



NEWS RELEASE OC 27-11
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Two Potential Sites Approved for New Los Banos Courthouse

SAN FRANCISCO—The State Public Works Board (SPWB) has approved selection of two potential sites for the proposed new courthouse in Los Banos. The preferred site is 4.8 acres in the 16000 block of South Mercy Springs Road, owned by the Merced Community College District. The state Administrative Office of the Courts, which is managing the courthouse project, is working closely with Merced County, which plans to acquire the remainder of this property for county services. The alternate site is approximately 4.5 acres of an 11-acre parcel at the northwest corner of Hwy 152 and Mercy Springs Road.

“In these bad economic times, we are fortunate that funding currently remains available for this important project. The courthouse will be first rate and a facility the people of Merced County will be proud to call their own. I look forward to our continued collaborative work with the City of Los Banos, the County of Merced and the State to make this project become a reality,” stated Hon. Brian L. McCabe, Presiding Judge, Merced County Superior Court.

The AOC, the County, and the Superior Court of Merced County will hold a community meeting on Tuesday, April 19, 2011, to provide information about the project’s current status and site options and hear comments from the public.

Community Meeting Date/Time: Tuesday, April 19, 2011, 5 pm to 7 pm
Location: College Greens Neighborhood Center, 1815 Scripps Dr., Los Banos

Site selection approval enables the AOC to undertake further due diligence, environmental assessment under the California Environmental Quality Act, and negotiations that will ultimately result in selection of the final site, expected by mid-year. Final site selection will be validated by the Superior Court of Merced County and the project’s advisory group. Site acquisition, which also requires SPWB approval, is expected to be completed later this year, after which architectural design can proceed. The architecture firm of Williams + Paddon. has been selected to design the new courthouse.

The proposed project will house two courtrooms in approximately 29,000 square feet. It will replace the existing one-courtroom courthouse, which is overcrowded, functionally deficient, and significantly lacking in security features to current standards.

The new courthouse project, with an estimated total cost of \$32.5 million, was ranked as an “Immediate Need” in the judicial branch’s capital-outlay plan, making it among the judicial

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branch's highest-priority infrastructure projects. It is among 41 projects to be funded by Senate Bill 1407, which finances critically needed courthouse construction, renovation, and repair through a portion of judicial branch fees, fines, and penalties, without impact on the state's General Fund.

More about the project may be found on the California Courts website at www.courts.ca.gov/2807.htm.

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The Judicial Council is the policymaking body of the California courts, the largest court system in the nation. Under the leadership of the Chief Justice and in accordance with the California Constitution, the council is responsible for ensuring the consistent, independent, impartial, and accessible administration of justice. The Administrative Office of the Courts carries out the official actions of the council and promotes leadership and excellence in court administration.