



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
AGENDA LETTER

Agenda Number:

**Clerk of the Board of
Supervisors**

105 E. Anapamu Street, Suite 407
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
(805) 568-2240

Department Name: Probation/Fire
Department No.: 022/031
For Agenda Of: February 27, 2024
Placement: Departmental
Estimated Time: 30 Minutes
Continued Item: No
If Yes, date from: N/A
Vote Required: Majority

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: Department Holly L. Benton, Chief Probation Officer (805) 803-8537
Director Mark Hartwig, Fire Chief/Fire Warden (805) 681-5500
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SUBJECT: Los Prietos Boys Camp Site Special Use Permit

County Counsel Concurrence

As to form: Yes

Auditor-Controller Concurrence

As to form: Yes

Other Concurrence: Risk Management

As to form: Yes

Recommended Actions:

That the Board of Supervisors:

- a) Receive and file a joint presentation from the Santa Barbara County Probation Department (Probation) and Santa Barbara County Fire Department (SBCFD) regarding a proposal to repurpose the property currently utilized by the Los Prietos Boys Camp (LPBC); and
- b) Approve the co-location of Probation and SBCFD at the current site of the LPBC; and
- c) Authorize the SBCFD to apply for a United States Forest Service (USFS) Special Use Permit; and
- d) Determine that the recommended action is not subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15378(b)(5), since the recommended action is a government administrative activity that will not result in direct or indirect physical changes in the environment.

Summary Text:

The Probation Department currently has a United States Forest Service (USFS) Special Use Permit that is effective through December 31, 2024 for the use of the property (site) currently utilized as Los Prietos Boys Camp (LPBC). The permit is department-specific and does not allow for other occupants. Efforts by Probation to reduce juvenile detention and divert youth with lower-level offenses into appropriate services have resulted in a diminished need for LPBC. Since Probation informed the Board in April 2022 of its intent to begin the process of closing LPBC, the LPBC population has consistently remained at programmatically and fiscally unsustainable levels. Through discussions with the USFS and SBCFD, the parties agree that Santa Barbara County Fire Department (SBCFD) and Probation may temporarily co-locate on the site with authorization from the County Board of Supervisors. Authorization to co-locate will allow a period of transition, during which Probation will wind down camp operations, and SBCFD will begin to prepare the site for SBCFD occupancy. The co-location authorization must first be made by the Board of Supervisors in order for the USFS to subsequently grant the formal authorization for co-location.

At the conclusion of Probation's current permit, Probation will relinquish the property, and if the new permit application is approved, SBCFD will enter into a long-term permit as the sole occupant. At that point, if the permit is approved, SBCFD will have assumed occupancy and will be the only permitted user. It is recommended the Board of Supervisors approve these actions as they are in the best interest of SBCFD, Probation, the USFS, and the community.

Background:**The Current State of Los Prietos Boys Camp:**

In the past, Probation has operated two juvenile facilities: the Santa Maria Juvenile Justice Center (JJC) and LPBC. LPBC has offered an alternative to traditional detention for selected male juvenile offenders by offering residence for youth while using principles of Positive Youth Development. The youth at LPBC were permitted to continue their education while learning discipline, leadership, job and life skills. The LPBC and its dedicated staff have offered the youth an opportunity to build on their strengths and make positive changes. In collaboration with the juvenile court system and Probation, youth considered eligible between the ages of 13 to 24, inclusive, have been assigned to LPBC to complete an individualized program designed to address treatment issues and needs. The rural character of the site where LPBC is located has provided inherent value by facilitating an environment for youth to receive targeted programming, therapeutic interventions, prosocial activities, educational opportunities, post-secondary education, and Career and Technology Education activities with work experience, all of which have provided a clear nexus to successful transition back into the community and potential future employment.

At its peak, LPBC operated with an Average Daily Population (ADP) of more than 100 youth. As recently as 2018, the ADP was 28 youth. Since the beginning of 2022, the ADP has dwindled to less than five youth, and as low as one youth for short periods of time. Following decades of state and local juvenile reforms, the implementation of Evidence-Based Practices (EBP), and countywide efforts to provide more robust diversion opportunities for justice-involved youth, the population at LPBC has fallen to levels that are financially unsustainable, and programmatically difficult. Since 2018, the LPBC ADP has continued to diminish as follows:

2018: 27.9
2019: 18.4

2020: 13.0
2021: 6.2
2022: 4.9
2023: 5.4

EBP programming which was cost effective with larger populations is not cost effective with such a reduced number of youth, and it has become increasingly difficult to maintain the same high standard programming that youth participated in for so many years. LPBC is no longer the most efficient and effective way to invest in the rehabilitation and reintegration of our youth. As of December 2023, youth are no longer being committed to LPBC, in order for Probation to wind down and conclude youth-serving operations on the site during the third quarter of FY 2023-24. The Department continues to explore and pursue alternative treatment options for the low number of youth who previously met the criteria for LPBC commitment, and is in the design and bid phase of a JJC unit remodel for a local treatment program.

Future Plan for SBCFD to Utilize LPBC site:

More than 40 years ago, the SBCFD Hand Crew was formed. The Hand Crew has a clear mission to respond to all-hazard emergencies, and when not involved in emergency incidents, the Hand Crew engages in fuel treatment projects such as clearing brush and low-lying limbs along roadways, building fuel breaks, and working with other various county, federal, and state agencies to limit fire danger and assist with vegetation treatment.

The SBCFD Hand Crew has outgrown their current location and needs a new site. The LPBC site has a larger footprint than the current Hand Crew camp at Lake Cachuma. The LPBC site also provides a fixed facility, as opposed to modular units, offering a full kitchen, dining hall, classrooms, dorms, as well as a garage for apparatus storage.

Relocating the Hand Crew to the LPBC site would facilitate cohabitation and increased collaboration with the USFS, pursuant to the 2022-Prescribed Fire Strategic Plan signed by the governor, with the goal to treat 500,000-acres with prescribed fires by 2025, and SBCFD is actively assisting in reaching this benchmark.

SBCFD and Probation Partnership:

The LPBC site is a County facility located on Federal land. Probation and SBCFD have a shared interest in developing a youth program at the current LPBC site for wards of the Court interested in pursuing a career in fire services. This youth program will provide mentoring and vocational opportunities for Santa Barbara County justice-involved youth. While the program is still in the design phase and will take time to launch, the program will include the following components:

Purpose:

The Santa Barbara County Fire Department desires to partner with the Santa Barbara County Probation Department to continue to invest in the lives of vulnerable youths and carry on the ethos of discipline, respect, and responsibility that are core to the history and living legacy of the Los Prietos Boys Camp.

Methodology:

Under the supervision of Santa Barbara County Probation, eligible youths will participate in training programs centered around educational, vocational, and personal development proctored and led by the Santa Barbara County Fire crew programs.

Goals:

- *Provide program continuity to vulnerable youths through effective partnership.*
- *Offer training and exposure to real-world vocational opportunities relevant to fire department crew operations including but not limited to:*
 - *Hand tool use for fire line/trail construction.*
 - *Power tool use including weed-whips, pole-saws, and chippers for vegetation management and fire line construction.*
 - *Classroom instruction on weather, map and compass use, and wildland fire behavior.*
- *Demonstrate and foster the value of team work and work ethic through intentional exercises.*
- *Purpose existing county programs and facilities to recognize the value of and invest in the lives of vulnerable youths to change lives.*
- *Provide mentorship and general counseling on relevant career pathways, including higher education requirements.*

USFS Permit Process Considerations:

The LPBC youth and staff residents will vacate the LPBC site prior to the expiration of Probation's USFS permit on December 31, 2024.

Should the Board of Supervisors approve today's recommended actions, SBCFD will immediately begin the process of applying for a new USFS permit to take effect on or before January 1, 2025. General Services will be assisting SBCFD with the USFS permit application process. When SBCFD's permit is approved, SBCFD will assume occupancy and will be the only permitted users.

Fiscal Analysis:

There is no fiscal impact to the County General Fund. There is a significant amount of deferred maintenance to be considered as part of the current co-location request and eventual permanent transition of the site to SBCFD. The current deferred maintenance estimate is \$800,000. Any future fiscal impacts related to the facilities will transfer from Probation to SBCFD once SBCFD has an approved USFS permit and Probation's USFS permit has expired and left the premises.

In addition, the estimated one-time costs related to facility modifications (e.g. bathrooms and apparatus room, etc.) for SBCFD operational purposes are \$500,000 and would be incurred in FY 2024-25. Annual ongoing facility related costs that will be borne by SBCFD are currently estimated to be between \$120,000 to \$200,000. Additional analysis will continue to occur to identify areas where ongoing costs can be reduced.

SBCFD costs will be funded by revenues from the agreement between SBCFD and the State (CalFire) to provide fire protection services to State Responsibility Areas (SRA) within Santa Barbara County. Additional funds are incorporated in the 2024-2025 budget. There will be no impacts to staffing or costs associated to this, permanent and extra help staffing have been in existence for numerous years for the fire hand crew.

Attachments:

Attachment A: PowerPoint Presentation

Authored by:

Samuel Leach, Deputy Chief Probation Officer