

Grand Jurors Say County Analyst Misled Them During Investigation

6/25/82 By PAUL BEATTY
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The county grand jury says it was given "misleading information (by a) senior analyst and other county administrative office personnel" in its six-month investigation of the county's response to the January storm.

Further, the 1981-82 jury says in its final report released this morning that the acting county administrator (George Newell, who is not named) and

his senior analyst (Michael Van De Veer, also not named) mismanaged a number of things during the flooding and landslide emergency.

Newell this morning denied the jury's charges and said that as far as he knows, all testimony given by his analysts was factual.

The jury calls for independent audit of the office and says Van De Veer should be suspended without pay until the audit is completed.

The jury names only two such instances in its

report, stating that the county has not met state guidelines to receive emergency office funding and thereby lost \$65,000 during the past two years, and that the senior analyst misled them about the inactive county disaster council.

The jury states that the senior analyst claimed the Board of Supervisors deactivated the disaster council four years ago (which the jurors say is not true) and that the county was eligible for the state

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funds (which the jury says letters from the state Office of Emergency Service prove is not true).

Concerning the disaster council, the jury says it has learned that Van De Veer told the county's Emergency Services Coordinator (previously Leroy Vernon and now Bill Plageman) not to convene the council.

The jury says that both statements from Van De Veer were misleading and that he should be suspended from his job until "an independent management consulting firm" can audit the full CAO's administration.

Newell said this morning that the question of a "deactivated" or "unconvened" disaster council sounded like more of a problem with semantics, and then fully backed Van De Veer on his assessment of the OES funds.

"We believe we are in compliance with state guideline and should receive the money," Newell said, adding, "there's

nothing misleading in stating this office's opinion."

He said the office was always open to audit and that it "is inappropriate" to say that an analyst should be on leave of absence while it is done."

The jury maintains, "These are only two of several instances wherein the grand jury has been misinformed by this senior analyst and other CAO personnel.

"More seriously, when the mininformation has been questioned, a cloud of obfuscation was generated which confused rather than clarified the issue, resulting in a loss of credibility of the office."

It conclude, "The grand jury is concerned that (1) errors are made and funds are lost, (2) that misstatements are made, and (3) that problems are covered up rather than solved.

"The competence and/or integrity of the office of the CAO and this senior analyst should be questioned."

The county Board of Supervisors is required to file an official response to the report.