

# **2024-2025 KERN COUNTY GRAND JURY**



**WELCOME TO THE CITY OF SHAFTER**  
*"Where Everything Grows"*

**Release Date**  
**June 17, 2025**

# **Welcome to the City of Shafter**

## **"Where Everything Grows"**



Image Courtesy of Kem Council of Governments

### **SUMMARY:**

The City of Shafter (Shafter) in Kern County, CA is located eighteen miles west-northwest of Bakersfield, CA. With a population of nearly 23,000, it is the fastest growing city in Kern County and the fifth fastest growing city in California. The population is expected to double within ten years. Shafter also prides itself as being one of the safest cities in the San Joaquin Valley.

Shafter has evolved into a diverse economic engine. It went from farming cotton and potatoes to almonds and grapes. Shafter has also branched out into the warehousing and logistics sector in an industrial park that includes many technically advanced companies. Some of the largest industries in Shafter include agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, retail trade, and educational services.

The community is the backbone behind the city's growth. The people of Shafter are always looking out for one another. They uphold their sense of community through schools, libraries, service clubs and churches. Some of the community events include holiday celebrations as well as First Fridays, which include food, crafts, entertainment, and community recognition.

### **PURPOSE OF INQUIRY:**

Pursuant to California Penal Code §§925 and 925(a), the 2024-2025 Kem County Grand Jury (Grand Jury) conducted an investigation into the operations and management of the City of Shafter.

## **METHODOLOGY:**

The Grand Jury conducted interviews with City Council Members and City employees, toured law enforcement facilities, and conducted internet research.

## **DISCUSSION OF FACTS:**

### **Shafter City Council**

Incorporated on January 11, 1938, the City of Shafter is a Charter City and operates according to the Charter which was approved by the voters in 1995. Shafter is a City Council-City Manager form of government. The City Council consists of five members, with one of those members appointed Mayor by the Council. It serves as the legislative and policy making body of the City of Shafter. Council members are elected at-large, are responsible to all residents, and devote their decision making for the best interests of the public.

Meetings are held at 6:00 pm on the first and third Tuesday of each month at the Shafter Council Chamber. The City Clerk prepares and maintains the agendas of each meeting. Agendas for regular meetings are posted at least 72 hours in advance, and agendas for special meetings are

posted at least 24 hours in advance. Postings can be located at:

- Shafter City Hall
- The City Council Chamber
- Shafter Police Department
- City of Shafter website

Residents may also sign up to receive notifications when agendas are posted. During a meeting, members of the public have an opportunity to address the City Council either before or during the Board's consideration of each item of business to be discussed at regular or special council meetings.

Council Members are required to take Sexual Harassment and Prevention Training (AB1825), Conflict of Interest and Ethics Training, and Ralph M. Brown Act Training. In addition to adhering to the City Charter, council members are also expected to follow a code of conduct referred to as the "Council Norms."

### **The Shafter City Charter**

The Shafter City Charter (Appendix A), a thirty-eight page document, can be found on the City website. Some key sections are:

- General Powers of the Council
- Duties of Mayor
- Prohibitions on Council
- Powers and Duties of City Manager

## The City Manager

The City Manager is appointed by the City Council and is responsible for enforcing municipal laws, directing the daily operations of the City, and supervising and administering the programs and services provided by all City departments. Some of the divisions included under the City Manager include:

- The City Clerk
- Human Resources Department
- Business Development
- Education Partnership
- IT Department

## The Shafter Police Department



Image Courtesy of the Shafter Police Department

The Shafter Police Department is responsible for all municipal law enforcement functions as well as traffic safety and animal control services within Shafter City limits. The recently remodeled police department is located at 201 Central Valley Highway, Shafter, CA. The department also has a temporary substation located at 8946 Forest Village Drive, which is in the Gossamer Grove community. The substation, where officers are able to take breaks, write reports, and conduct interviews, is staffed with a full-time sergeant and two officers. The department is hoping to have the permanent 5,000 square foot facility completed by the second quarter of 2026.

The Shafter Police Department is fully staffed with 56 full-time employees, which includes 41 sworn officers and 15 non-sworn support personnel. The Shafter Police Department is the highest paid law enforcement agency in Kern County. The Police Department recently acquired body cameras for officers on duty as well as two electric bicycles to patrol areas that are not easily accessible by car. The Department plans to upgrade the officers' radios and computers, monitors, and screens for the 911 dispatch center.

## Shafter Animal Control

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Images Courtesy of the Shafter Animal Control

The Shafter Animal Shelter works to uphold public safety and animal welfare. It operates a 37- kennel facility and has open intake. The animal intake must be from Shafter residents. One advantage of this facility is that it will also shelter stray cats, which helps minimize overpopulation. The shelter strives to find homes for all intakes as quickly as possible to avoid overcrowding and potential spread of disease among the pets. In 2024, the shelter took in 3,000 animals, and the overwhelming majority were happily adopted. They collaborate with rescues and other allies to facilitate adoptions outside of city limits, provide community outreach, low-cost vaccines, and spay and neuter clinics. Spay and neuter procedures performed elsewhere can cost up to \$800; however, the Shafter Animal Shelter offers the procedure for as little as \$25. Vaccines cost about \$15 each.

Some of the services Shafter Animal Control provides are:

- Pickup, impoundment, and disposal of stray animals
- Cat trap rental and pickup for stray cats
- Enforcement of animal laws
- Bite reports and rabies control
- Transportation of stray, injured animals
- Investigations of animal cruelty, neglect and/or abandonment
- Investigations of animal nuisance complaints
- Investigation assistance to other law enforcement agencies
- Adoptions of shelter animals
- Lost and found reports
- Public education programs and materials

During the Grand Jury's visit to the shelter, the staff explained the importance of rabies vaccines and dog licensing. Failure to comply is a misdemeanor. Rabies is a serious disease, and if not treated immediately after exposure, can be fatal.

## **FINDINGS:**

- F1. Although Council Members are familiar with the City Charter, there have been violations of City Charter §4.07 B (Appendix A) which have caused concern among City employees.
- F2. Council Members state there are "Council Norms," but Council Members could not give an accurate definition of these "Norms" causing lack of accountability.
- F3. The Shafter Animal Control Unit is clean and well-maintained. This unit continues to be a valuable resource for the community.
- F4. During a visit to the Shafter Police Department, the Grand Jury observed staff members and officers to be professional and fully engaged. This reflects their commitment to the community.
- F5. The jail located at the Department was clean and unoccupied. It passes compliance and inspection every year. This demonstrates the high level of accountability and performance within the department.
- F6. Through grant funding, the Shafter Police Department was able to build a gym inside the main headquarters. This gives staff members and officers the opportunity to work out and relieve stress.
- F7. Due to lack of visible signage, some members of the community may find it difficult to locate the Police Department building.

## **COMMENTS:**

The 2024-2025 Kern County Grand Jury would like to thank the City of Shafter Council Members, Police Department, and Animal Control, which is under the jurisdiction of the Police Department, for their contributions to the investigation. The City takes a proactive management approach, which is reflected in economic growth and community atmosphere.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The 2024-2025 Kern County Grand Jury recommends that:

- R1. The Shafter City Council review the City Charter and establish accountability measures for adherence by October 1, 2025. (Finding #1)
- R2. The Shafter City Council provide a definition of "Council Norms" and publish them on the City's website by October 1, 2025. (Finding #2)



- R3. By November 1, 2025, the Shafter City Council allocate funds for signage at the Shafter Police Department that will give the building a higher street visibility.  
(Finding #7)

## NOTES:

The City of Shafter City Council should post a copy of this report where it will be available for public review.

- Persons wishing to receive an email notification of newly released reports may sign up at: <https://www.kemcounty.com/govenunent/other-agencies/grand-jury>
- Present and past Kem County Grand Jury Final Reports and Responses can be accessed on the Kem County Grand Jury website <https://www.kemcounty.com/govemment/other-agencies/grand-juty>

## RESPONSE DEADLINE:

- **REQUIRED WITIDN 90 DAYS FROM:**

Shafter City Council  
Findings #1 through #7  
Recommendations #1 through #3

## RESPONSES ARE REQUIRED PURSUANT TO PENAL CODE §§933(c) AND 933.05:

- **PRESIDING JUDGE  
SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA  
COUNTY OF KERN  
1415 TRUXTUN AVENUE, SUITE 212  
BAKERSFIELD, CA 93301**
- **FOREPERSON  
KERN COUNTY GRAND JURY  
1415 TRUXTUN AVENUE, SUITE 600  
BAKERSFIELD, CA 93301**

Reports issued by the Grand Jury do not identify individuals interviewed. Cal. 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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## **APPENDIX A: Excerpts from the Shafter City Charter**

### **Section 4.02. General Powers of the Council:**

All powers of the City shall be vested in the Council, except as otherwise provided by this Charter, and the Council shall provide for the exercise thereof and for the performance of all duties and obligations imposed on the City by this Charter and by law.

**A. Duties of the Council:** The Council shall make policy for the City. In addition, the Council shall be responsible to the people of Shafter for, but not limited to the following duties and responsibilities:

1. Considering ordinances and resolutions and adopting those which it determines to be necessary for the governance, proper administration and adequate financing of the City.
2. Providing oversight of the City Manager and all City activities under his/her purview and at least annually evaluate the performance of the City Manager.
3. Insure all provisions of this Charter, ordinances, and applicable State and federal laws are carried out.

### **Section 4.04. Duties of Mayor:**

The duties of the Mayor shall be assigned by the Council by ordinance. These duties shall include but not be limited to the duties listed in this Section.

The Mayor shall be the chief representative of the City and shall:

- A. Represent the City for ceremonial purposes.
- B.** Preside at meetings of the Council.
- C. Represent the City in intergovernmental relations, personally or by a representative designated by him/her with the concurrence of the Council.
- D. Possess the authority and attributes of a Council Member.

### **Section 4.07. Prohibitions on Council:**

No Council Member shall hold any other City office or City employment during the term for which elected or appointed to the Council for two years thereafter.

Nothing in this Section shall be construed to prohibit the Council from selecting any current or former Council Member to represent the City on the governing board of any regional or intergovernmental agency.

**A. Personnel Restriction.** Neither the Council nor any of its members may in any manner control or require the appointment or removal of any City department head or employee whom the City Manager or any subordinate of the City Manager is empowered to appoint.

**B. Restriction on Interference With City Manager.** Neither the Mayor nor any Council Member shall interfere with the execution of the powers and duties of the City Manager. Except for purposes of inquiry, the Mayor and Council Members shall deal with the administrative service solely through the City Manager. Neither the Mayor nor



any Council Member shall give orders to, discipline or threaten any subordinate of the City Manager, either publicly or privately. The Council may express its views and fully and freely discuss with the City Manager anything pertaining to appointment and removal of City officers, department heads, and employees.

**Section 5.03. Powers and Duties of City Manager:**

The City Manager shall be responsible to the Council for the proper administration of all affairs of the City and shall:

A.. Appointment at Employees. Appoint, remove and discipline all employees of the City pursuant to requirements set out in this Charter and an ordinance establishing a merit system of appointment and employment.

B. Delegation of Authority. Have the power to delegate the appointment, removal, and discipline of subordinate employees to the department heads to which those employees are assigned.

C Supervision of Departments. Direct and supervise the administration of all departments, offices and agencies of the City.

D.. Annual Budget. Prepare annually, submit, and administer the budget, capital improvement plan and other plans and programs of the City as required by this Charter or as required by the Council.

E.. Keeping Council Informed. Keep the Council advised of the financial condition, current and future needs of the City. The City Manager shall make such recommendations to the Council concerning the affairs of the City as he/she shall deem necessary or desirable.

F.Enforcing Laws and Contracts. Provide for enforcement and faithful execution of all laws, regulations and rules of the City, all Charter provisions, all acts of the Council, and administration at all contracts to which the City is a party.

G.Annual Report. Submit to the Council and make available to the public a comprehensive annual financial and administrative report on the finances and activities of all City departments and agencies.

H.. Initiating Reports. Make such other reports to the Council as it may require or the City Manager may desire, concerning the needs and operations at City programs, departments, offices and agencies.

I. Restrictions. Engage in no incompatible business, occupation or activities.

J.. Receive Notices. Receive notice of all meetings of the Council, and all City boards, committees, and commissions.

K. Participating in Meetings. Be entitled to participate in the deliberations of any City board, committee, and commission, but shall have no vote therein.

L.Attending Meetings. The City Manager shall be entitled to attend all Council meetings, both public and closed, and shall have the right to take part in all discussions held at all such meetings but shall have no vote. The City Manager shall not be entitled to attend any closed session of the Council when dismissal of or other disciplinary actions involving the City Manager are discussed.

M.. Other Duties. Perform such other duties consistent with this Charter as may be required by the Council.

**DISCLAIMER:**

This report was issued by the Grand Jury with the exception of one Juror pursuant to Penal Code §916.2(a). The Juror was excluded from all parts of the inquiry/investigation, including interviews, deliberations, and the writing and approval of this report.