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21/10/2026

Public Comment



Good afternoon Supervisors,

I'm speaking on the agenda item to approve funding for a project manager for the North Branch Jail design.

I want to be clear at the outset: a project manager is needed whether the County ultimately builds a 1.0 or a 1.5 housing-unit expansion. Strong management matters.

What matters just as much are the values and priorities that guide what that manager is asked to manage.

Today, people are being held in our jails who do not need to be there—people delayed because the County is not meeting Public Defender staffing standards, people waiting in custody for court-ordered treatment or program placements that are not yet available, and people booked on misdemeanors later rejected for lack of evidence.

These are system failures that cause real harm. They do not require more jail beds—they require implementation, funding, and accountability.

Since your April vote, you have received jail-reduction recommendations showing that population reductions are achievable. What the community has not yet seen is an updated CEO analysis grounded in a proposed implementation plan for the jail-reduction solutions you have already accepted, and showing how those actions affect the size of the jail actually needed.

That clarity matters not only for justice, but to protect the County's safety net for critical needs. Avoiding the additional 146 million dollars tied to the 0.5 housing unit could instead help preserve funding for mental health care, substance-use treatment, housing supports, and other essential services now at risk.

We should fix the system first, not spend 146 million dollars building around its failures.

If you approve this manager position today, I urge you to do so with clear direction that the CEO return promptly with a public analysis comparing a 1.0 and 1.5 housing-unit option, grounded in a proposed implementation plan.

Leadership here means managing toward solutions that reduce harm first, protect the safety net, and build only what is truly needed.

Thank you.

*Maureen Earls*