

INSPECTION OF THE SISKIYOU COUNTY JAIL

SUMMARY

In accordance with State of California Penal Code 919(b), all correctional facilities in California are required to be visited and inspected by the Civil Grand Jury.

BACKGROUND

Concerns about overcrowding have been identified and reported over the last several years. Previous Civil Grand Juries have recommended a new facility be constructed. In 2014 and again in 2016, County ballot measures were placed before the voters to fund a new jail. Both efforts failed to pass. Previous Civil Grand Juries and the Siskiyou County Sheriff's Department have expressed concerns that there is a possibility that the safety of jail staff and inmates could be compromised. The Board of Supervisors (BOS) has been seeking to address these concerns by evaluating, exploring, and considering other alternatives.

METHODOLOGY

The 2017-2018 Civil Grand Jury toured the jail. We were shown the procedures for handling of prisoners from initial booking to release. Facility operations, maintenance, security, and handling of daily medical procedures were also covered during the tour.

DISCUSSION

From the outside, the jail has the appearance of a fortress with high brick walls, and a sally-port for inmate entrance. However, it may appear from the outside, the inside is small and inadequate. The original design capacity of the jail was 68 inmates, with priority given to misdemeanor violators and felons awaiting trial and sentencing.

Housing modifications have increased the maximum capacity to 104 inmates. At the time of the visit, all inmates were either sentenced felons or charged with a felony. This presents challenges to the staff in a building designed mainly for misdemeanor prisoners. The facility is faced with operating at over 50 percent greater than the original designed capacity. For many arrestees bookings can take as little as 10 minutes. Unless there is a serious felony charge, the typical booking results in a release with a subsequent court date. Serious offenders can be held in either one of four holding cells, two sobering cells, or one safety cell, until a more permanent housing cell becomes available.

Since the implementation of the Public Safety Realignment Act of 2011 (AB109), a substantial number of low-level felony sentences, which previously would have been served in state prison, must now be

served in county jails. Additionally, most parole violations are now served in county jails as well. Currently, there are no misdemeanor prisoners serving sentences in the Siskiyou County Jail. Misdemeanor offenders awaiting trial are routinely released after booking, pending their court date. Since the facility is normally at or near capacity, space must be made available immediately after a booking so as not to exceed maximum capacity. Sometimes, booking officers must request a release order from the court to release felony charged inmates as appropriate to ensure that maximum capacity is not exceeded.

Throughout the tour, it was apparent that the facility is clean and well run. Use of available space is outstanding. They are able to turn out meals from a kitchen one third smaller than it should be. Laundry capacity is limited to one large washer and dryer requiring a system of bagged containers that is unique and noteworthy. The three bed medical unit is small but operates well on a tight schedule. Inmates with injuries or illnesses beyond the unit's capabilities are transported to Fairchild Medical Center for treatment.

A mix of old and new technology allows inmates to be monitored and controlled by jail staff from a central location. Within the cell blocks staff are trained to observe and reduce blind spots whenever possible to insure maximum coverage.

The inmates observed appeared to be adjusted to a routine schedule that results in maximum control with minimum staff interaction. Inmates are dispersed throughout the facility in double bunk cells and limited space often requires low risk inmates to be housed with those of higher risk. This may have a negative impact on the low risk inmate both in jail and after release.

Currently, the jail has a staff of 36 employees. They include 28 correctional officers, 2 cooks, a maintenance worker, 3 medical technicians, and 2 doctors. The budget for this operation for fiscal year 2017-2018 is \$4,036,510, an increase of 11% over last year. The individual cost per inmate is \$134.70 per day.

Maintenance for this busy facility is a difficult and demanding challenge. Previous Grand Jury inspections revealed problems with leaking roofs and pipes. This tour included a look at repaired roofing and discussed additional scheduled repairs for the future. A new hot water furnace was installed to replace an inefficient and antiquated system where water was piped from the courthouse across the street. The budget is tight but upgrades are planned for implementation in the future.

Of concern is the movement of inmates from the cell blocks to other areas of the jail. For example, inmates must move through the control room when going to the medical facilities and other areas. This situation is due to the facility design and cannot be changed through building modification. Off limit areas are posted but require staff and electronic monitoring to be secure.

Pursuant to California Penal Code §4030 et seq., If a person is arrested and taken into custody, that person may be subjected to a patdown search, a metal detector search, body scanning or have their clothes thoroughly searched. A person may also be subject to a strip search, visual body cavity search or a physical body cavity search under very strict guidelines. Persons booked for misdemeanor or

infraction offenses or juvenile offenders under the applicable code sections, cannot be subjected to a strip search or visual body cavity search unless that person is going to be placed in the general population of the jail, and the peace officers determine there is reasonable suspicion to believe the person is concealing a weapon or contraband and a strip search would discover that weapon or contraband. Further, persons booked for misdemeanor or infraction offenses or juvenile offenders under the applicable code sections, cannot be subjected to a physical body cavity search unless there is a search warrant issued by a judicial officer specifically authorizing the physical body cavity search. Once it has been determined that an individual will be subjected to a body scan, strip search or visual body cavity search, that search must be done by a person of the same sex being searched unless it is conducted by a physician or licensed medical personnel. Physical body cavity searches must be done by a physician, nurse practitioner, registered or licensed vocation nurse, or an emergency medical technician level II. If the detention facility has a physician that provides health care to the inmates, that physician may also conduct the physical body cavity search. All such searches must be conducted under sanitary conditions.

Persons taken into custody and booked into jail for felony offenses are subject to all types of searches as described above before they are released into the general jail population and dependent on the nature of the offenses for which they were arrested. Currently the Siskiyou County Jail transports inmates requiring a physical body cavity search to Fairchild Medical Center for said search.

Inmates arrive through a sally-port into a search and booking area. The holding cells are clean, secure, and serviceable. Restraint devices are cleaned and returned to arresting officers to reduce potential for injury, illness, and disease. The booking system is efficient, well thought-out, and quick. Upon completion of booking, a determination is made whether an inmate will be retained on site, or released with a court date. They are then escorted outside and released, regardless of where they were arrested within the county. This places a burden on the inmate who potentially has nowhere to go, due to homelessness or lack of transportation. The City of Yreka may need to utilize local resources to accommodate those who live in other areas of the county.

Any money or property found on an inmate or sent to him/her is held in trust. This money may be used by the inmate to pay fines or fees as assessed by the court. Remaining funds may be used by the inmate to purchase items from the jail commissary.

Efforts to fund a new jail facility have been unsuccessful through multiple ballot measures. Siskiyou County was awarded \$26,985,416 in state funding toward a new jail facility. Citizens voted against a sales tax increase which would have provided an additional 10 million dollars to augment the existing funding. The state funding is still available to assist in converting the existing County Juvenile Center into an adult detention facility to replace the existing jail. This proposal is currently under consideration by the County Board of Supervisors. Upon implementation, the new facility will grow from 40 to 160 beds and is expandable for future needs. This has the potential to be affordable, cost effective, and meet the needs for Siskiyou County. Possible uses for the existing jail could include being developed into a mental health and rehabilitation facility.

FINDINGS

F1: The existing jail does not meet the needs of the county and affects law enforcement's ability to enforce laws and maintain safety. The need to expand capacity beyond the physical limitations of the current jail facility cannot be overstated. Inspections and visits dating back many years have identified similar deficiencies in jail operations directly related to design versus adjusted capacity. It is evident that a larger, better, and more expandable jail facility is desperately needed. The only practical solution currently on the table to deal with this problem is the proposed conversion of the Juvenile Center to an adult detention facility.

F2: Medical doctors on site (the jail currently has two) do not currently perform body cavity searches on site. This creates additional costs for transportation and hospital fees.

F3: An arrestee processed at the County jail is often released onto the streets regardless of where they were arrested in the county. This places a burden on the arrestee, who has no way to return to their home. Local resources must then be utilized to accommodate those who live in other areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS

R1. The Siskiyou County Civil Grand Jury recommends the proposed juvenile center conversion be further explored, developed, and implemented if practical.

R2: Pursuant to California Penal Code §4030 et seq., on-site qualified medical personnel should perform body cavity searches at the jail facility.

R3: Siskiyou County residents released from jail should be assisted in being returned back to their community, to alleviate the burden on the City of Yreka. This could be accomplished by contacting individual or public transportation. Using vouchers and placing a designated bus stop at the jail location could simplify arrangements. Ways to assist those living outside the county should be explored in a manner that does not place an additional cost burden on the County.

REQUEST FOR RESPONSES

Pursuant to Penal Code section 933.05, the Siskiyou County Civil Grand Jury requests responses as follows:

The Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors is requested to respond to R1, R2, and R3.

The Siskiyou County Sheriff's Department is requested to respond to R1, R2, and R3.