

Mills County Citizens' Jail Committee

Report of Recommendations to the Mills County, Iowa Board of Supervisors

9 December 2008

Executive Summary:

The Mills County Citizen’s Jail Committee was established at the request of the County Board of Supervisors. The Committee’s Charter was as follows: *“Form and make recommendations to the Mills County Board of Supervisors as to the design, location and capacity of a new jail public safety facility that will meet Mills County needs for the next 25 years plus on the basis of best cost/benefit ratio.”*

The Citizen’s Jail Committee worked from June 19, 2008 to December 4, 2008; a total of 13 full Committee meetings over six months.

The Committee finds that the need for a new Jail is indisputable and urgent.

The Committee evaluated twelve options to address the County’s needs. Seven individual concepts/sites were developed and evaluated to conclusion. All seven concepts were evaluated based on a set of twelve criteria.

The concept receiving the Committee’s top-ranking is for Mills County to pursue the design and construction of a building addition adding to the existing Mills County Jail.

With the presentation of this recommendation the Committee concludes this phase of the project’s development. We thank the Board of Supervisors for the opportunity to serve on this important Committee.

Respectfully submitted by the members of the Mills County Citizens’ Jail Committee:

D. Michael Malone, Chair

John Butler

William Campbell

Peter G. Franks

Barb Mass

Nancy O’Rourke

Vince Salerno

Duane Volz

Mills County Citizens' Jail Committee - Project Report

Introduction and Background:

This report summarizes the findings, conclusions, and recommendations reached by the Mills County Citizens' Jail Committee.

In October 2007 Mills County conducted a Special Election to approve a Bond Issue to design and construct a proposed jail/public safety facility near Glenwood. The proposed \$6,900,000.00 Bond Issue was proposed for the construction of a 23,972 SF Public Safety Facility. Estimated construction costs for this proposal was \$ 5,646,912.00. Voter turnout for this election was less than 13% and the Bond Issue received 42% support of the required 60% needed for approval.

While this election effort was not successful, the needs it sought to address have not changed. The Mills County Citizen's Jail Committee was established in early 2008 at the request of the County Board of Supervisors. This Committee was charged with making recommendations related to Mills County's jail and other public safety facility needs. Specifically, the Committee's Charter was as follows: *"Form and make recommendations to the Mills County Board of Supervisors as to the design, location and capacity of a new jail public safety facility that will meet Mills County needs for the next 25 years plus on the basis of best cost/benefit ratio."*

The Committee was comprised entirely of Mills County residents and Chaired by veteran businessman Mike Malone. There were no elected officials or County employees on the committee. The Committee's work was independent and objective and was free of any pressures leading towards a specific recommendation. The Committee's work was not influenced by outside forces and our recommendations are the product of the Committee's unhindered work.

The Citizen's Jail Committee worked from June 19, 2008 to December 4, 2008; a total of 13 full Committee meetings over six months. All meetings were open to the public. The recommendations are signed by eight members who worked on the Committee from the beginning. Four Committee members attrited. These are the unanimous recommendations of the Committee after reviewing a total of twelve (12) options that are detailed in the project report.

Initial Findings:

The Committee finds that the need for a new Jail is indisputable and urgent. Existing facilities are cramped, insufficient, and out-of-compliance with many regulations and standards. While the Sheriff's Office and jail staff have done an admirable job making do with the existing facilities; security, safety, and exposure to liability are all serious concerns that demand an appropriate long-term solution as soon as possible. Doing nothing is not an acceptable course.

Process:

The committee evaluated the County's current and future facility needs with respect to Jail functions and Sheriff's Administrative Offices. Also under consideration were the needs and justifications for addressing facility needs related to Emergency Management functions, 911-Communications Center functions, as well as accessibility deficiencies in existing County facilities.

The Committee benefitted greatly from the abundance of information generated in the 2007 Bond Issue design efforts. Design data and inmate population projections were current and relevant. We also had an invaluable resource in Lt. Mike Osler, whose input was thoughtful and informative. His in-depth knowledge of jail and Sheriff Office operations permitted the committee to fully grasp the needs and priorities of a new facility. Throughout the course of this six-month process there were several subcommittee meetings, including an ad-hoc working meeting to discuss and optimize the programmed project size. Function, capacity, and needs for all spaces were scrutinized. Reductions in many areas were achieved.

It should be noted that the Citizens' Committee engaged in considerable discussion related to the disposition of the existing jail building. The 1915 jail is part of the historic fabric of downtown Glenwood. The Committee felt it was exceedingly important to account for the jail building in the context of all concepts evaluated. The Committee felt it would be irresponsible for an empty and un-renovated jail building to be the byproduct of any proposal.

An initial Project Program Statement was generated for the August 14, 2008 Committee Meeting. This document listed all spaces to be included in a proposed project and described a building that would be 20,373 Gross Square Feet in area, including a 28-bed jail component. This included spaces for E-911 Communications Center (1084 GSF) as well as County Emergency Management spaces (2,188 GSF).

A series of seven sites/design concepts was developed based on this initial Project Program Statement. Upon evaluation of these concepts, the Committee determined that closer scrutiny for both justification and size of all included spaces and functions was in order.

A revised Project Program Statement was generated following an extended subcommittee meeting on September 30, 2008. This document described a building that would be 13,647 Gross Square Feet in area, including a 24-bed jail component. Spaces for E-911 Communications Center (1,084 GSF) as well as County Emergency Management spaces (2,188 GSF) were not included in this revised calculation.

A major challenge in contemplating any major design and construction project is counterbalancing long-term desires for growth, expansion, and flexibility with the near-term realities of making a project efficient, economical, and achievable. The reductions made with this revised Project Program Statement have found a responsible balance between needs and economy.

Options and Concepts Evaluated:

The committee evaluated twelve options to address the County's needs.

Several involved strategies that would require long-term agreements with other parties and/or jurisdictions. Upon research and evaluation all of these were tabled. The Committee determined that these were not well-suited to Mills County and did warrant additional evaluation efforts.

Concepts evaluated:

- Do-nothing - Status quo. Deferring the issue to some later time and continuing with current operations and deficient facilities. In this case, the Committee is assessing the County's costs, effectiveness and safety, and liability exposure associated with to continued operations at the current Jail.
 - *The Committee concluded that the need for a new jail facility is real and justifiable. The current facilities are outdated, insufficient, and represent significant safety and liability issues.*
- Outsourcing all Mills County Jail needs to other jurisdictions and limiting in-county jail functions to the minimum required operation of a 24-hour holding facility only.
 - *The Committee concluded that long-term costs associated with this solution would be unjustifiably high, and logistical difficulties of prisoner transportation would be profound.*
- Seeking a third-party vendor who would design, construct, and operate a new jail facility on a contract basis.
 - *The Committee concluded that Mills County's needs are far too small to be of interest to any businesses engaged in executing and operating contract jail projects. This option was tabled.*
- Seeking a developer who would design and construct a new jail facility to be occupied by Mills County under a long-term lease agreement.
 - *The Committee concluded that the lease costs would not be financially viable within the County's anticipated tax revenues and budgets. This option was tabled.*
- Pursuing agreements with other jurisdictions to develop a multi-county/regional jail facility to be located in Mills County.
 - *The Committee concluded that this approach would delay and complicate an already cumbersome process. Multiple agreements and multiple bond issue referendums made this concept risky and difficult. This option was tabled.*

Seven individual concepts/sites were developed and evaluated to conclusion. Three (A-1, A-2, and A-3) proposed a new building on an un-built site, assuming different locations for each. Three concepts (B, C-1 and C-2) involved design and construction of building additions, adding to existing Mills County facilities. The seventh concept (concept D) investigated the purchase and adaptive reuse of a standing building located west of Glenwood.

It is important to note that the product of these concept-generating efforts is neither a designed solution nor a fixed cost. The concepts were developed to test for feasibility and provide a reasonable basis for the Committee to perform an “apples-to-apples” comparison. All seven concepts appear to be feasible. Concept sketches and preliminary concept budgets for each were generated. Reasonable assumptions have been made as to locations, size, feasibility, and probable project costs.

- Concept/Site C-2. Design and construction of a building addition to the existing Mills County Courthouse, adding to the south.
 - *This concept and location was ranked 7th out of 7 concepts fully evaluated.*
- Concept/Site C-1. Design and construction of a building addition to the existing Mills County Courthouse, adding to the east.
 - *This concept and location was ranked 6th out of 7 concepts fully evaluated.*
- Concept/Site D. Renovation/Adaptive re-use of an existing building for needed facility functions. A standing building located west of Glenwood of sufficient size and compatible construction type was identified and evaluated.
 - *This concept and location was ranked 5th out of 7 concepts fully evaluated.*
- Concept/Site A-2. Design and construction of a new one-story facility on a new site, with proposed site to be in the vicinity of Malvern, Iowa.
 - *This concept and location was ranked 4th out of 7 concepts fully evaluated.*
- Concept/Site A-1. Design and construction of a new one-story facility on a new site, with proposed site to be in the vicinity of 190th Street west of Glenwood near I-29 & US 34 interchange.
 - *This concept and location was ranked 3rd out of 7 concepts fully evaluated.*
- Concept/Site A-3. Design and construction of a new one-story facility on a new site, with proposed site to be south of Glenwood on the “apple orchard” a parcel of land currently part of the Glenwood Resource Center. This site would have direct vehicle access off of US 34, east of the 221st street overpass.
 - *This concept and location was ranked 2nd out of 7 concepts fully evaluated.*
- Concept/Site B. Design and construction of a building addition to the existing Mills County Jail, including renovation of the existing Jail building.
 - *This concept and location was ranked 1st out of 7 concepts fully evaluated.*

Evaluation and Ranking:

All seven concepts (A-1 through D, above) were evaluated on the basis of best cost-benefit ratio, based on a set of twelve criteria. The criteria and the evaluation process were developed and accepted by the Committee. The criteria for evaluation were as follows:

1. Security
2. Total project cost
3. Location
4. Future expandability
5. Is this a common sense solution?
6. Transport
7. County – wide solution ...public opinion
8. Life cycle costs
9. Appearance
10. Utilization of existing Mills County Jail building
11. Ease of construction
12. Incidental benefits to Mills County Facilities

Each of the seven concept/sites was individually evaluated by each of the Committee members. Results were tabulated and discussed. The criteria above were tabulated and calculated in descending order of importance (#1=most important, #12=least important). Scoring based on the agreed criteria resulted in ranked recommendations.

Top-recommended Concept:

The concept receiving the Committee’s top-ranking is for the County to pursue the design and construction of a building addition adding to the existing Mills County Jail. The new addition would contain and support jail-related spaces and functions. The existing jail building will be fully renovated to provide spaces for the Sheriff’s Administrative Offices. The Committee’s evaluations appear to indicate that this is a common-sense solution that is appropriate, functional, and will address the County’s needs for many years. Further, it is cost effective, and benefits greatly from the close proximity to the County Courthouse. Finally, this concept offers the added advantages of utilizing the existing Mills County Jail Building and it will architecturally reinforce the east edge of Glenwood Square.

The top-recommended concept is markedly different from the design proposed in the 2007 Bond Issue effort:

	Jail Beds	Jail size	Sheriff’s Offices	Total size	Construction Costs	Overall Project Costs
2007 Bond Issue Proposal	32	14,854SF	6,738SF	23,972SF	\$5,464,962.00	\$6,900,000.00
<i>Costs below are adjusted to 2009 \$ for comparison purposes</i>						
2007 Bond Issue Proposal (2009 \$)					\$5,902,159.00	\$7,452,000.00
Citizen’s Committee Top-recommended Concept	24	11,361SF	4,120SF	15,481SF	\$4,226,000.00	\$5,557,000.00
Reductions	8	3,930SF	2,618SF	8,491SF	\$1,676,159.00	\$1,895,000.00

In order to weigh costs associated with the 2007 proposal against to the concepts evaluated by the Citizens’ Committee adjustments for time and cost inflation must be taken into account. Targeting a possible Bond Issue special election in Mid-2009, escalation due to construction costs inflation would revise the costs from the 2007 proposal as follows: construction costs \$ 5,902,159.00 and total project costs \$ 7,452,000.00 for comparison purposes, as indicated above. Inflation is based on the LSI Index, a nationally-respected index of commercial construction cost trends.

Unlike the 2007 proposal, the recommended concept does not incorporate the County E-911 Communications Center or the spaces for the County Emergency Management functions. The Committee was not convinced that the benefits for incorporating these functions could justify the expansion of project size and related costs. It should be noted that either, or both, are comparatively small units and could be incorporated, but not without expanding project size and costs.

The jail facility proposed is a 24 bed facility, as compared to 32 beds in the 2007 proposal. Inmate projections looking 20 years into the future forecast average daily inmate population to be 15.2 to 16.7 with a 140% "peaking factor" resulting in recommended size of 23-26 beds. It should be noted that the consultant's projected 2007 populations were 12.2 to 12.6, whereas actual 2007 daily population was 8.9. Daily populations for 2008 were trending downwards from the previous year. These actual statistics include both male and female inmates. Also included are intake prisoners who spent less than 24 hours under County custody. In a new facility, these intake prisoners would typically never occupy any cell other than an intake/holding cell. All information taken into account, the Committee concluded that 24 jail beds were appropriate and justified.

The Mills County Jail Administrator was included in these discussions and expressed his concurrence that this conclusion was adequate and appropriate. It was noted that the proposed project also includes three intake holding cells, one for an individual prisoner and two group cells. The jail bed count does not include these spaces. Total jail capacity would be 24 beds plus an additional capacity of 10-12 inmates in the three planned holding cells. It was also noted that a six-bed dormitory area was included for work-release and other prisoners with a minimum security classification. Expansion of this function could easily be accommodated in the design phase, with an incremental space expansion and the additional plumbing fixtures.

The Sheriff's Administrative Offices included in the 2007 Bond Issue proposal accounted for 6,738 SF. Existing spaces total 2,390 SF, including basement storage rooms which are not well utilized. Basement areas excluded, Sheriff Administrative spaces account for 990 SF within the existing jail building. Following a space-by-space review of Sheriff Offices programmed areas, significant reductions were realized. Sheriff Administrative Offices spaces included in the proposed top-recommended concept are 4,120 SF. In the concepts involving newly-constructed (new building) spaces for the Sheriff offices space allocation is 3,518 SF.

Recommended future actions:

The Committee concludes this phase of the project's development with this report. The County will need to decide what the next steps are and when those steps will be taken. We recommend that the County proceed with additional efforts to develop the top-ranked concept. Next logical steps would include:

- Establish a Phase II Design Committee, including members of this group as well as appropriate County officials and employees, to guide continued efforts.
- Issue a "Request For Qualifications" for Architect-led design teams to submit their credentials for review, interviews, and design team selection.
- Work with the selected design team to further evaluate and develop top-ranked concept(s).
- Select single concept and develop the solution as necessary to generate design graphics and an estimated construction cost corresponding to that design solution.
- Establish a well-defined project budget including hard costs and soft costs.
- Set the language and the amount for a Bond Issue.
- Prepare graphics and other promotional materials as needed to communicate the solution and the costs to the voters of Mills County.
- Promote the need, solution, and justification to the voters of the county prior to a special election.
- Hold a Special Election for voter approval.

With the presentation of this recommendation the Committee concludes this phase of the project's development. We thank the Board of Supervisors for the opportunity to serve on this important Committee.