



**Alignment with Board Strategic Plan:**

The recommendation is primarily aligned with Goal No. 2. A Safe and Healthy Community in Which to Live, Work, and Visit.

**Executive Summary and Discussion:**

Background

On April 12, 2005, the Board received an informational presentation from the Sheriff on the status of jail overcrowding and jail property acquisition in the North County. During the meeting, the Board directed the Sheriff and the County Executive Officer to proceed with planning for a new jail at the Laguna County Sanitation District site as well as with alternatives for relieving short-term jail overcrowding issues, and return to the Board with a report and recommendations as appropriate.

Summary and Conclusions of the New Jail Planning Study

The New Jail Planning Study is divided into eleven sections: Needs Assessment, Court Orders, Grand Jury Reports, Overcrowding Alternatives, Environmental Overview, Land Acquisition, Facility Design, Capital and Operational Costs, Funding Alternatives, Jail Alternatives, and an Executive Summary providing the highlights of each of the other sections.

Although numerous effective jail overcrowding alternatives are in place, the study concludes that due to population growth since the current jail was built in 1971, as well as stronger sentencing laws and increased time to process cases through the courts, there is definitely a need for a new County jail. Moreover, Grand Jury reports and court orders have recommended it.

The proposed new jail site is on the Laguna County Sanitation District property in the Fourth Supervisorial District. Environmental overview has been initiated and \$185,000 for site due diligence analysis is recommended to be allocated from Vehicle License Fee (VLF) repayment revenue (funds generated locally, borrowed by the State in FY 2003-04 and repaid in 2005-06). The site is being appraised to determine fair market value, and an option to buy (which would secure the site at a nominal cost) is recommended to be pursued by the County Executive Officer and Sheriff.

Schematic drawings illustrating the proposed design of an 808 bed jail (expandable to 1520 beds) has been completed. Capital costs for the facility are estimated at \$153 million and the net increased cost for operations is estimated at \$19.2 million per year. Alternatives to provide funding for these costs have been assiduously evaluated. Options analyzed include: pay-as-you-go, save and then pay, general obligation bond financing, certificates of participation (COPs) financing, sale of County "surplus" property, oil royalty funding from potential oil development, and a sales tax increase. The study concludes that a sales tax increase is the most viable option that would cover both the capital and operational costs in a timely manner.

Finally, the study examines jail alternatives including a court delay reduction program, renting jail space from other jurisdictions, adding psychiatric health facilities, securing interim housing for inmates and other system studies. It concludes that implementation of these alternatives could serve as short term stop-gap measure but would not eliminate the need for a new jail facility.

Setting Aside Funds for Potential Future Land Purchase

The study indicates the importance and priority of selecting a site. As one time VLF repayment revenue is currently available and the purchase of the identified Laguna Sanitation District site is an option the Board may wish to consider in the future, it is recommended that \$2 million of VLF repayment funds be set aside for the potential purchase of the site.

Public Survey

As staff was finishing the New Jail Planning Study, there was consensus that before proceeding much further, there would be value in gauging public opinion about the need for and potential financing of a new jail. Accordingly, it is recommended that the Board authorize the County Executive Officer and Sheriff to contract with an expert polling firm to conduct such a survey and return to the Board with recommendations. Such a survey could be completed in January 2006 and is estimated to cost approximately \$40,000 which is recommended to be funded from VLF repayment revenues.

**Mandates and Service Levels:**

Although the County is mandated to provide jail services, none of the recommended near term administrative actions are mandated nor do they change any service level.

**Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:**

The fiscal impacts are contained in the recommended actions. Currently, there is \$3,470,000 of VLF repayment revenue available, \$2,225,000 of which would be allocated if the Board adopts all of staff's recommendations. Although a new jail would certainly have a facilities impact, the recommended actions do not.

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