

From: [scott_anderson](#)
To: [OCCMCOMMENTS](#)
Subject: Attn. Invitation to Comments - SB 1407 Project Evaluations
Date: Friday, August 24, 2012 12:07:25 PM
Attachments: [Los Banos Courthouse SB1407 Project continuation comments.doc](#)
[Los Banos Courthouse Continuation of SB 1407 projects letter to the Court.doc](#)

August 23, 2012

Court Facilities Working Group
Administrative Office of the Courts
455 Golden Gate Avenue
San Francisco, CA

RE: Merced County – New Los Banos Courthouse
SB 1407 Project Evaluation

Dear Court Facilities Working Group,

We appreciate your time to obtain input from the public related to the evaluation of the SB 1407 projects to determine which projects will move forward. We know that the Administrative Office of the Courts and the Judicial Council are facing difficult budgeting decisions, but there are extremely important needs for Merced County that make the new Los Banos Courthouse a critical facility to move forward with.

Safety and Security

The current Los Banos courthouse is unsafe, substandard, overcrowded and functionally inadequate. The facility has significant deficiencies with many physical conditions which adversely affect the ability to provide justice.

Prisoner Movement

- The current courthouse has no sally port and the prisoners come into the facility from a chain link area which is clearly visible from the public streets. This allows the potential for gangs to signal or communicate with the prisoners.
- Inside the courthouse there are no secure holding facilities so the prisoners are held in a narrow secure hallway. This creates severe safety and security issues for deputies.
- The prisoners are brought into court immediately in front of the judge and the clerk to the jury box, which is the only seating available. This movement, path of travel and placement of prisoners is a critical safety concern to judges, staff and the public.

Judge Security:

- Judges enter the building directly into their chambers, also in clear view from the street and adjacent properties. In addition, the doorway entrance to the chambers is located directly adjacent to the prisoner's entrance to the secure corridor.

Overcrowding

Public areas

- The courtroom is heavily used and the entry is very small and congested, which creates a potential safety hazard for the court, the deputies and the public.
- The courtroom is too small and cramped and some people have to wait outside of the courtroom. The front row seating is not used because it is too close to the defendant seating.
- There is inadequate space for the staff and files have to be stored in a breakroom and a hallway.

Physical Condition

- The building is old and potentially unsafe in an earthquake.
- The courthouse HVAC, Plumbing, Electrical and Landscaping irrigation systems are inadequate.
- The roof of the courthouse needs to be replaced.

Accessibility

- There is no accessible audience seating in the courtroom.
- There are no secure accommodations for prisoners with disabilities.
- The courtroom bench, witness stand and clerk's workstation are not accessible.
- Restroom facilities are not ADA compliant.

Access to Court Services

- There is no jury assembly room in the facility. Because of this jury selection and most jury trials are held in Merced, making it necessary to travel over 40 miles to Merced. Much of the population in Western Merced County is low income and this cost of traveling long distances can be prohibitive and creating a disservice of justice to the citizens of West Merced County.
- When jury trials are held in Los Banos the courtroom is occupied and cannot be used for any other judicial needs, further limiting the citizens access to the judicial system.

Economic Opportunity

- Western Merced County has an unemployment rate above 18%, and the new Los Banos Courthouse creates potential construction and related job opportunities, which are desperately needed.
- The courthouse is part of a larger Justice Center with proposed County Justice Building and the proposed City Police and Jail facilities. There are efficiencies in design, construction and shared infrastructure that can be recognized if these can be coordinated.
- With the courthouse proceeding, the adjacent development of support facilities will also be able to go forward. This will not only provide the opportunity to share resources, infrastructure and construction efficiencies, but it will bring long term job opportunities to the County.

Extent to Which Project Solves a Court's Facilities Problems

The proposed new Los Banos Courthouse addresses all the deficiencies of the existing facility.

- *Safety and Security:* The new Los Banos courthouse includes enclosed sally port, separated secure circulation, holding cells, enlarged screening areas, concealed and secure judges entry, and properly sized and appointed courtrooms that will provide a much higher level of safety and security for the judges, staff, deputies and the public.
- *Overcrowding:* The Public and employee areas allow ample space for movement, waiting, and working. Seating for the Public has been provided outside the courtrooms, Family Services and outside the Civil, Criminal and Traffic public counters.
- *Access to Court Services:* Having the new courthouse located in Los Banos will alleviate the long travel distance previously encountered when the Public has to travel to Merced for court hearings and other court services. This includes new services such as Family Services and self help which are not available in the current outdated courthouse.

- *Accessibility:* The new courthouse will have full accessible features, including parking and access to the building, interior Public and employee area, courtrooms and detention/holding areas.

Expected Operational Impact

- The new courthouse will provide operation efficiencies and cost reductions for the Courts, as well as for the citizens of Western Merced County.
- With the ability to provide all of the court services at the new facility, the travel of staff from Merced to Los Banos should be able to be reduced, resulting in reduced costs. This will also help in minimizing costs related to continuations when parties are not able to get over to Merced for hearings or cases.
- With the new facility, jury selection and jury trials can be held in Los Banos, reducing operational costs, and allowing citizens easier ability to perform their jury duty commitments while also reducing their costs.
- Because most jury trials cannot be heard in the Los Banos facility, the County incurs additional costs related to moving prisoners back and forth between the two facilities. With jury trials being able to be held in Los Banos, this movement will be minimized reducing costs considerably.
- The current facility is in need of constant repair work in a variety of areas. The new facility with new systems and equipment will not need this repair work, thereby reducing repair costs.

“Outside the Box Thinking”

- The new Los Banos Courthouse has been developed with a 1 story and a 2 story design option. The architects and engineers developed concepts that significantly reduced the project costs from between 14% to 22%, depending upon the design option selected. These creative concepts need to be continued to develop a methodology for designing and building courthouse facilities at a much lower cost, than previous courthouse. By allowing this project to go forward now and refining the strategies that were developed this reduced cost facility can be more easily achieved with the limited funding. This type of thinking will allow Merced County to obtain the facility that they desperately need and will allow the citizens of Western Merced County access to proper judicial services.

Thank you for reviewing the courthouse projects needs in detail. I urge you to select this project to move forward so the citizens of Merced County, the judicial staff and all others involved in the project will be able to realize the benefits and value that this new courthouse will bring.

Sincerely,

August 23, 2012

Court Facilities Working Group
Administrative Office of the Courts
455 Golden Gate Avenue
San Francisco, CA

RE: Merced County – New Los Banos Courthouse
SB 1407 Project Evaluation

Dear Court Facilities Working Group,

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1. Safety and Security

The current Los Banos courthouse is unsafe, substandard, overcrowded and functionally deficient. The facility has significant deficiencies with many physical conditions which adversely impacts and creates impediments to the administration of justice.

Prisoner Movement

- The current courthouse has no sally port. Therefore, prisoners must come into the building from a chain link area located adjacent to the building. This area is in clear view of the street and adjacent properties. Once prisoners are inside the courthouse there are no secure holding facilities. Prisoners (up to 40 a day) are held in a narrow secure hallway. This narrow space does not allow for prisoners such as gang members, combative inmates or men/women to be segregated. This creates severe safety and security issues for deputies.
- Because of restricted space, prisoners are escorted into the courtroom between the judge's bench and the counsel tables. This places the prisoners in close proximity to the judge and within 4 feet of the clerk. The only seating for prisoners in the courtroom is in the jury box. The movement, path of travel and placement of prisoners is a critical safety concern.

Judge Security:

- Judges enter the building directly into their chambers, also in clear view from the street and adjacent properties. In addition, the doorway entrance to the chambers is located directly adjacent to the prisoner's entrance to the secure corridor.

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Public areas

- Over 330 people enter and exit the building each day through a single set of double doors. This makes ingress and egress very congested. In addition the entry area size is inadequate for the security screening station.
- There is inadequate space for the public to wait outside the courtroom.
- The courtroom is small and cramped and about 500 SF less than the current standards for a courtroom. The front row seating is not used because it is too close to the defendant seating. For a high volume courtroom 90-100 seats for the public are typical. This courtroom has seating for only 30 persons.
- Clerical areas are cramped and congested.
- Active case files are stored in the employee breakroom and hallways because there is no other location for them.
- The site does not have adequate parking. Only 10-11 spaces are allocated for the courts, additional parking must be found on the surrounding streets.

3. Physical Condition

- The building has a poor seismic rating and therefore could be structurally unsafe
- The courthouse HVAC, Plumbing, Electrical and Landscaping irrigation systems are inadequate.
- The roof of the courthouse needs to be replaced.

Accessibility

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Access to Court Services

- There is no jury assembly room in the facility. Because of this most jury trials are held in Merced, making it necessary to travel over 70 miles (two ways) to Merced. Much of the population in Western Merced County is low income and this cost of traveling long distances can be prohibitive to some, creating a disservice of justice to the citizens of West Merced County. When jury trials are held in Los Banos the courtroom is occupied and cannot be used for any other judicial needs. Because most jury trials cannot be heard in the Los Banos facility, the County incurs additional costs related to moving prisoners back and forth between the two facilities.

4. Economic Opportunity

- The New Los Banos Courthouse creates economic opportunity for the Western Merced County in potential construction and related job opportunities, which are desperately needed in an area where unemployment is above 18%.
- Currently the courthouse project has the opportunity to gain economic benefit and potential reduced construction costs as it is part of a larger Justice Center with proposed County Justice Building and the proposed City Police and Jail facilities. The City and County have been working concurrently and are very supportive of the project. These efforts will allow the project to proceed forward more effectively, however if the project is delayed, this opportunity could be lost in the future.
- There are adjacent private sector support facilities (retail, restaurants, office space for attorneys and bail bonds) slated to begin construction along with the courthouse. The developer of this work is currently cooperating with the Courts in the design and layout of the entire development and infrastructure. This relationship could lead to shared site demolition work, or construction work resulting in reduced costs for the courthouse. If the courthouse does not proceed in a timely manner, this economic opportunity could disappear.
- The influx of new Court, County, City and private facilities will provide additional long term job opportunities for the citizens of Western Merced County. The courthouse is the catalyst for this work and needs to proceed forward.
- The new facility will provide more of the needed justice services for the area, thereby allowing the courts to operate more efficiently and effectively, reducing travel time and costs for the courts and the citizens it serves.

5. Project Status

- The New Los Banos Courthouse is currently in the preliminary plan phase.

6. Extent to Which Project Solves a Court's Facilities Problems

The proposed schematic design of the new Los Banos Courthouse addresses all the deficiencies of the existing facility.

Safety and Security

- At the current schematic level of design level the New Los Banos courthouse includes enclosed sally port, separated secure circulation, holding cells and related spaces that will provide a much higher level of safety and security than the current facility.

Prisoner Movement

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- All aspects of prisoner movement, arrival to the facility, holding, and seating within the courtroom have been addressed. Prisoners are moved into the courtrooms directly from the holding area. The judges will no longer be in view of the public when they enter the building. The judge's chambers are located along private corridors out of public circulation and prisoner movement.

Overcrowding

- The Public and employee areas have been designed to allow ample space for movement, waiting, and working. The buildings entry will have cueing space for the Public as they are waiting to be screened prior to entering the facility. Seating for the Public has been provided outside the courtrooms, Family Services and outside the Civil, Criminal and Traffic public counters.

Access to Court Services

- Having the new courthouse located in Los Banos will alleviate the long travel distance previously encountered when the Public had to travel to Merced for court hearings and other court services.
- The new courthouse will have a Family Services area that was not available in the current outdated courthouse.

Accessibility.

- Courtrooms will be accessible to all populations.
- Detention facilities will have a fully accessible holding cell
- Parking, entry, circulation and restroom facilities, along with all Public and employee areas will be accessible.

Physical Condition

- The new facility will be designed with modern building systems and will comply with state and local seismic codes.

7. Expected Operational Impact

- The new facility will not only provide operation efficiencies and reductions for the Courts, but also for the citizens of Western Merced County.
- The current Los Banos Courthouse is outdated and inefficient, both in operational aspects and physical functionality. The mechanical and electrical systems utilize energy inefficiently. The new facility will allow operation costs per building square foot to be reduced, benefitting the courts and the environment.
- With the ability to provide all of the court services at the new facility, the travel of staff from Merced to Los Banos should be able to be reduced, resulting in reduced costs. This will also be a cost reduction for the citizens who will be able to obtain justice without having to travel to Merced. In addition, those citizens who are currently denied access to justice because they cannot travel to Merced, will now have that available to them. This will have an overall beneficial impact on the community.

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- A better work environment will be provided through the use of natural daylight, increased air quality and properly functioning spaces, which will create more effective and productive staff. There are studies which show that this can lead to reduced sick days and overall more efficiency and reduced costs.
- The current facility is in need of constant repair work in a variety of areas. The new facility with new systems and equipment will not need this repair work, thereby reducing repair costs.
- With the new facility, jury selection and jury trials can be held in Los Banos, reducing operational costs, and allowing citizens easier and less costly ability to perform their jury duty commitments.

8. "Outside the Box Thinking"

- The design for the new Los Banos Courthouse has been developed with two potential options: a 1 story and a 2 story design. During the creation of these options, more efficient site layout, building orientation, building shape, structural system, exterior walls and materials were researched to develop a significantly cost effective design that reduced the project costs from between 14% to 22%, depending upon the design option selected.
- Optional concepts and layouts for transportation of in-custody detainees from a secure sally port to the holding cells were explored and developed. This allowed the team to evaluate both costs and security related to the various options.
- Building systems were designed based around the facility and maintenance contractors in the area, thereby eliminating the needs for costly consultants/contractors from the Bay Area to come to service the facility.
- The site layout was designed to minimize the building footprint and usage of the site to reduce development and construction costs, and allow space for future flexibility and expansion.
- Site circulation and drive areas are being shared between the courthouse, the County's Justice facility and the adjacent private sector development to reduce duplication and costs.
- Work required for sustainable site and water quality features are being combined with site security features for cost efficiency.
- Use of covered exterior cueing space instead of more expensive interior lobby space was used at the building's entry.
- Exterior public service windows were incorporated to allow more efficient processing and reduce loads and impact on security screening staff and space.
- A variety of options related to audio video systems and infrastructure options were provided.
- The design employed flexible use of meeting rooms, conference rooms, jury assembly and attorney/client rooms to reduce the overall number of rooms required.
- The Judge's opted to reduce their office spaces in size when the design concepts showed the same function could be achieved in less space.
- The number of spaces was reduced by careful consideration of uses and ability to overlap functions.

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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jonathan Friedman', with a large, stylized initial 'J'.

Jonathan Friedman

August 23, 2012

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- With the new facility, jury selection and jury trials can be held in Los Banos, reducing operational costs, and allowing citizens easier ability to perform their jury duty commitments while also reducing their costs.
- Because most jury trials cannot be heard in the Los Banos facility, the County incurs additional costs related to moving prisoners back and forth between the two facilities. With jury trials being able to be held in Los Banos, this movement will be minimized reducing costs considerably.
- The current facility is in need of constant repair work in a variety of areas. The new facility with new systems and equipment will not need this repair work, thereby reducing repair costs.

“Outside the Box Thinking”

- The new Los Banos Courthouse has been developed with a 1 story and a 2 story design option. The architects and engineers developed concepts that significantly reduced the project costs from between 14% to 22%, depending upon the design option selected. These creative concepts need to be continued to develop a methodology for designing and building courthouse facilities at a much lower cost, than previous courthouse. By allowing this project to go forward now and refining the strategies that were developed this reduced cost facility can be more easily achieved with the limited funding. This type of thinking will allow Merced County to obtain the facility that they desperately need and will allow the citizens of Western Merced County access to proper judicial services.

Thank you for reviewing the courthouse projects needs in detail. I urge you to select this project to move forward so the citizens of Merced County, the judicial staff and all others involved in the project will be able to realize the benefits and value that this new courthouse will bring.

Sincerely,



Jonathan Friedman



15 Business Park Way	Suite 101	Sacramento, CA 95828-0912	p 916.383.4825	f 916.383.6014
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August 24, 2012

Brad R. Hill, Presiding Justice
Court of Appeal, Fifth District
2424 Ventura Street
Fresno, California 93721

RE: Los Banos Courthouse, Merced County

Dear Honorable Brad R. Hill and Members of the Court Facility Working Group:

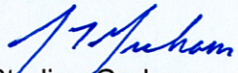
In response to your invitation to comment on Courthouse Projects, HMH Builders requests your consideration to proceed with the construction process for the Los Banos Courthouse Project. We are mindful of the many challenges faced by the Administrative Office of the Court (AOC) and Judicial Council due to the current state budget.

HMH Builders would like to add our support to others for the Los Banos Courthouse project to proceed with construction activities. The current Los Banos court facility is inadequate in security and space necessary for current court operations. The new courthouse will resolve many of the struggles as the current facility faces. In the current schematic design the estimates came in significantly beyond the goal of 10% reduction.

The City of Los Banos is one area that has been hit hardest by the downturn in the economy. This has resulted in many laborers being out of work and the City of Los Banos experiencing an unemployment rate above 17%. With unemployment well over the national average and a large percentage of these unemployed being laborers, it allows for a great shared opportunity between Los Banos residents and the courts. The new court is anticipated to offset the staggering local unemployment rate while offering reduced costs for construction due to a surplus of workers. The project will also stimulate additional investment in the community and bring jobs to the Los Banos area that is currently suffering from high unemployment rates.

Thank you for your consideration of our support for this project.

Sincerely,


Sterling Graham
Estimator, HMH BUILDERS, INC.

Cc: Brian McCabe, Presiding Judge, Superior Court of California, County of Merced

August 23, 2012

Court Facilities Working Group
Administrative Office of the Courts
455 Golden Gate Avenue
San Francisco, CA

RE: Merced County – New Los Banos Courthouse
SB 1407 Project Evaluation

Dear Court Facilities Working Group,

We appreciate your time to obtain input from the public related to the evaluation of the SB 1407 projects to determine which projects will move forward. We know that the Administrative Office of the Courts and the Judicial Council are facing difficult budgeting decisions, but there are extremely important needs for Merced County that make the new Los Banos Courthouse a critical facility to move forward with.

Safety and Security

The current Los Banos courthouse is unsafe, substandard, overcrowded and functionally inadequate. The facility has significant deficiencies with many physical conditions which adversely affect the ability to the provide justice.

Prisoner Movement

- The current courthouse has no sally port and the prisoners come into the facility from a chain link area which is clearly visible from the public streets. This allows the potential for gangs to signal or communicate with the prisoners.
- Inside the courthouse there are no secure holding facilities so the prisoners are held in a narrow secure hallway. This creates severe safety and security issues for deputies.
- The prisoners are brought into court immediately in front of the judge and the clerk to the jury box, which is the only seating available. This movement, path of travel and placement of prisoners is a critical safety concern to judges, staff and the public.

Judge Security:

- Judges enter the building directly into their chambers, also in clear view from the street and adjacent properties. In addition, the doorway entrance to the chambers is located directly adjacent to the prisoner's entrance to the secure corridor.

Overcrowding

Public areas

- The courtroom is heavily used and the entry is very small and congested, which creates a potential safety hazard for the court, the deputies and the public.
- The courtroom is too small and cramped and some people have to wait outside of the courtroom. The front row seating is not used because it is too close to the defendant seating.
- There is inadequate space for the staff and files have to be stored in a breakroom and a hallway.

Physical Condition

- The building is old and potentially unsafe in an earthquake.
- The courthouse HVAC, Plumbing, Electrical and Landscaping irrigation systems are inadequate.
- The roof of the courthouse needs to be replaced.

Accessibility

- There is no accessible audience seating in the courtroom.
- There are no secure accommodations for prisoners with disabilities.
- The courtroom bench, witness stand and clerk's workstation are not accessible.
- Restroom facilities are not ADA compliant.

Access to Court Services

- There is no jury assembly room in the facility. Because of this jury selection and most jury trials are held in Merced, making it necessary to travel over 40 miles to Merced. Much of the population in Western Merced County is low income and this cost of traveling long distances can be prohibitive and creating a disservice of justice to the citizens of West Merced County.
- When jury trials are held in Los Banos the courtroom is occupied and cannot be used for any other judicial needs, further limiting the citizens access to the judicial system.

Economic Opportunity

- Western Merced County has an unemployment rate above 18%, and the new Los Banos Courthouse creates potential construction and related job opportunities, which are desperately needed.
- The courthouse is part of a larger Justice Center with proposed County Justice Building and the proposed City Police and Jail facilities. There are efficiencies in design, construction and shared infrastructure that can be recognized if these can be coordinated.
- With the courthouse proceeding, the adjacent development of support facilities will also be able to go forward. This will not only provide the opportunity to share resources, infrastructure and construction efficiencies, but it will bring long term job opportunities to the County.

Extent to Which Project Solves a Court's Facilities Problems

The proposed new Los Banos Courthouse addresses all the deficiencies of the existing facility.

- *Safety and Security:* The new Los Banos courthouse includes enclosed sally port, separated secure circulation, holding cells, enlarged screening areas, concealed and secure judges entry, and properly sized and appointed courtrooms that will provide a much higher level of safety and security for the judges, staff, deputies and the public.
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Expected Operational Impact

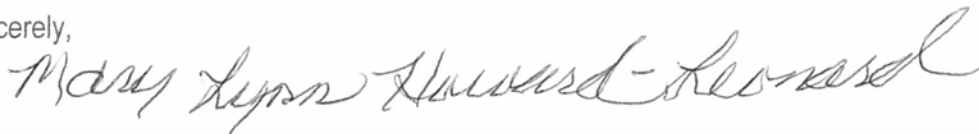
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Expected Operational Impact

- The new courthouse will provide operation efficiencies and cost reductions for the Courts, as well as for the citizens of Western Merced County.
- With the ability to provide all of the court services at the new facility, the travel of staff from Merced to Los Banos should be able to be reduced, resulting in reduced costs. This will also help in minimizing costs related to continuations when parties are not able to get over to Merced for hearings or cases.
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Thank you for reviewing the courthouse projects needs in detail. I urge you to select this project to move forward so the citizens of Merced County, the judicial staff and all others involved in the project will be able to realize the benefits and value that this new courthouse will bring.

Sincerely,



From: [Leonard King](#)
To: [OCCMCOMMENTS](#)
Subject: Attn. Invitation to Comments - SB 1407 Project Evaluations - Los Banos Courthouse
Date: Friday, August 24, 2012 8:18:20 AM
Attachments: [ATT00001](#)

Dear Court Facilities Working Group,

Thank you for taking the time to consider our reasons that the New Los Banos Courthouse is an important project and should not be delayed. We understand the difficult budget challenges that the Administrative Office of the Courts and the Judicial Council are facing, but there are extremely important needs for Merced County that make the new Los Banos Courthouse a critical facility to move forward with. We are writing to express our concerns and comments regarding the upcoming evaluation of the SB 1407 projects to determine which projects will move forward. Below are our comments related to the various criteria listed as part of the evaluation process. While you may have already seen some of these reasons for the courthouse to move forward we encourage you to read on and learn how the preliminary design of the new courthouse has responded to many of these deficiencies.

1. Safety and Security

The current Los Banos courthouse is unsafe, substandard, overcrowded and functionally deficient. The facility has significant deficiencies with many physical conditions which adversely impacts and creates impediments to the administration of justice.

Prisoner Movement

- The current courthouse has no sally port. Therefore, prisoners must come into the building from a chain link area located adjacent to the building. This area is in clear view of the street and adjacent properties. Once prisoners are inside the courthouse there are no secure holding facilities. Prisoners (up to 40 a day) are held in a narrow secure hallway. This narrow space does not allow for prisoners such as gang members, combative inmates or men/women to be segregated. This creates severe safety and security issues for deputies.
- Because of restricted space, prisoners are escorted into the courtroom between the judge's bench and the counsel tables. This places the prisoners in close proximity to the judge and within 4 feet of the clerk. The only seating for prisoners in the courtroom is in the jury box. The movement, path of travel and placement of prisoners is a critical safety concern.

Judge Security:

- Judges enter the building directly into their chambers, also in clear view from the street and adjacent properties. In addition, the doorway entrance to the chambers is located directly adjacent to the prisoner's entrance to the secure corridor.

2. Overcrowding

Public areas

- Over 330 people enter and exit the building each day through a single set of double doors. This

makes ingress and egress very congested. In addition the entry area size is inadequate for the security screening station.

- There is inadequate space for the public to wait outside the courtroom.
- The courtroom is small and cramped and about 500 SF less than the current standards for a courtroom. The front row seating is not used because it is too close to the defendant seating. For a high volume courtroom 90-100 seats for the public are typical. This courtroom has seating for only 30 persons.
- Clerical areas are cramped and congested.
- Active case files are stored in the employee breakroom and hallways because there is no other location for them.
- The site does not have adequate parking. Only 10-11 spaces are allocated for the courts, additional parking must be found on the surrounding streets.

3. Physical Condition

- The building has a poor seismic rating and therefore could be structurally unsafe
- The courthouse HVAC, Plumbing, Electrical and Landscaping irrigation systems are inadequate.
- The roof of the courthouse needs to be replaced.

Accessibility

- There is no accessible audience seating in the courtroom.
- There are no secure accommodations for prisoners with disabilities.
- The courtroom bench, witness stand and clerk's workstation are not accessible.
- Restroom facilities are not ADA compliant.

Access to Court Services

- There is no jury assembly room in the facility. Because of this most jury trials are held in Merced, making it necessary to travel over 70 miles (two ways) to Merced. Much of the population in Western Merced County is low income and this cost of traveling long distances can be prohibitive to some, creating a disservice of justice to the citizens of West Merced County. When jury trials are held in Los Banos the courtroom is occupied and cannot be used for any other judicial needs.

Because most jury trials cannot be heard in the Los Banos facility, the County incurs additional costs related to moving prisoners back and forth between the two facilities.

4. Economic Opportunity

- The New Los Banos Courthouse creates economic opportunity for the Western Merced County in potential construction and related job opportunities, which are desperately needed in an area where unemployment is above 18%.
- Currently the courthouse project has the opportunity to gain economic benefit and potential reduced construction costs as it is part of a larger Justice Center with proposed County Justice Building and the proposed City Police and Jail facilities. The City and County have been working concurrently and are very supportive of the project. These efforts will allow the project to proceed forward more effectively, however if the project is delayed, this opportunity could be lost in the future.
- There are adjacent private sector support facilities (retail, restaurants, office space for attorneys and bail bonds) slated to begin construction along with the courthouse. The developer of this

work is currently cooperating with the Courts in the design and layout of the entire development and infrastructure. This relationship could lead to shared site demolition work, or construction work resulting in reduced costs for the courthouse. If the courthouse does not proceed in a timely manner, this economic opportunity could disappear.

- The influx of new Court, County, City and private facilities will provide additional long term job opportunities for the citizens of Western Merced County. The courthouse is the catalyst for this work and needs to proceed forward.
- The new facility will provide more of the needed justice services for the area, thereby allowing the courts to operate more efficiently and effectively, reducing travel time and costs for the courts and the citizens it serves.

5. Project Status

- The New Los Banos Courthouse is currently in the preliminary plan phase.

6. Extent to Which Project Solves a Court's Facilities Problems

The proposed schematic design of the new Los Banos Courthouse addresses all the deficiencies of the existing facility.

Safety and Security

- At the current schematic level of design level the New Los Banos courthouse includes enclosed sally port, separated secure circulation, holding cells and related spaces that will provide a much higher level of safety and security than the current facility.

Prisoner Movement

- All aspects of prisoner movement, arrival to the facility, holding, and seating within the courtroom have been addressed. Prisoners are moved into the courtrooms directly from the holding area.

The judges will no longer be in view of the public when they enter the building. The judge's chambers are located along private corridors out of public circulation and prisoner movement.

Overcrowding

- The Public and employee areas have been designed to allow ample space for movement, waiting, and working. The buildings entry will have cueing space for the Public as they are waiting to be screened prior to entering the facility. Seating for the Public has been provided outside the courtrooms, Family Services and outside the Civil, Criminal and Traffic public counters.

Access to Court Services

- Having the new courthouse located in Los Banos will alleviate the long travel distance previously encountered when the Public had to travel to Merced for court hearings and other court services.
- The new courthouse will have a Family Services area that was not available in the current outdated courthouse.

Accessibility.

Courtrooms will be accessible to all populations.

- Detention facilities will have a fully accessible holding cell
- Parking, entry, circulation and restroom facilities, along with all Public and employee areas will be accessible.

Physical Condition

- The new facility will be designed with modern building systems and will comply with state and local seismic codes.

7. Expected Operational Impact

- The new facility will not only provide operation efficiencies and reductions for the Courts, but also for the citizens of Western Merced County.
- The current Los Banos Courthouse is outdated and inefficient, both in operational aspects and physical functionality. The mechanical and electrical systems utilize energy inefficiently. The new facility will allow operation costs per building square foot to be reduced, benefitting the courts and the environment.
- With the ability to provide all of the court services at the new facility, the travel of staff from Merced to Los Banos should be able to be reduced, resulting in reduced costs. This will also be a cost reduction for the citizens who will be able to obtain justice without having to travel to Merced. In addition, those citizens who are currently denied access to justice because they cannot travel to Merced, will now have that available to them. This will have an overall beneficial impact on the community.
- A better work environment will be provided through the use of natural daylight, increased air quality and properly functioning spaces, which will create more effective and productive staff. There are studies which show that this can lead to reduced sick days and overall more efficiency and reduced costs.
- The current facility is in need of constant repair work in a variety of areas. The new facility with new systems and equipment will not need this repair work, thereby reducing repair costs.
- With the new facility, jury selection and jury trials can be held in Los Banos, reducing operational costs, and allowing citizens easier and less costly ability to perform their jury duty commitments.

8. "Outside the Box Thinking"

- The design for the new Los Banos Courthouse has been developed with two potential options: a 1 story and a 2 story design. During the creation of these options, more efficient site layout, building orientation, building shape, structural system, exterior walls and materials were researched to develop a significantly cost effective design that reduced the project costs from between 14% to 22%, depending upon the design option selected.
- Optional concepts and layouts for transportation of in-custody detainees from a secure sally port to the holding cells were explored and developed. This allowed the team to evaluate both costs and security related to the various options.
- Building systems were designed based around the facility and maintenance contractors in the

area, thereby eliminating the needs for costly consultants/contractors from the Bay Area to come to service the facility.

- The site layout was designed to minimize the building footprint and usage of the site to reduce development and construction costs, and allow space for future flexibility and expansion.
- Site circulation and drive areas are being shared between the courthouse, the County's Justice facility and the adjacent private sector development to reduce duplication and costs.
- Work required for sustainable site and water quality features are being combined with site security features for cost efficiency.
- Use of covered exterior cueing space instead of more expensive interior lobby space was used at the building's entry.
- Exterior public service windows were incorporated to allow more efficient processing and reduce loads and impact on security screening staff and space.
- A variety of options related to audio video systems and infrastructure options were provided.
- The design employed flexible use of meeting rooms, conference rooms, jury assembly and attorney/client rooms to reduce the overall number of rooms required.
- The Judge's opted to reduce their office spaces in size when the design concepts showed the same function could be achieved in less space.
- The number of spaces was reduced by careful consideration of uses and ability to overlap functions.

In closing, we appreciate the diligence you are demonstrating in the review of the Los Banos Courthouse. We urge you to allow this project to move forward for the citizens of Merced County, the judicial staff and all others involved in the project. The benefits and value that this new courthouse will bring forth will be realized for years to come.

Sincerely,

Thank you,
Leonard W. King, PE
Principal



The Engineering Enterprise

853 Lincoln Way, Suite 105
Auburn, CA 95603

530-886-8556 x1566
leonard@engent.com

Visit us on the web at www.engent.com

HDL Design

■ Architecture & Interiors ■

August 23, 2012

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HDL Design

■ Architecture & Interiors ■

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- With the new facility, jury selection and jury trials can be held in Los Banos, reducing operational costs, and allowing citizens easier ability to perform their jury duty commitments while also reducing their costs.
- Because most jury trials cannot be heard in the Los Banos facility, the County incurs additional costs related to moving prisoners back and forth between the two facilities. With jury trials being able to be held in Los Banos, this movement will be minimized reducing costs considerably.
- The current facility is in need of constant repair work in a variety of areas. The new facility with new systems and equipment will not need this repair work, thereby reducing repair costs.

“Outside the Box Thinking”

- The new Los Banos Courthouse has been developed with a 1 story and a 2 story design option. The architects and engineers developed concepts that significantly reduced the project costs from between 14% to 22%, depending upon the design option selected. These creative concepts need to be continued to develop a methodology for designing and building courthouse facilities at a much lower cost, than previous courthouse. By allowing this project to go forward now and refining the strategies that were developed this reduced cost facility can be more easily achieved with the limited funding. This type of thinking will allow Merced County to obtain the facility that they desperately need and will allow the citizens of Western Merced County access to proper judicial services.

HDL Design

■ Architecture & Interiors ■

Thank you for reviewing the courthouse projects needs in detail. I urge you to select this project to move forward so the citizens of Merced County, the judicial staff and all others involved in the project will be able to realize the benefits and value that this new courthouse will bring.

Sincerely,

HDL Design Architects and Interior Designers



Heather H. Larsen, AIA
Principal Architect



David B. Larsen
Principal Architect

From: [Jeff Navarro](#)
To: [OCCMCOMMENTS](#)
Subject: Attn. Invitation to Comments - SB 1407 Project Evaluations
Date: Friday, August 24, 2012 8:45:17 AM

August 24, 2012

Court Facilities Working Group
Administrative Office of the Courts
455 Golden Gate Avenue
San Francisco, CA

RE: Merced County – New Los Banos Courthouse
SB 1407 Project Evaluation

Dear Court Facilities Working Group,

We appreciate your time to obtain input from the public related to the evaluation of the SB 1407 projects to determine which projects will move forward. We know that the Administrative Office of the Courts and the Judicial Council are facing difficult budgeting decisions, but there are extremely important needs for Merced County that make the new Los Banos Courthouse a critical facility to move forward with.

Safety and Security

The current Los Banos courthouse is unsafe, substandard, overcrowded and functionally inadequate. The facility has significant deficiencies with many physical conditions which adversely affect the ability to provide justice.

Prisoner Movement

- The current courthouse has no sally port and the prisoners come into the facility from a chain link area which is clearly visible from the public streets. This allows the potential for gangs to signal or communicate with the prisoners.
- Inside the courthouse there are no secure holding facilities so the prisoners are held in a narrow secure hallway. This creates severe safety and security issues for deputies.
- The prisoners are brought into court immediately in front of the judge and the clerk to the jury box, which is the only seating available. This movement, path of travel and placement of prisoners is a critical safety concern to judges, staff and the public.

Judge Security:

- Judges enter the building directly into their chambers, also in clear view from the street and adjacent properties. In addition, the doorway entrance to the chambers is located directly adjacent to the prisoner's entrance to the secure corridor.

Overcrowding

Public areas

- The courtroom is heavily used and the entry is very small and congested, which creates a potential safety hazard for the court, the deputies and the public.

- The courtroom is too small and cramped and some people have to wait outside of the courtroom. The front row seating is not used because it is too close to the defendant seating.
- There is inadequate space for the staff and files have to be stored in a breakroom and a hallway.

Physical Condition

- The building is old and potentially unsafe in an earthquake.
- The courthouse HVAC, Plumbing, Electrical and Landscaping irrigation systems are inadequate.
- The roof of the courthouse needs to be replaced.

Accessibility

- There is no accessible audience seating in the courtroom.
- There are no secure accommodations for prisoners with disabilities.
- The courtroom bench, witness stand and clerk's workstation are not accessible.
- Restroom facilities are not ADA compliant.

Access to Court Services

- There is no jury assembly room in the facility. Because of this jury selection and most jury trials are held in Merced, making it necessary to travel over 40 miles to Merced. Much of the population in Western Merced County is low income and this cost of traveling long distances can be prohibitive and creating a disservice of justice to the citizens of West Merced County.
- When jury trials are held in Los Banos the courtroom is occupied and cannot be used for any other judicial needs, further limiting the citizens access to the judicial system.

Economic Opportunity

- Western Merced County has an unemployment rate above 18%, and the new Los Banos Courthouse creates potential construction and related job opportunities, which are desperately needed.
- The courthouse is part of a larger Justice Center with proposed County Justice Building and the proposed City Police and Jail facilities. There are efficiencies in design, construction and shared infrastructure that can be recognized if these can be coordinated.
- With the courthouse proceeding, the adjacent development of support facilities will also be able to go forward. This will not only provide the opportunity to share resources, infrastructure and construction efficiencies, but it will bring long term job opportunities to the County.

Extent to Which Project Solves a Court's Facilities Problems

The proposed new Los Banos Courthouse addresses all the deficiencies of the existing facility.

- **Safety and Security:** The new Los Banos courthouse includes enclosed sally port, separated secure circulation, holding cells, enlarged screening areas, concealed and secure judges entry, and properly sized and appointed courtrooms that will provide a much higher level of safety and security for the judges, staff, deputies and the public.
- **Overcrowding:** The Public and employee areas allow ample space for movement, waiting, and working. Seating for the Public has been provided outside the courtrooms, Family Services and outside the Civil, Criminal and Traffic public counters.

Access to Court Services: Having the new courthouse located in Los Banos will alleviate the long travel distance previously encountered when the Public has to travel to Merced for court hearings and other court services. This includes new services such as Family Services and self help which are not available in the current outdated courthouse.

- Accessibility: The new courthouse will have full accessible features, including parking and access to the building, interior Public and employee area, courtrooms and detention/holding areas.

Expected Operational Impact

- The new courthouse will provide operation efficiencies and cost reductions for the Courts, as well as for the citizens of Western Merced County.
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Thank you for reviewing the courthouse projects needs in detail. I urge you to select this project to move forward so the citizens of Merced County, the judicial staff and all others involved in the project will be able to realize the benefits and value that this new courthouse will bring.

Sincerely,

JEFF NAVARRO

From: [Kimberly Navarro](#)
To: [OCCMCOMMENTS](#)
Subject: Attn. Invitation to Comments - SB 1407 Project Evaluations
Date: Friday, August 24, 2012 8:51:57 AM

August 24, 2012

Court Facilities Working Group
Administrative Office of the Courts
455 Golden Gate Avenue
San Francisco, CA

RE: Merced County – New Los Banos Courthouse
SB 1407 Project Evaluation

Dear Court Facilities Working Group,

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Economic Opportunity

- Western Merced County has an unemployment rate above 18%, and the new Los Banos Courthouse creates potential construction and related job opportunities, which are desperately needed.
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Extent to Which Project Solves a Court's Facilities Problems

The proposed new Los Banos Courthouse addresses all the deficiencies of the existing facility.

- **Safety and Security:** The new Los Banos courthouse includes enclosed sally port, separated secure circulation, holding cells, enlarged screening areas, concealed and secure judges entry, and properly sized and appointed courtrooms that will provide a much higher level of safety and security for the judges, staff, deputies and the public.
- **Overcrowding:** The Public and employee areas allow ample space for movement, waiting, and working. Seating for the Public has been provided outside the courtrooms, Family Services and outside the Civil, Criminal and Traffic public counters.
- **Access to Court Services:** Having the new courthouse located in Los Banos will alleviate the long travel distance previously encountered when the Public has to travel to Merced for court hearings and other court services. This includes new services such as Family Services and self help which are not available in the current outdated courthouse.
- **Accessibility:** The new courthouse will have full accessible features, including parking and access to the building, interior Public and employee area, courtrooms and detention/holding areas.

Expected Operational Impact

- The new courthouse will provide operation efficiencies and cost reductions for the Courts, as well as for the citizens of Western Merced County.
- With the ability to provide all of the court services at the new facility, the travel of staff from Merced to Los Banos should be able to be reduced, resulting in reduced costs. This will also help in minimizing costs related to continuations when parties are not able to get over to Merced for hearings or cases.
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County to obtain the facility that they desperately need and will allow the citizens of Western Merced County access to proper judicial services.

Thank you for reviewing the courthouse projects needs in detail. I urge you to select this project to move forward so the citizens of Merced County, the judicial staff and all others involved in the project will be able to realize the benefits and value that this new courthouse will bring.

Sincerely,

Kimberly Navarro

August 23, 2012

Court Facilities Working Group
Administrative Office of the Courts
455 Golden Gate Avenue
San Francisco, CA

RE: Merced County – New Los Banos Courthouse
SB 1407 Project Evaluation

Dear Court Facilities Working Group,

Thank you for taking the time to consider our reasons that the New Los Banos Courthouse is an important project and should not be delayed. We understand the difficult budget challenges that the Administrative Office of the Courts and the Judicial Council are facing, but there are extremely important needs for Merced County that make the new Los Banos Courthouse a critical facility to move forward with. We are writing to express our concerns and comments regarding the upcoming evaluation of the SB 1407 projects to determine which projects will move forward. Below are our comments related to the various criteria listed as part of the evaluation process. While you may have already seen some of these reasons for the courthouse to move forward we encourage you to read on and learn how the preliminary design of the new courthouse has responded to many of these deficiencies.

1. **Safety and Security**

The current Los Banos courthouse is unsafe, substandard, overcrowded and functionally deficient. The facility has significant deficiencies with many physical conditions which adversely impacts and creates impediments to the administration of justice.

Prisoner Movement

- The current courthouse has no sally port. Therefore, prisoners must come into the building from a chain link area located adjacent to the building. This area is in clear view of the street and adjacent properties. Once prisoners are inside the courthouse there are no secure holding facilities. Prisoners (up to 40 a day) are held in a narrow secure hallway. This narrow space does not allow for prisoners such as gang members, combative inmates or men/women to be segregated. This creates severe safety and security issues for deputies.
- Because of restricted space, prisoners are escorted into the courtroom between the judge's bench and the counsel tables. This places the prisoners in close proximity to the judge and within 4 feet of the clerk. The only seating for prisoners in the courtroom is in the jury box. The movement, path of travel and placement of prisoners is a critical safety concern.

Court Facilities Working Group
Administrative Office of the Courts
SB1407 Project Evaluation Criteria Comments
August 23, 2012

Judge Security:

- Judges enter the building directly into their chambers, also in clear view from the street and adjacent properties. In addition, the doorway entrance to the chambers is located directly adjacent to the prisoner's entrance to the secure corridor.

2. Overcrowding

Public areas

- Over 330 people enter and exit the building each day through a single set of double doors. This makes ingress and egress very congested. In addition the entry area size is inadequate for the security screening station.
- There is inadequate space for the public to wait outside the courtroom.
- The courtroom is small and cramped and about 500 SF less than the current standards for a courtroom. The front row seating is not used because it is too close to the defendant seating. For a high volume courtroom 90-100 seats for the public are typical. This courtroom has seating for only 30 persons.
- Clerical areas are cramped and congested.
- Active case files are stored in the employee breakroom and hallways because there is no other location for them.
- The site does not have adequate parking. Only 10-11 spaces are allocated for the courts, additional parking must be found on the surrounding streets.

3. Physical Condition

- The building has a poor seismic rating and therefore could be structurally unsafe
- The courthouse HVAC, Plumbing, Electrical and Landscaping irrigation systems are inadequate.
- The roof of the courthouse needs to be replaced.

Accessibility

- There is no accessible audience seating in the courtroom.
- There are no secure accommodations for prisoners with disabilities.
- The courtroom bench, witness stand and clerk's workstation are not accessible.
- Restroom facilities are not ADA compliant.

Access to Court Services

- There is no jury assembly room in the facility. Because of this most jury trials are held in Merced, making it necessary to travel over 70 miles (two ways) to Merced. Much of the population in Western Merced County is low income and this cost of traveling long distances can be prohibitive to some, creating a disservice of justice to the citizens of West Merced County. When jury trials are held in Los Banos the courtroom is occupied and cannot be used for any other judicial needs. Because most jury trials cannot be heard in the Los Banos facility, the County incurs additional costs related to moving prisoners back and forth between the two facilities.

Court Facilities Working Group
Administrative Office of the Courts
SB1407 Project Evaluation Criteria Comments
August 23, 2012

4. Economic Opportunity

- The New Los Banos Courthouse creates economic opportunity for the Western Merced County in potential construction and related job opportunities, which are desperately needed in an area where unemployment is above 18%.
- Currently the courthouse project has the opportunity to gain economic benefit and potential reduced construction costs as it is part of a larger Justice Center with proposed County Justice Building and the proposed City Police and Jail facilities. The City and County have been working concurrently and are very supportive of the project. These efforts will allow the project to proceed forward more effectively, however if the project is delayed, this opportunity could be lost in the future.
- There are adjacent private sector support facilities (retail, restaurants, office space for attorneys and bail bonds) slated to begin construction along with the courthouse. The developer of this work is currently cooperating with the Courts in the design and layout of the entire development and infrastructure. This relationship could lead to shared site demolition work, or construction work resulting in reduced costs for the courthouse. If the courthouse does not proceed in a timely manner, this economic opportunity could disappear.
- The influx of new Court, County, City and private facilities will provide additional long term job opportunities for the citizens of Western Merced County. The courthouse is the catalyst for this work and needs to proceed forward.
- The new facility will provide more of the needed justice services for the area, thereby allowing the courts to operate more efficiently and effectively, reducing travel time and costs for the courts and the citizens it serves.

5. Project Status

- The New Los Banos Courthouse is currently in the preliminary plan phase.

6. Extent to Which Project Solves a Court's Facilities Problems

The proposed schematic design of the new Los Banos Courthouse addresses all the deficiencies of the existing facility.

Safety and Security

- At the current schematic level of design level the New Los Banos courthouse includes enclosed sally port, separated secure circulation, holding cells and related spaces that will provide a much higher level of safety and security than the current facility.

Prisoner Movement

Court Facilities Working Group
Administrative Office of the Courts
SB1407 Project Evaluation Criteria Comments
August 23, 2012

- All aspects of prisoner movement, arrival to the facility, holding, and seating within the courtroom have been addressed. Prisoners are moved into the courtrooms directly from the holding area. The judges will no longer be in view of the public when they enter the building. The judge's chambers are located along private corridors out of public circulation and prisoner movement.

Overcrowding

- The Public and employee areas have been designed to allow ample space for movement, waiting, and working. The buildings entry will have cueing space for the Public as they are waiting to be screened prior to entering the facility. Seating for the Public has been provided outside the courtrooms, Family Services and outside the Civil, Criminal and Traffic public counters.

Access to Court Services

- Having the new courthouse located in Los Banos will alleviate the long travel distance previously encountered when the Public had to travel to Merced for court hearings and other court services.
- The new courthouse will have a Family Services area that was not available in the current outdated courthouse.

Accessibility.

- Courtrooms will be accessible to all populations.
- Detention facilities will have a fully accessible holding cell
- Parking, entry, circulation and restroom facilities, along with all Public and employee areas will be accessible.

Physical Condition

- The new facility will be designed with modern building systems and will comply with state and local seismic codes.

7. Expected Operational Impact

- The new facility will not only provide operation efficiencies and reductions for the Courts, but also for the citizens of Western Merced County.
- The current Los Banos Courthouse is outdated and inefficient, both in operational aspects and physical functionality. The mechanical and electrical systems utilize energy inefficiently. The new facility will allow operation costs per building square foot to be reduced, benefitting the courts and the environment.
- With the ability to provide all of the court services at the new facility, the travel of staff from Merced to Los Banos should be able to be reduced, resulting in reduced costs. This will also be a cost reduction for the citizens who will be able to obtain justice without having to travel to Merced. In addition, those citizens who are currently denied access to justice because they cannot travel to Merced, will now have that available to them. This will have an overall beneficial impact on the community.

Court Facilities Working Group
Administrative Office of the Courts
SB1407 Project Evaluation Criteria Comments
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- A better work environment will be provided through the use of natural daylight, increased air quality and properly functioning spaces, which will create more effective and productive staff. There are studies which show that this can lead to reduced sick days and overall more efficiency and reduced costs.
- The current facility is in need of constant repair work in a variety of areas. The new facility with new systems and equipment will not need this repair work, thereby reducing repair costs.
- With the new facility, jury selection and jury trials can be held in Los Banos, reducing operational costs, and allowing citizens easier and less costly ability to perform their jury duty commitments.

8. "Outside the Box Thinking"

- The design for the new Los Banos Courthouse has been developed with two potential options: a 1 story and a 2 story design. During the creation of these options, more efficient site layout, building orientation, building shape, structural system, exterior walls and materials were researched to develop a significantly cost effective design that reduced the project costs from between 14% to 22%, depending upon the design option selected.
- Optional concepts and layouts for transportation of in-custody detainees from a secure sally port to the holding cells were explored and developed. This allowed the team to evaluate both costs and security related to the various options.
- Building systems were designed based around the facility and maintenance contractors in the area, thereby eliminating the needs for costly consultants/contractors from the Bay Area to come to service the facility.
- The site layout was designed to minimize the building footprint and usage of the site to reduce development and construction costs, and allow space for future flexibility and expansion.
- Site circulation and drive areas are being shared between the courthouse, the County's Justice facility and the adjacent private sector development to reduce duplication and costs.
- Work required for sustainable site and water quality features are being combined with site security features for cost efficiency.
- Use of covered exterior cueing space instead of more expensive interior lobby space was used at the building's entry.
- Exterior public service windows were incorporated to allow more efficient processing and reduce loads and impact on security screening staff and space.
- A variety of options related to audio video systems and infrastructure options were provided.
- The design employed flexible use of meeting rooms, conference rooms, jury assembly and attorney/client rooms to reduce the overall number of rooms required.
- The Judge's opted to reduce their office spaces in size when the design concepts showed the same function could be achieved in less space.
- The number of spaces was reduced by careful consideration of uses and ability to overlap functions.

Court Facilities Working Group
Administrative Office of the Courts
SB1407 Project Evaluation Criteria Comments
August 23, 2012

In closing, we appreciate the diligence you are demonstrating in the review of the Los Banos Courthouse. We urge you to allow this project to move forward for the citizens of Merced County, the judicial staff and all others involved in the project. The benefits and value that this new courthouse will bring forth will be realized for years to come.

Sincerely,



Mark F. Posnick A.I.A., CASp, LEED AP
Associate Principal
Project Manager



Robi Kaseman IIDA, CID, LEED AP
Associate Principal
Senior Interior Designer

August 23, 2012

Court Facilities Working Group
Administrative Office of the Courts
455 Golden Gate Avenue
San Francisco, CA

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SB 1407 Project Evaluation

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Thank you for reviewing the courthouse projects needs in detail. I urge you to select this project to move forward so the citizens of Merced County, the judicial staff and all others involved in the project will be able to realize the benefits and value that this new courthouse will bring.

Sincerely,

Milt and Kay Posnick

August 23, 2012

Court Facilities Working Group
Administrative Office of the Courts
455 Golden Gate Avenue
San Francisco, CA

RE: Merced County – New Los Banos Courthouse
SB 1407 Project Evaluation

Dear Court Facilities Working Group,

Thank you for taking the time to consider our reasons that the New Los Banos Courthouse is an important project and should not be delayed. We understand the difficult budget challenges that the Administrative Office of the Courts and the Judicial Council are facing, but there are extremely important needs for Merced County that make the new Los Banos Courthouse a critical facility to move forward with. We are writing to express our concerns and comments regarding the upcoming evaluation of the SB 1407 projects to determine which projects will move forward. Below are our comments related to the various criteria listed as part of the evaluation process. While you may have already seen some of these reasons for the courthouse to move forward we encourage you to read on and learn how the preliminary design of the new courthouse has responded to many of these deficiencies.

1. Safety and Security

The current Los Banos courthouse is unsafe, substandard, overcrowded and functionally deficient. The facility has significant deficiencies with many physical conditions which adversely impacts and creates impediments to the administration of justice.

Prisoner Movement

- The current courthouse has no sally port. Therefore, prisoners must come into the building from a chain link area located adjacent to the building. This area is in clear view of the street and adjacent properties. Once prisoners are inside the courthouse there are no secure holding facilities. Prisoners (up to 40 a day) are held in a narrow secure hallway. This narrow space does not allow for prisoners such as gang members, combative inmates or men/women to be segregated. This creates severe safety and security issues for deputies.
- Because of restricted space, prisoners are escorted into the courtroom between the judge's bench and the counsel tables. This places the prisoners in close proximity to the judge and within 4 feet of the clerk. The only seating for prisoners in the courtroom is in the jury box. The movement, path of travel and placement of prisoners is a critical safety concern.

Judge Security:

- Judges enter the building directly into their chambers, also in clear view from the street and adjacent properties. In addition, the doorway entrance to the chambers is located directly adjacent to the prisoner's entrance to the secure corridor.

2. Overcrowding

Public areas

- Over 330 people enter and exit the building each day through a single set of double doors. This makes ingress and egress very congested. In addition the entry area size is inadequate for the security screening station.
- There is inadequate space for the public to wait outside the courtroom.
- The courtroom is small and cramped and about 500 SF less than the current standards for a courtroom. The front row seating is not used because it is too close to the defendant seating. For a high volume courtroom 90-100 seats for the public are typical. This courtroom has seating for only 30 persons.
- Clerical areas are cramped and congested.
- Active case files are stored in the employee breakroom and hallways because there is no other location for them.
- The site does not have adequate parking. Only 10-11 spaces are allocated for the courts, additional parking must be found on the surrounding streets.

3. Physical Condition

- The building has a poor seismic rating and therefore could be structurally unsafe
- The courthouse HVAC, Plumbing, Electrical and Landscaping irrigation systems are inadequate.
- The roof of the courthouse needs to be replaced.

Accessibility

- There is no accessible audience seating in the courtroom.
- There are no secure accommodations for prisoners with disabilities.
- The courtroom bench, witness stand and clerk's workstation are not accessible.
- Restroom facilities are not ADA compliant.

Access to Court Services

- There is no jury assembly room in the facility. Because of this most jury trials are held in Merced, making it necessary to travel over 70 miles (two ways) to Merced. Much of the population in Western Merced County is low income and this cost of traveling long distances can be prohibitive to some, creating a disservice of justice to the

citizens of West Merced County. When jury trials are held in Los Banos the courtroom is occupied and cannot be used for any other judicial needs.

Because most jury trials cannot be heard in the Los Banos facility, the County incurs additional costs related to moving prisoners back and forth between the two facilities.

4. Economic Opportunity

- The New Los Banos Courthouse creates economic opportunity for the Western Merced County in potential construction and related job opportunities, which are desperately needed in an area where unemployment is above 18%.
- Currently the courthouse project has the opportunity to gain economic benefit and potential reduced construction costs as it is part of a larger Justice Center with proposed County Justice Building and the proposed City Police and Jail facilities. The City and County have been working concurrently and are very supportive of the project. These efforts will allow the project to proceed forward more effectively, however if the project is delayed, this opportunity could be lost in the future.
- There are adjacent private sector support facilities (retail, restaurants, office space for attorneys and bail bonds) slated to begin construction along with the courthouse. The developer of this work is currently cooperating with the Courts in the design and layout of the entire development and infrastructure. This relationship could lead to shared site demolition work, or construction work resulting in reduced costs for the courthouse. If the courthouse does not proceed in a timely manner, this economic opportunity could disappear.
- The influx of new Court, County, City and private facilities will provide additional long term job opportunities for the citizens of Western Merced County. The courthouse is the catalyst for this work and needs to proceed forward.
- The new facility will provide more of the needed justice services for the area, thereby allowing the courts to operate more efficiently and effectively, reducing travel time and costs for the courts and the citizens it serves.

5. Project Status

- The New Los Banos Courthouse is currently in the preliminary plan phase.

6. Extent to Which Project Solves a Court's Facilities Problems

The proposed schematic design of the new Los Banos Courthouse addresses all the deficiencies of the existing facility.

Safety and Security

- At the current schematic level of design level the New Los Banos courthouse includes enclosed sally port, separated secure circulation, holding cells and related spaces that will provide a much higher level of safety and security than the current facility.

Prisoner Movement

- All aspects of prisoner movement, arrival to the facility, holding, and seating within the courtroom have been addressed. Prisoners are moved into the courtrooms directly from the holding area.
- The judges will no longer be in view of the public when they enter the building. The judge's chambers are located along private corridors out of public circulation and prisoner movement.

Overcrowding

- The Public and employee areas have been designed to allow ample space for movement, waiting, and working. The buildings entry will have cueing space for the Public as they are waiting to be screened prior to entering the facility. Seating for the Public has been provided outside the courtrooms, Family Services and outside the Civil, Criminal and Traffic public counters.

Access to Court Services

- Having the new courthouse located in Los Banos will alleviate the long travel distance previously encountered when the Public had to travel to Merced for court hearings and other court services.
- The new courthouse will have a Family Services area that was not available in the current outdated courthouse.

Accessibility

- Courtrooms will be accessible to all populations.
- Detention facilities will have a fully accessible holding cell
- Parking, entry, circulation and restroom facilities, along with all Public and employee areas will be accessible.

Physical Condition

- The new facility will be designed with modern building systems and will comply with state and local seismic codes.

7. Expected Operational Impact

- The new facility will not only provide operation efficiencies and reductions for the Courts, but also for the citizens of Western Merced County.

- The current Los Banos Courthouse is outdated and inefficient, both in operational aspects and physical functionality. The mechanical and electrical systems utilize energy inefficiently. The new facility will allow operation costs per building square foot to be reduced, benefitting the courts and the environment.
- With the ability to provide all of the court services at the new facility, the travel of staff from Merced to Los Banos should be able to be reduced, resulting in reduced costs. This will also be a cost reduction for the citizens who will be able to obtain justice without having to travel to Merced. In addition, those citizens who are currently denied access to justice because they cannot travel to Merced, will now have that available to them. This will have an overall beneficial impact on the community.
- A better work environment will be provided through the use of natural daylight, increased air quality and properly functioning spaces, which will create more effective and productive staff. There are studies which show that this can lead to reduced sick days and overall more efficiency and reduced costs.
- The current facility is in need of constant repair work in a variety of areas. The new facility with new systems and equipment will not need this repair work, thereby reducing repair costs.
- With the new facility, jury selection and jury trials can be held in Los Banos, reducing operational costs, and allowing citizens easier and less costly ability to perform their jury duty commitments.

8. "Outside the Box Thinking"

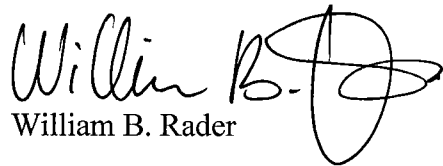
- The design for the new Los Banos Courthouse has been developed with two potential options: a 1 story and a 2 story design. During the creation of these options, more efficient site layout, building orientation, building shape, structural system, exterior walls and materials were researched to develop a significantly cost effective design that reduced the project costs from between 14% to 22%, depending upon the design option selected.
- Optional concepts and layouts for transportation of in-custody detainees from a secure sally port to the holding cells were explored and developed. This allowed the team to evaluate both costs and security related to the various options.
- Building systems were designed based around the facility and maintenance contractors in the area, thereby eliminating the needs for costly consultants/contractors from the Bay Area to come to service the facility.
- The site layout was designed to minimize the building footprint and usage of the site to reduce development and construction costs, and allow space for future flexibility and expansion.

Court Facilities Working Group
Administrative Office of the Courts
SB1407 Project Evaluation Criteria Comments
August 23, 2012

- Site circulation and drive areas are being shared between the courthouse, the County's Justice facility and the adjacent private sector development to reduce duplication and costs.
- Work required for sustainable site and water quality features are being combined with site security features for cost efficiency.
- Use of covered exterior queuing space instead of more expensive interior lobby space was used at the building's entry.
- Exterior public service windows were incorporated to allow more efficient processing and reduce loads and impact on security screening staff and space.
- A variety of options related to audio video systems and infrastructure options were provided.
- The design employed flexible use of meeting rooms, conference rooms, jury assembly and attorney/client rooms to reduce the overall number of rooms required.
- The Judge's opted to reduce their office spaces in size when the design concepts showed the same function could be achieved in less space.
- The number of spaces was reduced by careful consideration of uses and ability to overlap functions.

In closing, we appreciate the diligence you are demonstrating in the review of the Los Banos Courthouse. We urge you to allow this project to move forward for the citizens of Merced County, the judicial staff and all others involved in the project. The benefits and value that this new courthouse will bring forth will be realized for years to come.

Sincerely,


William B. Rader

August 23, 2012

Court Facilities Working Group
Administrative Office of the Courts
455 Golden Gate Avenue
San Francisco, CA

RE: Merced County – New Los Banos Courthouse
SB 1407 Project Evaluation

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- The courtroom is heavily used and the entry is very small and congested, which creates a potential safety hazard for the court, the deputies and the public.
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Physical Condition

- The building is old and potentially unsafe in an earthquake.
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Economic Opportunity

- Western Merced County has an unemployment rate above 18%, and the new Los Banos Courthouse creates potential construction and related job opportunities, which are desperately needed.
- The courthouse is part of a larger Justice Center with proposed County Justice Building and the proposed City Police and Jail facilities. There are efficiencies in design, construction and shared infrastructure that can be recognized if these can be coordinated.
- With the courthouse proceeding, the adjacent development of support facilities will also be able to go forward. This will not only provide the opportunity to share resources, infrastructure and construction efficiencies, but it will bring long term job opportunities to the County.

Extent to Which Project Solves a Court's Facilities Problems

The proposed new Los Banos Courthouse addresses all the deficiencies of the existing facility.

- *Safety and Security:* The new Los Banos courthouse includes enclosed sally port, separated secure circulation, holding cells, enlarged screening areas, concealed and secure judges entry, and properly sized and appointed courtrooms that will provide a much higher level of safety and security for the judges, staff, deputies and the public.
- *Overcrowding:* The Public and employee areas allow ample space for movement, waiting, and working. Seating for the Public has been provided outside the courtrooms, Family Services and outside the Civil, Criminal and Traffic public counters.
- *Access to Court Services:* Having the new courthouse located in Los Banos will alleviate the long travel distance previously encountered when the Public has to travel to Merced for court hearings and other court services. This includes new services such as Family Services and self help which are not available in the current outdated courthouse.

- *Accessibility*: The new courthouse will have full accessible features, including parking and access to the building, interior Public and employee area, courtrooms and detention/holding areas.

Expected Operational Impact

- The new courthouse will provide operation efficiencies and cost reductions for the Courts, as well as for the citizens of Western Merced County.
- With the ability to provide all of the court services at the new facility, the travel of staff from Merced to Los Banos should be able to be reduced, resulting in reduced costs. This will also help in minimizing costs related to continuations when parties are not able to get over to Merced for hearings or cases.
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“Outside the Box Thinking”

- The new Los Banos Courthouse has been developed with a 1 story and a 2 story design option. The architects and engineers developed concepts that significantly reduced the project costs from between 14% to 22%, depending upon the design option selected. These creative concepts need to be continued to develop a methodology for designing and building courthouse facilities at a much lower cost, than previous courthouse. By allowing this project to go forward now and refining the strategies that were developed this reduced cost facility can be more easily achieved with the limited funding. This type of thinking will allow Merced County to obtain the facility that they desperately need and will allow the citizens of Western Merced County access to proper judicial services.

Thank you for reviewing the courthouse projects needs in detail. I urge you to select this project to move forward so the citizens of Merced County, the judicial staff and all others involved in the project will be able to realize the benefits and value that this new courthouse will bring.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Cigi Ramesbottu". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

From: [Mary Schooley](#)
To: [OCCMCOMMENTS](#)
Subject: Attn. Invitation to Comments - SB 1407 Project Evaluations
Date: Friday, August 24, 2012 8:26:08 AM

August 23, 2012

Court Facilities Working Group
Administrative Office of the Courts
455 Golden Gate Avenue
San Francisco, CA

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From: [Jeff Schooley](#)
To: [OCCMCOMMENTS](#)
Subject: Attn. Invitation to Comments - SB 1407 Project Evaluations
Date: Friday, August 24, 2012 8:28:09 AM

August 23, 2012

Court Facilities Working Group

Administrative Office of the Courts

455 Golden Gate Avenue

San Francisco, CA

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SB 1407 Project Evaluation

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- Active case files are stored in the employee breakroom and hallways because there is no other location for them.
- The site does not have adequate parking. Only 10-11 spaces are allocated for the courts, additional parking must be found on the surrounding streets.

3. Physical Condition

- The building has a poor seismic rating and therefore could be structurally unsafe
- The courthouse HVAC, Plumbing, Electrical and Landscaping irrigation systems are inadequate.
- The roof of the courthouse needs to be replaced.

Accessibility

- There is no accessible audience seating in the courtroom.
- There are no secure accommodations for prisoners with disabilities.
- The courtroom bench, witness stand and clerk's workstation are not accessible.
- Restroom facilities are not ADA compliant.

Access to Court Services

- There is no jury assembly room in the facility. Because of this most jury trials are held in Merced, making it necessary to travel over 70 miles (two ways) to Merced. Much of the population in Western Merced County is low income and this cost of traveling long distances can be prohibitive to some, creating a disservice of justice to the citizens of West Merced County. When jury trials are held in Los Banos the courtroom is occupied and cannot be used for any other judicial needs. Because most jury trials cannot be heard in the Los Banos facility, the County incurs additional costs related to moving prisoners back and forth between the two facilities.

4. Economic Opportunity

- The New Los Banos Courthouse creates economic opportunity for the Western Merced County in potential construction and related job opportunities, which are desperately needed in an area where unemployment is above 18%.
- Currently the courthouse project has the opportunity to gain economic benefit and potential reduced construction costs as it is part of a larger Justice Center with proposed County Justice Building and the proposed City Police and Jail facilities. The City and County have been working concurrently and are very supportive of the project. These efforts will allow the project to proceed forward more effectively, however if the project is delayed, this opportunity could be lost in the future.
- There are adjacent private sector support facilities (retail, restaurants, office space for attorneys and bail bonds) slated to begin construction along with the courthouse. The developer of this work is currently cooperating with the Courts in the design and layout of the entire development and infrastructure. This relationship could lead to shared site demolition work, or construction work resulting in reduced costs for the courthouse. If the courthouse does not proceed in a timely manner, this economic opportunity could disappear.
- The influx of new Court, County, City and private facilities will provide additional long term job opportunities for the citizens of Western Merced County. The courthouse is the catalyst for this work and needs to proceed forward.
- The new facility will provide more of the needed justice services for the area, thereby allowing the courts to operate more efficiently and effectively, reducing travel time and costs for the courts and the citizens it serves.

5. Project Status

- The New Los Banos Courthouse is currently in the preliminary plan phase.

6. Extent to Which Project Solves a Court's Facilities Problems

The proposed schematic design of the new Los Banos Courthouse addresses all the deficiencies of the existing facility.

Safety and Security

- At the current schematic level of design level the New Los Banos courthouse includes enclosed safety port, separated secure circulation, holding cells and related spaces that will provide a much higher level of safety and security than the current facility.

Prisoner Movement

Court Facilities Working Group
Administrative Office of the Courts
SB1407 Project Evaluation Criteria Comments
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- All aspects of prisoner movement, arrival to the facility, holding, and seating within the courtroom have been addressed. Prisoners are moved into the courtrooms directly from the holding area. The judges will no longer be in view of the public when they enter the building. The judge's chambers are located along private corridors out of public circulation and prisoner movement.

Overcrowding

- The Public and employee areas have been designed to allow ample space for movement, waiting, and working. The buildings entry will have cueing space for the Public as they are waiting to be screened prior to entering the facility. Seating for the Public has been provided outside the courtrooms, Family Services and outside the Civil, Criminal and Traffic public counters.

Access to Court Services

- Having the new courthouse located in Los Banos will alleviate the long travel distance previously encountered when the Public had to travel to Merced for court hearings and other court services.
- The new courthouse will have a Family Services area that was not available in the current outdated courthouse.

Accessibility.

- Courtrooms will be accessible to all populations.
- Detention facilities will have a fully accessible holding cell
- Parking, entry, circulation and restroom facilities, along with all Public and employee areas will be accessible.

Physical Condition

- The new facility will be designed with modern building systems and will comply with state and local seismic codes.

7. Expected Operational Impact

- The new facility will not only provide operation efficiencies and reductions for the Courts, but also for the citizens of Western Merced County.
- The current Los Banos Courthouse is outdated and inefficient, both in operational aspects and physical functionality. The mechanical and electrical systems utilize energy inefficiently. The new facility will allow operation costs per building square foot to be reduced, benefitting the courts and the environment.
- With the ability to provide all of the court services at the new facility, the travel of staff from Merced to Los Banos should be able to be reduced, resulting in reduced costs. This will also be a cost reduction for the citizens who will be able to obtain justice without having to travel to Merced. In addition, those citizens who are currently denied access to justice because they cannot travel to Merced, will now have that available to them. This will have an overall beneficial impact on the community.

Court Facilities Working Group
Administrative Office of the Courts
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- A better work environment will be provided through the use of natural daylight, increased air quality and properly functioning spaces, which will create more effective and productive staff. There are studies which show that this can lead to reduced sick days and overall more efficiency and reduced costs.
- The current facility is in need of constant repair work in a variety of areas. The new facility with new systems and equipment will not need this repair work, thereby reducing repair costs.
- With the new facility, jury selection and jury trials can be held in Los Banos, reducing operational costs, and allowing citizens easier and less costly ability to perform their jury duty commitments.

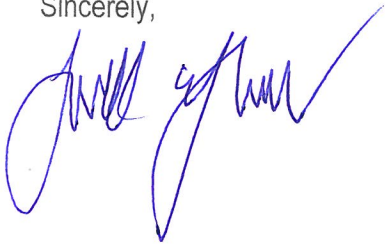
8. “Outside the Box Thinking”

- The design for the new Los Banos Courthouse has been developed with two potential options: a 1 story and a 2 story design. During the creation of these options, more efficient site layout, building orientation, building shape, structural system, exterior walls and materials were researched to develop a significantly cost effective design that reduced the project costs from between 14% to 22%, depending upon the design option selected.
- Optional concepts and layouts for transportation of in-custody detainees from a secure sally port to the holding cells were explored and developed. This allowed the team to evaluate both costs and security related to the various options.
- Building systems were designed based around the facility and maintenance contractors in the area, thereby eliminating the needs for costly consultants/contractors from the Bay Area to come to service the facility.
- The site layout was designed to minimize the building footprint and usage of the site to reduce development and construction costs, and allow space for future flexibility and expansion.
- Site circulation and drive areas are being shared between the courthouse, the County's Justice facility and the adjacent private sector development to reduce duplication and costs.
- Work required for sustainable site and water quality features are being combined with site security features for cost efficiency.
- Use of covered exterior queuing space instead of more expensive interior lobby space was used at the building's entry.
- Exterior public service windows were incorporated to allow more efficient processing and reduce loads and impact on security screening staff and space.
- A variety of options related to audio video systems and infrastructure options were provided.
- The design employed flexible use of meeting rooms, conference rooms, jury assembly and attorney/client rooms to reduce the overall number of rooms required.
- The Judge's opted to reduce their office spaces in size when the design concepts showed the same function could be achieved in less space.
- The number of spaces was reduced by careful consideration of uses and ability to overlap functions.

Court Facilities Working Group
Administrative Office of the Courts
SB1407 Project Evaluation Criteria Comments
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In closing, we appreciate the diligence you are demonstrating in the review of the Los Banos Courthouse. We urge you to allow this project to move forward for the citizens of Merced County, the judicial staff and all others involved in the project. The benefits and value that this new courthouse will bring forth will be realized for years to come.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "John G. ...", written in a cursive style.

August 23, 2012

Court Facilities Working Group
Administrative Office of the Courts
455 Golden Gate Avenue
San Francisco, CA

RE: Merced County – New Los Banos Courthouse
SB 1407 Project Evaluation

Dear Court Facilities Working Group,

We appreciate your time to obtain input from the public related to the evaluation of the SB 1407 projects to determine which projects will move forward. We know that the Administrative Office of the Courts and the Judicial Council are facing difficult budgeting decisions, but there are extremely important needs for Merced County that make the new Los Banos Courthouse a critical facility to move forward with.

Safety and Security

The current Los Banos courthouse is unsafe, substandard, overcrowded and functionally inadequate. The facility has significant deficiencies with many physical conditions which adversely affect the ability to provide justice.

Prisoner Movement

- The current courthouse has no sally port and the prisoners come into the facility from a chain link area which is clearly visible from the public streets. This allows the potential for gangs to signal or communicate with the prisoners.
- Inside the courthouse there are no secure holding facilities so the prisoners are held in a narrow secure hallway. This creates severe safety and security issues for deputies.
- The prisoners are brought into court immediately in front of the judge and the clerk to the jury box, which is the only seating available. This movement, path of travel and placement of prisoners is a critical safety concern to judges, staff and the public.

Judge Security:

- Judges enter the building directly into their chambers, also in clear view from the street and adjacent properties. In addition, the doorway entrance to the chambers is located directly adjacent to the prisoner's entrance to the secure corridor.

Overcrowding

Public areas

- The courtroom is heavily used and the entry is very small and congested, which creates a potential safety hazard for the court, the deputies and the public.
- The courtroom is too small and cramped and some people have to wait outside of the courtroom. The front row seating is not used because it is too close to the defendant seating.

- There is inadequate space for the staff and files have to be stored in a breakroom and a hallway.

Physical Condition

- The building is old and potentially unsafe in an earthquake.
- The courthouse HVAC, Plumbing, Electrical and Landscaping irrigation systems are inadequate.
- The roof of the courthouse needs to be replaced.

Accessibility

- There is no accessible audience seating in the courtroom.
- There are no secure accommodations for prisoners with disabilities.
- The courtroom bench, witness stand and clerk's workstation are not accessible.
- Restroom facilities are not ADA compliant.

Access to Court Services

- There is no jury assembly room in the facility. Because of this jury selection and most jury trials are held in Merced, making it necessary to travel over 40 miles to Merced. Much of the population in Western Merced County is low income and this cost of traveling long distances can be prohibitive and creating a disservice of justice to the citizens of West Merced County.
- When jury trials are held in Los Banos the courtroom is occupied and cannot be used for any other judicial needs, further limiting the citizens access to the judicial system.

Economic Opportunity

- Western Merced County has an unemployment rate above 18%, and the new Los Banos Courthouse creates potential construction and related job opportunities, which are desperately needed.
- The courthouse is part of a larger Justice Center with proposed County Justice Building and the proposed City Police and Jail facilities. There are efficiencies in design, construction and shared infrastructure that can be recognized if these can be coordinated.
- With the courthouse proceeding, the adjacent development of support facilities will also be able to go forward. This will not only provide the opportunity to share resources, infrastructure and construction efficiencies, but it will bring long term job opportunities to the County.

Extent to Which Project Solves a Court's Facilities Problems

The proposed new Los Banos Courthouse addresses all the deficiencies of the existing facility.

- *Safety and Security:* The new Los Banos courthouse includes enclosed sally port, separated secure circulation, holding cells, enlarged screening areas, concealed and secure judges entry, and properly sized and appointed courtrooms that will provide a much higher level of safety and security for the judges, staff, deputies and the public.
- *Overcrowding:* The Public and employee areas allow ample space for movement, waiting, and working. Seating for the Public has been provided outside the courtrooms, Family Services and outside the Civil, Criminal and Traffic public counters.
- *Access to Court Services:* Having the new courthouse located in Los Banos will alleviate the long travel distance previously encountered when the Public has to travel to Merced for court hearings

and other court services. This includes new services such as Family Services and self help which are not available in the current outdated courthouse.

- *Accessibility*: The new courthouse will have full accessible features, including parking and access to the building, interior Public and employee area, courtrooms and detention/holding areas.

Expected Operational Impact

- The new courthouse will provide operation efficiencies and cost reductions for the Courts, as well as for the citizens of Western Merced County.
- With the ability to provide all of the court services at the new facility, the travel of staff from Merced to Los Banos should be able to be reduced, resulting in reduced costs. This will also help in minimizing costs related to continuations when parties are not able to get over to Merced for hearings or cases.
- With the new facility, jury selection and jury trials can be held in Los Banos, reducing operational costs, and allowing citizens easier ability to perform their jury duty commitments while also reducing their costs.
- Because most jury trials cannot be heard in the Los Banos facility, the County incurs additional costs related to moving prisoners back and forth between the two facilities. With jury trials being able to be held in Los Banos, this movement will be minimized reducing costs considerably.
- The current facility is in need of constant repair work in a variety of areas. The new facility with new systems and equipment will not need this repair work, thereby reducing repair costs.

“Outside the Box Thinking”

- The new Los Banos Courthouse has been developed with a 1 story and a 2 story design option. The architects and engineers developed concepts that significantly reduced the project costs from between 14% to 22%, depending upon the design option selected. These creative concepts need to be continued to develop a methodology for designing and building courthouse facilities at a much lower cost, than previous courthouse. By allowing this project to go forward now and refining the strategies that were developed this reduced cost facility can be more easily achieved with the limited funding. This type of thinking will allow Merced County to obtain the facility that they desperately need and will allow the citizens of Western Merced County access to proper judicial services.

Thank you for reviewing the courthouse projects needs in detail. I urge you to select this project to move forward so the citizens of Merced County, the judicial staff and all others involved in the project will be able to realize the benefits and value that this new courthouse will bring.

Sincerely,



August 23, 2012

Court Facilities Working Group
Administrative Office of the Courts
455 Golden Gate Avenue
San Francisco, CA

RE: Merced County – New Los Banos Courthouse
SB 1407 Project Evaluation

Dear Court Facilities Working Group,

Thank you for the opportunity for the public to offer opinions on which of the current SB 1407 courthouse construction projects will continue into construction. While it is unfortunate that given our state's economic woes, the Governor has chosen to pull funding from AOC's pockets, there is still a critical need in some areas for these projects to move forward. I believe strongly that Los Banos is one of those projects.

Safety and Security

The current courthouse serving this community is extremely overcrowded, leading to unsafe conditions for all involved (prisoners, staff, and public). With no sallyport to control prisoner movement, so all transport in and out of the building is open to visual contact with the public streets via chain link fence. With no holding facilities inside the building, prisoners wait in a crowded hallway; this is a dangerous situation for the Sheriff Department deputies who are charged with securing these groups. Prisoners are brought into the Court directly adjacent to judge and are seated in the jury box, which does not provide safe separation for the Court staff. Finally, the lack of secure travel access for judges from their parking area to chambers leaves them open to view and potential threats, which is a serious concern for our judicial leadership.

Overcrowding

This court is constantly overcrowded due to the large community it serves. The entry is very small, and becomes overly congested during busy court hours. The courtroom is so small that often people have to wait outside, and the first row of seating is unavailable because it is located too close to the defendant seating area (also a safety concern). The facility is so crowded, in fact, that court staff have to file documents and materials in hallways and break rooms, because there is no adequate storage area for court documents.

Physical Condition

Due to its age and heavy use described above, this building is in poor condition. The facility's HVAC, plumbing, and electrical systems are outdated and in need of repair, and the roof is due for replacement. ADA accessible facilities are not provided for public court seating, disabled prisoners, court bench and witness stand, or even the public restroom facilities. There is no jury assembly area available at this

facility, meaning jury selection (and accordingly, those providing jury duty) must be held in Merced, over 40 miles away. When a jury trial is held in Los Banos, it means the court is not available for any other needs, limiting access to judicial services for the community.

Economic Opportunity

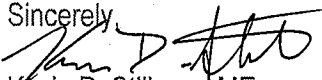
This project would provided much-needed economic opportunity for the community. This area of Merced County is experiencing very high unemployment, and this court project (along with the proposed County Justice Building and Police/Jail facilities) will not only provide direct job opportunities in construction and support services, but will also become an anchor for future development in the area. This will help provide long-term employment opportunities for the community, long after actual construction is complete..

Extent to Which Project Solves a Court's Facilities Problems

A new Los Banos Courthouse will address all of the issues of the existing facility listed above. The new facility will be designed to comply with current Facility Standards for modern court buildings. An enclosed sallyport, separated secure circulation, concealed judge's entry and travel paths, and adequately sized and arranged courtrooms will provide a safe and secure facility for prisoners, judicial staff, and the public. Adequately sized and planned public and employee areas will allow ample space for movement and waiting areas outside of the courtrooms. A new court located in Los Banos will provide access to court services for the large population of Western Merced County that currently has to travel over 40 to the larger Merced Courthouse, and new services such as Family Law will be provided which are not available at the existing facility. Furthermore, a new facility will provide adequate access for disabled persons by complying with all applicable ADA requirements, whereas the existing facility is woefully deficient in disabled access for prisoners, staff and the public.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide input on why this new Los Banos Courthouse meets a critical need in the Western Merced County community. I urge you to select this project to move forward so the citizens of Merced County, the judicial staff and all others involved in the project will be able to realize the benefits and value that this new courthouse will bring.

Sincerely,



Kevin D. Stillman, ME

Concerned CA Citizen and Taxpayer

August 23, 2012

Court Facilities Working Group
Administrative Office of the Courts
455 Golden Gate Avenue
San Francisco, CA

RE: Merced County – New Los Banos Courthouse
SB 1407 Project Evaluation

Dear Court Facilities Working Group,

We appreciate your time to obtain input from the public related to the evaluation of the SB 1407 projects to determine which projects will move forward. We know that the Administrative Office of the Courts and the Judicial Council are facing difficult budgeting decisions, but there are extremely important needs for Merced County that make the new Los Banos Courthouse a critical facility to move forward with.

Safety and Security

The current Los Banos courthouse is unsafe, substandard, overcrowded and functionally inadequate. The facility has significant deficiencies with many physical conditions which adversely affect the ability to provide justice.

Prisoner Movement

- The current courthouse has no sally port and the prisoners come into the facility from a chain link area which is clearly visible from the public streets. This allows the potential for gangs to signal or communicate with the prisoners.
- Inside the courthouse there are no secure holding facilities so the prisoners are held in a narrow secure hallway. This creates severe safety and security issues for deputies.
- The prisoners are brought into court immediately in front of the judge and the clerk to the jury box, which is the only seating available. This movement, path of travel and placement of prisoners is a critical safety concern to judges, staff and the public.

Judge Security:

- Judges enter the building directly into their chambers, also in clear view from the street and adjacent properties. In addition, the doorway entrance to the chambers is located directly adjacent to the prisoner's entrance to the secure corridor.

Overcrowding

Public areas

- The courtroom is heavily used and the entry is very small and congested, which creates a potential safety hazard for the court, the deputies and the public.
- The courtroom is too small and cramped and some people have to wait outside of the courtroom. The front row seating is not used because it is too close to the defendant seating.
- There is inadequate space for the staff and files have to be stored in a breakroom and a hallway.

Physical Condition

- The building is old and potentially unsafe in an earthquake.
- The courthouse HVAC, Plumbing, Electrical and Landscaping irrigation systems are inadequate.
- The roof of the courthouse needs to be replaced.

Accessibility

- There is no accessible audience seating in the courtroom.
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- Restroom facilities are not ADA compliant.

Access to Court Services

- There is no jury assembly room in the facility. Because of this jury selection and most jury trials are held in Merced, making it necessary to travel over 40 miles to Merced. Much of the population in Western Merced County is low income and this cost of traveling long distances can be prohibitive and creating a disservice of justice to the citizens of West Merced County.
- When jury trials are held in Los Banos the courtroom is occupied and cannot be used for any other judicial needs, further limiting the citizens access to the judicial system.

Economic Opportunity

- Western Merced County has an unemployment rate above 18%, and the new Los Banos Courthouse creates potential construction and related job opportunities, which are desperately needed.
- The courthouse is part of a larger Justice Center with proposed County Justice Building and the proposed City Police and Jail facilities. There are efficiencies in design, construction and shared infrastructure that can be recognized if these can be coordinated.
- With the courthouse proceeding, the adjacent development of support facilities will also be able to go forward. This will not only provide the opportunity to share resources, infrastructure and construction efficiencies, but it will bring long term job opportunities to the County.

Extent to Which Project Solves a Court's Facilities Problems

The proposed new Los Banos Courthouse addresses all the deficiencies of the existing facility.

- *Safety and Security:* The new Los Banos courthouse includes enclosed sally port, separated secure circulation, holding cells, enlarged screening areas, concealed and secure judges entry, and properly sized and appointed courtrooms that will provide a much higher level of safety and security for the judges, staff, deputies and the public.
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- *Access to Court Services:* Having the new courthouse located in Los Banos will alleviate the long travel distance previously encountered when the Public has to travel to Merced for court hearings and other court services. This includes new services such as Family Services and self help which are not available in the current outdated courthouse.

- *Accessibility*: The new courthouse will have full accessible features, including parking and access to the building, interior Public and employee area, courtrooms and detention/holding areas.

Expected Operational Impact

- The new courthouse will provide operation efficiencies and cost reductions for the Courts, as well as for the citizens of Western Merced County.
- With the ability to provide all of the court services at the new facility, the travel of staff from Merced to Los Banos should be able to be reduced, resulting in reduced costs. This will also help in minimizing costs related to continuations when parties are not able to get over to Merced for hearings or cases.
- With the new facility, jury selection and jury trials can be held in Los Banos, reducing operational costs, and allowing citizens easier ability to perform their jury duty commitments while also reducing their costs.
- Because most jury trials cannot be heard in the Los Banos facility, the County incurs additional costs related to moving prisoners back and forth between the two facilities. With jury trials being able to be held in Los Banos, this movement will be minimized reducing costs considerably.
- The current facility is in need of constant repair work in a variety of areas. The new facility with new systems and equipment will not need this repair work, thereby reducing repair costs.

“Outside the Box Thinking”

- The new Los Banos Courthouse has been developed with a 1 story and a 2 story design option. The architects and engineers developed concepts that significantly reduced the project costs from between 14% to 22%, depending upon the design option selected. These creative concepts need to be continued to develop a methodology for designing and building courthouse facilities at a much lower cost, than previous courthouse. By allowing this project to go forward now and refining the strategies that were developed this reduced cost facility can be more easily achieved with the limited funding. This type of thinking will allow Merced County to obtain the facility that they desperately need and will allow the citizens of Western Merced County access to proper judicial services.

Thank you for reviewing the courthouse projects needs in detail. I urge you to select this project to move forward so the citizens of Merced County, the judicial staff and all others involved in the project will be able to realize the benefits and value that this new courthouse will bring.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Thomas M. Ventura", is written over a horizontal line.

Thomas M. Ventura

August 23, 2012

Court Facilities Working Group
Administrative Office of the Courts
455 Golden Gate Avenue
San Francisco, CA

RE: Merced County – New Los Banos Courthouse
SB 1407 Project Evaluation

Dear Court Facilities Working Group,

Thank you for taking the time to consider our reasons that the New Los Banos Courthouse is an important project and should not be delayed. We understand the difficult budget challenges that the Administrative Office of the Courts and the Judicial Council are facing, but there are extremely important needs for Merced County that make the new Los Banos Courthouse a critical facility to move forward with. We are writing to express our concerns and comments regarding the upcoming evaluation of the SB 1407 projects to determine which projects will move forward. Below are our comments related to the various criteria listed as part of the evaluation process. While you may have already seen some of these reasons for the courthouse to move forward we encourage you to read on and learn how the preliminary design of the new courthouse has responded to many of these deficiencies.

1. Safety and Security

The current Los Banos courthouse is unsafe, substandard, overcrowded and functionally deficient. The facility has significant deficiencies with many physical conditions which adversely impacts and creates impediments to the administration of justice.

Prisoner Movement

- The current courthouse has no sally port. Therefore, prisoners must come into the building from a chain link area located adjacent to the building. This area is in clear view of the street and adjacent properties. Once prisoners are inside the courthouse there are no secure holding facilities. Prisoners (up to 40 a day) are held in a narrow secure hallway. This narrow space does not allow for prisoners such as gang members, combative inmates or men/women to be segregated. This creates severe safety and security issues for deputies.
- Because of restricted space, prisoners are escorted into the courtroom between the judge's bench and the counsel tables. This places the prisoners in close proximity to the judge and within 4 feet of the clerk. The only seating for prisoners in the courtroom is in the jury box. The movement, path of travel and placement of prisoners is a critical safety concern.

Judge Security:

- Judges enter the building directly into their chambers, also in clear view from the street and adjacent properties. In addition, the doorway entrance to the chambers is located directly adjacent to the prisoner's entrance to the secure corridor.

2. Overcrowding

Public areas

- Over 330 people enter and exit the building each day through a single set of double doors. This makes ingress and egress very congested. In addition the entry area size is inadequate for the security screening station.
- There is inadequate space for the public to wait outside the courtroom.
- The courtroom is small and cramped and about 500 SF less than the current standards for a courtroom. The front row seating is not used because it is too close to the defendant seating. For a high volume courtroom 90-100 seats for the public are typical. This courtroom has seating for only 30 persons.
- Clerical areas are cramped and congested.
- Active case files are stored in the employee breakroom and hallways because there is no other location for them.
- The site does not have adequate parking. Only 10-11 spaces are allocated for the courts, additional parking must be found on the surrounding streets.

3. Physical Condition

- The building has a poor seismic rating and therefore could be structurally unsafe
- The courthouse HVAC, Plumbing, Electrical and Landscaping irrigation systems are inadequate.
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Accessibility

- There is no accessible audience seating in the courtroom.
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- There is no jury assembly room in the facility. Because of this most jury trials are held in Merced, making it necessary to travel over 70 miles (two ways) to Merced. Much of the population in Western Merced County is low income and this cost of traveling long distances can be prohibitive to some, creating a disservice of justice to the citizens of West Merced County. When jury trials are held in Los Banos the courtroom is occupied and cannot be used for any other judicial needs. Because most jury trials cannot be heard in the Los Banos facility, the County incurs additional costs related to moving prisoners back and forth between the two facilities.

4. Economic Opportunity

- The New Los Banos Courthouse creates economic opportunity for the Western Merced County in potential construction and related job opportunities, which are desperately needed in an area where unemployment is above 18%.
- Currently the courthouse project has the opportunity to gain economic benefit and potential reduced construction costs as it is part of a larger Justice Center with proposed County Justice Building and the proposed City Police and Jail facilities. The City and County have been working concurrently and are very supportive of the project. These efforts will allow the project to proceed forward more effectively, however if the project is delayed, this opportunity could be lost in the future.
- There are adjacent private sector support facilities (retail, restaurants, office space for attorneys and bail bonds) slated to begin construction along with the courthouse. The developer of this work is currently cooperating with the Courts in the design and layout of the entire development and infrastructure. This relationship could lead to shared site demolition work, or construction work resulting in reduced costs for the courthouse. If the courthouse does not proceed in a timely manner, this economic opportunity could disappear.
- The influx of new Court, County, City and private facilities will provide additional long term job opportunities for the citizens of Western Merced County. The courthouse is the catalyst for this work and needs to proceed forward.
- The new facility will provide more of the needed justice services for the area, thereby allowing the courts to operate more efficiently and effectively, reducing travel time and costs for the courts and the citizens it serves.

5. Project Status

- The New Los Banos Courthouse is currently in the preliminary plan phase.

6. Extent to Which Project Solves a Court's Facilities Problems

The proposed schematic design of the new Los Banos Courthouse addresses all the deficiencies of the existing facility.

Safety and Security

- At the current schematic level of design level the New Los Banos courthouse includes enclosed sally port, separated secure circulation, holding cells and related spaces that will provide a much higher level of safety and security than the current facility.

Prisoner Movement

Court Facilities Working Group
Administrative Office of the Courts
SB1407 Project Evaluation Criteria Comments
August 23, 2012

- All aspects of prisoner movement, arrival to the facility, holding, and seating within the courtroom have been addressed. Prisoners are moved into the courtrooms directly from the holding area. The judges will no longer be in view of the public when they enter the building. The judge's chambers are located along private corridors out of public circulation and prisoner movement.

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- The Public and employee areas have been designed to allow ample space for movement, waiting, and working. The buildings entry will have cueing space for the Public as they are waiting to be screened prior to entering the facility. Seating for the Public has been provided outside the courtrooms, Family Services and outside the Civil, Criminal and Traffic public counters.

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- Having the new courthouse located in Los Banos will alleviate the long travel distance previously encountered when the Public had to travel to Merced for court hearings and other court services.
- The new courthouse will have a Family Services area that was not available in the current outdated courthouse.

Accessibility.

- Courtrooms will be accessible to all populations.
- Detention facilities will have a fully accessible holding cell
- Parking, entry, circulation and restroom facilities, along with all Public and employee areas will be accessible.

Physical Condition

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7. Expected Operational Impact

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8. "Outside the Box Thinking"

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- The site layout was designed to minimize the building footprint and usage of the site to reduce development and construction costs, and allow space for future flexibility and expansion.
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- Work required for sustainable site and water quality features are being combined with site security features for cost efficiency.
- Use of covered exterior cueing space instead of more expensive interior lobby space was used at the building's entry.
- Exterior public service windows were incorporated to allow more efficient processing and reduce loads and impact on security screening staff and space.
- A variety of options related to audio video systems and infrastructure options were provided.
- The design employed flexible use of meeting rooms, conference rooms, jury assembly and attorney/client rooms to reduce the overall number of rooms required.
- The Judge's opted to reduce their office spaces in size when the design concepts showed the same function could be achieved in less space.
- The number of spaces was reduced by careful consideration of uses and ability to overlap functions.

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In closing, we appreciate the diligence you are demonstrating in the review of the Los Banos Courthouse. We urge you to allow this project to move forward for the citizens of Merced County, the judicial staff and all others involved in the project. The benefits and value that this new courthouse will bring forth will be realized for years to come.

Sincerely,

Derek West



LOS BANOS
CHAMBER
of Commerce

“Working for Business - Believing in Los Banos”

August 20, 2012

Brad R. Hill, Presiding Justice
Court of Appeal, Fifth District
2424 Ventura Street
Fresno, California 93721

RE: Los Banos Courthouse, Merced County

Dear Honorable Brad R. Hill and Members of the Court Facility Working Group:

In response to your invitation to comment on Courthouse Projects, HMM Builders requests your consideration to proceed with the construction process for the Los Banos Courthouse Project. We are mindful of the many challenges faced by the Administrative Office of the Court (AOC) and Judicial Council due to the current state budget.

The Los Banos Chamber of Commerce would like to add our support to others for the Los Banos Courthouse project to proceed with construction activities. The current Los Banos court facility is inadequate in security and space necessary for current court operations. The new courthouse will resolve many of the struggles as the current facility faces. In the current schematic design the estimates came in significantly beyond the goal of 10% reduction.

This project will bring much needed construction jobs to the local workforce and businesses in one of the economically hardest hit areas of California. Together with local subcontractors and suppliers many of the area businesses will benefit from increase jobs from the courthouse project. The project will also stimulate additional investment in the community and bring jobs to the Los Banos area that is currently suffering from high unemployment rates.

Thank you for your consideration of our support for this project.

Sincerely,

John Whala

John Whala
Executive Director
Los Banos Chamber of Commerce.

Cc: Brian McCabe, Presiding Judge, Superior Court of California, County of Merced

503 J Street, Los Banos, CA 93635
(209) 826-2495 Fax: (209) 826-9689 Email: lbcofc@pacbell.net

August 23, 2012

Court Facilities Working Group
Administrative Office of the Courts
455 Golden Gate Avenue
San Francisco, CA

RE: Merced County – New Los Banos Courthouse
SB 1407 Project Evaluation

Dear Court Facilities Working Group,

Thank you for taking the time to consider our reasons that the New Los Banos Courthouse is an important project and should not be delayed. We understand the difficult budget challenges that the Administrative Office of the Courts and the Judicial Council are facing, but there are extremely important needs for Merced County that make the new Los Banos Courthouse a critical facility to move forward with. We are writing to express our concerns and comments regarding the upcoming evaluation of the SB 1407 projects to determine which projects will move forward. Below are our comments related to the various criteria listed as part of the evaluation process. While you may have already seen some of these reasons for the courthouse to move forward we encourage you to read on and learn how the preliminary design of the new courthouse has responded to many of these deficiencies.

1. Safety and Security

The current Los Banos courthouse is unsafe, substandard, overcrowded and functionally deficient. The facility has significant deficiencies with many physical conditions which adversely impacts and creates impediments to the administration of justice.

Prisoner Movement

- The current courthouse has no sally port. Therefore, prisoners must come into the building from a chain link area located adjacent to the building. This area is in clear view of the street and adjacent properties. Once prisoners are inside the courthouse there are no secure holding facilities. Prisoners (up to 40 a day) are held in a narrow secure hallway. This narrow space does not allow for prisoners such as gang members, combative inmates or men/women to be segregated. This creates severe safety and security issues for deputies.
- Because of restricted space, prisoners are escorted into the courtroom between the judge's bench and the counsel tables. This places the prisoners in close proximity to the judge and within 4 feet of the clerk. The only seating for prisoners in the courtroom is in the jury box. The movement, path of travel and placement of prisoners is a critical safety concern.

Judge Security:

- Judges enter the building directly into their chambers, also in clear view from the street and adjacent properties. In addition, the doorway entrance to the chambers is located directly adjacent to the prisoner's entrance to the secure corridor.

2. Overcrowding

Public areas

- Over 330 people enter and exit the building each day through a single set of double doors. This makes ingress and egress very congested. In addition the entry area size is inadequate for the security screening station.
- There is inadequate space for the public to wait outside the courtroom.
- The courtroom is small and cramped and about 500 SF less than the current standards for a courtroom. The front row seating is not used because it is too close to the defendant seating. For a high volume courtroom 90-100 seats for the public are typical. This courtroom has seating for only 30 persons.
- Clerical areas are cramped and congested.
- Active case files are stored in the employee breakroom and hallways because there is no other location for them.
- The site does not have adequate parking. Only 10-11 spaces are allocated for the courts, additional parking must be found on the surrounding streets.

3. Physical Condition

- The building has a poor seismic rating and therefore could be structurally unsafe
- The courthouse HVAC, Plumbing, Electrical and Landscaping irrigation systems are inadequate.
- The roof of the courthouse needs to be replaced.

Accessibility

- There is no accessible audience seating in the courtroom.
- There are no secure accommodations for prisoners with disabilities.
- The courtroom bench, witness stand and clerk's workstation are not accessible.
- Restroom facilities are not ADA compliant.

Access to Court Services

- There is no jury assembly room in the facility. Because of this most jury trials are held in Merced, making it necessary to travel over 70 miles (two ways) to Merced. Much of the population in Western Merced County is low income and this cost of traveling long distances can be prohibitive to some, creating a disservice of justice to the citizens of West Merced County. When jury trials are held in Los Banos the courtroom is occupied and cannot be used for any other judicial needs. Because most jury trials cannot be heard in the Los Banos facility, the County incurs additional costs related to moving prisoners back and forth between the two facilities.

4. Economic Opportunity

- The New Los Banos Courthouse creates economic opportunity for the Western Merced County in potential construction and related job opportunities, which are desperately needed in an area where unemployment is above 18%.
- Currently the courthouse project has the opportunity to gain economic benefit and potential reduced construction costs as it is part of a larger Justice Center with proposed County Justice Building and the proposed City Police and Jail facilities. The City and County have been working concurrently and are very supportive of the project. These efforts will allow the project to proceed forward more effectively, however if the project is delayed, this opportunity could be lost in the future.
- There are adjacent private sector support facilities (retail, restaurants, office space for attorneys and bail bonds) slated to begin construction along with the courthouse. The developer of this work is currently cooperating with the Courts in the design and layout of the entire development and infrastructure. This relationship could lead to shared site demolition work, or construction work resulting in reduced costs for the courthouse. If the courthouse does not proceed in a timely manner, this economic opportunity could disappear.
- The influx of new Court, County, City and private facilities will provide additional long term job opportunities for the citizens of Western Merced County. The courthouse is the catalyst for this work and needs to proceed forward.
- The new facility will provide more of the needed justice services for the area, thereby allowing the courts to operate more efficiently and effectively, reducing travel time and costs for the courts and the citizens it serves.

5. Project Status

- The New Los Banos Courthouse is currently in the preliminary plan phase.

6. Extent to Which Project Solves a Court's Facilities Problems

The proposed schematic design of the new Los Banos Courthouse addresses all the deficiencies of the existing facility.

Safety and Security

- At the current schematic level of design level the New Los Banos courthouse includes enclosed sally port, separated secure circulation, holding cells and related spaces that will provide a much higher level of safety and security than the current facility.

Prisoner Movement

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- All aspects of prisoner movement, arrival to the facility, holding, and seating within the courtroom have been addressed. Prisoners are moved into the courtrooms directly from the holding area. The judges will no longer be in view of the public when they enter the building. The judge's chambers are located along private corridors out of public circulation and prisoner movement.

Overcrowding

- The Public and employee areas have been designed to allow ample space for movement, waiting, and working. The buildings entry will have cueing space for the Public as they are waiting to be screened prior to entering the facility. Seating for the Public has been provided outside the courtrooms, Family Services and outside the Civil, Criminal and Traffic public counters.

Access to Court Services

- Having the new courthouse located in Los Banos will alleviate the long travel distance previously encountered when the Public had to travel to Merced for court hearings and other court services.
- The new courthouse will have a Family Services area that was not available in the current outdated courthouse.

Accessibility.

- Courtrooms will be accessible to all populations.
- Detention facilities will have a fully accessible holding cell
- Parking, entry, circulation and restroom facilities, along with all Public and employee areas will be accessible.

Physical Condition

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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Scott Wheeler", with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Scott Wheeler