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**NEWS RELEASE**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Site Finalized for New Santa Rosa Criminal Courthouse**

SAN FRANCISCO—The State Public Works Board today approved acquisition of three properties needed for the new criminal courthouse and related parking for the Superior Court of Sonoma County. The site is located in the Sonoma County Administration Center campus, north of downtown Santa Rosa. The new courthouse will be located just east of the Hall of Justice, on a cleared site where the Old Jail facility was previously located. The nearly seven acres that the state will acquire from the county also includes two parcels for surface parking—one adjacent to the new courthouse, the other a current parking lot on Russell Avenue near the new courthouse site. The County of Sonoma will sell the land to the state Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC), which is managing the project, for \$5.2 million, at a discount from its appraised value.

René A. Chouteau, Presiding Judge, attended the SPWB meeting in Sacramento to ensure he was present to answer any questions and show judicial leadership commitment and support for this project as a top priority for the court, which is “a safe and efficient facility that provides the excellent services that our community deserves. Jurors are entitled to convenient and comfortable accommodations while performing their constitutional duty in the administration of criminal justice.”

José Octavio Guillén, Court Executive Officer, stated, “The approval by the State Public Works Board is a huge milestone and the culmination of great collaboration between the Court, County, and AOC. The unique and complex nature of this site acquisition required a strong partnership to make this possible. Sonoma County residents will not only benefit from having a new, secure, and efficient criminal courthouse, but also from the hundreds of jobs created during the construction process that will help fuel our local economy. This is truly a great day for our Court and the people we serve.”

The new courthouse will house 15 courtrooms, space for court administration, the court clerk, court security operations and holding, a jury assembly room, and building support space in approximately 173,500 square feet. The new courthouse will consolidate all criminal court operations in a single and secure facility for greater efficiency. Criminal proceedings will be moved from the Hall of Justice, built in 1965, which is inadequate, undersized, and lacking in security features to current standards. The new building will also replace two courtrooms in the current jail as well as administrative space formerly located in a leased facility.

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Escrow on the property is expected to close by mid-June, enabling the AOC to proceed with architectural design, for which it has engaged the architecture firm of Richard Meier & Partners. Construction is currently scheduled to begin in early 2014 and be completed by early 2016, subject to change.

The new courthouse project was ranked as an “Immediate Need” in the judicial branch’s capital-outlay plan, making it among the branch’s highest-priority infrastructure projects. It is funded by [Senate Bill 1407](#), enacted in 2008 to provide up to \$5 billion in funding for new and renovated courthouses using court fees, penalties, and assessments rather than taxpayer revenues from the state’s General Fund.

More information on the project can be found on the California Courts website at [www.courts.ca.gov/facilities-sonoma.htm](http://www.courts.ca.gov/facilities-sonoma.htm).

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