

June 19, 2007

Honorable Judge Rodney S. Melville  
Superior Court, Santa Maria Division  
312-M East Cook Street  
Santa Maria, California 93455-5165

**Board of Supervisors' Response to the 2006-07 Civil Grand Jury Report on:  
"A New County Jail? A Need That Will Not Go Away!"**

Dear Judge Melville:

During its regular meeting of Tuesday, June 19, 2006, the Board of Supervisors adopted the following responses as its responses to the 2006-07 Grand Jury's report on "A New County Jail? A Need That Will Not Go Away!"

The Board of Supervisors thanks the Grand Jury for its finding and recommendation on this important matter.

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**Finding 1**

*Year after year, compelling evidence supports the need for a new jail. Yet the County Board of Supervisors has failed to act by placing a line-item construction project in the budget, or by identifying a source of funds for a future construction project.*

**Response:** The Board Agrees partially with the finding as to the statement "Year after year, compelling evidence supports the need for a new jail".

However, the Board of Supervisors has placed the new County Jail capital and operating budget in the County's Capital Improvement Program every year since the need was first identified. Prior years spending accumulate to \$1.7 million primarily for schematic design and site review. On December 13, 2005, the Board of Supervisors approved a budget revision transferring \$2 million from VLF (Vehicle License Fee) revenue to the General Fund Capital Designation in order to set aside funds for the potential purchase of land for a new Jail.

In addition, on December 13, 2005 the Board considered several sources of identified funds for the construction and operation of a new County Jail. In planning for the construction of a new county

jail, the Santa Barbara County Chief Executive Office (CEO) and the Sheriff's Department have held several meetings to discuss funding alternatives for construction and operation of a new facility. These funding alternatives were presented to the Board as part of a public presentation titled County of Santa Barbara New Jail Planning Study. Funding continues to be the most significant obstacle for this critical need. The study considered numerous funding options including a hypothetical list of the type of General Fund curtailments that would need to be considered (copy of Funding Alternatives attached, see page 4 of 15 where it is noted that this data is hypothetical and does not constitute a recommendation by the County Executive Officer, and it is only an illustration). The study ultimately concluded that a ½% sales tax was the most viable option to cover both the capital and operational costs. At that time, a polling firm determined that this option was not likely to pass voter approval.

### **Recommendation 1**

*The County Board of Supervisors should develop and present to the public a specific plan for funding and constructing a new North County Jail.*

**Response:** The Board has implemented the Recommendation as part of a public presentation titled County of Santa Barbara New Jail Planning Study. Additional information is provided here on the current status of corrections reform and Sheriff's Department planning for a new Jail.

Governor Schwarzenegger included a comprehensive corrections reform package as part of the Governor's Proposed 2007-2008 Budget released in January 2007. On April 26, 2007, the Legislature passed Assembly Bill (AB) 900, the Public Safety and Offender Rehabilitation Services Act of 2007 to address the issue of corrections reform. Since AB 900 is considered an urgency measure, it became effective May 4, 2007, which is the day following the Governor's signature. AB 900 provides infrastructure funding of \$6.1 billion for 40,000 state beds and \$1.2 billion for 13,000 local jail beds, with a required local match of 25% (cash or in-kind) for local bed construction.

Given the latest corrections proposal passed by the Legislature (and Governor), the Sheriff's Department is holding discussions with the State regarding the possible co-location of additional local jail beds and re-entry facilities within the County. The possibility of constructing additional local beds is an option to help alleviate overcrowding at the County's jail.

According to the California State Association of Counties, AB 900 contains an "Unspecified mechanism to give preference for a portion of local jail bed funding to counties that (1) assist in the siting of state re-entry facilities or mental health day treatment and crisis care centers and (2) provide a continuum of care to parolees for mental health and substance abuse needs (Section 15820.907(b) and (c))."

There is a required local match of 25% (cash or in-kind which could include land) for the construction of local jails. It is unknown at this time whether the State or respective counties would bear the full cost, or some portion, of staffing and operational costs associated with additional local jail beds and/or re-entry facilities. There may be local costs associated with treatment capacity if the County expands its local jail beds or becomes a re-entry site.

This promising proposal would partner the County with the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) to co-locate a State Secure Reentry Facility with a new County Jail. This potential partnership would address both jail and prison overcrowding and develop new approaches for reducing criminal recidivism. The County would still need to identify a source for matching capital and ongoing operation costs. These efforts would place the County in a primary position to

develop a contractual relationship with the CDCR that will enable both entities to complete projects and objectives in an efficient, cost-effective and timely manner.

One proposed site for the new County Jail is a 50-acre parcel at the Laguna County Sanitary District site about two miles west of the City of Santa Maria. The Board of Supervisors authorized an option to buy the property and also set aside \$2 million for the potential purchase of the land. An Environmental Impact Report (EIR) in process will identify alternative sites and any significant impacts that a new County Jail would have.

While this process continues, the Sheriff's Department and CEO continue to proactively review other alternatives. A Blue Ribbon Commission on Jail Overcrowding has been established to develop alternatives and identify practices to further reduce jail overcrowding. Other projects that are being implemented and/or are being studied include converting the County's Santa Maria Jail to a Type II facility to house inmates longer than 96 hours; expanding the Work Furlough Program; establishing a Day Reporting Center, and converting/remodeling parts of the Main Jail to housing areas. These programs and projects will assist with the overcrowding issue; however, it is generally agreed that the definitive solution is the construction and ongoing operations of a new County Jail.

Sincerely,

Brooks Firestone, Chair  
Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors

Attachments:

County of Santa Barbara New Jail Planning Study – “Funding Alternatives”  
Grand Jury Report entitled “A New County Jail? A Need That Will Not Go Away!”

cc: Grand Jury Foreperson