

The Superior Court

STATE OF CALIFORNIA
COUNTY OF EL DORADO
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SUZANNE N. KINGSBURY
PRESIDING JUDGE

January 14, 2020

El Dorado County Board of Supervisors
330 Fair Lane
Placerville, CA 95667

Re: Juvenile Detention Facilities
Agenda Item # 23

Dear Board Members,

It is my understanding that the Board of Supervisors will be considering the above-referenced agenda item this morning at 11 a.m. My colleague, Judge Michael McLaughlin, the Presiding Judge of the El Dorado County Juvenile Court, will be there in person to address you and to answer any questions. I have previously appeared before the current board to address the importance of this project, and to stress the need for maintaining juvenile detention facilities within our county, and don't want to reiterate comments I have already provided.

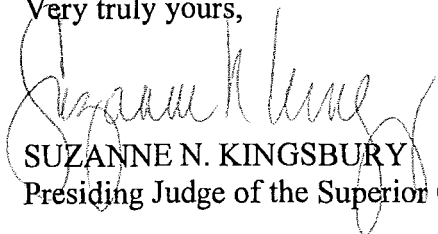
Although the preference of our judges is to have a facility in both South Lake Tahoe and Placerville, we understand that the current number of detained youth do not warrant the fiscal cost of maintaining a juvenile detention facility in both locations. With the decommissioning of the Juvenile Hall in Placerville last year, we have been operating using only the Juvenile Treatment Facility. However recent changes in the law could well impact the number of detained youth and the length of their stay in our facilities. Additionally, the "pendulum" of how juvenile and adult cases are handled in court swings back and forth over time. Arguably, we are at a time within the justice system where that pendulum has swung fairly far to the left, given the changes brought by criminal justice realignment, statutory revisions, and through the initiative process. All it takes is a few notorious events involving violence to cause that pendulum swing back in the other direction. I have been a judge for nearly a quarter of a century and was an attorney for

almost 15 years prior to assuming the bench, and I have seen our justice system and have seen this phenomenon occur consistently over time.

The one area within the criminal justice system where we can truly make a difference with our youth. Most young people who commit serious and violent crimes, or who have a lengthy history of engaging in criminal activity, have the capability of changing and becoming productive members of our community. However, we are not able to accomplish this change by shipping them out of the geographic area where they live in order to detain them, restricting access to their friends and families due to the distance of their placement, changing programming which we have found to be successful to that of another community, connecting them with service providers who will not provide their treatment when they return home, etc. Children in the juvenile justice system frequently feel disconnected and marginalized. I don't know how removing them from our community, usually the only home they have known, and sending them to a far flung location serves this vulnerable group of children.

I am going to leave the talking points and the minutiae to the folks who will present in person at the meeting. I will just close this letter with the following point – children who are wards of the court in our local detention facilities for the most part are El Dorado County residents. They are legally the children of the juvenile court and of the county once we remove them from the custody and care of their parents. In other words, these are your kids. Is this the kind of treatment that you would want or expect for your child? Juvenile detention facilities, just like jails and other lockups, are costly to operate. There will always be a need to detain youth, even with changes in the system. Please move forward on this project. Thank you.

Very truly yours,



SUZANNE N. KINGSBURY
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court

T. Rollingson on behalf BOS 1/14/2020
of L. Berger # 23

TO: EDC Board of Supervisors

FROM: Larry Berger

DATE: 1/9/2020

SUBJECT: Canceling plans for construction of Juvenile Hall

On May 21, 2019 this BOS conferred upon me a proclamation acknowledging my years as the first El Dorado County Juvenile Hall Superintendent and subsequently serving on the JJC/DPC. I was humbled by this award and inferred the Board's recognition of, and appreciation for this important service provided to our community. I was surprised to learn that a proposal to abandon the project to build a new Juvenile Hall to replace the decommissioned facility was even being discussed. I can appreciate the contradiction confronting the Board for acknowledging the importance of the service provided for troubled youth on one hand, and now dealing with the prospect of disavowing the means to effectively deal with it on the other.

I have heard of no other practical means of dealing with the delinquency issue confronting our County, with better solutions to replace it. Can we afford to create a vacuum in place of the only means of combatting the delinquency issue on the Western Slope?

I have every confidence that you will weigh the importance of supporting the building of the new Juvenile Hall against any argument offered to abandon the project. The welfare of our youth certainly outweighs any financial implications that may be implied. Out-sourcing this important project not only diminishes its effectiveness but also imposes many costly obstacles for the staff having to deal with the problem.

Respectfully,

Larry Berger