

OLIVEHURST PUBLIC UTILITIES DISTRICT (OPUD)

A Small Agency with a Big Impact



2025-26 Yuba County Civil Grand Jury

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SUMMARY

Olivehurst Public Utility District (OPUD) provides essential public services to residents in southern Yuba County. These services include drinking water and wastewater utilities, fire protection, parks, and street lighting in Olivehurst, as well as drinking water, wastewater, and parks in Plumas Lake. Through these services, OPUD plays an important role in the daily lives of thousands of residents.

Although OPUD facilities, parks, and service vehicles are visible throughout the community, many residents may not fully understand the range of services the district provides or how the agency operates. As with many public agencies, interactions between residents and OPUD often occur when problems arise, such as service interruptions or billing concerns. Often, residents share grumblings about our public agencies and OPUD is no exception.

The Grand Jury found that OPUD provides a wide range of essential services with a relatively small staff and relies on multiple funding sources to support its operations. The review also identified opportunities to improve communication with residents and to strengthen systems for tracking and responding to customer service requests.

BACKGROUND

OPUD's mission is *"to provide high-quality services to enhance our community's quality of life."* The district operates within state and local laws and regulations governing public utilities and special districts.

OPUD was established in 1948 to provide public services to residents in southern Yuba County. Unlike many agencies that provide a single service, OPUD delivers multiple services affecting residents' daily lives. OPUD provides the following services:

Olivehurst

- Water
- Wastewater (sewer)
- Parks
- Fire protection
- Street lighting (historic Olivehurst)

Plumas Lake

- Water
- Wastewater (sewer)
- Parks



Most residents interact with OPUD through water and wastewater services. OPUD also maintains local parks where residents may reserve facilities for private events. In addition, it operates Yuba County's only public swimming pool.

Funding for OPUD services is complex and comes from multiple sources, including user fees, property taxes, special assessments, and grants.

The Yuba County Civil Grand Jury periodically reviews county agencies and special districts as part of its oversight responsibilities. The Grand Jury noted that OPUD, one of the more than 100 county and special district agencies in Yuba County, had not been reviewed in more than a decade. The committee therefore conducted an oversight review of the agency.

The purpose of this review was to examine OPUD's organization and services. The Grand Jury also reviewed how the district communicates with residents and responds to service requests.

METHODOLOGY

This investigation was conducted by members of the Yuba County Civil Grand Jury pursuant to California Penal Code Section 916.

The Grand Jury interviewed OPUD staff and customers, and reviewed publicly available information, including the OPUD website and Board of Directors meeting documents.

DISCUSSION

OPUD has a five-member Board of Directors, elected by residents of the service district. They hold monthly board meetings that can be attended by the public in person, viewed live via Zoom or viewed later via the recorded session. The Board of Directors also has Committee meetings monthly for Parks and Recreation, Fire and Safety, and Water and Wastewater Committees.

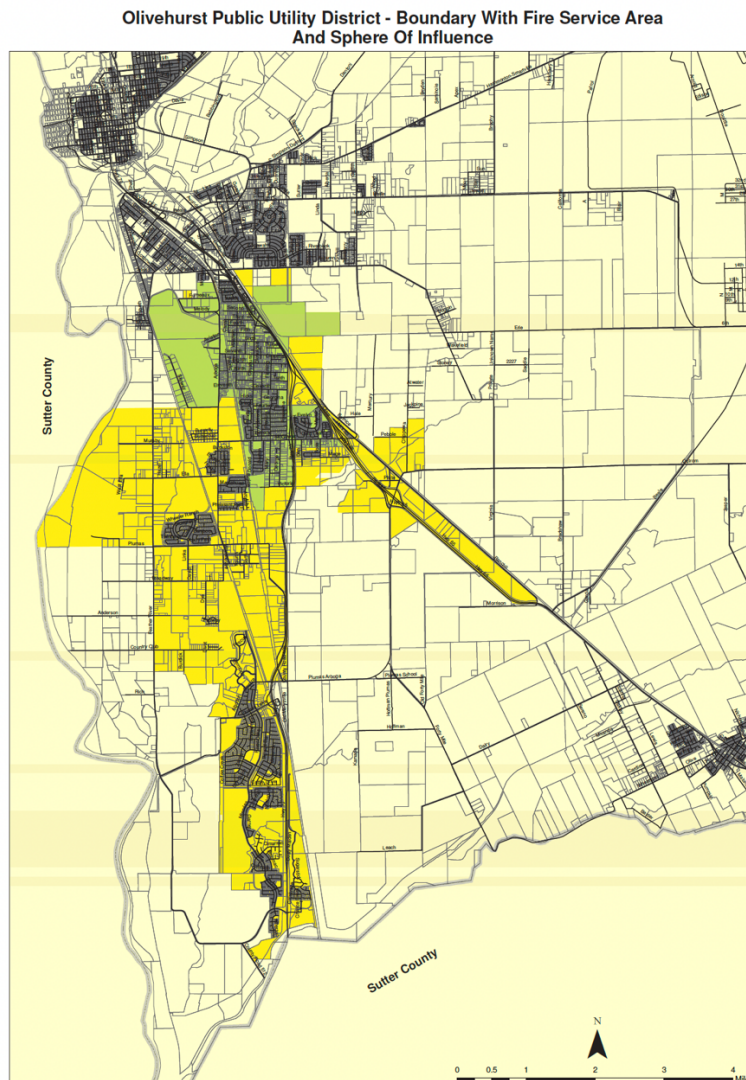
OPUD provides a wide range of services with a relatively small staff (an organizational chart, revised January 2026, can be found on the OPUD website). The district employs approximately 50 employees to operate water and wastewater systems, maintain parks, provide fire protection in Olivehurst, and manage district infrastructure. Staff often have multiple roles to perform the organization's functions. A General Manager has overall responsibility. Department heads typically have 3-10 people reporting to them.

Residents may contact OPUD by telephone, email, or through a service request form available on the district's website. Staff's handling of water/wastewater complaints is determined and regulated by the State Water Resources Control Board, the Public Utilities Commission, and the State of California. When OPUD receives a complaint regarding fees, things are spelled out in their Water Sewer Fact Sheet and/or Water Wastewater Services Policy which are on the OPUD website. Complaints regarding the more than 50 acres of parks are forwarded to the Parks Department Manager who responds to the residents directly.

Interview Observations

The Grand Jury learned in interviews with OPUD customers that some calls to OPUD were not returned timely and submissions on the OPUD website did not always receive a response. In interviews with OPUD staff it was learned that although staff expressed the goal of promptly responding to requests from the public (within one to two business days) there is no centralized tracking log for receiving and responding to complaints. Although notes are currently made in the resident's account, there is no central tracking that ensures all requests and complaints get handled timely.

Both customer and staff interviewees noted a lack of understanding by the public of OPUD's responsibilities and jurisdiction. For example, some residents contact OPUD regarding issues such as storm drain maintenance or street lighting (outside of historic Olivehurst), which is not within the agency's jurisdiction, and there was uncertainty regarding information about after-hours emergency services.



Acknowledgements

The Grand Jury found that OPUD staff were responsive and forthcoming in responding to our questions or need for clarification. Given the tight budgets, multitude of services provided, and the broad jurisdiction of OPUD, we commend the staff and feel fortunate to having them serve our communities.

FINDINGS

F1. Customer service requests and complaints submitted to OPUD are not consistently tracked or resolved.

F2. Public understanding of OPUD's responsibilities and jurisdiction appears limited.

RECOMMENDATIONS

R1. The Grand Jury recommends that the OPUD General Manager, by December 31, 2026, direct staff to develop a centralized system to log and track customer service requests and complaints to ensure timely responses and follow-up.

R2. The Grand Jury recommends that the OPUD General Manager, by December 31, 2026, direct staff to review the OPUD website and clarify the district's responsibilities and jurisdiction. Such clarification should include which services are not under OPUD jurisdiction but often assumed to be and provide contact information for the appropriate agency. Additionally, information on after-hours emergency services should be more clearly listed.

REQUIRED RESPONSES

The following responses are required, pursuant to Penal Code sections 933 and 933.05 from the following governing boards within 90 days:

- OPUD Board of Directors (F1, F2, R1, R2)

INVITED RESPONSES

Responses are invited from the following within 90 days:

- OPUD General Manager (F1, F2, R1, R2)

Responses to this report should be directed to:

The Honorable Stephen Berrier
Supervising Judge of the Grand Jury
Superior Court of the State of California, County of Yuba
215 Fifth Street
Marysville CA 95901

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The resources reviewed for this investigation included:

OPUD Services

<https://www.opud.org/opud-services>

OPUD Organizational Chart

<https://www.opud.org/files/4c08c7314/09.04 Updated Organizational Chart.pdf>

OPUD Financial Information-Current fiscal year actual to budget through January 29, 2026

<https://www.opud.org/files/783b03628/05.05 Review Revenue and Expenditures FY 2025-26.pdf>

OPUD Financial Audits for fiscal year 2023-24

<https://www.opud.org/files/1436f7466/Financial+Audit+FY+2023-24.pdf>

Disclaimer: Reports issued by the Grand Jury do not identify individuals interviewed. Penal Code section 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.

§ 933. Findings and Recommendations (Excerpt)

No later than 90 days after the grand jury submits a final report on the operations of any public agency subject to its reviewing authority, the governing body of the public agency shall comment to the presiding judge of the superior court on the findings and recommendations pertaining to matters under the control of the governing body, and every elected county officer or agency head for which the grand jury has responsibility pursuant to Section 914.1 shall comment within 60 days to the presiding judge of the superior court, with an information copy sent to the board of supervisors, on the findings and recommendations pertaining to matters under the control of that county officer or agency head and any agency or agencies which that officer or agency head supervises or controls. In any city and county, the mayor shall also comment on the findings and recommendations. All of these comments and reports shall forthwith be submitted to the presiding judge of the superior court who impaneled the grand jury. A copy of all responses to grand jury reports shall be placed on file with the clerk of the public agency and the office of the county clerk, or the mayor when applicable, and shall remain on file in those offices...

As used in this section, “agency” includes a department.

§ 933.05. Responses to Findings (Excerpt)

- (a) For purposes of subdivision (b) of Section 933, as to **each** grand jury **finding**, the responding person or entity shall indicate one of the following:
 - (1) The respondent agrees with the finding.
 - (2) The respondent disagrees wholly or partially with the finding, in which case the response shall specify the portion of the finding that is disputed and shall include an explanation of the reasons therefor.
- (b) For purposes of subdivision (b) of Section 933, as to **each** grand jury **recommendation**, the responding person or entity shall report one of the following actions:
 - (1) The recommendation has been implemented, with a summary regarding the implemented action.
 - (2) The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future, with a timeframe for implementation.
 - (3) The recommendation requires further analysis, with an explanation and the scope and parameters of an analysis or study, and a timeframe for the matter to be prepared for discussion by the officer or head of the agency or department being investigated or reviewed, including the governing body of the public agency when applicable. This timeframe shall not exceed six months from the date of publication of the grand jury report.
 - (4) The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable, with an explanation therefor.
- (c) However, if a finding or recommendation of the grand jury addresses budgetary or personnel matters of a county agency or department headed by an elected officer, both the agency or department head and the board of supervisors shall respond if requested by the grand jury, but the response of the board of supervisors shall address only those budgetary or personnel matters over which it has some decision making authority. The response of the elected agency or department head shall address all aspects of the findings or recommendations affecting his or her agency or department.
...
- (f) A grand jury shall provide to the affected agency a copy of the portion of the grand jury report relating to that person or entity two working days prior to its public release and after the approval of the presiding judge. No officer, agency, department, or governing body of a public agency shall disclose any contents of the report prior to the public release of the final report. (*Emphasis added.*)