



Superior Court
of the State of California
In and For
The County of Placer
Roseville, California

In Chambers of
HON. ALAN V. PINESCHI
PRESIDING JUDGE
OF THE SUPERIOR COURT
DEPARTMENT 33
10820 JUSTICE CENTER DRIVE
ROSEVILLE, CALIFORNIA 95678
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ROSEVILLE, CALIFORNIA 95661
(916) 408-6230 Fax (916) 408-6236

August 22, 2012

To: Hon. Brad Hill, Chair, Court Facilities Working Group

Cc: Court Facilities Working Group

Re: Invitation to Comment on New (North) Tahoe Area Courthouse Project

Attached please find the Superior Court of Placer County's response to the Court Facilities Working Group (CFWG) request for comment/information on the pending SB 1407 projects. The attached response provides information on each of the sixteen items requested by the CFWG. Many of these items are duplicative of information provided to the CFWG in the past and also, in great degree, replicate evaluation items used by the Judicial Council in the original determination of courthouse needs.

We would be remiss not to point out that replacement of the Tahoe City Courthouse has been consistently ranked in the "Immediate Need" category – ranking 15th in the original capital outlay assessment in 2004 and, most recently, 5th most needed Statewide in the FY 10/11 report (the last available before the SB 1407 projects were removed from the rankings). The immediate need for this facility remains unchanged. While we appreciate the opportunity to reiterate the needs for an accessible, adequate, and secure facility in the North Tahoe area, the scoring methods used from 2004 to today remain valid and we strongly believe that methodology should be given significant weight in your decision-making process.

Regards,

Hon. Alan V. Pineschi
Presiding Judge

**Response to the Court Facilities Working Group's
Invitation to Comment on Courthouse Projects
August 2012**

Facility/Project: New (North) Tahoe Area Courthouse Project (Placer County)

Comment Submitted by: Superior Court of Placer County

Executive Summary

The Court Facility Working Group (Working Group) is faced, yet again, with the difficult task of weighing the diverse needs of the courts slated for courthouses via SB 1407. We at the Placer Superior Court understand the necessity of this task and that due to the shifting of funds to support court operations there is no alternative but to decide that some projects can no longer move forward.

Per your request, we have compiled and submit to you a great deal of information on the necessity for the Tahoe Courthouse. On the pages that follow, we address each of the 16 items you requested – or make note of where the Administrative Office of the Courts is a better source of the information. But first let us summarize the key reasons why this one-courtroom facility is so necessary in the North Tahoe Basin.

The current Tahoe City Courthouse, located on the North Shore of Lake Tahoe, was constructed in 1959/1960 and was initially designed to support security needs related to the Winter Olympics at Squaw Valley. The building, which is owned by the County, includes the court, a Sheriff substation, and District Attorney Offices. To summarize the deficiencies:

- The court occupies only 2,100 total square feet. This includes the courtroom, clerk's office, and public hallway. The courtroom occupies only 525 square feet.
- The courtroom has no jury box and jury selection is handled at an off-site facility due to lack of seating and parking.
- In-custody defendants are walked from the back of the courtroom to the counsel table. During their short walk, they pass through the public seating area and immediately past the open hallway to the exit of the courthouse.
- There is no room for a security screening station. While signs advise the public that weapons are not allowed, there is no mechanism to prevent them.
- The courthouse inadequately accommodates persons with disabilities.
- Court files are stored in a storage shed outside. In winter, these files are inaccessible by court staff and the public due to snow (which this past winter was measured in 10s of feet).

The Placer County Grand Jury has cited the Tahoe City Courthouse as inadequate and in need for replacement nearly every year for at least 17 years (see summary on page 43 of

http://www.placer.courts.ca.gov/grandjury/2011-2012/Final_Report_2011-2012.pdf) In so finding, the Grand Jury, has also cited in past years the California Corrections Standards Authority's statements that the facility is "physically deteriorating and in need of replacement."

Some may argue that this one courtroom facility is more expensive to construct than larger court facilities. And that is true. The loss of economies of scale presented by a one courtroom facility and the real estate prices and short annual building cycle in the Tahoe Basin make it more expensive. According to one construction management company, construction costs in the Tahoe Basin tend to be 20-25% higher than those in the Central Valley due to 1) need for deeper foundations and utilities due to the cold weather; 2) stronger foundations, roofs, and other structures to handle snow loads; and 3) the need to complete construction in a shortened building season.

However, even before being designated as a "Cost Reduction Demonstration Project," our project team met and reduced the expected project square footage by more than 16% - and, combined with substantially lower than budgeted land costs, recognized cost savings of more than 18%. We will continue to work collaboratively with the AOC Office of Court Construction Management staff assigned to this project to design a cost effective court facility.

Others may argue that we have a modern facility in Roseville that eliminates the need for the Tahoe City courthouse project. Unfortunately it does not. The North Tahoe Basin is at the eastern end of Placer County approximately 100 miles from the main courthouse in Roseville. This distance is exacerbated during the winter months where conditions make the travel over Donner Summit from an elevation of 6,397 feet down to 241 feet difficult, dangerous, and at times impossible due to road conditions.

Finally, the North Shore of Lake Tahoe and the surrounding ski resorts are a major tourist location in our State. Visitors spend more than \$350 million annually in the North Tahoe region¹, creating jobs and generating revenue for business and government alike. Although we hope those visiting our State do not have a need to visit the court, our location in Tahoe City gives them access when and if it becomes necessary for them to interact with the justice system.

The New (North) Tahoe Area Courthouse Project (North Tahoe Courthouse Project) is vital to citizens and visitors in the Tahoe Basin. This not about a bigger, better, fancier building, it is a true access to justice issue. You can see this by the support letters we have included in Appendix A. We do not envy the task you have ahead and appreciate your time and consideration.

¹ Dean Runyan Associates (2009). *The Economic Significance of Travel to the North Lake Tahoe Area*. Tahoe City, CA: North Lake Tahoe Resort Association. Retrieved August 20, 2012 from <http://www.nltra.org/documents/pdfs/FinalReport.pdf> .

1.0 Security

The Tahoe City Courthouse, slated for replacement by the North Tahoe Courthouse Project, has serious and substantial security deficiencies. These include:

- There is not space for a full screening station. An old magnetometer has been placed in the hallway as a deterrent, but there is not space to truly monitor the magnetometer, address any alarms, or search bags in any way. There is no more screening at this facility than at your local retailer. This increases the risk of incident at this facility in a clear way.
- In-custody defendants must walk through the small public seating area to reach the counsel table. These defendants also pass directly in front of the exit hallway with a direct path to the public exit. This presents a potential risk to the public viewing the proceedings and a potential flight opportunity for those in custody.
- There is no bar or other barrier between the well and the public seating area and the bailiff's station is at the back of the courtroom. This presents a potential risk for altercations or an effort to reach the defendant, attorneys, court staff, or the judicial officers with a hindered ability for the bailiff to respond effectively.
- There is no secured parking area for the judicial officers.
- The courtroom and judges' chambers have exterior windows that face/open to a non-secure area. Any member of the public can walk directly up to those windows, presenting a potential risk to the judicial officer, staff, defendants, and the public.

Please see Appendix 2 photograph 1 and 2 for examples of these deficiencies. The overall lack of security in the courthouse and in the adjacent holding cells has been noted by the Administrative Office of the Courts, in the feasibility study for this project, for at least 17 consecutive years by Placer County Grand Juries, and by the California Corrections Standards Authority in their 2006-2008 Biennial Inspection Report.

The impacts of these deficiencies are clear. The lack of space to actively screen individuals entering the courthouse or the courtroom and the physical security constraints in the courtroom combine to increase the potential for a major event to occur.

2.0 Overcrowding

The court occupies a total of 2,100 square feet and the courtroom is a tiny 525 square feet. Overcrowding issues include:

- Public Windows and Lobby – The window to the clerk's office shares the same hallway as the access to the courtroom. When even a small number of individuals are seeking to speak to the clerk, this can result in congestion and make access to

and from the courtroom problematic. The tight hallway places litigants in close proximity in a confining space, resulting in both overcrowding and a security risk.

- Courtroom – Public seating is limited to 16 people and there is no space for jury selection. Public seating is almost completely eliminated when there is a jury trial as there is no separate jury seating. Jury selection is held two towns over along the North Shore of Lake Tahoe in a small convention facility due to the lack of space in the courthouse.
- Parking – There are a total of 24 parking spaces for the public and the District Attorney, Sheriff, and court staff that share the building. On a normal day, there are seven (7) spots for the public. This number is further restricted in the winter months due to snow accumulation.

3.0 Physical Conditions

The physical deficiencies of the current facility include:

- Numerous security deficiencies as noted in section 1.0.
 - No space for entrance screening.
 - In custody defendants are brought through the audience area of the courtroom.
 - The bailiff's station is toward the rear of the audience area.
 - No secured parking lot.
- Limited access for persons with disabilities.
- Insufficient space to store case files (files are stored in a storage container in the parking lot).
- Egress from Judges' bench travels through the managing clerk's office.
- There is no room for self help services or child custody recommending counseling.
- There is no area for attorneys to meet with their clients or parties to hold settlement conversations.
- There is little to no covered external waiting area, forcing the public to wait in cars or in inclement weather prior to court.
- Internal waiting area/lobby is insufficient, resulting in significant congestion when court starts and ends.

4.0 Access to Court Services

The current facility has no space to provide Family Law Facilitator or Self Help functions. As noted, there is no space for jury assembly. There is no seating area outside the courtroom for the jurors or an area apart from the public to wait until session begins. There is no space to hold on-site child custody recommending counseling sessions. There are no interview rooms for attorneys to speak to their clients or for parties to negotiate settlement. There is no space to hold community outreach meetings with the populations served in the Tahoe Basin – groups very different from those in the more suburban Roseville-Auburn areas. And there is no space for court files – only the most active are stored inside with the balance stored in a shipping container located in the parking lot. During the winter season the container either requires staff to bring their own shovel to clear snow to open the container doors or – at times the “file room” can become inaccessible, resulting in the inability to allow access to the court records.

Each of these issues is addressed by the proposed facility. The preliminary design concept is to create a multi-purpose room in the new facility that can act as a space to hold self-help workshops, serve as a jury waiting and deliberation room, hold community meetings, and would allow for on-site child custody recommending counseling. Initially contemplated as many rooms, the project team has devised ways to make a single room – through the use of vestibules for sound proofing and security – to serve these many purposes. Further, attorney rooms are included in the design as is a more open lobby to allow for physical separation of parties from one another, allowing for a calmer environment. And, finally, the building will have sufficient space for file storage and viewing by the public.

5.0 Economic Opportunity

Land prices are severely depressed in the Tahoe Basin, creating a unique opportunity to secure property at prices far lower than originally anticipated. The budget for land has been reduced by more than \$2 million from the original estimate.

The proposed location is less than ¼ of a mile from the existing Sheriff Substation and is located adjacent to land that could be purchased by the County should they choose to relocate that station. The bailiff serving the court also serves as the transportation officer for the Sheriff, resulting in substantial economies for both Sheriff's Transportation and Court Security. The currently proposed location would allow these economies to continue to the greatest degree possible.

6.0 Project Status

The project is currently in site selection. If not for the current hold on projects, the court believes the project would have been submitted to SPWB in early-August 2012 for purchase approval.

7.0 Court Usage

7.1 Courtroom Locations and Judicial Officer Calendar Assignments

The Placer Superior Court has five facilities – including the current Tahoe City Courthouse. One nine-courtroom facility in Roseville, a six-courtroom facility in Auburn, two one courtroom locations in Auburn (courtrooms connected to the Main Jail and Juvenile Hall), and the one-courtroom Tahoe City Courthouse.

Two of the courtrooms at the Historic Courthouse in Auburn are held dark – barring special circumstances – a result of too few judicial officers (as documented by the Judicial Needs Study) and insufficient staff to provide support to those courtrooms.

Note that we do not use a traditional judge to courtroom assignment in all instances. Many of our judges change courtrooms during the week or the month. For this reason, you will see more than one judicial officer listed in some of our courtrooms.

Courtroom Assignments

Department	Location	Judicial Officer(s)	Notes
1	Historic-Auburn	Hon. C. Nichols	
2	Historic-Auburn	Comm. J. Ross & Comm. D. Amara	
3	Historic-Auburn	Hon. M. Curry	
4	Historic-Auburn	Assigned Judges	
5	Historic-Auburn	DARK	
6	Historic-Auburn	DARK	
12	Juvenile – Auburn	Hon. F. Kearney	
13	Main Jail – Auburn	Hon. J. Cosgrove (Ret.) & Hon. A. Saint Evans (Ret.)	Assigned Judges currently assigned due to two judge vacancies.
14	Tahoe City	Comm. T. Bahrke	
30	SJC - Roseville	Hon. J. O'Flaherty & Ref. D. Bills	
31	SJC – Roseville	Hon. E. Gini & Hon. J. O'Flaherty & Hon. J. Penney	
32	SJC – Roseville	Hon. J. Cosgrove (Ret.) & Assigned Judge	Assigned Judges currently assigned due to two judge vacancies.
33	SJC – Roseville	Hon. C. Nichols & Hon. A. Pineschi	
40	SJC – Roseville	Comm. M. Jacques	
41	SJC – Roseville	Comm. J. Ross &	

		Comm. D. Amara	
42	SJC - Roseville	Hon. C. Wachob	
43	SJC – Roseville	Hon. J. O’Flaherty & Assigned Judge	Assigned Judges currently assigned due to two judge vacancies.
44	SJC – Roseville	Hon. J. Penney	

7.2 Estimated Population Served

The North Tahoe population is subject to extreme variability. According to the Placer County Planning Department and County Executive’s Office, more than 60% of all housing units in the area are second homes. This leads to a relatively small permanent population of around 8,500 residents. However, the peak population – during the winter ski months and summer tourist months for Lake Tahoe – is routinely to between 30,000 and 40,000 people. This peak population includes both second home owners who are not counted in the permanent population but spend substantial time in the region and tourists.

7.3 Number of Filings

In FY 2010/2011, the Placer Superior Court had a total of 62,496 new case filings. Of those, 3,824 were filed at the Tahoe City Courthouse. Courtwide this equates to roughly 4,300 filings per judicial position (14.5 courtwide) and 3,800 filings per judicial position for Tahoe City only.

7.4 Number of Dispositions

The court’s case management system does not currently track dispositions across all case types.

7.5 Number of Jury Trials

In FY 2011/2012, the Placer Superior Court had a total of 114 jury trials. Two jury trials were held at the Tahoe City courthouse. Only misdemeanor and limited civil jury trials are held at the Tahoe City courthouse. Jury trials are uncommon at the Tahoe City Courthouse due, in part, to the severe limitations of the facility. The need to hold jury selection at a separate facility places a substantial burden on the judicial and staff resources of our court. A second judicial officer must be assigned to the Tahoe location to hear other scheduled matters and the four staff at the facility has to support both the assembly location, the normal clerks’ office duties, and staff the courtroom.

7.6 Weighted Filings Data

Data to be provided by the AOC. However, the latest Judicial Needs Study found the Placer Superior Court to be in need of an additional 8.4 judicial officers (two have already been approved but remain unfunded). This is a relative need for 58% MORE judicial resources, making the Placer Court the 5th most in need of judicial resources in the State (based on percentage).

8.0 Type of Courthouse

The Tahoe City Courthouse – or new North Tahoe Courthouse – is a branch facility. This location hears traffic, misdemeanor, family law, probate, limited civil, and juvenile delinquency matters filed in or, at the request of the parties, involving residents of the Tahoe area.

The North Tahoe Basin is at the eastern end of Placer County approximately 100 miles from the main courthouse in Roseville. This distance is exacerbated during the winter months where conditions make the travel over Donner Summit from an elevation of 6,397 feet down to 241 feet difficult, dangerous, and at times impossible due to road conditions.

To clarify this point, on average, Interstate 80 – which connects Tahoe to southern Placer County – is closed or has road delays due to inclement weather an average of 20 times per winter (according to Caltrans and where a closure/delay is defined as a delay of two hours or more). Without the a courthouse in North Tahoe, those needing to avail themselves of the court would be forced to endure dangerous road conditions and risk potential delays and road closures on their way to or from the facilities in the southern end of the County.

Further, the North Shore of Lake Tahoe and the surrounding ski resorts are a major tourist location in our State, bringing over \$350 million to the California economy.² Our State holds Lake Tahoe up as a gem and one of its major treasures. Although we hope those visiting our State do not have a need to visit the court, our location in Tahoe City gives them access when and if it becomes necessary for them to interact with the justice system.

9.0 Disposition of Existing Court Space or Facility

The facility is County-owned. Once the new facility is constructed, the County will be released of any duty to provide the court space in the Tahoe area and will be able to use the existing 2,100 square feet for other purposes if they so choose.

² Dean Runyan Associates (2009). *The Economic Significance of Travel to the North Lake Tahoe Area*. Tahoe City, CA: North Lake Tahoe Resort Association. Retrieved August 20, 2012 from <http://www.nltra.org/documents/pdfs/FinalReport.pdf>.

The current location is not adequate for the County and Court needs. The current location is in a Stream Environment Zone, a designation that significantly restricts building on the site. The current facility was constructed prior to these designations and limitations. A renovated/replacement facility would face substantial difficulties working within the current restrictions and limitations. Due to these and other limitations, the existing site was eliminated from consideration by the Project Advisory Group and the AOC.

10.0 Consolidation of Facilities

The New North Tahoe Courthouse would replace the existing facility and allow the court to discontinue the lease of a storage container used to house court files.

11.0 Extent to Which Project Solves a Court's Facilities Problems

The court has few facility problems. The Santucci Justice Center in Roseville opened in 2008 and consolidated courthouses previously open in Auburn, Roseville, and Colfax. There are only two significant facility related issues for the court.

The first is the Tahoe City/North Tahoe Courthouse. A problem fully solved by this project.

The second relates to the need for an arraignment/high volume in-custody courtroom at the new South Placer Adult Correctional Facility. The County has constructed a connected courtroom shell but funding to complete the interior is not currently identified.

12.0 Expected Operational Impact

The new facility will be roughly 10,000 square feet larger than the current facility. This will result in additional local court costs for janitorial services. As with all facilities, there will be the need to purchase furniture and equipment, but there is no indication those costs will be any more or less than for any other contemplated facility.

The court would be able to discontinue the lease of a shipping container, a nominal savings.

AOC staff may be able to provide estimates, if any, of costs related to maintenance and snow removal and whether those costs will be lower or higher than that currently paid to the County for the current facility.

The court does not anticipate the need to add additional staff for the facility.

There may be an increased need for court security. The current facility has no room for an entry screening station and is co-located with the Sheriff substation. This allows

Court Security to allocate only 0.5 FTE to this facility. With the added need of perimeter security, there will be some increase in Court Security related costs.

13.0 Qualitative Statement of Need

This project is supported by the local community. See Appendix 1 for letters of support from County elected officials and private citizens.

In general, a new Tahoe Courthouse is needed because the:

- Current facility has serious security deficiencies.
- Current facility is overcrowded.
- Location in Tahoe is an access to justice issue.

14.0 Courtroom and Courthouse Closures

The Placer Superior Court discontinued the routine use of Departments 5 and 6 at the Historic Courthouse in Auburn in 2009. This was necessitated by the layoff of 36 staff and the resulting difficulty of staffing all courtrooms on a daily basis. These courtrooms were previously presided over by Assigned Judges and Temporary Judges. They do continue to be used periodically.

In FY 2011/2012 the court provided only limited services on twelve days due to fiscal constraints. For FY 2012/2013, the court has announced eight limited service days and a reduction in clerks' office hours on Fridays.

These limited service days and reduced hours do not change the need for a new courthouse in the North Tahoe area. The new courthouse resolves long standing deficiencies at the current facilities – deficiencies noted for more than a decade and a half by the local Grand Jury. Reductions in hours are a necessary reaction to the fiscal climate and, while unfortunately, are better options than full scale closures of additional courtrooms or court facilities. Eight fewer days and fewer hours on Friday do not change or lessen the need for access by the residents and visitors in Tahoe to a safe, local court facility.

15.0 Outside the Box Thinking

As already noted, the court – voluntarily and proactively – sought to reduce the cost and size of the project. A major space saver was the consolidation of the self help/jury deliberation/jury assembly/meeting room space from multiple rooms into a single multipurpose room. This, along with small changes in contemplated layout and recognizing some workstations and file areas were duplicative, allowed the court and AOC staff to reduce the size of the courthouse by 16%.

Initial design thoughts also incorporate a shift in the physical layout of the courthouse to minimize the need for elevators, secured pathways, and challenge historic thinking of how and where jury deliberation, courtrooms, and chambers need to be located relative to one another.

During site selection, considerable effort was made to negotiate the purchase of land – in cooperation with the County – that would allow for co-location of the Court and a new Sheriff's substation. Unfortunately, the Court and County were unable to come to agreement on price with the landowner.

As a one-courtroom facility, other options, like a hearing room instead of a full courtroom are not options. However, the court will continue to review the size and scope of the project throughout design to identify further

16.0 Expended Resources

The AOC can provide the amount of money spent to date on the project. The non-quantitative costs include considerable effort and mobilization of the Project Advisory Group – which included diverse set of members from the local community. Presentations have already been made to local community groups to explain the project, highlight the location, and begin the process of community dialogue.

In the past 30 years there have been at least three attempts to replace the Tahoe City Courthouse. All have stalled or failed for one reason or another. Our initial project meetings with the County and community members were met with skepticism and it took time and effort to convince participants that this was not an effort in futility. That this was different than all the times before. And, thus far, the project has proceeded further than any before and there is excitement about the completion of this facility. To stop this project now will make future efforts extremely difficult and “remobilizing” the community a fourth time may prove extraordinarily complex.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Letter of Support from Community

Appendix 2: Pictures

Appendix 1: Letters of Support from Community

The pages that follow provide letters from:

- Supervisor Jennifer Montgomery, Placer County Supervisor, August 2012
- District Attorney Scott Owens, Placer County District Attorney, October 2011
- Ms. Suzanne Gazzaniga on behalf of the Placer County Bar Association, October 2011
- Mr. Roger Kahn, local business owner and member of the Project Advisory Group, October 2011

County of Placer Board of Supervisors

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JACK DURAN
District 1

ROBERT M. WEYGANDT
District 2

JIM HOLMES
District 3

KIRK UHLER
District 4

JENNIFER MONTGOMERY
District 5



August 20, 2012

Administrative Office of the Courts
Office of Communications
455 Golden Gate Ave.
San Francisco, CA 94102-3688

Regarding: The Tahoe Courthouse Project - Court Facilities Working Group public comment.

To whom it may concern,

Please accept this letter as expressing my support for full funding for the proposed Tahoe Court project. As you are well aware, the current Court building in Tahoe City is old, unsafe, unsanitary and is frankly a poor first exposure to the American Justice System for many of our international visitors.

Lake Tahoe and California are premier destinations for visitors from the United States and the world. Sadly, when some of those visitors are forced to become part of our justice system—either as plaintiffs or defendants—they are subjected to a derelict building that has the following defects:

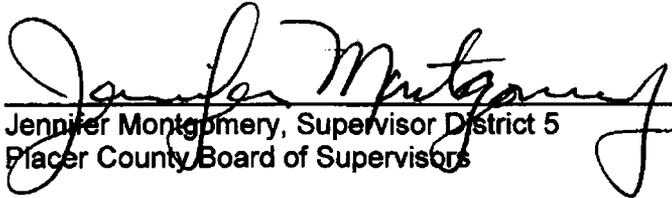
- Security screening in the existing facility is virtually nonexistent.
- In-custody defendants walk past public areas in the courtroom.
- The courtroom lacks enough public seating, does not have an area designated for the jury and does not have a jury box.
- The building is not in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- Parking is inadequate. It is not unusual to be unable to find a parking spot
- The court has two entrances due to its constrained layout, which is confusing and frustrating.
- Entering and exiting the building has very little weather protection, a particular issue during the snowy winters.

As the local elected representative for the Placer County portion of Lake Tahoe, I ask that you look at cutting back on some of the larger projects throughout the State to support construction of this "one courtroom" project in an underserved rural area.

The Placer County Grand Jury has repeatedly taken the position that this building (which is occupied by both the Court and the Sheriff's Office/Jail) needs to be replaced. This is an opportunity for the State to address a public safety concern specific to the Court and may indeed create an opportunity for Placer County to partner with the Court in some manner to construct a new Sheriff's Department and Jail facility.

I urge you to fully fund the Tahoe Court project. Please feel free to contact me for any additional questions, concerns or clarifications you might need.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Montgomery, Supervisor District 5
Placer County Board of Supervisors



R. SCOTT OWENS

DISTRICT ATTORNEY

PLACER COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY

10810 Justice Center Drive, Suite 240 • Roseville, CA 95678

6231

October 13, 2011

Administrative Office of the Courts
Attn: Comments to Court Facilities Working Group
455 Golden Gate Ave., 8th Floor
San Francisco, CA 94102

Re: Replacement of Tahoe City Justice facility

To whom it may concern:

The Tahoe Justice Center and the Placer County Sheriff's Burton Creek Substation are located in one building referred to as the Burton Creek Justice Center. A satellite office for the District Attorney and Court Clerk is also located in this facility. The Justice Center is a two-story wood frame building constructed in 1959, which was originally constructed as a temporary facility constructed for the 1960 Winter Olympics which were held in Olympic Valley. The building is still being used today by the aforementioned departments.

The building is in dire need of replacement and the Court in particular. Dating back as far as 1999 the Placer County Grand Jury found the building unsafe and inadequate and recommended replacing the facility within three years. As recent as 2010, the Placer County Grand Jury again recommended the immediate replacement of the facility.

The Court facility is in need of replacement for a number of reasons, primarily addressing the security of employees and the public, as well as addressing the proper functioning of the Court.

Security in the existing building is virtually nonexistent. Due to the size and layout of the building, the use of a metal detector to search individuals attending court for deadly or dangerous weapons is not practical. Additionally, the court does not have an x-ray machine to view the contents of packages, parcels, purses, briefcases or other containers which attendees bring with them to court. The courtroom has two windows which are not bulletproof and open directly into the courtroom. In fact, the prosecutor's desk is located directly in front of one of the windows. Anyone can walk in front of those windows, as they are in an unsecured area of the grounds. Moreover, there is only one unlocked entrance/exit to the courtroom, thus in an emergency, staff and public may not be able to safely exit the courtroom. In addition, the proximity of opposing attorneys creates a constant conflict and makes communicating with clients virtually impossible.



R. SCOTT OWENS

DISTRICT ATTORNEY

PLACER COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY

10810 Justice Center Drive, Suite 240 • Roseville, CA 95678

6231

Furthermore the current building is not in compliance with the American with Disabilities Act. In fact, to remove a person from the courtroom after suffering a medical emergency is nearly impossible, the individual actually would have to be removed through the clerk's office.

The size of the current building is inadequate to properly serve the public. In the courtroom there is not an area for the jury. There is no permanent jury box. During jury trials the jury sits in chairs which have been placed in two rows by court staff. There is not sufficient seating for the public during jury trial. Due to the size of the courtroom and the layout necessary during a jury trial, there is one seat for the public to use. Additionally, due to the small size of the courtroom, during jury trials it is necessary to conduct jury selection at a location which can accommodate the entire venire. The court has been forced to rent a room in the local conference center to complete jury selection.

Furthermore, parking at the current facility is inadequate. On days where the calendars are large, it is not unusual to be unable to find a parking place on the courthouse property.

For the foregoing reasons this office strongly supports the construction of a new court facility in the North Lake Tahoe.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "R. Scott Owens".

R. SCOTT OWENS,
PLACER COUNTY DISCTRICT ATTORNEY



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October 16, 2011

Hon. Brad R. Hill
Administrative Presiding Justice
Court of Appeal, 5th District
Transmitted via email

Re: New North Tahoe Courthouse Project

Dear Honorable Brad R. Hill,

On behalf of the Placer County Bar Association, this letter is written to encourage the Court Facilities Working Group to support the new North Tahoe Area Courthouse in Placer County.

Simply stated, the need for a secure, appropriately sized court to allow the citizens of this California region access to justice is essential. The North Tahoe region, due to its geographical location, is almost an entirely different county, often separated in winter by walls of snow. Within these walls, people live, work, get married and divorced. They may become victims of crime and need the assistance of neutral magistrates. Most importantly, the North Tahoe region's population fluctuates almost every weekend. Not only do the permanent residents need access to justice, the temporary residents do as well. Moreover, these temporary residents, tourists and visitors from all over the world, may occasionally need to appear as litigants, as victims and/or as witnesses in this court. When these visitors and tourists enter the North Tahoe courthouse it would be appropriate for the courthouse to reflect the dignity, stability and principles of jurisprudence in existence throughout the United States of America.

While the Court Facilities Working Group must follow the guidelines regarding the prioritization of the projects, the group must also come to understand the unique needs of this region to appropriately assess the projects. The current courthouse in North Tahoe is inadequate and has been inadequate for decades. The improvement in security a new courthouse would bring to the community, visitors, staff and litigants would ensure the region safe and equal access to justice for all in the North Tahoe Region.

This project clearly meets all of the criteria. If this project is delayed or eliminated, the regions access to justice will be severely impacted. The Placer County Bar Association urges this project maintain its priority ranking. This project is a critical component to a safe, secure, stable and more successful community in the North Tahoe region.

Sincerely,

Suzanne I. Gazzaniga
President, Placer County Bar Association

From: Roger Kahn [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, October 14, 2011 3:16 PM
To: 'occmcomments@jud.ca.gov'
Subject: North Tahoe Courthouse

**ROGER KAHN
POST OFFICE BOX 1305
TAHOE CITY, CA 96145**

October 14, 2011

Administrative Office of the Courts
Attn: Comments to Court Facilities Working Group
455 Golden Gate Avenue, 8th Floor
San Francisco, CA 95102

Re: New Tahoe Courthouse Project

To Whom It May Concern:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the need for the new North Tahoe (Placer County) Courthouse Construction Project. Let me start by describing why the current courthouse is in dire need of replacement. To summarize:

- Security screening in the existing facility is virtually nonexistent.
- In-custody defendants walk past public areas in the courtroom.
- The courtroom lacks enough public seating, does not have an area designated for the jury and does not have a jury box.
- The building is not in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- Parking is inadequate. It is not unusual to be unable to find a parking spot.
- The court has two entrances due to its constrained layout, which is confusing and frustrating.
- Entering and exiting the building has very little weather protection, a particular issue during the snowy winters.

Most of these problems have been cited by the Placer County Grand Jury for many years and they have repeatedly called for the replacement of the courthouse.

Your Working Group should also know that for both convenience and safety, we need a court facility on the North Shore of Lake Tahoe. While the courthouses in the south-western end of the County are great facilities, they are hours away from Tahoe and, in the winter, require travel over mountain passes that are treacherous and can be delayed or closed for snow removal.

Further, as a local business owner, having the courthouse along the North Shore makes it far more convenient for local residents to perform important functions as they relate to their obligations under the justice system including testifying at trials that are held locally and serving on juries.

For all of these reasons, I support and ask for your continued support of the North Tahoe Courthouse construction project.

Very truly yours,

Roger Kahn

Appendix 2: Pictures

Photograph 1: Hallway from Entrance/Clerk Window to Courtroom



Photograph 2: Courtroom (Note Exterior Windows)



*Response to the Court Facilities Working Group's
Invitation to Comment on Courthouse Projects – August 2012*

Facility/Project: New (North) Tahoe Area Courthouse Project (Placer County)

Photograph 3: Exterior File Storage



Photograph 4: Exterior in Winter 1



*Response to the Court Facilities Working Group's
Invitation to Comment on Courthouse Projects – August 2012*

Facility/Project: New (North) Tahoe Area Courthouse Project (Placer County)

Photograph 5: Exterior in Winter 2

