

OFFICE OF THE SHERIFF
CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO

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ROOM 456, CITY HALL
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA 94102



VICKI L. HENNESSY
SHERIFF

October 16, 2017
Reference: 2017-121

Honorable Members
Board of Supervisors
City Hall, Room 244
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
San Francisco, CA 94102

Dear Members;

On Tuesday, October 17, the Board of Supervisors will receive for introduction legislation to approve a plan to begin the process of relocating City departments from the seismically compromised Hall of Justice. If approved, the District Attorney's Office and the Adult Probation Department will move into leased space nearby. Not addressed in the legislation is the fate of County Jail #4, located on the seventh floor. In keeping with Mayor Lee's concern that there be a plan in progress to close County Jail #4, I write to let you know that I am working with the City's Capital Planning team to develop options for creating suitable housing for the prisoners at County Jail #6, in San Bruno; and making improvements at County Jail #2, at 425 7th Street, to accommodate functions for which it is now dependent on the Hall of Justice.

You may recall that in 2015, the Board was presented with a plan for a new detention facility designed to replace the two Hall of Justice jails -- County Jail #3, which is currently closed and County Jail #4, which currently houses approximately 350 prisoners -- to be partially funded by an \$80 million grant from the California Board of State and Community Corrections. The remaining \$270 million was to be funded by certificates of participation.

The Board rejected the plan and the grant in favor of convening Re-Envisioning the Jail Replacement Project, a working group organized "to plan for the permanent closure of County Jails Nos. 3 and 4, and any corresponding investments in mental health facilities and current jail retrofits needed to uphold public safety and better serve at-risk individuals."

Co-chaired by Roma Guy, representing Taxpayers for Public Safety, Health Director Barbara Garcia and me, the working group brought together mental health providers and advocates, former inmates, and city department heads, including the District Attorney, Public Defender, Chief Adult Probation Officer, Chief of Police, Director of Public Works, and the Controller, as well as representatives from the Mayor's Office and the Board of Supervisors.

The final report of the working group, presented to the Board of Supervisors on June 13, 2017, detailed several recommendations, including:

- Implementation of Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion, known as LEAD SF, a collaboration lead by the Director of Public Health, the District Attorney and the Chief of Police which provides a pre-booking diversion program that will refer repeat low-level drug offenders to community-based health and social services. LEAD SF received grant funding from the Board of State and Community Corrections and began working toward implementation in June.
- Provision of more psychiatric respite beds for individuals leaving custody and those at risk of becoming incarcerated. The Department of Public Health has opened a 15-bed facility on the Zuckerberg San Francisco General Hospital campus for post-psychiatric emergency treatment and has funded 34 new medical respite beds for multi-diagnosed individuals.
- Implementation by the District Attorney's Office of weekend and holiday rebooking, currently in progress.
- Bail reform, currently in active consideration by the Superior Court.
- Increased investment in pretrial release of prisoners through San Francisco Pretrial Diversion, a non-profit funded by the Sheriff's Department. First implemented in San Francisco more than 35 years ago to assist the court in making pretrial release decisions, in May 2016 Pretrial Diversion adopted a new risk assessment tool, known as the Public Safety Assessment (PSA), which is designed to reduce implicit bias from the decision to allow individuals own-recognition release. The PSA offers a range of supervision options from "no conditions" to "assertive case management," with the goal of ensuring that the individual remain arrest-free and makes all required court appearances.

It is important to note that San Francisco has long led the nation in the innovation and use of pretrial alternatives to incarceration, an effort that began in the 1980's and has grown steadily since. The individuals granted pretrial release in San Francisco would have to pay bail to secure their release in other jurisdictions. Pretrial release has had a profound impact on the jail population. Today, the jail population averages between 1250 and 1300 prisoners. Another 1100-plus individuals are awaiting trial on pretrial release and more than 50 are serving sentences in jail alternative programs. But for the aggressive use of pretrial release and sentencing alternatives, the San Francisco jail population would be approximately 2400. Those remaining in jail after arraignment, for the most part, are charged with serious and/or violent crimes and have multiple charges. They have been deemed by the court to be ineligible for pretrial release.

It is for these individuals, entrusted to my care, that, as Sheriff, it is my duty and my obligation to ensure safe, secure, and humane housing and treatment.

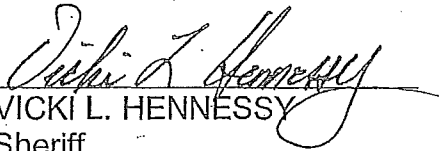
I fully support the work of the Re-Envisioning Project and continue to remain actively involved in bringing the recommendations to fruition. However, while I believe they are necessary and worthy, I do not believe the recommendations will reduce the jail population to the point where we can close County Jail #4 without making provisions for housing the prisoners elsewhere. Recent spikes in violent crime and property crime, and calls by members of the Board of Supervisors and others to address this will lead to more arrests and a higher jail population. I hope that as the impact of the implemented recommendations is felt, the increased population may be reduced, bringing the numbers back down to the current level.

A "next step" identified in the final report of the Re-Envisioning Project is to "begin planning for re-opening of County Jail #6 in San Bruno to expedite closure of County Jail #4 in the event the implemented recommendations do not sufficiently reduce the jail population." Given the time it takes to move a capital project from proposal to completion, it is important that we act expeditiously to comply with the clear direction of the Re-Envisioning work group. Therefore, in the near future I will be seeking your approval for the issuance of certificates of participation to fund improvements to County Jail #2 necessary to sever its dependence on the Hall of Justice, and to renovate County Jail #6 to safely and humanely house prisoners once the Hall of Justice is closed.

In advocating for the renovation of County Jail #6, I am advocating for these prisoners to live in a modern, well-functioning facility that affords them safe housing and access to educational, vocational and treatment programs that maximize their potential for productive life in the community after incarceration.

I welcome your questions and, I encourage you, if you haven't already, to view the conditions at County Jail #4 and to allow me to show you the renovations I am proposing to County Jail #6. Please contact me or my Chief of Staff, Eileen Hirst, to set up a tour.

Sincerely,


VICKI L. HENNESSY
Sheriff