

SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA, COUNTY OF BUTTE

September 21, 2011

Justice Brad Hill, Chair
Court Facilities Working Group
c/o Court of Appeal, Fifth District
2424 Ventura Street
Fresno, CA 93721

Dear Justice Hill:

I write this letter in response to the Trial Court Facilities Working Group's request for input regarding Butte's pending construction project under SB1407. We appreciate the daunting tasks before the committee as they address this complex issue.

Simply stated, our existing court facilities do not adequately serve the needs of the residents of our County. We can hear in-custody matters in only one of our three Courthouses, the Butte County Courthouse in Oroville. This south-county facility houses eleven Courtrooms, two of which are not jury-capable, and three of which cannot be utilized for in-custody matters. Yet, it handles the vast majority of our filings County-wide as our other facilities are simply not capable of handling the volume and variety of filings due to size, security, and accessibility limitations.

While the Butte County Courthouse is located in the County Seat, this is not the County's population center. Out of physical necessity this facility handles 70% of our non-traffic filings. However, three-quarters of the population resides in the northern part of the county. Only civil and traffic matters can be heard in our current north county facilities. Residents must travel to Oroville for any other hearings including all criminal and Family Law cases. All jurors are summoned to Oroville for selection, even those destined for a civil case in Chico, as the Chico facility simply cannot accommodate jury pools. The Paradise Courthouse is now slated for closure effective September 30, 2011. This is partially in relation to current budgetary conditions, but also in recognition of the Court's inability to provide a secure, accessible environment for public and staff in that location, and in anticipation of our new facility.

The new North Butte County Courthouse is a necessity in order to offer adequate service to those who reside in Butte County's population center. It will address the currently existing security and accessibility issues by consolidating the functions of the current Chico and Paradise facilities, as well as allowing the transfer of designated services from the overcrowded Oroville facility to Chico.

We are currently reaching the end of the Design Development phase of our project. We have been moving smoothly and swiftly forward, due in no small part to the cooperation and support of our local communities. The site for our new facility has been selected and purchased, and we are in a unique position to influence the tone of the community in that location as we are the initial, flagship project in a newly developing area of Chico. The City of Chico and the developer have gone through extreme efforts to accommodate the conditions placed upon them by the State, even to the extent of modifying their overall development agreement to fit our needs. The site was selected in

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DAVID E. GUNN,
COURT COMMISSIONER

KIMBERLY FLENER,
COURT EXECUTIVE OFFICER

RICHARD L. HOLST,
ASSISTANT COURT EXECUTIVE
OFFICER

PLEASE REPLY TO:

■ Butte County Courthouse
One Court Street
Oroville, CA 95965
Tel: (530) 532-7013
Fax: (530) 538-8567

□ Chico Courthouse
655 Oleander Avenue
Chico, CA 95926
Tel: (530) 532-7013
Fax: (530) 892-8516

□ Paradise Courthouse
747 Elliott Road
Paradise, CA 95969
Tel: (530) 532-7013
Fax: (530) 872-2614

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tandem with the County, and with their full cooperation and the long-term goal of their purchase of the adjacent property in order to create a County government center in the North Butte County area, again in the hopes of serving our community more effectively and efficiently.


A delay in our project would be a blow not only to the Court and its ability to provide access, but also to the City and County who are counting on the success of our project to support their own community development goals. We have had their universal support. We have had no negative feedback from the public. There has been no public controversy over the project or the site that has been selected. The site is purchased. The design is developed. We are ready, willing, and able to proceed.

With regards to the "options for moving forward" presented by OCCM for the committee's consideration, while we appreciate the desire to keep all projects moving forward to the extent possible, it is clearly recognized that the funds simply do not currently exist to simultaneously design and build 41 projects throughout the State. However, it is critical that the AOC demonstrate that it can successfully complete a project that will serve the citizens of this state. To purchase 41 pieces of property only to leave them vacant, or to proceed to design buildings with no expectation that there will be funds available to build them in the near future, will only serve to further the argument that facility funds are not being wisely used and, therefore, are expendable, or may be diverted to other uses. Successful completion of needed projects can controvert that argument. We are ideally situated to be the first such successful project.

As an added bonus, our project is currently several million dollars *under* budget. This is another facet of our project that can be touted as a success. Allowing our site to sit as a vacant lot would be a major blemish not only to the community development, but even more so to OCCM and the AOC.

Which projects should proceed? Those that have been previously identified as the most critical and those that are the most likely to reach a successful, timely completion. It would be difficult to envision a project more in line with those criteria than our own.

Very Truly Yours,



Honorable Steven J. Howell
Presiding Judge

SJH/rlh

cc: Court Executive Officer Kimberly Flener



OFFICE OF THE
CITY MANAGER

411 Main Street - 3rd Floor (530) 896-7200
P.O. Box 3420 Fax (530) 895-4825
Chico, CA 95927 <http://www.ci.chico.ca.us>

PS-51-61

September 22, 2011

Justice Brad Hill, Chair
Court Facilities Working Group
c/o Court of Appeal, Fifth District
2424 Ventura Street
Fresno, CA 93721

RE: Development of a new North County Regional Court Facility

Dear Justice Hill,

The City of Chico fully supports the building of the North County Regional Court facility at its designated location in Chico. This new facility will serve Chico residents as well as residents in our surrounding communities including Paradise and Magalia. The project will fill a vital community need for a new courthouse that has existed for several years.

The new court facility will also be a founding structure in the Meriam Park planned community subdivision. Meriam Park has been designated a catalyst community by the California Department of Housing and Community Development for its innovative and sustainable housing elements. The new North County Regional Court Facility is a critical part of the overall planned future development of Meriam Park and greater Chico. We understand that the County of Butte and the Superior Court of Butte County are working cooperatively, and that the placement of the new courthouse fits within Butte County's long range facility plans.

Once again, on behalf of the City of Chico, I strongly support the development of the new North County Regional Court facility, and the City looks forward to working with the County, Courts and the State of California to make this a successful project.

Please feel free to contact me at (530) 896-7201, or dburklan@ci.chico.ca.us.

Sincerely,

David Burkland
City Manager

cc: Paul Hahn, Butte County CAO
Kimberly Flener, Court Executive Officer



BUTTE COUNTY ADMINISTRATION

25 COUNTY CENTER DRIVE, SUITE 200
OROVILLE, CALIFORNIA 95965-3380
Telephone: (530) 538-7631 Fax: (530) 538-7120

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Chief Administrative Officer

September 22, 2011

Justice Brad Hill, Chair
Court Facilities Working Group
c/o Court of Appeal, Fifth District
2424 Ventura Street
Fresno, CA 93721

Re: New North County Court Facility

Dear Justice Hill:

The Board of Supervisors of the County of Butte supports the construction of a new court facility in the northern portion of Butte County to serve the Chico and Paradise regions.

The County of Butte and the Butte County Superior Court have been working diligently on the transfer of court facilities as provided for in SB1732 (Chapter 1802, Statutes of 2002). In fact, Butte County was one of the first counties in California to execute a transfer when we completed the transfer of the Juvenile Hall Courtroom. This transition speaks to the close working relationship county administration and the Courts have developed and continue to support.

Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns regarding Butte County's support for a North County Regional Court facility. We look forward to working with the Butte County Superior Court and the Administrative Office of the Courts on the successful accomplishment of this project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Hahn", written over a horizontal line.

Paul Hahn
Chief Administrative Officer

