

THE BASTILLE BUILDING (Former Kings County Jail)

SYNOPSIS

After touring the City Parks and interviewing Parks Superintendent, the Grand Jury invited the Hanford Recreation Director and the City Council members to discuss the possibility of refurbishing the Bastille building. Several churches have expressed interest in working with the City of Hanford to turn the Bastille into a “Teen Center”.

WHY THE GRAND JURY INVESTIGATED

During an interview with the Director of Parks and Recreation and with the Hanford City Council members, it was mentioned that the City of Hanford has been approached by church groups expressing interest in working with the City to develop the Bastille as a teen center.

AUTHORITY

California Penal Code 925a. The Grand Jury may at any time investigate and report on the operations of any incorporated city in the county.

METHOD OF INVESTIGATION

The Grand Jury toured the Bastille building to look into the feasibility of using the Bastille as a teen center.

BACKGROUND AND FACTS

The Bastille is a county-owned building leased by the City of Hanford. This building was originally constructed in 1897 and served as the Kings County jail and sheriff’s office until 1964. At that time the ceiling caved in, and the building was condemned. A new and much larger sheriff’s office and jail were constructed about one mile to the west on Lacey Boulevard, and the original jail was closed.

Over the years the building has been used as an art gallery, several restaurants, and nightclubs. It is interesting to note that there have been reports from the cooks in the kitchen of some unseen presence trying to frighten them. Pots and pans would be moved and the cooks felt like someone was always watching them. There have been other reports of a heavy presence in the old solitary confinement chambers, and there are rumors that after a new stairway was built that the “presence” appeared to become old and frail.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding 1 There are numerous clubs and restaurants selling alcoholic beverages in close proximity to the Bastille.

Recommendation 1 There have been numerous unlawful incidents at this location making its use as a teen center undesirable.

Finding 2 The Bastille building is currently vacant and was left in a state of disrepair by the former tenants.

Recommendation 2 The building should be leased to a non-profit organization at a minimal cost and would be preserved and maintained as a historical site.

COMMENTS

The interviews disclosed the interest of several churches working with the City to turn this building into a teen center. However, with the findings and comments expressed above, the Grand Jury believes it would not be appropriate for said use. The Grand Jury would prefer this building be repaired and maintained as a historical site and added to the tours for visitors to Hanford.

It is the Grand Jury’s opinion that the City of Hanford should work with some non profit organization to restore The Bastille and lease it to said group for a minimal fee. This would keep the building in good repair and a valued asset to Hanford and Kings County.

RESPONSE REOUIREMENT

Penal Code Sections 933 and 933.05 require that specific responses to both the findings and recommendations contained in this report be submitted to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court of Kings County.
The City of Hanford (60 days from the time of receipt of this report).