

2002-2003

## **JAIL HOLDING FACILITY INSPECTIONS, 2002-2003**

According to Penal Code section 919(b), a Grand Jury is charged with conducting inspections of jail holding facilities and considering the complaints, if any, from inmates. The Grand Jury inspected certain jails and holding facilities in Alameda County. In connection with these inspections, the Grand Jury had available to it inspection reports from previous Grand Juries together with current inspection reports from the Alameda County Department of Public Health and of the California Board of Corrections.

The primary focus of this Grand Jury's inspections was to verify the recommendations made by the Alameda County Department of Public Health and the California Board of Corrections. The Grand Jury visited the Santa Rita Jail on July 18, 2002 as part of its orientation. The Grand Jury inspected the Alameda City Jail on November 14, 2002; the Oakland City Jail on December 5, 2002; the Berkeley City Jail on December 12, 2002, and the new Oakland Police Department, Eastmont Substation, on March 13, 2003. No major discrepancies were uncovered during the course of inspections. Consequently, there are no recommendations by this Grand Jury regarding jails and holding facilities. We suggest that the 2003-2004 Grand Jury make unannounced visits to the various jails within Alameda County.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

None.

## JUVENILE HALL CONSTRUCTION

### INTRODUCTION

As a part of the orientation process, the 2002-2003 Grand Jury toured the Alameda County Juvenile Hall. Alameda County is the government agency responsible for Juvenile Hall. The Chief Probation Officer and staff are in charge of the day to day operations of Juvenile Hall.

The Grand Jury took a walking tour of the facility and then met with the Chief Probation Officer, senior staff, and on-site supervisors. During the meeting the Grand Jury focused on some disturbing conditions at the current facility and the delay in building a new facility, that has been in the planning stage for over ten years.

### HISTORY

There are three reasons why the County of Alameda considered building a new facility: 1) the current site sits on an active earthquake fault, 2) the current facility is seriously deteriorated, and 3) there had been debate as to whether its capacity is sufficient. For over a decade the need for a new facility has been recognized but there had been no definitive action taken by the Board of Supervisors except the initiation of an EPA report on four possible sites. Previous grand juries expressed serious concerns for the delays in building a new facility.

The Board of Supervisors has approved the need for a new facility. Alameda County has been awarded a \$33.2 million federal grant by the state Board of Corrections (BOC) to assist in financing this project. However, the grant is contingent on a start and completion date. The original start date was 2/28/02, with a completion date of 6/30/05. The start date was extended to January 2003. This date has passed. Alameda County asked for another extension date and received verbal approval. According to the Alameda County general services administrator, the completion date has been extended to June 2006.

Three major issues contributed to the delay in building the new juvenile hall. The first was the selection of a building site and size. The site selected limits the size of the hall (number of beds).

Four sites were evaluated: the county-owned property in the city of Dublin near the Santa Rita Jail; the Glen Dyer Detention Center site (North County Jail in Oakland); the Pardee/Swan Site, a 34-acre Port of Oakland owned property near the Oakland airport; and the existing San Leandro property site.

The second issue that contributed to the delay dealt with construction costs. Preliminary estimates, including furnishings and fixtures, are estimated at close to \$175 million for the entire complex, including the court and probation facilities. The cost to build on property not owned by the county, the Pardee/Swan site, if the property could be purchased from the Port of Oakland, increases building costs by more than \$30 million.

The third issue that contributed to the delayed decision revolves around the family of juvenile detainees. How far the family and friends may have to travel to visit or return home with juveniles who are released was a concern.

## **FINDINGS**

During the Grand Jury's tour of Juvenile Hall, staff pointed out examples of poor conditions including seismic problems, cracked buildings and walls, electrical problems, and the age of the building, which opened in 1953. Old gas lines break frequently and PG&E is often involved in repairs.

Deliberations on building of a new Juvenile Hall began in 1992. Political interests and various community pressures delayed the decision making process for nearly eleven years.

## CONCLUSION

The inability of the Board of Supervisors, due to political concerns, to reach a decision on the location and size, delayed the selection of a construction site. After hearing concerns from citizens at three environmental impact hearings, some supervisors changed positions on the construction site and size issues. The existing San Leandro site (330 beds) has finally been selected by the Board of Supervisors. Any further delays may contribute to the loss of the BOC grant, and cause the county to face rising construction costs. Most importantly, until the new facility is built, juveniles held at the hall are at serious risk.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### **Recommendation 03-35:**

The Board of Supervisors ensure the beginning of construction of the new juvenile hall without further delay.

## RESPONSES REQUIRED

Board of Supervisors

Recommendation 03-35