees that Tuolumne County is a supportive and desirable place to build a career in public service.

It is easier said than done to fill vacancies in local government, even without dealing with a culture problem. Retirement rates have increased, and vacancies are on the rise, compounded by wage disparities with the private sector and other governmental agencies.

This, however, is not a unique problem to CDD nor Tuolumne County government as a whole; this is a problem across the country. The Institute for Local Government developed an apprenticeship program called the Bridge Initiative to help local governments hire for positions that are in high demand and notoriously difficult to fill, while also expanding economic opportunity and career mobility. The County already offers a few paid internship opportunities within the I.T. and Public Health departments but should consider expanding these programs to provide local students with a greater opportunity to gain experience to qualify for easier to fill entry-level positions.

To foster engagement and innovative thinking within the County, employees – from entry level staff to department heads – need to feel heard and valued. It starts at the top. The Board of Supervisors needs to set the example by acknowledging the culture problem and ensuring department heads are comfortable speaking up about the problems their staff are facing and potential solutions. The County should solicit feedback from all employees about what resources they need to do their job, if there are any barriers from doing their jobs effectively, how the organizational culture can be improved, and so on. This needs to remain anonymous so that employees can feel comfortable speaking freely and honestly. But most importantly, the County needs to close the feedback loop and make meaningful changes before employee trust can be regained. The Grand Jury is confident that strengthening these personnel practices will result in a more efficient, motivated, and stable workforce. By taking the same proactive, visionary approach to employee relations, the Board will secure long-term benefits for the County, its employees, and the public it serves.

TUOLUMNE COUNTY BUILDING ENVIRONMENT

To better understand the regulatory and permitting environment within Tuolumne County, the Grand Jury interviewed a number of contractors and individuals familiar with the local development process. The Grand Jury also interviewed nearly all of the remaining and many of the former CDD staff members, members of the Board of Supervisors, and representatives from agencies both within and outside of Tuolumne County and others. The Grand Jury heard reports from contractors, developers, and homeowners that the ease of getting projects approved through CDD varied widely. The practice of applying additional “Tuolumne County” requirements was reported beyond those things explicitly required by the Ordinance Code and application of those additional requirements varied depending on what CDD staff member was assigned to a project. However, these additional requirements were items not formally codified or publicly adopted in the Ordinance Code. Environmental

Health and Code Compliance departments also contended with similar complaints about consistency.

Additionally, how much leeway was given to the permit-holder to address code violations was also not always consistent and led to unpredictability. Several individuals described these concerns as longstanding and expressed the view that requirements and interpretations could vary depending on the reviewer assigned to the project. One contractor characterized the process as involving “variable” or “flavor-of-the-month” requirements that were not always clearly documented or consistently applied.

A common concern from interviewees was that CDD routinely returned building plans to applicants requesting additional information, notwithstanding the presence of an engineer’s professional stamp and certification on the submitted plans. This practice contributed to project delays, increased costs, and frustration among applicants and contractors, and created a perception of inconsistency and inefficiency within the permitting process.

Another recurring complaint was that, after an identified correction had been completed, subsequent inspections would identify additional corrections that had not been previously communicated. Witnesses stated that this practice resulted in repeated inspection cycles, increased project costs, and uncertainty regarding the requirements necessary to achieve final approval.

The Grand Jury found that these differences, additional requirements, and inconsistencies in leeway were attributable to how different individual staff interpreted the Ordinance Code and their preferred practical application of those Codes. Additionally, the Grand Jury found that some contractors complained about these issues in the process and in some cases abandoned projects because of their eroding public trust in the agency. The Grand Jury also received testimony indicating that some contractors and property owners perceived the building process in neighboring counties to be less difficult or less restrictive than in Tuolumne County. Those interviewed attributed this perception to differences in the interpretation and application of building and development requirements. Discussions with individuals involved in local economic development further confirmed that concerns regarding the complexity, consistency, and predictability of the County’s permitting and building review processes had generated ongoing complaints and project delays within portions of the business and development community.

THE HIGH SCHOOL ROAD PROJECT

The Civil Grand Jury's review of the CDD led to an investigation of perceived conflicts between CDD and a member of the Board of Supervisors. That research prompted us to evaluate the Conflict-of-Interest language added to the Board of Supervisors Governance Manual and the application of that provision to the interactions between a member of the Board and the CDD Department. That investigation further led to an evaluation of that Supervisor's project on High School Road, which uncovered significant concerns related to permitting, interagency coordination, and regulatory compliance. A substantial portion of the work performed on the High School Road project appears to have occurred without the appropriate permits in place. This includes grading and site development activities that were initiated before all required approvals were secured.

Chronology Of Related Events

The project referred to as belonging to Supervisor Holland is located at 17411 High School Road in Jamestown. The goal of the project was to erect eight (8) large buildings to be used as a storage facility. To facilitate a clear understanding of the complex and, at times, unclear sequence of surrounding events associated with the High School Road Project, the following chronology has been compiled. This timeline provides an essential context for the findings and recommendations presented in this report.

2019 - Mr. Holland acquired the property located at 17411 High School Road.

August 22, 2019 – Tuolumne County Fire Department issued a letter (Appendix F) to CDD specifying seven (7) conditions that need to be met on the High School Road property prior to issuance of any building permits. Of particular note, Condition 3 required Tuolumne County Fire Prevention to test and approve the required water flow prior to issuance of any building permits and Condition 4 required a letter from TUD to Tuolumne County Fire Prevention confirming that the required fire flow is available to the project site prior to issuance of any building permits. The Grand Jury was unable to confirm that either of those conditions were met or completed.

January 14, 2021 - The CDD Director issued Conditions of Approval for the Site Development Permit on the High School Road property. The document consisted of ten pages, with an additional eleventh page addressing tribal consultation requirements related to the Chicken Ranch Rancheria and the potential presence of archaeological resources on the property.

April 19, 2021 - The CDD Director approved the issuance of Site Development Permit (SDP-19-004), subject to an extensive set of Conditions of Approval totaling approximately 60 conditions.

November 2021 - A grading plan was submitted to CDD by Granite Land Holdings, which proposed how earthwork would be performed safely and in compliance with County standards, while protecting neighboring properties, roads, drainage systems, and the environment. A grading plan becomes the basis for County review, permit approval, certain fees, inspections, and final certification.

January 26, 2022 - Grading Permit G2021-00026 was issued allowing for a “Volume of grading of +/-12,833 cubic yards”. (Note: +/- indicates the actual volume could be a little more or a little less than the stated number. It is on the basis of earth being moved that fees are assessed.) Required inspections are supposed to occur throughout the grading process and are completed when requested by the permit holder. A condition of approval was providing a proper erosion control plan.

April 2023 – Significant excavation and site preparation activities commenced at the High School Road Property.

September 11, 2023 - Initial public complaints were submitted to the CDD alleging that work performed on the property obstructed an existing drainage ditch.

September 20, 2023 - Roger Root was promoted from Information Technology Director to Assistant County Administrative Officer.

September 29, 2023 - Mr. Holland publicly announced his candidacy for the District 1 seat on the Board of Supervisors.

Late 2023 - Tuolumne County implemented the OpenGov Permitting and Licensing system during the second half of 2023. Public training for contractors and applicants was conducted on September 22, 2023, in preparation for deployment of the new system, which replaced prior permitting processes and provided online permit application, plan review, and inspection-tracking capabilities.

October 13, 2023 – Tuolumne County Environmental Health issued a Site and Soils Evaluation Report for the High School Road project. They stated, “Installation may not begin until revised plans are submitted that meet minimum code standards for a septic system repair and a permit is issued.” The submitted plan showed septic for one office, but did not include the septic necessary for the addition of a residence in Building C.

November 7–9, 2023 - Eight Building Permits (one per structure) were issued, authorizing foundation work only for the High School Road project. A foundation only permit allows for the installation of footings, form, and building of the foundation that a structure will eventually sit on.

September 2023 – February 2024 - Numerous complaints were filed with CDD by Tuolumne County citizens regarding excavation and construction of the drainage outfall ditch. Reported concerns included, but were not limited to, diversion of water to a seasonal creek at the north end of the property, use of substandard materials, work performed by unlicensed individuals, and inconsistencies with approved plans. Multiple meetings occur involving the complainant(s), the property owner, and Tuolumne County officials.

January 10, 2024 – The Public Works Director issued a Notice of Grading Permit Revocation for the High School Road project. She stated that the permit issued on January 26, 2022, and extended to January 26, 2024, was “issued without all conditions of approval having been met.” She stated a number of issues existed, and “in order to perform any additional grading on the parcel, a new grading permit must be obtained.”

January 12, 2024 – The Public Works Director issued a Notice of Grading Permit Suspension in response to a complaint made to the Tuolumne County Sheriff’s Office regarding the High School Road property owner filling a cross culvert with concrete and debris. The Suspension stipulated that Item 7, a drainage plan, must be resubmitted to address several issues.

February 20, 2024 - The Public Works Director communicated to the complainant that discussions with relevant department heads would occur that day and that enforcement actions, including potential fines, would be pursued if compliance was not achieved.

February 21, 2024 – The Public Works Director resigned with an effective date of April 14, 2024.

April 10, 2024 – Mr. Holland submitted a Drainage Report from a third--party consultant.

April 12, 2024 – Following completion of their review of the Drainage Report, the outgoing Public Works Director rescinded the suspension of the Grading Permit.

April 17, 2024 – A memo was written to the Department of Public Works file by an engineer in the Public Works Department stating that Mr. Holland indicated that “there is no intention to create the necessary ditch in conjunction with his project, although it is shown on the grading plans.” It was also noted that Mr. Holland “wants to construct his outermost building immediately on the property line fronting the road. However, there is a water main

of substantial size located between the eastern edge of High School Road and the right-of-way line on that side, and drainage culverts to allow for driveway encroachments to Holland’s proposed project would need to be incorporated as well.”

May 16, 2024 – Assistant CAO Roger Root emailed Mr. Holland that both CAO Riggs and Mr. Root concurred with Mr. Holland’s proposed plan for installation of a fire hydrant and instructed Mr. Holland to proceed and provide notice when work is scheduled to begin.

Note: Incumbent CAO Riggs has denied ever providing authorization for the installation of the hydrant.

September 25, 2024 – CDD issued a Plan Review Correction Letter for the High School Road project citing 56 items.

November 5, 2024 - Mr. Holland was elected to the Tuolumne County Board of Supervisors.

January 6, 2025 - Mr. Holland was sworn in as a member of the Tuolumne County Board of Supervisors.

January 15, 2025 - Tracie Riggs resigned from her position as Tuolumne County Administrative Officer, and Roger Root became the Acting County Administrative Officer.

February 2025 – Supervisor Holland, in his role as a newly elected Supervisor, attends ethics training offered by the Tuolumne County Office of County Counsel. This training included education regarding conflict-of interest rules.

March 18, 2025 – During Board Member Reports at a BOS meeting, Supervisor Holland presented a slideshow entitled, “Maybe Time for a New Approach.” He summarized his visit with Amador County’s CDD and said that “hopefully we can change the way business is done here and incorporate this (Amador’s) philosophy and ability to get things done.” Following this meeting, the BOS adjourned into closed session during which time they conducted a performance review of the CDD Director. Several interviewees said that the perception was that Supervisor Holland delivered his unscheduled presentation at that time with the intent to negatively impact the impending performance review for the CDD Director.

March 19, 2025 - A CDD staff member issued a Plan Review Correction Letter – 2nd Review for the High School Road project identifying substantial deficiencies (57) that were required to be addressed prior to continuation of the building permit process.

April 7, 2025 – A member of the community reported that the drainage overflow/culvert at the High School Road site was again obstructed.

April 18, 2025 - A meeting was held to address Supervisor Holland's concerns regarding his permit request for the High School Road project. Present during this meeting were representatives from County Counsel and Human Resources plus the CDD Director and Acting CAO. During this meeting, the CDD Director indicated that issuance of the permit would proceed upon receipt of an engineer's letter addressing collateral loading on the buildings. Documentation indicated that such a letter was submitted prior to the meeting.

April 21, 2025 - Previously issued "Foundation Only" permits for Buildings A, B, D, E, F, G, and H were reissued as "Structural Only" permits (Permit Nos. B2023-01733, B2023-01732, B2023-01731, B2023-01730, B2023-01729, B2023-01727, and B2023-01726). Structural only permits merely allow for the construction of the building's four exterior walls. They do not allow for the installation of any electrical components, water, interior walls or door, flooring, insulation, or lighting or sprinklers. Permit No. B2023-01728 for Building C remained limited to foundation construction only. Building C was proposed to include both office space and a residential dwelling unit. According to the CDD, additional code issues remained unresolved, preventing the issuance of a full building permit authorizing construction beyond the foundation phase.

Spring 2025 (Date Unspecified) - A conflict-of-interest was identified involving Supervisor Holland, and CDD. Subsequently, language addressing conflict-of-interest provisions was added to the Board of Supervisors Governance Manual in June 2025. The amendment of that policy and the Governance Manual ultimately allowed for consideration of external jurisdiction involvement in the review of the High School Road project.

May 5, 2025 – Email communication took place between the CAO's Office and CDD regarding proposed budget allocations for "outside planning services," including a reference to specifically adding "\$20,000 for Supervisor Holland's projects."

June 3, 2025 - The Tuolumne County Board of Supervisors approved amendments to its Governance Manual to address conflicts-of-interest. The revisions authorized the County to contract with another local agency to perform municipal services or functions within County jurisdiction when a conflict arises. Authority to execute such agreements was delegated to the County Administrative Officer, subject to budgetary and signing authority limitations. Supervisor Holland both seconded the motion and voted to approve the amendment.

June 17, 2025 – The BOS discussed expanding the office hours for CDD. The CDD Director and Assistant Director spoke in opposition to this expansion. The item was tabled until the BOS meeting on June 24, 2025.

June 19, 2025 – To validate its plan review of the High School Road project and ensure that applicable code requirements had been correctly identified, CDD engaged an independent consulting firm already under contract with Tuolumne County to conduct a separate review of the High School Road project plans. The consulting firm's review substantially confirmed the concerns and deficiencies previously identified by CDD staff. In addition, the consultant identified further corrections and plan revisions that were required before the project could be determined to comply with applicable building code and safety standards. The independent review therefore supported CDD's determination that additional technical issues remained unresolved and that further plan revisions were necessary before a full building permit could be issued.

June 24, 2025 – The BOS discussed resolution 48-25 to modify the operational hours of the Francisco building, including CDD. The resolution passed 3-2 with Supervisors Griefer, Holland, and Kirk voting in favor of the resolution, and Supervisors Brandon and Campbell voting against the resolution.

July 1, 2025 - The Acting CAO transmitted a memorandum to the Amador County Administrative Officer (Appendix #H) requesting that Amador County provide plan review, permit processing, and inspection services for the High School Road project pursuant to the newly adopted conflict-of-interest provisions. The precise scope of services is not clearly defined in the memorandum.

July 4, 2025 - CDD Director Quincy Yaley submitted her resignation. Subsequently, Brian Bell was appointed Acting Community Development Director.

July 12, 2025 – Supervisor Holland installed an unpermitted fire hydrant to support the High School Road project.

July 14, 2025 (approx.) - Acting CAO Roger Root, Human Resources Director Karen McGettigan, and County Counsel Sarah Carrillo met with Brian Bell regarding the High School Road project. During that meeting, Mr. Bell was instructed to discontinue further oversight and involvement with matters related to the project. This directive effectively removed CDD from participation in the review, permitting, inspection, and enforcement activities associated with the project.

July 22, 2025 - Roger Root was formally appointed Interim CAO.

July 28, 2025 – Despite prior instructions from CAO Root, Acting CDD Director Brian Bell issued an Opportunity to Correct notice for the High School Road property, citing violations of § 15.04.010 of the Tuolumne County Ordinance Code for failure to obtain the required

building permits pursuant to the California Building Code. The notice identified violations associated with “Building C” of the storage facility development, stating that a building permit had not been issued due to unresolved structural, life-safety, and fire-safety deficiencies requiring correction. The notice also cited the installation of a private fire hydrant without the required permit.

July 28, 2025 (approx.): Via phone, Interim CAO Root again directed Bell to withdraw the Opportunity to Correct Notice and discontinue further involvement with matters related to the High School Road property.

August 5, 2025 – Acting CDD Director Bell appeared before the Board of Supervisors during Staff Reports to inform them that the last remaining Code Compliance Officer had resigned and that the CDD had lost fourteen employees in the previous nine months.

August 6, 2025 – County Counsel Sarah Carillo resigned.

August 7, 2025 – Acting CDD Director Bell resigned with an effective date of August 22, 2025.

August 14, 2025 – CDD Code Compliance issued a Notice and Order for the High School Road project citing violation of § 15.04.010 of the Tuolumne County Ordinance Code for failing to obtain a building permit pursuant to California Building Code. Specifically, they cite the fact that Building C had “not been issued a permit for erection of the building due to pending structural and life safety items in need of correction. Erection of the building is currently underway in violation of Tuolumne County Ordinance Code and the California Building Standards Code” and “installation of a private fire hydrant without a permit.”

August 19, 2025 – The Board of Supervisors approved Resolution 62-25 authorizing the CAO to assume the role of CDD Director/Assistant Director during the vacancy of those two positions. Therefore, Roger Root assumed the additional role of Acting CDD Director while continuing to serve as Interim CAO.

October 7, 2025 – Three citizens appeared before the Board of Supervisors to ask for an investigation into the actions of Supervisor Holland as they related to the High School Road project.

October 7, 2025 – Supervisor Holland addressed the Board of Supervisors regarding the hydrant he installed for the High School Road project, stating, “It’s a public hydrant, not a private hydrant, it’s not mine, it belongs to the County.” He also stated, “It was the deal that was made with Tracy Riggs long ago. We just finally got around to installing it.” He said that as a private citizen, he donated a \$10,000 hydrant to the County.

October 8, 2025 - Amador County issued internal documentation related to Building C (Appendix G). The scope of work was described as “plan check and inspection services for (specific portions) of the Building C.” However, the language was ambiguous and did not clearly state that Amador County was not issuing a building permit for Building C. There was a “permit number” associated with the document. However, according to Amador County building representatives, this number was only used for tracking purposes within their permit management system, and the document did not constitute the issuance of an official building permit for Building C.

October 10, 2025 - Interim CAO Root issued a press release (see Appendix E) stating that Amador County issued a permit for Building C and noted that multiple permits had previously been issued by Tuolumne County on April 21, 2025, for the other seven buildings onsite. The press release noted that those permits were issued following submission of an engineer’s letter addressing the collateral loading concerns. He also stated that the “public hydrant referenced in recent documents was first reviewed in early 2024 during a meeting with County staff, including representatives from CAO, Facilities, Public Works, and CDD, and was coordinated with the TUD.”

November 4, 2025 - The Tuolumne County Board of Supervisors voted to appoint Roger Root as County Administrative Officer.

November 11, 2025 - Email correspondence from an Amador County CDD staff member to a Tuolumne County CDD staff member indicated that Amador County’s scope of work included plan review and inspection services for all eight buildings.

February 9, 2026 – The Tuolumne County District Attorney’s Office announced that no criminal charges would be filed related to the installation of the fire hydrant on High School Road. They stated, “By announcing our decision today, we address only those issues properly vested within our Office’s jurisdiction – namely, whether a criminal act had been committed related to the installation of the fire hydrant, and whether there was evidence to prove such act beyond a reasonable doubt. At this time, there is insufficient evidence to prove a crime was committed as it relates to the installation of this fire hydrant. Whether any County policy or administrative law violations occurred is not for us to comment on.”

April 20, 2026 - During interviews conducted by the Grand Jury with Amador County officials, it was stated that Amador County did not issue any building permits for the High School Road project. Amador County representatives clarified that building permits may only be issued by the jurisdiction of record, which for this project is the County of Tuolumne. Amador County officials identified their role as strictly limited to plan review and inspection services

for all eight buildings. Additionally, Amador County representatives reported that they had not yet provided their documentation to Tuolumne County, nor did they coordinate with other agencies in Tuolumne County, such as the local fire authority, for required inspections. They stated that they have advised Mr. Holland to contact the local fire authority for the inspections. They further stated that issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy and final approvals remains the responsibility of Tuolumne County, including sign-off by the appropriate fire prevention authority.

To date: Work continues on the High School Road property, including the erecting of all eight structures and installation of electrical components.

Note: *This chronology reflects the best available information at the time of investigation.*

Conflict-of-Interest Policy

The Grand Jury received concerns regarding the adoption and implementation of the County's new Conflict-of-Interest Policy in June 2025. These concerns related specifically to the High School Road Project owned and being developed by Supervisor Holland. Below, the Grand Jury outlines information it learned during its' investigation related to the conflicts arising between the project, its owner, and the County, the adoption of the Conflict-of-Interest Policy, and how application of that policy for the High School Road Project has led to ongoing public safety and public integrity concerns with the property that remain unmitigated.

Pre-Existing Conflict Resolution Mechanisms

Prior to adoption of the County's new Conflict-of-Interest Policy in June 2025, Tuolumne County maintained several mechanisms intended to address actual or perceived conflicts of interest involving elected officials, County employees, and regulatory decisions.

The Governance Manual required Supervisors to comply with the Political Reform Act, Government Code § 1090, and other applicable conflict-of-interest laws. Supervisors were directed to seek advice from County Counsel, the FPPC, or private legal counsel when conflicts arose. When legally required, Supervisors were expected to disclose conflicts publicly and recuse themselves from participation in affected matters.

The County also maintained administrative safeguards within CDD. Independent planning and engineering consultants under contract with the County could review permitting decisions, evaluate technical issues, and provide third-party analysis when disputes arose.

Appeals processes also existed through County Code for certain permitting and land-use decisions.

The Grand Jury found no evidence that these existing safeguards had been fully exhausted prior to adoption of the new policy. Independent consultant review was among the mechanisms available to address disputes regarding permitting decisions and allegations of bias.

The Grand Jury also learned that concerns had been raised regarding the use of consultants as an impartial alternative. Specifically, some individuals expressed the belief that consultants who regularly contract with the County could be incentivized to align with County staff's positions in order to maintain future business relationships. The Grand Jury did not independently verify whether such influence existed. However, the concern was cited by some individuals as a reason why consultant review was viewed as an insufficient solution to address perceived conflicts.

Prior County Code provisions also stipulated that code enforcement appeals would be heard by the County's Code Compliance Hearing Board, a three-member board of County residents appointed by the BOS. The hearing process allowed the owner, or responsible person to testify, present witnesses and evidence, and receive the County's hearing report in advance. However, the BOS never appointed members to this board, resulting in the BOS serving as the default governing body for such appeals.

In addition, the Grand Jury was unable to identify an active Code Compliance Board within the County's current Code Compliance framework. Current County materials describe enforcement through CDD and Chapter 1.10 of the Ordinance Code but do not reference a functioning Code Compliance Board. The Grand Jury did not determine whether the Board was formally dissolved, whether its duties were reassigned, or when it last met.

While the Grand Jury did not determine whether the Code Compliance Board would have been applicable to the circumstances surrounding the High School Road project, its apparent absence from the current enforcement framework further complicated the Grand Jury's assessment of what independent review mechanisms were available prior to adoption of the Conflict-of-Interest Policy.

The Grand Jury recognizes that none of these mechanisms are identical to the process ultimately created through the Conflict-of-Interest Policy. However, the existence of conflict-of-interest laws, disclosure and recusal requirements, consultant review, administrative appeal procedures, and historical references to additional oversight

mechanisms raises questions regarding whether existing processes were fully evaluated before adoption of a new policy authorizing regulatory review by another jurisdiction.

The Grand Jury further notes that no private citizen has the ability to request that a project be transferred outside County jurisdiction merely because they disagree with a decision or believe a conflict exists. However, through the Conflict-of-Interest policy, County elected officials, department heads, managers, and supervisors may receive access to a process that is not otherwise available to members of the public.

Adoption of the Conflict-of-Interest Policy

On June 3, 2025, the Tuolumne County Board of Supervisors amended its Governance Manual to add a conflict-of-interest provision authorizing the County to contract with another local agency to perform municipal services or functions within Tuolumne County when a conflict involving an elected official or employee exists. The amendment further delegated authority to the County Administrative Officer to enter into such agreements within existing budgetary and signing authority limits. The full changes made to the policy are shown in Appendix D.

Board members interviewed by the Grand Jury stated that the policy was presented as a mechanism to avoid actual or perceived conflicts of interest and to ensure impartial treatment of County officials when interacting with County departments. Several Board members indicated they believed the policy was intended to prevent preferential treatment arising from the authority elected officials hold over County employees and departmental operations.

It's important to note that prior to this point, CDD had a successful recent history of providing services to several members of the BOS and to the CAO. This included use permits, building permits, and code compliance matters which were resolved without issue.

While presented as a broad policy change without any specific causation, the timing of the Conflict-of-Interest amendment is notable. Prior to adoption of the policy, County leadership had already begun discussing methods of addressing disputes involving the High School Road project. Of significant concern is the fact that the Grand Jury identified internal communications that took place in early May 2025, predating adoption of the policy, discussing Tuolumne County's funding for outside review of Supervisor Holland's project. These discussions occurred before the Governance Manual language was formally approved. During the BOS meeting to approve the Conflict-of-Interest language on June 3, 2025, Supervisor Campbell questioned Acting CAO Root regarding how budgeting would be done to anticipate payments for work sent outside the County. Acting CAO Root said, "We

wouldn't know the cost until the case presented itself." He also, coincidentally, used the example of an "outside project", stating, "If it's an outside project that has a conflict, then whoever's project that is would cover the cost of that like they would if they were turning in a project in the County today." Therefore, at the time the language was changed, there was consideration of the need to send a "project" to another jurisdiction. While Acting CAO Root stated that the person who had the project would cover the costs associated, the Grand Jury uncovered an invoice from Amador County showing that on August 13, 2025, they billed Tuolumne \$3,035.11 for the project located at 17411 High School Road in Jamestown. This bill was subsequently paid by Tuolumne County on September 17, 2025.

Several members of the Board of Supervisors told the Grand Jury they were unaware that Supervisor Holland's active development project would become subject to the newly adopted policy so soon after its implementation, raising questions regarding the Board's understanding of the policy's immediate application and potential impacts. Some Supervisors stated they may have evaluated the proposal differently had they understood its anticipated application.

Governance and Oversight Concerns

The policy delegates authority to the CAO to identify outside agencies and enter into agreements intended to resolve conflict-of-interest situations. While the stated goal is impartiality, the Grand Jury identified concerns regarding oversight, transparency, and accountability.

Unlike traditional conflict-of-interest procedures, which focus on disclosure, recusal, independent review, and appeals, the new policy authorizes transfer of governmental functions outside the County's normal administrative structure. The Grand Jury found little evidence of clear criteria defining when such transfers are appropriate, what alternatives must first be considered, or how the County determines whether existing safeguards are insufficient.

The California Building Code places enforcement authority with the local Building Official:

- § 104.1 authorizes and directs the Building Official to enforce the provisions of the code.
- § 104.2 grants the Building Official authority to review plans, issue permits, and inspect work for compliance.
- § 105.6 authorizes the Building Official to suspend or revoke permits issued in error or based upon inaccurate information.

Similarly, California Health and Safety Code § 17960 requires local agencies to enforce the California Building Standards Code and related provisions of state law. § 17961 and 17962 authorize local enforcement officers to inspect properties and enforce applicable standards and ordinances.

The Grand Jury was informed that inspectors from another county may not possess the same familiarity with Tuolumne County's local ordinances, interagency requirements, departmental workflows, or project-specific history. In speaking with representatives from several counties, the Grand Jury learned that such arrangements appear uncommon and were viewed by some as inadvisable.

The Grand Jury also found that, shortly after adoption, the policy was applied to a project involving a sitting member of the Board of Supervisors and that the affected Supervisor participated in the vote approving the newly adopted policy.

The 2022 Governance Manual already required Supervisors to comply with the Political Reform Act and Government Code § 1090, seek advice from County Counsel, the FPPC, or private counsel when ethics concerns arose, publicly disclose conflicts when required, and recuse themselves from participation in affected matters. The Grand Jury notes that Supervisor Holland did not publicly announce a conflict or recuse himself while participating in discussion and approval of the Conflict-of-Interest Policy, despite the policy's subsequent application to his own project.

While the Grand Jury makes no legal determination regarding the vote itself, these circumstances create an appearance issue that undermines public confidence in the neutrality of the adoption of the conflict-of-interest policy.

Application of the Policy

Shortly after adoption of the Governance Manual amendment, County leadership determined that a conflict existed involving Supervisor Holland's High School Road project and the CDD.

Interviews and documentation reviewed by the Grand Jury showed that representatives from the County Administrative Office, Human Resources, County Counsel, and CDD met to discuss the matter. Following those discussions, neighboring counties were contacted regarding possible involvement. Mono County and Mariposa County declined participation. Amador County agreed to provide review services.

The Grand Jury notes that the County ultimately selected the same jurisdiction that had previously been highlighted by Supervisor Holland during a public presentation comparing the relative performance of the two departments. While the Grand Jury found no evidence that the presentation influenced the selection decision, the sequence of events contributes to the concerns raised by some witnesses.

On July 1, 2025, the Acting CAO formally requested Amador County to perform plan review, permit processing assistance, and inspection services related to the High School Road project. (Appendix H) The Grand Jury found that this was the first, and to date the only, reported use of the newly adopted policy.

Based upon the testimony, documentation, and other evidence reviewed, the Grand Jury found that the circumstances involving Supervisor Holland and CDD staff did not principally arise from concerns that CDD personnel would provide preferential treatment or fail to enforce applicable laws and regulations. Rather, the evidence indicated that disputes developed because CDD staff were applying and enforcing existing code, permitting, inspection, and compliance requirements in a manner that Supervisor Holland found objectionable.

The Grand Jury further found that subsequent efforts to transfer permitting and inspection responsibilities associated with the High School Road project to another jurisdiction created the appearance that an alternative regulatory process was being sought that could result in less restrictive review or more flexible enforcement standards. Such actions have the potential to undermine public confidence in the impartial administration of County regulations and create the perception that elected officials may receive treatment inconsistent with that afforded to other County residents and applicants.

Impacts of the Conflict-of-Interest Policy Change

Research uncovered a history of contentious interactions between Supervisor Holland and CDD. This adversarial relationship spanned multiple prior projects and predated the initiation of the High School Road project and Supervisor Holland's election to the Board of Supervisors. Despite the fact that other Board members (both past and present) have utilized CDD services without issue, changes were made to the Tuolumne County Governance Manual on June 3, 2025, that allowed Supervisor Holland's active project to be sent to a jurisdiction outside the County for review. Written communications in May 2025, between the CAO's Office and CDD regarding proposed budget allocations of "\$20,000 for Supervisor Holland's projects" predated the adoption of that Conflict-of-Interest language in the Governance Manual. These communications indicate that consideration was being

given to sending Supervisor Holland's projects outside the County for review prior to the formal vote adopting the language allowing for that change. The timing of these events raises a reasonable inference that the Governance Manual language was intended to apply specifically to Supervisor Holland's projects. Several members of the BOS told us in interviews that they were unaware of Supervisor Holland's active development project at the time of their vote on the Conflict-of-Interest Policy changes in the Governance Manual.

These circumstances further raise concerns regarding Supervisor Holland's participation in seconding the motion to add the Conflict-of-Interest language, and his subsequent vote in favor of adopting the provisions, given the potential application of the language to currently pending matters in which he held a financial interest, thereby creating the appearance of a conflict-of-interest in the voting process itself.

It is also important to note that, while mutual assistance agreements between jurisdictions are relatively common, they are typically utilized in operational contexts involving emergency response services such as law enforcement, fire protection, and certain legal or prosecutorial functions. Based on the Grand Jury's research, no comparable examples were identified in which a county routinely relied on another county to perform core building permitting, inspection, or code enforcement functions as part of standard regulatory operations. This distinction raises questions regarding the appropriateness, transparency, and consistency of using inter-county arrangements for technical regulatory functions traditionally performed by the originating jurisdiction.

Lack of Interagency Coordination

The Civil Grand Jury also identified significant communication deficiencies between Tuolumne County and Amador County following the adoption of the Conflict-of-Interest provisions. These deficiencies involved the initial request for assistance, acceptance of responsibilities, definition of scope, and the status of work performed. The lack of clearly defined roles and documented agreements contributed to confusion regarding which agency held responsibility for specific aspects of plan review, permitting, and inspection. It was also unclear when documentation would be transmitted to Tuolumne County.

Press Release

On October 10, 2025 Interim CAO Root issued a press release (see Appendix E) regarding the High School Road Project. He stated that:

- Amador County issued a permit for Building C

- Multiple permits had previously been issued by Tuolumne County on April 21, 2025, for the other seven buildings onsite. The press release noted that those permits were issued following submission of an engineer’s letter addressing the collateral loading concerns.
- The “public hydrant referenced in recent documents was first reviewed in early 2024 during a meeting with County staff, including representatives from CAO, Facilities, Public Works, and CDD, and was coordinated with the TUD.”

Our investigation found that Amador denied ever issuing a building permit for the High School Road Project. Their representatives were emphatic that only the jurisdiction of record (i.e. Tuolumne County) had that authority to issue a permit. The “permit” they issued was strictly a recordkeeping document. The original permit for Building C issued by Tuolumne County was for Foundation Only. Both structural and electrical work were done on Building C. Thus, the work done to construct Building C was done without a permit. While CAO Root stated that the other seven (7) structures were under a permit from Tuolumne County, correspondence with Amador County identified that at some point after the initial request from CAO Root on July 1, 2025, they were instructed to also perform inspections on the remaining seven (7) structures. There was no formal documentation of this request. The permits that Tuolumne County had on file for those buildings were for Structure Only and did not cover anything other than the erection of the walls. Amador County informed the Grand Jury that electrical work had been completed on those structures. Therefore, they were also being completed without a permit.

Further, the release incorrectly characterized the type of fire hydrant installed and misstated the extent and appropriateness of County personnel involvement in decisions related to the hydrant’s installation and approval process.

The press release stated that the County Administrative Officer serving on April 19, 2024, had approved the hydrant installation. However, testimony and information obtained by the Grand Jury indicated that the former CAO disputed and denied having provided such approval. During the Grand Jury’s interviews, no member of the groups he cited, other than CAO Root, ever confirmed that any approval was granted for the installation of the hydrant. Regardless, “verbal approval” is not sufficient to install a hydrant, and the Grand Jury found that it too had been installed without a permit. The fact that Supervisor Holland stated he had subsequently donated the hydrant to the County does not abrogate his responsibility to follow the law in installing the hydrant.

These inconsistencies raise concerns regarding the accuracy of information disseminated to the public and the adequacy of fact verification prior to the issuance of official County

communications. The dissemination of inaccurate or misleading information by senior County leadership has the potential to undermine public confidence in County governance and administrative transparency.

Regulatory Compliance

Evidence reviewed by the Grand Jury indicates that grading activities associated with the High School Road project may not have fully complied with applicable regulations or with the conditions and limitations specified in the approved grading permit. Further, evidence suggests that the extent of earth movement exceeded the scope authorized under the permit. The grading permit specified an allowable grading volume of $\pm 12,833$ cubic yards. This means that the amount of earth movement may be a little more or a little less than the stated amount. However, qualified engineering professionals interviewed subsequently estimated that the actual volume of grading may have approached 50,000 cubic yards, substantially exceeding the permitted amount. The responsibility of requesting on-going grading inspections belongs to the permit holder, in this case Granite Land Holdings. Final approval of the work performed by the permit holder has not been requested as of the date of this report.

The Grand Jury also identified additional areas of concern, including reported impacts to existing wells and heritage oak trees, grading activities allegedly performed without the appropriate contractor licensing for work of that scale, runoff and drainage issues contributing to flooding concerns, and excavation cuts reportedly exceeding the approved plan limitations by more than twofold in certain locations. These issues exacerbate the concerns related to regulatory compliance, oversight, environmental impacts, and adherence to applicable County and State requirements.

No project is exempt from compliance with applicable laws and regulations. It is reasonable for the public to expect all of its public employees and elected officials to demonstrate a heightened commitment to following the laws, ordinances, and permitting requirements imposed upon all individuals seeking to develop projects in our community. Allegations and documented concerns regarding work performed without required permits, work conducted without appropriate licensure, the creation of drainage conditions potentially affecting neighboring properties, and the appearance of preferential treatment are inconsistent with the standards of accountability and public trust associated with those who serve as elected officials.

Fire Hydrant Installation at High School Road Property

The Civil Grand Jury identified significant issues related to the installation and regulatory classification of a fire hydrant on the High School Road project. Central to this issue is a lack of clarity and consistency in the distinction between public and private fire hydrants, and the regulatory implications associated with each classification. The Civil Grand Jury further noted that requirements governing fire hydrants differ depending on whether the hydrant is classified as public or private. These differences may include permitting authority, installation standards, maintenance responsibilities, and coordination requirements with both water and fire agencies.

Additionally, hydrant barrel and cap/nozzle color coding represents a critical operational element for emergency responders. Hydrant color conveys essential information regarding water flow capacity and system characteristics, enabling firefighters to make rapid, informed decisions during emergency response. Inconsistent application or misunderstanding of these standards may create potential risks for public safety.

Characteristic	Public Fire Hydrant	Private Fire Hydrant
Ownership	Typically owned by a public water agency or other public entity.	Typically owned by a private property owner, developer, homeowners association, or business.
Primary Purpose	Provides fire protection for the public water distribution system and surrounding community.	Provides fire protection for a specific private property or development.
Water Supply	Connected to a public water distribution system.	Usually connected to a private fire service main supplied by a public or private water system.
Installation	Generally installed by or under the supervision of the public water agency or its authorized contractor.	Typically installed by a private contractor on behalf of the property owner or developer.
Permitting	May be installed as part of a public infrastructure project under approved public works plans.	Generally requires applicable fire and building permits prior to installation.

Characteristic	Public Fire Hydrant	Private Fire Hydrant
Utility Approval	Normally coordinated with and approved by the public water supplier.	Utility approval is commonly required for connection to the public water system.
Inspection	Normally inspected during construction by the responsible public agencies.	Subject to inspection by the Authority Having Jurisdiction before being placed into service.
Acceptance	Typically accepted into the public water system after testing and inspection.	May remain privately owned unless formally dedicated and accepted by the public agency.

Table 1 – comparison of public versus private hydrants

Definition of a Private Fire Hydrant

According to TUD, a private fire hydrant system is connected through a backflow prevention device, typically located at or near the property line. The backflow prevention device serves as the point of demarcation between public infrastructure maintained by TUD and privately owned fire protection facilities. Any backflow device, associated pipelines, fire sprinklers, hydrants, or related fire protection apparatus located downstream of the device are considered private facilities. Accordingly, responsibility for the operation, maintenance, repair, and any associated liability for these systems rests with the private property owner.

Private fire hydrants are subject to specific permitting requirements pursuant to applicable fire code provisions, specifically California Fire Code §105.6.19. Installation of a private hydrant typically requires prior approval from TUD and must be performed by a properly licensed contractor, such as a Class A (General Engineering) or C-34 (Pipeline) contractor.

For new commercial development, projects are required to undergo comprehensive plan review addressing fire and life safety considerations. This includes evaluation of hydrant location, spacing, and available water supply. Applicable standards require that adequate fire flow be available on-site, verified through testing, and approved by the Tuolumne County Fire Prevention Division prior to the issuance of building permits, consistent with Tuolumne County Code provisions.

Definition of a Public Hydrant

According to TUD, a public fire hydrant is connected directly to the public water distribution system owned and operated by TUD. They may be installed and connected to the water district main lines at the request of the County Fire Prevention Division or when required as a condition of a building permit at the applicant's expense. Installation must be completed by a contractor holding a Class A or C34 License, but do not generally require a permit to install. These hydrants should be installed within a permanent easement granted to the water district or within a public right-of-way. Ongoing maintenance is typically managed by the water district. In this context, the term "public" refers specifically to facilities owned, operated, and maintained by TUD, and does not refer to Tuolumne County.

The Hydrant at High School Road Property

The fire hydrant installed at the High School Road project appears to have been improperly characterized as a public hydrant. Documentation and interviews conducted by the Grand Jury indicated that the installation failed to comply with established standards and regulatory requirements applicable to either public or private fire hydrant systems. The fire hydrant in question has not been assessed to determine the proper color coding and, as of this report, has not been color coded. The absence of proper permitting, inspection, testing, and certification by qualified personnel raises significant concerns regarding code compliance, operational reliability, and public safety related to that hydrant.

Without inspection and verification by appropriately trained and authorized inspectors, the County cannot ensure that the hydrant is capable of functioning safely and effectively during an emergency response. Witnesses interviewed by the Grand Jury stated that the hydrant may not be readily accessible to emergency responders due to its location and the physical characteristics of the surrounding area. Several witnesses expressed concern that vegetation, site features, and the placement of the hydrant could impede rapid identification and access during an emergency response.

The Grand Jury was advised that accessibility is a critical component of fire protection infrastructure. Firefighters must be able to quickly locate, approach, connect to, and operate a hydrant under emergency conditions, often during periods of limited visibility and heightened urgency. Witnesses indicated that hydrant placement standards are intended to ensure that emergency personnel can access water supplies without unnecessary delay or obstruction.

The Grand Jury did not independently evaluate the operational suitability of the hydrant; however, it found that concerns regarding accessibility, installation standards, and

compliance with applicable requirements were raised consistently by multiple individuals possessing relevant technical or operational expertise. These concerns underscore the importance of ensuring that fire protection infrastructure is properly reviewed, permitted, inspected, and approved by qualified authorities prior to being placed into service.

The Grand Jury was informed that a water pressure test was conducted by the CAO. However, the CAO does not possess the specialized training typically required to conduct or certify such testing and the testing done was reportedly completed outside of normal working hours. Questions therefore remain regarding the reliability and sufficiency of the testing performed, as well as potential insurance and liability implications if the hydrant was not installed in compliance with applicable standards.

Witnesses with relevant technical expertise advised the Grand Jury that acceptance testing of fire protection infrastructure is ordinarily performed in accordance with established engineering, fire protection, and water system standards and is typically documented by qualified personnel. Such testing is intended to verify that the system is capable of providing the required water flow, pressure, and operational performance under emergency conditions.

The Grand Jury found no evidence that a qualified independent professional had certified the installation or documented that the hydrant met all applicable requirements. As a result, uncertainty remains regarding whether the hydrant has been properly evaluated and approved for its intended purpose. The Grand Jury makes no determination regarding the hydrant's operational capability; however, it finds that the absence of documented testing, inspection, and certification by appropriately qualified personnel is inconsistent with the standard processes ordinarily used to ensure the reliability and safety of critical fire protection infrastructure.

Witnesses with relevant technical expertise advised the Grand Jury that, absent the required inspections and documentation, there is no independent verification that critical components of the installation were constructed in accordance with applicable standards. Witnesses specifically identified concrete thrust blocks, tie rods, and other restraint systems as essential elements commonly used to counteract the significant forces generated within pressurized water systems during operation. The Grand Jury was informed that these protective measures are intended to maintain the stability and integrity of the hydrant and associated piping when subjected to the pressures and flow rates that may occur during emergency firefighting activities. Witnesses expressed concern that, if such components were not properly installed, inspected, and approved, the system could be

exposed to excessive movement, mechanical stress, or failure when placed into service and pose a threat to firefighters.

The images below depict the location and installation of the hydrant in question and illustrate concerns regarding its accessibility to emergency response personnel. The placement of the hydrant, including its proximity to surrounding features and potential obstructions, raises questions as to whether it complies with applicable fire access and operational safety standards. These conditions may impede timely access during an emergency response and could adversely affect firefighting operations.

Photos taken June 4, 2026 of fire hydrant installed in support of the High School Road Project



FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

The Civil Grand Jury reviewed documentation, correspondence, public records, and other relevant materials supporting the following Findings and Recommendations, which are offered to strengthen administrative oversight, improve public confidence, and enhance consistency in County permitting, enforcement, and interagency coordination practices.

STAFFING FINDINGS

Finding 1: Budget cuts have led to concerns about future job loss, causing CDD employees to resign or retire prior to being let go. The perception of a poor employee pay structure, newly degraded work culture, and a lack of support from the Board of Supervisors has resulted in difficulty filling vacancies within CDD. Current staffing levels within CDD are not sufficient for maintaining minimum service levels without utilizing more costly third-party contracts.

Recommendation 1-1: Update and maintain the publicly available organization charts for CDD to align with current budgeted positions and vacancy status by August 31, 2026.

Recommendation 1-2 Review the literature from ILG related to the Bridge Initiative, or other similar local government apprenticeship programs, and report back on the feasibility of implementing something similar or expanding the existing internship programs, by September 30, 2026.

Recommendation 1-3 To identify opportunities to increase morale and improve the overall work culture within the County, perform an anonymous, county-wide employee survey by December 31, 2026.

Finding 2: Supervisor Holland's presentation "Maybe Time for a New Approach" created a misleading comparison between the Tuolumne County and Amador County Community Development Departments by relying on staffing, budget, and permit processing comparisons between departments with materially different structures, responsibilities, and workloads.

Finding 3: The lack of definitive metrics/guidelines for permit approval time inhibits the ability to identify opportunities for improvement in the permit approval process and contributes to the poor public perception of the CDD.

Recommendation 2/3-1: Once a CDD Director has been hired, develop goals for permit approval times by category groups and utilize data from OpenGov to track progress against those goals, by March 31, 2027.

Recommendation 2/3-2: Once a CDD Director has been hired, develop target approval times by category groups and make this available to the public, by March 31, 2027.

Recommendation 2/3-3: Develop and implement a plan to publicly reinforce the value of the CDD and the permit process via Public Service Announcements, Townhall Meetings, Board of Supervisors presentations, or similar, by December 31, 2026.

Finding 4: The Board of Supervisors' use of the Board Reports agenda section to deliver an extensive presentation criticizing the CDD immediately prior to the closed-session evaluation of the CDD Director created the perception of improper public discussion of personnel matters, undermined public confidence in Brown Act compliance and fair governance practices, and addressed matters not properly agendized while denying the public and the department a meaningful opportunity to comment or respond.

Finding 5: The timing and manner of the presentation, immediately preceding the CDD Director's performance evaluation, contributed to the perception of intimidation, unfair treatment of county staff, and inconsistency in the personnel evaluation process.

Recommendation 5-1: By October 1, 2026, the Board of Supervisors should adopt standards of conduct promoting professional and respectful treatment of County staff to reduce the perception of intimidation, retaliation, or politically motivated targeting of department leadership.

Recommendation 5-2: By October 1, 2026, the Board of Supervisors should adopt clear guidance reinforcing that discussions tied to the performance of a specific employee belong in closed session under Government Code §§ 54953 and 54957. If a department-level discussion could reasonably be attributed to a department head, it should either stay strictly policy-level in open session or be moved to closed session. The Board should also ensure evaluation practices are applied consistently, and that employees are given a fair opportunity to respond, to avoid both Brown Act concerns and potential HR-related issues.

Recommendation 5-3: By October 1, 2026, the Board of Supervisors should adopt a formal policy defining the permissible scope and limitations of Board Reports,

including reasonable time limits and restrictions on using the section for extensive presentations, policy advocacy, or criticism of specific departments or employees without proper agendaization.

Recommendation 5-4: County Counsel should provide annual Brown Act and governance training to all Board members regarding proper agendaization requirements, the distinction between public policy discussions and personnel evaluations, appropriate use of Board Reports, and due process and fairness considerations involving department heads and county staff.

Recommendation 5-5: By October 1, 2026, the Board of Supervisors should require that substantive presentations involving criticism, evaluation, or comparison of county departments be placed on a properly noticed agenda item to allow adequate public notice, staff preparation, and opportunity for response.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT FINDINGS

Finding 6: CDD maintained a practice of applying unwritten “Tuolumne County” requirements in addition to formally adopted State codes and regulations, despite those local requirements not being formally codified or publicly adopted through the required legislative process. This practice contributed to project delays, increased costs, and frustration among applicants and contractors, and created a perception of inconsistency and inefficiency within the permitting process.

Recommendation 6: The Board of Supervisors and CDD should ensure that all plan review and permitting decisions are based solely on formally adopted State and local codes; any additional local requirements should be clearly documented, formally adopted, and publicly accessible by September 1, 2026.

Finding 7: CDD routinely fails to rely on the expertise of engineer’s preparing plan documents and does not always accept plans when there is the presence of an engineer’s professional stamp on submitted plans.

Recommendation 7: The Board of Supervisors and CDD should establish and adhere to clear guidelines for plan review involving professionally prepared and stamped engineering documents. Such guidelines should define the respective roles and responsibilities of design professionals and plan reviewers, while ensuring compliance with adopted codes by September 1, 2026.

Finding 8: CDD frequently provided applicants with incremental or successive correction notices during the plan review and permitting process whereby additional corrections or new requirements were often issued that had not been identified during prior reviews even after applicants had corrected identified deficiencies and resubmitted revised materials. This practice contributed to project delays, increased costs, and frustration among applicants and contractors, and created a perception of inconsistency and inefficiency within the permitting process.

Recommendation 8: By October 1, 2026, the CDD should evaluate and improve its plan review and permitting procedures to promote greater consistency, completeness, and accuracy in applicant feedback. The CDD should make reasonable efforts to identify and communicate all known deficiencies and required corrections during the initial review stages in order to minimize repeated correction cycles, reduce unnecessary delays, and improve transparency and customer service throughout the permitting process.

Finding 9: CDD has demonstrated inconsistent enforcement of ordinance code and their level of flexibility for remediation of issues.

Recommendation 9-1: The Grand Jury encourages CDD to maintain a cooperative, professional, and educational approach when addressing unintentional failures by community members to comply with building codes and permitting requirements. At the same time, by October 1, 2026, CDD should review and, if necessary, strengthen enforcement policies related to Ordinance 1.10 governing unpermitted work and code compliance as they apply to repeat offenders, including contractors and property owners with documented patterns of noncompliance.

Recommendation 9-2: By October 1, 2026, the County should implement consistent tracking, documentation, and reporting mechanisms to identify recurring violations and ensure that proportionate, progressive enforcement actions are applied fairly and uniformly. These measures would promote voluntary compliance, strengthen accountability, and improve public confidence in the integrity and consistency of the County's permitting and enforcement processes.

CONFLICT-OF-INTEREST POLICY FINDINGS

Finding 10: The Board of Supervisors amended its Governance Manual on June 3, 2025, to include a Conflict-of-Interest provision establishing a mechanism for projects involving potential conflicts of interest to be reviewed by an outside agency when multiple conflict-resolution and review mechanisms already existed. The Grand Jury further found that

Supervisor Holland participated in discussions and voting related to the adoption of the Conflict-of-Interest provisions while having an active project that was subsequently subject to the policy. These circumstances created concerns regarding transparency, impartiality, and public trust.

Recommendation 10-1: Within 60 days of this report, the Board of Supervisors should reconsider the June 3, 2025 approval of the Conflict-of-Interest Policy due to concerns created by Supervisor Holland's participation in a vote on a policy that was subsequently applied to his own project.

Recommendation 10-2: By September 1, 2026, the Board of Supervisors should review and reconsider the Conflict-of-Interest provisions contained within the Governance Manual and evaluate whether existing conflict-resolution, appeal, and review mechanisms provide adequate safeguards before retaining, modifying, or rescinding the policy.

Recommendation 10-3: Utilize existing contracted consultants and escalation procedures to provide verification of impartiality in cases of actual or perceived impropriety where county services affect an official or county leader, within 60 days of this report.

Recommendation 10-4: By September 1, 2026, the Board of Supervisors should require full disclosure of any actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest that may reasonably benefit from a proposed governance policy before Board consideration and voting. Following such disclosure, the Board should reconsider and retake any vote involving the Conflict-of-Interest provisions if advised by County Counsel that such action is appropriate. Any officials with a direct conflict-of-interest should recuse themselves from participation consistent with applicable laws and policies.

Finding 11: Policies and procedures governing the delegation of project review, permitting, and inspection responsibilities to an external agency under the Conflict-of-Interest provisions are not clearly defined. The Grand Jury found limited guidance regarding scope of authority, roles and responsibilities, communication requirements, documentation standards, and oversight of projects transferred outside Tuolumne County. In the case of the work sent to Amador County, the Grand Jury found that the solution to the problem was even more dysfunctional than the problem itself.

Recommendation 11: By September 1, 2026, the Board of Supervisors should develop and implement formal procedures establishing minimum requirements for

agreements with outside counties or agencies performing project review, permitting, inspection, or related functions under the Conflict-of-Interest provisions.

Finding 12: The Grand Jury found limited transparency and project tracking when responsibility for review, permitting, or inspection is assigned to an external jurisdiction. This creates uncertainty regarding project status, decision-making authority, document retention, and accountability to the public.

Recommendation 12: By September 1, 2026, the Board of Supervisors should establish a policy requiring any outside jurisdiction performing work on behalf of Tuolumne County to provide regular written status updates and supporting documentation. Tuolumne County should maintain these records within its project tracking systems, including OpenGov or any successor platform, to ensure transparency, accountability, and continuity of oversight.

Finding 13: The Grand Jury was unable to identify an active Code Compliance Board within the County's current Code Compliance framework. Current County materials describe enforcement through the CDD and Chapter 1.10 of the Tuolumne County Ordinance Code but do not reference a functioning Code Compliance Board. The Grand Jury did not determine whether the Board was formally dissolved, whether its duties were reassigned, or when it last met.

Recommendation 13: By September 1, 2026, the Board of Supervisors should review the status, authority, and purpose of the Code Compliance Board and determine whether an independent local review body should be re-established, activated, or otherwise replaced to provide an additional layer of public oversight and accountability within the County's regulatory framework.

HIGH SCHOOL ROAD PROJECT FINDINGS

Finding 14: Amador County did not issue a permit for the actual work performed on the High School Road project, nor was it ever in their scope of work to issue permits for work performed in another County. Amador County officials stated that they assumed no responsibility for issuing permits for work done in Tuolumne County.

Recommendation 14-1: By September 1, 2026, Tuolumne County should retain qualified and certified independent third-party professionals to conduct a comprehensive review of the High School Road project to determine compliance with all applicable permitting, inspection, and approval requirements, including, but not limited to, grading, building, occupancy, fire protection systems, and related public

safety regulations. The review should include an evaluation of whether all required inspections were properly completed and documented, and whether corrective actions or enforcement measures are warranted based on the findings.

Recommendation 14-2: Any deficiencies identified through the review referenced in Recommendation 8-1 should be corrected, at the expense of the property owner, prior to further project advancement.

Recommendation 14-3: A Certificate of Occupancy for the High School Road project must not be issued until there has been verification by a qualified and certified Tuolumne County CDD employee that all applicable Tuolumne County requirements, including fire and life safety standards, have been fully satisfied.

Finding 15: The hydrant at the High School Road project was installed without a permit. While the Assistant CAO gave approval of the concept, formal written approval, and the extent to which such approval addressed installation, permitting, and compliance requirements is unclear. Qualified and appropriately certified personnel did not perform, document, or verify all required inspections, testing, and compliance evaluations necessary to confirm that the fire hydrant installation met applicable fire safety standards. As a result, the extent of the project's compliance with applicable public safety and permitting requirements remains unclear.

Recommendation 15-1: By September 1, 2026, the appropriate agencies should conduct a comprehensive review of the fire hydrant installed at the High School Road project to determine whether all applicable permitting, inspection, engineering, fire protection, testing, and code-compliance requirements were properly satisfied. The review should also evaluate whether required approvals, inspections, and documentation were completed in accordance with applicable laws, regulations, and accepted professional standards, and whether corrective actions, additional approvals, or remedial measures are warranted.

Recommendation 15-2: Any costs associated with the review, inspections, testing, corrective work, or remedial repairs should be the responsibility of the property owner to the extent permitted by applicable laws, ordinances, and County policies.

Recommendation 15-3: The "donation" of the hydrant alluded to by Supervisor Holland should not be accepted by the County until all permitting, inspections, corrections and payment of fees have been completed.

Finding 16: The Conflict-of-Interest provisions contained within the Tuolumne County Governance Manual state, in part, that “A County Board member shall not make, participate in making, or in any way use or attempt to use his/her official position to influence a governmental decision in which he/she knows or has reason to know that he/she has a disqualifying conflict-of-interest.”

The Grand Jury also found that permitting, inspection, and enforcement activities conducted outside the normal jurisdictional structure reduced transparency, complicated oversight responsibilities, and contributed to confusion regarding authority, accountability, and applicable standards.

Recommendation 16: The Grand Jury recommends that Tuolumne County immediately rescind the agreement with Amador County related to permitting review, inspection, and regulatory services associated with the High School Road project, and that all such responsibilities be returned to the jurisdiction of the Tuolumne County Community Development Department and other appropriate County agencies.

Recommendation 16-2: In the event the Agreement with Amador County is not rescinded, the County should ensure that all future review, inspection, and enforcement activities related to the project are conducted in accordance with standard County procedures, established regulatory requirements, and normal jurisdictional authority to preserve transparency, consistency, accountability, and public confidence in the permitting process.

Finding 17: Supervisor Holland’s actions while serving as a member of the Board of Supervisors, a position entrusted with maintaining the public trust, raises concerns regarding compliance with Tuolumne County governance policies and ethical standards. These actions undermine public confidence in Tuolumne County government.

Recommendation 17-1: Considering the circumstances described above, by September 1, 2026, the County should evaluate whether appropriate administrative, legal, or corrective measures are warranted, consistent with applicable laws, policies, and procedures.

Recommendation 17-2: By September 1, 2026, the County should establish a plan to strengthen oversight, ethics training, conflict-of-interest safeguards, and documentation requirements for elected officials and County staff to promote transparency, accountability, and public trust in County operations.

COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER FINDINGS

Finding 18: The Grand Jury identified a clear and recurring lack of understanding by County leadership regarding the complexities of permitting, code compliance, and inspection requirements. A notable example involved the distinction between public and private fire hydrants, including the differing permitting requirements, inspection standards, jurisdictional authority, and installation procedures applicable to each. Such misunderstandings contributed to confusion regarding compliance obligations, oversight responsibilities, and enforcement actions. The absence of sufficient technical familiarity with applicable building, fire, and public works requirements created the potential for inconsistent decision-making and increased risk to both public safety and County liability exposure. Your Grand Jury appreciates that the CAO has been tasked with doing multiple jobs concurrently and is making his best effort to meet expectations. However, the Grand Jury finds that technical, regulatory, permitting, and code-compliance determinations should be made only by appropriately qualified and authorized personnel within the applicable departments or by certified subject-matter experts.

Recommendation 18: The Grand Jury recommends that the CAO **immediately** discontinue making independent technical or code-compliance determinations and instead defer such matters to qualified County staff, licensed professionals, or other properly authorized experts.

Finding 19: The Grand Jury determined that the press release issued by the CAO on October 10, 2025, contained statements that were misleading, inaccurate, or unsupported by available documentation and witness testimony.

Recommendation 19: The County Administrative Officer should, by August 1, 2026, issue a revised public statement or corrected press release containing accurate and verified information regarding the permitting status, hydrant classification, County involvement, and approval history associated with the High School Road project. Prior to release, the information should be reviewed for factual accuracy by the appropriate County departments and qualified personnel to ensure that future public communications are complete, accurate, and consistent with the documented record.

REQUIRED RESPONSES

Pursuant to Penal Code § 933 and 933.05, the following responses are required:

- The Tuolumne County Board of Supervisors is required to respond to all findings and recommendations within 90 days of receipt of this report.

Responses must be submitted to the presiding judge of Tuolumne County Superior Court in accordance with the provisions of Penal Code § 933.05. Response must include the information required by Penal Code § 933.05

Reports issued by the Grand Jury do not identify individuals interviewed. Penal Code § 929 requires that reports of the Grand Jury not contain the name of any person or facts leading to the identity of any person who provides information to the Grand Jury.

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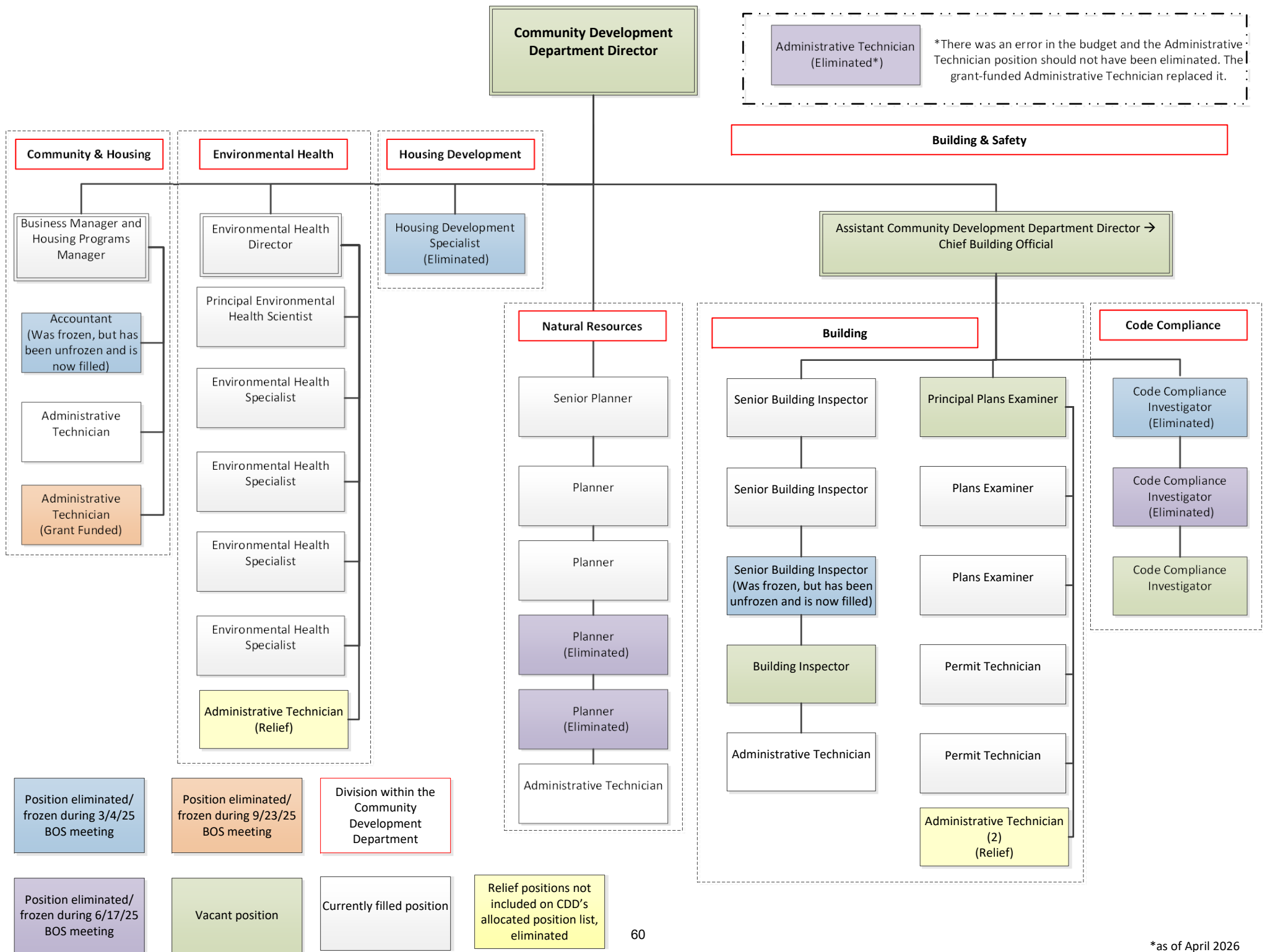
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: CDD ORGANIZATION CHART



APPENDIX B: TUD EASEMENT ENFORCEMENT GUIDE

District Observes Excavation Activity near TUD Facilities or responds to USA Ticket

Active USA? **Yes**
No

Field Staff to Open Notice of Easement Encroachment (NOEE) Form. See documentation requirements

Document Incident

Order Contractor to Call in a USA

Is there a conflict?
Yes
No

Route to Engineering to Confirm Easement and Further Action

No further action

No Conflicts

USA Non-compliance Repeat Offender **Yes**
No

File Dig Safe Complaint and/or Notice of Violation to Owner

No further action

Potential Easement Encroachment?

Stop Dig Order

Route to Engineering to Confirm Easement and Further Action

Is there an Conflict?
Yes
No

Engineering to Address Issue

File Dig Safe Complaint and Notice of Violation to Owner

No further action

Pipeline Exposed or Minor Damage

Stop Dig Order

Route to Engineering to Confirm Easement and Further Action

File Dig Safe Complaint and Notice of Violation to Owner

Life Safety or Water/Sewer Main Break

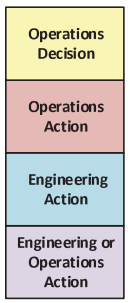
Stop Dig Order

Route to Engineering to Confirm Easement and Further Action

Engineering to File Dig Safe Complaint and Notice of Violation to Owner

Tuolumne Utilities District Easement Enforcement Guide Flowchart - 2026

- NOEE Form Documentation Requirements**
1. Address and APN
 2. Contractor name, license, phone
 3. Owner name and address
 4. Description of Issue
 5. Risk Level
 6. Recommendation action for resolution



APPENDIX C: SOMERTON ARIZONA BUILDING PERMIT PROCESSING TIME FRAMES



City of Somerton

Community Development / Building Safety

Contact: Sergio Jimenez, Building Inspector

Office: (928) 722-5083; email: SergioJimenez@somertonaz.gov

Building Permit Processing Time Frames

Per Requirements of A.R.S § 9-835

Activity – Building Permits Note: All Time Frames are Business Days	Administrative Completeness Review Time	Substantive Review Time		Overall Review Time (includes times for Admin. Review, 1 st and 2 nd reviews)
		1 st Review of Plans	2 nd Review of Plans (if needed)	
Commercial Building - New	2	15	10	27
Commercial Building – Addition or Alteration	2	15	10	27
Commercial Building – Shell Building	2	15	10	27
Commercial Building – Elec./Plumb/Mech.	1	5	5	11
Commercial Electrical – Solar PV	2	5	5	12
Commercial Building - Fire	1	5	5	11
Commercial Building – Tower	2	10	7	19
Commercial Building – Demolition	1	5	5	11
Commercial Building – Shade Structure	2	5	5	12
Signs	2	5	5	12
Residential Building – New	1	5	5	11
Residential Building – Addition or Alteration	1	5	5	11
Residential Building – Elec./Plumb/Mech.	1	5	5	11
Residential Building – Solar PV	1	5	5	11
Residential Building – Demolition	1	5	5	11
Residential Standard Floor Plans	1	5	5	11
Factory Built Building – New	2	10	7	19
Factory Built Building – Temporary Office	1	5	5	11
Manufactured Home	1	2	2	5
Park Model	1	2	2	5
Residential Multi Family – New	2	15	10	27
Residential Multi Family – Addition or Alteration	2	15	10	27
Residential Multi Family – Elec./Plumb/Mech.	1	5	5	11
Residential Multi Family – Solar PV	2	5	5	12
Residential Multi-Family – Fire Sprinkler	1	5	5	11
Residential Multi Family – Demolition	1	5	5	11

**APPENDIX D: PROPOSED AND APPROVED LANGUAGE IN THE CONFLICT-OF-INTEREST
POLICY**

Governance manual language: red is new proposed language.

Conflicts of Interest

A County Board member shall not make, participate in making, or in any way use or attempt to use his/her official position to influence a governmental decision in which he/she knows or has reason to know that he/she has a disqualifying conflict of interest. A conflict of interest exists if the decision will have a "reasonably foreseeable material financial effect" on one or more of the County Board member's "economic interests," unless the effect is indistinguishable from the effect on the public generally or the County Board member's participation is legally required.

The Board of Supervisors is committed to governing in an ethical manner and adhering to all requirements of the Political Reform Act, Government Code § 1090 (relating to financial interests in contracts) and related state ethics laws. Board members recognize that complying with State ethics laws is an individual responsibility and, as such, each member understands that potential ethical issues require careful attention. The following protocol offers a general framework for identifying and handling such issues in an appropriate manner:

- When a Board member becomes aware of a potential ethical issue, they should promptly seek advice from the Office of the County Counsel, the FPPC, or a private attorney prior to taking any action that could violate ethics laws.
- Ethical issues that arise for the first time in a public meeting or similar setting should be brought to the attention of the Office of the County Counsel as discreetly as possible. This may include requesting a meeting recess or a continuance, if feasible, to afford the affected member an opportunity to obtain accurate, confidential advice from the County Counsel or other appropriate advisor.
- If a Board member is advised that recusal is legally required, prior to Board consideration of a relevant item, the Supervisor will briefly announce the nature of the conflict of interest. With the exception of consent agenda items, the Supervisor will leave the room during Board consideration of the item. If these actions are not taken by a Supervisor, to preserve the validity of a pending Board action, the County Counsel may advise the Board of its opinion that recusal (or other action) is legally required and request appropriate action by the affected Supervisor.

- If a Supervisor disagrees with the County Counsel's advice on an ethical issue, they will take reasonable steps to resolve the disagreement. This could include seeking advice from the FPPC or a private attorney, either independently or in coordination with the County Counsel's office. The Supervisor should recuse themselves from Board items implicating the conflict (if such items cannot reasonably be continued) until further advice is obtained.

Proposed additional language:

When a conflict of interest arises involving a Board member or other public official/employee, the Board may contract with another local agency to perform municipal services or functions within the County's jurisdiction pursuant to Government Code section 54981. This approach may be taken to avoid the appearance of impropriety or other conflicts when providing County services or functions to the affected official/employee.

The Board delegates to the County Administrator (CAO) the authority to enter into such contracts, provided that the contract cost remains within the CAO's signing authority and funds have been allocated in the approved budget.

This policy may be implemented in situations where:

An official/employee must receive services or functions from the County; or

The County must impose services or functions on an official/employee;

and doing so directly could create an actual or perceived conflict between the official/employee and the County.

The goal of contracting with another agency in such cases is to ensure fair and impartial treatment of the official/employee in the delivery of County-related services/functions.

When it is in the County's best interest to pursue this course of action, the CAO will convene a meeting with the affected Department

Head (or designee), County Counsel, and the Human Resources Director to assess the conflict and determine the most appropriate resolution.

**APPENDIX E: PRESS RELEASE DATED OCTOBER 10, 2025 FROM THE TUOLUMNE COUNTY
ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE**



County Administration Office

Roger Root

Interim County Administrative Officer

PRESS RELEASE

DATE: October 10, 2025

CLARIFICATION ON PUBLIC HYDRANT INSTALLATION AND PERMIT PROCESS ON HIGH SCHOOL ROAD

Tuolumne County Administration is providing clarification regarding the installation of a public fire hydrant and related construction permitting on High School Road, following recent questions and reports concerning project approvals and water use.

The public hydrant referenced in recent discussions was first reviewed in early 2024 during a meeting with County staff, including representatives from CAO, Facilities, Public Works, and the Community Development Departments, and was coordinated with the Tuolumne Utilities District (TUD). At that time, the County confirmed that the hydrant would be located on County-owned property within the public right-of-way and connected to a County-owned and maintained water line.

During a subsequent meeting in spring 2024, TUD staff confirmed that water usage from public hydrants designated for fire safety is not metered, and therefore, not billable to the County. Consistent with this information, then County Administrative Officer and Assistant County Administrator approved moving forward with the installation of the hydrant on April 19, 2024, authorizing the work to proceed.

The hydrant in question is a public hydrant, not a private one, and its installation complies with applicable Fire and County codes. Under California Fire Code Chapter 1, Section 105.7.19, a construction permit is only required for private hydrants. County Ordinance Title 15.20.030 establishes standards for hydrant installation, which were met in this case. The hydrant was also shown on the plans previously approved by County staff.

Regarding building permits associated with the High School Road project, multiple permits were issued by Tuolumne County on April 21, 2025, following submission of an engineer's letter addressing collateral loading concerns. Amador County issued the permit for one specific structure ("Building C") after the Board of Supervisors approved governance manual updates allowing other jurisdictions to assist with permits and inspections in cases where the administration determines there might be a conflict of interest.

All pending administrative processes associated with this clarification will be completed as appropriate and in accordance with all applicable county ordinances. Some details associated with this clarification may be restricted if they directly relate to personnel matters, which are confidential and protected by law. Tuolumne County administration remains committed to transparency and factual communication regarding public infrastructure and development projects.

"We Support the Board of Supervisors in implementing their policies and promoting fiscal sustainability through service & collaboration with the County Departments and the Community"

**APPENDIX F: CAL FIRE LETTER DATED AUGUST 22, 2019 FROM STEVE GREGORY TO CDD
RE HIGH SCHOOL ROAD PROPERTY**



CAL FIRE
Tuolumne County Fire Department
Cooperative Fire Protection Services
Fire Prevention Division



Josh White
County Fire Warden

48 W. Yaney Ave.
Sonora, CA 95370
Phone: 209-533-5100 ♦ Fax: 209-533-5522

Andrew Murphy
Asst. County Fire Warden

August 22, 2019

To: Natalie Rizzi, Planner
From: Steve Gregory, Senior Fire Inspector
Re: Granite Land Holdings SDP19-004
APN 058-210-063 & 058-210-065

After reviewing the above application, I offer the following comments:

Prior to the issuance of any building permits, conditions 1, 2, 3 and 4 shall be addressed.

1. The required fire flow for the proposed building is 3,000 gpm at 20-psi for 3 hours with Type V – B construction. If the building’s construction type changes, the required fire flow shall also change. Fire flow is determined by the square footage of the largest building on site including all horizontal projections. A reduction of up to 75%, as approved, is allowed when the building is provided with an approved automatic sprinkler system. The resulting fire-flow shall not be less than 1,500 gallons per minute. (CFC Section 508.3)
2. The required fire flow shall be on site, tested and approved by Tuolumne County Fire Prevention prior to the issuance of any building permits. (TCOC Chapter 15.20.010)
3. County Standard Dry Barrel Hydrant shall be available within 300 feet of the furthest portion of all proposed buildings measured by way of drivable access. Tuolumne County Fire Prevention shall approve all hydrant plans, locations and installations. (TCOC Chapter 15.20)
4. A letter from Tuolumne Utilities District (TUD) shall be provided to Tuolumne County Fire Prevention confirming that the required fire flow is available to the project site prior to issuance of any building permits.
5. Roads shall be provided within 150 feet of all portions of the exterior walls of the proposed buildings. The roads shall be constructed to have an unobstructed width of not less than 20 feet and an unobstructed vertical clearance of not less than 13’6”. The roads shall be designed and maintained to support the imposed loads of fire apparatus and shall be provided with a surface so as to provide all-weather driving capabilities. Signs shall be provided and maintained for fire apparatus access roads to identify such roads and prohibit the obstruction thereof or both. The roads shall be posted with signs stating “No Parking Fire Lane” or other language as approved by Fire Prevention. The number and location of the signs shall be as approved by Fire Prevention. Red striping on the exterior boundaries of fire access roads shall be used to identify areas of roads and prohibit vehicle obstruction. The configuration of the fire apparatus access roads shall be indicated on the site plan and shall be approved by Fire Prevention. Fire apparatus access roads shall not be blocked in any manner, including parking of vehicles. (CFC Sections 503, TCOC Title 11)

6. For dead-end fire apparatus access roads in excess of 150 feet in length, an area for turning fire apparatus around shall be provided as approved by Fire Prevention. (CFC Section 503)
7. Security Gates:
 - Gates on access roads shall be posted with signs stating "Fire Access Road, No Parking". The size, number and location of the signs shall be approved by Fire Prevention. (CFC Section 503.6)
 - All gates providing access from a road to a driveway shall be located at least 30 feet from the roadway edge, the gate entrance shall be two feet wider than the width of the traveled way, and the gate shall open away from the roadway (TCOC Section 11.12.062).
 - A switch shall be installed on electronic gates and located in a County approved supra lock box to allow Fire Department access. Tuolumne County Fire Prevention shall approve the switch and its location. (CFC Section 503.6)
 - Electronic gates shall open automatically when a vehicle approaches from within the gated area. (CFC Section 503.6)
 - Where security gates are installed, they shall have an approved means of emergency operation. (CFC Section 503.6)

If you have any questions regarding the above conditions, please do not hesitate to contact me at your convenience.

APPENDIX G: AMADOR COUNTY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AGENCY PERMIT #256850



Community Development Agency

RESIDENTIAL: SINGLE FAMILY (CUSTOM), NON-RESIDENTIAL: NEW CONSTRUCTION PERMIT

Community Development Agency
810 Court Street
Jackson, CA 95642
(209) 223-6422
Inspection Hotline: (209) 223-6423

Permit Number
256850
Issue Date: 08-Oct-2025

Property Address:
17411 HIGH SCHOOL ROAD, JAMESTOWN CA 95327, CA

Parcel:
Project Name: Tuolumne County Conflict of interest project

Applicant Name: Granite land Holdings **Applicant Category:** Contractor
Owner Name: Mike Holland **Address:** PO Box 3140 Sonora, CA 95370-3140
Contractor Company: GRANITE BUILDING & DEVELOPMENT INC **License #:** 949299
Contractor Agent: Granite land Holdings **Address:** PO Box 3140 Sonora, CA 95370-3140

PERMIT DETAILS

THIS PERMIT IS FOR: Residential: Single Family (Custom), Non-Residential: New Construction
Description/Scope of Work: Amador County scope of work to cover plan check and inspections for the R3 (595 SqFt) and B (250SqFt) spaces in building C This is a new self-storage facility on previously undeveloped land. Work will consist of 8 storage buildings, 92,367.5 SqFt, with a sales office and residential unit, Transient. Project location 17411 High School Rd Jamestown CA 95327 APN 058-210-065-000
Occupancy Type: R, R-3, S, S-1

Permit Fees Paid:	\$3,035.11
Balance:	\$0.00

VALUATIONS

<u>Title</u>	<u>Basis</u>	<u>Quantity</u>	<u>Value</u>
S-2 Storage, low hazard IIIB	90.92	91500	\$8,434,470.00
B Business IIIB	178.57	250	\$44,642.50
R-3 Residential, one- and two-family d IIIB	158.15	695	\$109,914.25

PERMIT DECLARATION

Permit fees are non-refundable unless in error. This permit expires if work is not commenced within 180 days or if work is suspended for more than 180 days. After 180 days, plans will be destroyed. To continue with this project after the expiration date, new permit application, plans and all supporting documents must be provided, and new fees based on current valuation and ordinances must be paid.

Construction or work for which a permit is required shall be subject to inspection and shall remain accessible and exposed for inspection purposes until approved per Section 109 of the California Building Code.

I hereby acknowledge that I submitted this application and state that the information given is correct. I agree to comply with all county ordinances and state laws regulating building construction.

Assessment Note: Improvements to your property may result in a change in your property assessment and a site visit from the Assessor's office. Further information is available from the Assessor's office at 810 Court St, in Jackson or by phone at 209-223-6351.

Permit Issued To:	Granite land Holdings	Date: 08-Oct-2025
Reviewed By:		Date: 08-Oct-2025

Additional Permit Notes/Comments/Requirements: PC 3.5 HRs PRP 09-29-2025

APPENDIX H: MEMO FROM TUOLUMNE COUNTY CAO TO AMADOR CAO RE HIGH SCHOOL ROAD PROCESSING SERVICES



County Administration Office

Roger Root

Acting County Administrative Officer

July 1, 2025

To: Chuck Iley, Amador County Administrative Officer
From: Roger Root, Tuolumne Acting County Administrator
SUBJECT: Building Permit Processing Services Due to Conflict of Interest

Background:

On June 3, 2025, the Tuolumne County Board of Supervisors approved amending their governance manual to provide direction when a conflict of interest exists involving a Board member or other public official/employee.

The governance manual states:

When a conflict of interest arises involving a Board member or other public official/employee, the Board may contract with another local agency to perform municipal services or functions within the County's jurisdiction pursuant to Government Code section 54981.

This approach may be taken to avoid the appearance of impropriety or other conflicts when providing County services or functions to the affected official/employee. The Board delegates to the County Administrator (CAO) the authority to enter into such contracts, provided that the contract cost remains within the CAO's signing authority and funds have been allocated in the approved budget.

This policy may be implemented in situations where: An official/employee must receive services or functions from the County; or The County must impose services or functions on an official/employee; and doing so directly could create an actual or perceived conflict between the official/employee and the County.

The goal of contracting with another agency in such cases is to ensure fair and impartial treatment of the official/employee in the delivery of County-related services/functions. When it is in the County's best interest to pursue this course of action, the CAO will convene a meeting with the affected Department Head (or designee), County Counsel, and the Human Resources Director to assess the conflict and determine the most appropriate resolution.

Our District One Supervisor has an existing conflict with the Tuolumne County Community Development Department, and currently has a need for building permit processing for a project in Tuolumne County. As we have discussed, we would like to request Amador County Building Department provide independent building permit processing service for this project and you have indicated a willingness to provide these services. This arrangement is authorized under California Government Code section 54981 and the Tuolumne County Governance Manual, as described above, which permits inter-county service agreements.

"We Support the Board of Supervisors in implementing their policies and promoting fiscal sustainability through service & collaboration with the County Departments and the Community"

Scope of Services and Terms:

1. Services

Amador County shall provide the following services for the subject building permit application:

- Plan Review: Review all submitted construction documents for code compliance under all applicable state and local legal requirements, including Title 15 of the Tuolumne County Ordinance Code.
- Permit Processing: Process the application through all required steps, including communication with the applicant regarding corrections or additional information, up to and including any appeals to the Tuolumne County Board of Supervisors.
- Inspections: Conduct all necessary field inspections related to the permit, including, but not limited to, foundation, framing, electrical, plumbing, mechanical, and final inspections. Inspection results and reports will be shared with Tuolumne County and the applicant in a timely manner.

2. Final Plan Approval Authority Delegated to Amador County

Amador County shall have full authority to approve or deny the building plans and permit application in accordance with applicable state and local building codes. All approvals or denials will be documented and provided to Tuolumne County for record-keeping.

3. Reimbursement for Services

Tuolumne County shall reimburse Amador County for all reasonable costs incurred in the course of providing these services. Reimbursement will be based on Amador County’s current fee schedule for similar services. An itemized invoice will be provided by Amador County on a monthly basis, and shall be paid by Tuolumne County within 30 days of receipt.

4. Recordkeeping and Documentation

All records, reports, and documentation generated by Amador County in the course of providing these services will be transmitted to Tuolumne County for inclusion in the official permit file.

5. Indemnification

Amador County and Tuolumne County agree to be responsible and assume liability for its own wrongful or negligent acts or omissions, or those of its officers, agents, or employees to the full extent required by law.

6. Points of Contact

Amador County:
 Chuck Iley
 County Administrative Officer
 810 Court Street
 Jackson, CA 95642
 Email: ciley@amadorgov.org

Tuolumne County:
 Roger Root
 Acting County Administrative Officer
 2 South Green Street
 Sonora, CA 95370
 Email: rroot@co.tuolumne.ca.us

Thank you for your willingness to assist Tuolumne County in this endeavor.

Sincerely,

Roger Root
Acting County Administrative Officer
Tuolumne County

Attached:
Building Plans A-H (8 total)
Tuolumne County Ordinance Code, Title 15 – Buildings & Construction
Title24 for Apartment
Title24 for Commercial