



Superior Court
State of California
County of Lake
255 N. Forbes Street
Lakeport, California 95453
707-263-2374

MARY E. SMITH

COURT EXECUTIVE/CLERK
JURY COMMISSIONER

September 22, 2011

Court Facilities Working Group
c/o Justice Brad R. Hill
Presiding Justice
Court of Appeal, Fifth District

Via electronic mail only

Re: Request for Information on SB1407 Projects
New Lakeport Courthouse

Dear Justice Hill and Working Group Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide additional information regarding our new Lakeport Courthouse project prior to making recommendations to the Judicial Council. We appreciate the gravity of the decisions before you.

First, we would like to briefly address the inadequacies of our current facility which will speak to the desperate need for the new Lakeport Courthouse. The current facility lacks adequate security, is severely overcrowded, is in poor physical condition, and creates an unsafe environment for staff and the public that visit our courthouse.

Security

- Weapons screening is limited because this is a shared use facility and the county is resistant to stringent screening. There are six doors without screening and folks just wait to follow an employee into the building or they catch the door when someone exits to enter the building.
- There are no separate circulation paths for judges, staff or in-custody defendants. Judges often walk through hallways with the parties whose

case they have just presided over. In-custody defendants are lead through public hallways to the courtroom, posing a security risk to the public as well as creating an escape risk.

- There is no secure judicial parking.

Inadequate space

- We have roughly 15,000 square feet of space to house four courtrooms, 39 staff, 4 judicial officers, public counters, in addition to all parties and members of the public who have business with the court.
- There is no jury assembly room and no alternative place for jurors to await jury selection. They are forced to stand in the public hallways while they wait to be called to a courtroom. Aside from the inconvenience for the jurors, this also means jurors are waiting in the same hallway with the attorneys, defendants, parties, and/or witnesses in the case they could potentially decide. (See photos A and B below.)
- There is no place for victims and witnesses to wait, they are also forced to wait in the public hallways, sometimes with the alleged perpetrator.
- Staff spaces are also overcrowded with boxes and file cabinets being permanently stored in hallways. (See photo C below.) Staff are quite literally working in converted closets and hallways. (See photos D and E below.)

Maintenance Issues

- Heating and air conditioning issues mean that courtrooms and office spaces often reach over 80 degrees in the summer and below 60 degrees in the winter. We often have leaks and plumbing issues.
- In winter months when staff are using space heaters at their desks, the electrically system will quickly become overloaded and breakers will trip. It can actually take over an hour to fix this problem.
- Early fall after the first cold snap, bats find their way into all areas of our floor (seeking warmth), despite many unsuccessful efforts by maintenance staff to rectify this problem.

As a small underfunded court with an annual budget of approximately \$4 million, we are unable to save enough money for the recommended reserves much less save enough money to complete this project on our own. Without SB1407 funds, the court will remain in the current dilapidated and unsafe building. Furthermore, we are gravely concerned about delaying the new

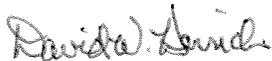
Lakeport Courthouse project. As we have seen in the past two year, SB1407 funds are at great risk of being "borrowed" and we will lose not only our courthouses but the extraordinary impact these construction projects will have on our economy.

On a statewide level it is important for the branch to move forward with as many projects that can be successfully completed quickly for many reasons beside the dire need for new courthouses. We need to prove our ability to build beautiful courthouses, on time and on budget, to build our confidence and silence our critics. The new Lakeport Courthouse a perfect opportunity to showcase these skills. We should have the deed to the property any day now. There are no buildings that have to be demolished, and no significant environmental issues on our site. While there was some initial resistance from members of the public as to where on the site the building should be placed, at a recent Project Advisory Committee meeting, the group endorsed the new revised location of the building and is very supportive of the project moving forward. The new Lakeport Courthouse project is one that is ready to move forward to completion on-time in late 2014.

Lastly, one of the items Justice Hill requested in our response was a discussion of how the new building might affect operating costs. We do not anticipate our security costs will increase as a result of the new building as we will continue with the same service level in the new building; four courtrooms and one screening station. We do anticipate increase costs in utilities and janitorial expense, although it is hard to provide a meaningful estimate at this time. However, this building will be a much more energy efficient and we will be combining three facilities into one, thereby creating a potential savings of approximately \$60,000 per year. To a court our size, that is a substantial savings.

Please feel free to contact us if you need any further information.

Sincerely,



David W. Herrick
Presiding Judge



Mary E. Smith
Court Executive Officer

Photo A



Photo B



Photo C



Photo D



Photo E

