



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
AGENDA LETTER

Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
105 E. Anapamu Street, Suite 407
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
(805) 568-2240

Agenda Number:

Submitted on:
(COB Stamp)

Department Name: Sheriff
Department No.: 032
Agenda Date: May 05, 2026
Placement: Administrative Agenda
Estimated Time: N/A
Continued Item: No
If Yes, date from: N/A
Vote Required: Majority

TO: Board of Supervisors
FROM: Department Director: Bill Brown, Sheriff-Coroner
Contact: Guillermo Ramirez, Lieutenant, Resources Bureau
SUBJECT: Service Agreement with ViaPath Technologies to provide Inmate Communications Services

County Counsel Concurrence

As to form: Yes

Other Concurrence: Risk Management

As to form: Yes

Auditor-Controller Concurrence

As to form: Yes

Other Concurrence: Purchasing

As to form: Yes

Recommended Actions:

That the Board of Supervisors:

- a) Approve, ratify, and authorize, the Chair to execute an Agreement with ViaPath Technologies, formerly presented to the board as Telmate LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Global Tel* Link (GTL) to provide Inmate Communications Services at the Sheriff's Office Northern Branch Jail and Santa Barbara Main Jail facilities for a period effective January 01, 2026, through December 31, 2028; and
- b) Determine that the above-recommended actions are not a project that is subject to environmental review under California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), pursuant to (CEQA) Guidelines section 15378(b)(4), finding that the actions are governmental funding mechanisms and/or fiscal activities that will not result in direct or indirect physical changes in the environment.

Summary Text:

This item is before your Board to authorize the Sheriff's Office to enter into an Agreement with ViaPath Technologies to provide telephone, video visitation and tablet-based Inmate Communication

Services, at the Sheriff's Office correctional facilities, following a public bid process in partnership with General Services through a Request For Proposal (RFP# 9180002). ViaPath Technologies was selected as the winning bidder through review by a scoring panel of Sheriff's Office representatives. This agreement will be for a period of three years, effective January 1, 2026, to December 31, 2028, with the option of two one-year extensions.

Discussion:

The Sheriff's Office provides oversight for Inmate Communications Services. Vendors who are contracted to provide Communication Services for incarcerated individuals in county jails must provide up-to-date telephone systems, correctional grade tablets, and designate a maintenance crew onsite. Technological advancements have changed the inmate telephone communication landscape, and many vendors now offer inmate tablets and kiosks that allow inmates to communicate with friends, family and corrections facility staff.

Through tablets, incarcerated individuals are able to make video calls, send messages, receive photos, order commissary, access correctional information such as custody and medical handbooks, access law library, and access media/entertainment through a pay per view system. Subscription for streaming content and premium apps will also be available to incarcerated individuals through the term of this agreement.

Funds generated from this agreement are deposited into the Inmate Welfare Fund (Fund 0075). The money deposited into the Inmate Welfare Fund must be expended by the Sheriff's Office primarily for the benefit, education and welfare of the inmates confined within the jail, pursuant to California Penal Code §4025(e). An example of this is the Sheriff's Treatment Program, which supports evidence-based programming such as cognitive behavioral therapy, substance use disorder treatment, relapse prevention and trauma-informed counseling, which is partially funded through the Inmate Welfare Fund (Fund 0075).

Penal Code §4025 further requires that the Board receive and file information pertaining to the Inmate Welfare Fund annually. The most recent Inmate Welfare Fund annual report was received and filed by your Board in September 2025, and SBSO anticipates the next report will be filed in September 2026.

This item was delayed in coming to your Board due to challenges navigating the RFP process, approval through the County's Executive Information Technology Council (EITC) and contract negotiations with the selected vendor. On Thursday, December 18, 2025, The Executive Information Technology Council (EITC) - which offers oversight for policies, standards, and projects exceeding \$100,000 - gave their approval to proceed with the request for proposal process.

Background:

The County has historically contracted with third-party vendors to provide inmate communication services, including telephone and tablet-based platforms within custody facilities. These services are essential for maintaining communication between incarcerated individuals and their families, while supporting facility operations and programming.

As technology has evolved, the County has evaluated providers to ensure services remain secure, reliable, and aligned with operational and industry standards. ViaPath Technologies is a recognized provider of integrated inmate communication systems, offering telephone, tablets, and related services that meet the County's security and service requirements. Prior to the May 18, 2025 RFP for

these services, ViaPath Technologies served as the Inmate Communications vendor at the County's jails since September 1, 2018.

The proposed agreement continues the County's use of a comprehensive communication platform and is consistent with prior Board direction authorizing similar services. These services operate under a revenue-sharing model that helps offset program costs.

This recommendation also reflects ongoing regulatory and legislative efforts to improve accessibility, affordability, and transparency in inmate communication services. In recent years, SBSO has experienced significant decline in pay phone fees due to legislative changes and the implementation of a price cap on inmate communication rates. In October 2021, the California Public Utilities Commission CA PUC decreased domestic calling rates from \$0.16 to \$0.07 cents per minute, and international calling rates from \$0.75 to \$0.21 cents per minute. In addition, the original 2024 FCC order, created under the Martha Wright-Reed Just and Reasonable Communications Act of 2023, established rate caps and banned site commissions for calling services within correctional facilities. Because of the applied price cap, the phone revenues were reduced by approximately 80% compared to previous years.

On November 7, 2025, Federal Communication Commission voted to increase the phone and video calling rate caps for incarcerated individuals. The change in the previous ruling of 2024, was as result of the pressure from phone companies, Sheriff's, and State Attorney Generals.

Key Changes Made by the FCC were as follows:

- Revised Rate Cap Methodology and New Interim Rate Caps: The FCC will now calculate rate caps using only billed minutes and allow for the full inclusion of safety and security costs incurred by Incarcerated People's Communications Services (IPCS) providers for both audio and video calls.
- New Rate Tier for Small Jails: An additional rate cap tier has been created to accommodate the unique cost structures of extremely small jails, 0-49 Average Daily Population (ADP).
- \$0.02 Per-Minute Additive: A uniform \$0.02 per-minute interim rate additive has been established to support recovery of costs borne by correctional facilities to make IPCS available (applies to both audio and video calls).
- Ban on Site Commissions: The FCC reaffirmed its ban on site commission payments.
- Adopted Inflation Factor: The FCC adopted a new inflation factor (6.7%) to reflect the increase in costs since it last received cost data, which is now incorporated into the new interim rate caps and is based on reports from the FCC's meeting.
- Implementation: The new interim rate caps including the \$0.02 per-minute additive and the ban on site commissions will be effective 120 days after the decision is published in the Federal Register.
- Further Rulemaking: The FCC is seeking additional public comment on these issues as it works toward establishing permanent rate caps.

As dictated in the new FCC ruling, the new rates proposed are based on the average daily population of the facilities. Following extensive internal discussions and a thorough analysis of the demographics of incarcerated individuals in Santa Barbara County, it was determined that the Sheriff's Office would maintain the phone rates as they are, at 0.7 cents per minute. This decision aims to support the

incarcerated individuals ability to remain in contact with their families, maintain their social ties, and provide the much needed emotional support during their incarceration.

Performance Measure:

The Sheriff's Office monitors the performance of Inmate Communications, phones and tablets regularly. The selected vendor provides essential telecommunications services to the incarcerated persons within Sheriff's Office Jail facilities. The most essential measure of their performance is relative to maintaining equipment that functions effectively for the incarcerated persons, minimizing telephone outages, Wi-Fi reliability, and ensuring that they provide appropriate responses and troubleshooting should an outage occur.

The Sheriff's Office also regularly reviews grievance requests from incarcerated persons pertaining to inmate communications. Through the tablets, the system will provide an auditable electronic record of all submissions which will improve the overall processing and tracking efficiency of grievances.

The Sheriff's Office monitors the quality of phone calls and tablet performance and ensures that the service provided to incarcerated persons meet the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) guidelines, and standards identified in California Code of Regulations Title 15. Monitoring inmate telephone services ensures facility safety, security and orderly operations.

Contract Renewals:

On May 18, 2025, the Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office, in partnership with General Services, distributed a Request for Proposal (RFP# 9180002) for qualified, experienced vendors who could provide reliable, cost-effective inmate telephone and services, and correctional grade tablets for incarcerated persons in the County's Correctional Facilities.

Three vendors submitted responses to the RFP, and each proposal was evaluated by an evaluation team. The team combined standardized evaluation criteria and scoring. Based on the evaluation results, ViaPath Technologies was identified as the vendor that met the RFP requirements and provided the best overall service and value to the Sheriff's Office. A significant factor in our consideration for the Inmate Communication Services vendor was the demonstrated performance and reliability of ViaPath Technologies at the County's jails over the past several years, having successfully partnered with the County of Santa Barbara from September 1, 2018, through December 31, 2025, and consistently meeting operational expectations.

During the terms of the previous contracts, ViaPath's service interruptions or outages have been very rare and have been rectified quickly. This vendor also regularly replaces damaged or inoperable equipment quickly.

ViaPath's services continue to improve inmate access to secure telephone, video visitation, and electronic messaging, allowing individuals to maintain meaningful contact with family members, legal representatives, and approved support networks. These services include rehabilitative opportunities for incarcerated individuals through access to structured educational, vocational, and life-skills programming designed to support positive behavior, personal development, and successful reintegration. These opportunities may also include adult education and high school equivalency preparation, workforce readiness and digital literacy training, cognitive and behavioral health programming, substance use and wellness education, and reentry-focused services that promote

goal setting, responsibility, and connection to community resources, all of which contribute to improved institutional behavior and reduced recidivism.

Collectively, ViaPath’s services contribute to safer correctional facilities, improved inmate outcomes, and alignment with the County’s objectives for rehabilitation and community safety. Maintaining these connections has been shown to support positive behavior while in custody and following release.

Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:

Budgeted: Yes

Fiscal Analysis:

Funding Source	FY 25/26 Revenue	Annualized On-going Revenue:
Annual Technology Grant (ViaPath)	\$125,000.00	\$125,000.00
Other Revenue	\$340,000.00	\$600,000.00
Estimated Total	\$465,000.00	\$725,000.00

Narrative:

This is a revenue generating contract. The Sheriff’s Office Inmate Welfare Fund receives a portion of the revenue generated through revenue sharing of entertainment content provided via tablets. The vendor has agreed to pay 35% revenue to the County on gross revenue generated by and through the Inmate Telephone and Tablet System. The agreement also establishes an annual technology grant secured by ViaPath, intended to support the acquisition of technology, equipment, or related services. Due to the fact that money is transferred from the Sheriff’s Office to the vendor directly to cover the vendors portion of the revenue share, this contract was set at an amount not to exceed \$3,000,000.00 over the course of the five year (if extended) contract.

Special Instructions:

Clerk of the Board: Please send two (2) copies of the official executed agreement and two (2) copies of the Minute Order to the Sheriff’s Office, Attention CFO Hope Vasquez and to Lieutenant Guillermo Ramirez

Attachments:

- Attachment A – ViaPath Technologies 2026-28 Service Agreement
- Attachment B – Board Contract Summary
- Attachment C – Certification of Insurance

Contact Information:

Guillermo Ramirez, Sheriff’s Custody Lieutenant, gnr4046@sbsheriff.org
 Hope Vasquez, CFO, Sheriff’s Office, hmv3606@sbsheriff.org