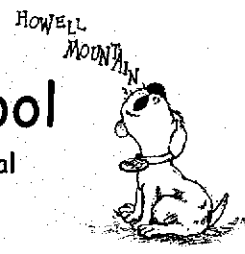


# Howell Mountain School

Thomas W. Stubbs, Superintendent/Principal



# FILED

June 4, 2009

JUN 17 2009

Clerk of the Napa Superior Court  
By: C. Brennan  
Deputy

Dear Grand Jury of the County of Napa

I am responding to the recent Findings and Recommendations that are recorded in the 2009-2009 Napa County Grand Jury Final Report for Howell Mountain School District.

## Findings:

- #1 – The HMESD is a Basic Aid District, thereby receiving money generated from the Angwin property tax base. **Response:** HMESD agrees --This is correct.
- #2 – In 2000, the HMESD declared bankruptcy. **Response:** HMESD does **NOT** agree--This is incorrect---in 2000 the HMESD received a Negative Certification (which is *not* the same as declaring Bankruptcy) from the Napa County Office of Education because the district was unable to meet its financial obligations for that year and three succeeding years.
- #3 – HMESD now operates in the black with a sizable special reserve fund of \$635,463.13 and a General Fund Reserve of \$319,097. The reserve acts as a hedge in the event of a reduction in property tax revenue. **Response:** HMESD agrees - This is correct.
- #4 – A recent and total renovation of the school campus has allowed for moderate student growth. However a planned community development – the Eco Village, if approved, will substantially impact the district, necessitating additional teacher/staff and classroom space and possibly a new campus. **Response:** HMESD agrees -- This is correct.
- #5 – There is no safe pathway between HMES and the Angwin Teen Center which is utilized for after school activities. **Response:** HMESD agrees -- This is correct.
- #6 – Response time by the Napa County Sheriff's Department to HMES is between 15 minutes and two hours. **Response:** HMESD agrees -- This is correct but that is due to the severity of the situation---if we need police /sheriff response "immediately" ---we get it.
- #7 – The D.A.R.E. program is taught by a retired teacher/policeman on an alternate-year basis. **Response:** HMESD agrees -- That is correct except it is usually taught by a *currently* employed Sheriff or Deputy.

Received  
Napa Superior Court

JUN 17 2009

Court Executive Office

## Recommendations:

#1– HMESD closely monitor and maintain reserve accounts as a hedge in the current economic turndown. **Response:** HMESD agrees -- Not only are we closely monitoring our reserves, we are carefully making cuts in all of budget areas to eliminate any possible waste or unneeded expenses.

#2 – Plans be made to accommodate an increase in student population in anticipation of the development of the Eco-village community. **Response:** HMESD agrees -- We have been meeting with the developers (Triad) of the Eco village and have produced generation tables to predict how many students would be generated by these new homes over time. It appears that due to the economic downturn (especially in the local Real estate market) that this project will be delayed (if not cancelled) for at least 3 -5 years (2015). If and when the Angwin Eco-Village is developed, Howell Mountain ESD will benefit from the Developer Fees that would be generated, as well as, increased property taxes that the new homes would also generate.

#3 – A safe walkway be established between HMES and the Angwin Teen Center. **Response:** HMESD agrees -- We have (and continue to) submit plans to Safe Routes to School. We also have been in regular communication with our county Supervisor, Dianne Dillon regarding this issue. This is a *public works project* issue that we cannot unilaterally solve---we need the collaboration and political support of our elected officials.

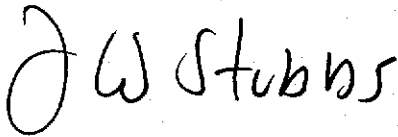
#4 – The Napa County sheriff's Department improve response time to situations involving the safety of the student population in emergency situations. **Response:** HMESD does **NOT** agree -- Actually all of us who work at Howell Mountain School were quite surprised by *this* recommendation. Our relationship is excellent with the Napa County Sheriff's department and we have never had an issue with *response time*. In fact, we are quite pleased with how quickly the Napa county Sheriff's department respond to any calls that we place for all kinds of situations (emergency or not). We not only have the dispatch phone numbers for non-emergency situations but we also have the cell phone numbers for several sheriff officers that are available to us --whether or not they are on duty. In addition, the Sheriff's Department has made arrangements with other agencies to respond if the situation warrants it.

#5 – HMESD continue to present the D.A.R.E. program and develop a consistent drug education program to be incorporated into the curriculum each school year. **Response:** HMESD agrees -- The D.A.R.E. program is an excellent program that usually get presented at Howell Mountain School. For the past two years, that has not been the case due to scheduling conflicts at the Sheriffs Department. This WILL be resolved for 2009-2010. A meeting has been scheduled between our Superintendent and the Sheriff's Department on June 17<sup>th</sup> at 11 am to plan for next year's program.

## **Commendation**

We appreciate what the Grand Jury reported regarding how the district has been fiscally responsible to resolve our financial problems of almost a decade ago. We also appreciate the acknowledgement of the fact that we have built up a reserve that would protect the district during financial lean times. Finally, we too are quite pleased with the modernization of our entire campus and we look forward to years of prosperity especially in the areas of academic growth, community bonding, and goodwill to all of those that we collaborate with.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas Stubbs". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial "T".

Thomas Stubbs  
Superintendent/Principal