

EL DORADO COUNTY
2015-2016 GRAND JURY
REPORT



**PROPOSED PUBLIC SAFETY
HEADQUARTERS**

CASE 15-09 • JUNE 9, 2016

Public Release
JUNE 24, 2016

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The El Dorado County Sheriff has proposed a new public safety headquarters. The Sheriff's Office is proposing to bring all off-site locations under one roof to eliminate outside rental costs, open lines of communication, improve work efficiencies, allow technological growth and improve access and services to the public.

METHODOLOGY

- Interviewed Sheriff's department personnel.
- Interviewed appropriate El Dorado County managers/directors.
- Attended public forums presented by El Dorado County Sheriff staff and county officials.
- Reviewed various county documents.

DISCUSSION

The existing Sheriff's headquarters was dedicated in 1970, and is now 46 years old. When originally constructed, the headquarters also housed the county jail. From its dedication, the headquarters was reported as being at capacity and too small for the Sheriff department's needs. The explosive growth of the county has sparked an expansion of the Sheriff department's personnel and responsibilities to keep pace with the needs of the county and its citizens.

In 2013, Vanir Construction Management prepared a needs assessment study to determine the operations and functions required of a sheriff's headquarters. Best practices were assessed, concepts were laid out and consolidated, and efficiencies were determined. The findings of the report stated, "*The County should consider replacing this facility. The cost to upgrade this facility including ADA requirements is not justified.*"¹ After this finding, the Board of Supervisors voted to discontinue any major maintenance to the facility on Fair Lane.

The design of a new facility was undertaken by Architectural Nexus and will provide for all divisions and functions of the Sheriff's Department to be housed under one roof. The design process and space analysis determined that the proper size for the main facility is 106,000 square feet. It also discussed ancillary facilities such as additional parking and potential power generation.

In the fall of 2014, the Board of Supervisors approved the purchase of 30.37 acres for the facility and future expansion. The land is located off of Missouri Flat Road on Industrial Drive in Diamond Springs. An additional .36 acre parcel will provide additional vehicular access to Merchandise Way for a total of 30.73 acres at a cost of \$2.7 million dollars. Escrow for the purchase of the land closed in March 2016.

¹ Cited from Public Handout provided by John D'Agostini, Sheriff-Coroner Public Administrator – May 23, 2016

A potential source of funding for construction of the facility was uncovered through the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). An El Dorado County facility finance team, formed by Larry Combs, Chief Administrative Officer (CAO)², approved the USDA application and its contingencies. An environmental impact report was conducted and approved; an estimated cost of \$54 million dollars for the project was established. The Board of Supervisors agreed to submit a qualifying application that was approved by the USDA citing it as the type of project with which they wanted to be involved. The loan offered by USDA was for \$54 million, financed at an annual interest rate of 2.875% over a 40-year period, with an annual debt payment of approximately \$2.2 million.

USDA has a deadline of June 1, 2016 to lock in the 2nd quarter interest rate of 2.875% per annum. On June 30th, the interest rate for the 3rd quarter will be announced and even the slightest adjustment would impact the annual debt payment. At this time, it appears that the deadline date will not be met and the loan will be subject to the 3rd quarter interest rates and possibly escalating construction costs.

As dictated by law, the Sheriff is also the Coroner of El Dorado County and it is his responsibility to investigate all suspicious, unattended and criminal deaths. Currently, the Sheriff's department transports decedents to a local mortuary for storage where a standard post-mortem autopsy can be performed. For criminal acts, Sheriff's deputies transport the decedents to a Sacramento County morgue where forensic autopsies are performed at an additional cost to the county. Moving El Dorado County decedents to outside facilities can delay an autopsy and jeopardize the integrity of evidence. Included in the design of the new facility is a fully equipped morgue capable of performing standard post-mortem and forensic autopsies that may be utilized by neighboring counties generating revenue for El Dorado County.³

The average cost of a forensic autopsy is \$4,000-\$5,000 and \$1,500-\$2,000 for a standard post-mortem autopsy. In 2015 the Sheriff's department paid Sacramento County for 289 forensic autopsies.⁴

A 25-yard indoor firing range is included in the facility which will provide deputies the ability to perform required shooting exercises without traveling to a distant, off-site firing range that is only available during daylight hours and at prescribed times. The highest percentage of gun related incidents occur during the night time hours. With an indoor range, deputies will be able to train in low light conditions, conduct night time practice and tactical training. The range will be of sufficient size to allow the use of moveable walls and windows to meet training needs. Deputies will also be able to remain on-site for extensive specialty training, such as that required for SWAT teams and specialty assignments.

² Letter date May 9, 2016 by CAO to BOS (Page 2 of 4)

³ Cited from Public Handout provided by John D'Agostini, Sheriff-Coroner Public Administrator – May 23, 2016

⁴ Cited from interview with Sheriff and Undersheriff – May 5, 2016

Warehouse type buildings proposed for the site include:

- Property Evidence building: Increased storage needs relating to major crimes and ongoing criminal investigations. Staff efficiency will be greatly increased due to enhanced inventory organization and the integrity of stored evidence will be preserved. It is noted that any loss or degradation of evidence through improper storage could result in criminal charges being dismissed or convictions overturned on appeal.
- Radio shop: Increased repair time efficiency.
- Boat and Off Highway Vehicle storage: Storage for six boats and 45 off-highway vehicles; indoor storage will be provided for expensive Dive Team equipment.
- Special Operations Storage: House and secure equipment for specialty units, such as, SWAT, Search and Rescue, mass casualty equipment and the Sheriff's Team of Active Retirees (STARS) equipment.
- Vehicular evidence storage is also accommodated within a secured fenced area.

A 20-year expansion plan includes a car wash, crime lab, additional solar energy units and a future parking lot which could replace the Emergency Vehicle Operations Course.

A solar covered parking area will be provided for patrol and deputy parking within the confines of the administrative area. This area will not only provide additional electrical power for the headquarters, it will also have a secure Wi-Fi connection to download all patrol car information from shift data. Future expansion might include additional solar power installation. A Power Purchase Agreement was determined to be the best way to finance the costs of a solar farm. Consumption savings by the solar farm will be credited against higher tier energy costs. Surplus solar energy can be applied to the overall utility costs of El Dorado County.

As of April 2016, the Board of Supervisors asked staff to look at the feasibility of completing the project in phases. The phased construction plan is to be presented to the Board of Supervisors to include the scope of the phases, projected costs, financing terms with USDA and related repayment and budgeting options.⁵

The phased construction plan introduces a myriad of possibilities and interjects a large amount of uncertainty:

- How large would each phase be and what would the timing be?
- Which portions of the department would move in with each phase?
- What will a phased construction approach have on construction and loan costs?
- How many more months can the current headquarters be used?

⁵ Cited in letter to BOS from Larry Combs, CAO – dated May 9, 2016

FINDINGS

- F1. Facility site has been purchased and project funding identified.
- F2. A facility needs assessment and the Environmental Impact Report have been submitted and approved.
- F3. Construction background work has been completed and is ready to go.
- F4. Delay in acceptance of USDA loan may result in an increase in annual interest rate, costs, and annual debt service.
- F5. Phased construction may increase total cost of construction.
- F6. Acceptance of USDA loan by the Board of Supervisors is the final step required to secure financing.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- R1. The Board of Supervisors accept the USDA loan application on or before July 1, 2016 or at the earliest date possible.
- R2. The primary 106,000 square foot Sheriff's Public Safety Headquarters be built as soon as possible and in one phase.
- R3. Future replacement of aging buildings and facilities should be replaced in a timely manner.

REQUEST FOR RESPONSES

Responses to both findings and recommendations in this report are required by law in accordance with California Penal Code §933 and §933.05.

Responses are requested from:

- El Dorado County Board of Supervisors on or before September 22, 2016
- El Dorado County Sheriff on or before August 23, 2016

Address responses to:

The Honorable Suzanne N. Kingsbury
Presiding Judge of the El Dorado County Superior Court
1354 Johnson Blvd.
South Lake Tahoe, CA 96150

The Presiding Judge of the El Dorado County Superior Court additionally requests that the responses be sent electronically as a Word or PDF file to facilitate the economical and timely distribution of such responses. Please email responses to the El Dorado County Grand Jury at: courtadmin@eldoradocourt.org.

[Reports issued by the Grand Jury do not identify individuals interviewed.](#) Penal Code section 929 requires that reports of the Grand Jury not contain the name of any person or facts leading to the identity of any person who provides information to the Grand Jury.