

Regional Jail Planning

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1. Why must Shoreline look for a new place to house its misdemeanor population?

Most of the cities in King County, including Shoreline, contract with Yakima and King Counties to house the majority of their misdemeanor populations. Shoreline's current contract with King County expires on December 31, 2012. King County, based on the projections for their own jail needs, informed cities that it would no longer provide jail beds for the cities' misdemeanor populations after 2012.

Cities have been negotiating a contract extension for up to two years with King County to allow for enough time to site and build a new city facility. The County has offered the cities 220 beds in 2013 and 100 beds in 2014. The County's offer of 100 beds in 2014 does not come close to meeting the cities' collective bed need. Therefore, the cities must have an alternative jail identified and ready to house their inmates by the end of 2013.

Shoreline also contracts with Yakima County (current contract expires on December 31, 2010) for some of its bed need. However, Shoreline mostly uses Yakima to house its sentenced inmates or its inmates who will be in jail for more than a few days. The majority of Shoreline's misdemeanants are in jail

for 3 days or less. Shoreline needs a jail nearby where it can book people after they are arrested. In addition, Yakima County does not house those inmates needing substantial psychiatric or medical care, a service only King County currently offers. Yakima also has limited space for female inmates. Twenty percent of Shoreline's misdemeanor population is female. Therefore, Yakima County is not a viable replacement for those services offered by King County.

Shoreline also uses the City of Issaquah's jail to house inmates and has designated Issaquah as its primary booking facility. However, the Shoreline Police Department only books about 25% of Shoreline's inmates. The other 75% of inmates are either booked by other jurisdictions on outstanding Shoreline warrants or are jail transfers. Many of those other jurisdictions use King County as their primary booking facility and do not book Shoreline inmates into Issaquah. Issaquah also will not accept inmates needing medical or psychiatric care, that are intoxicated, or considered problem inmates. As with Yakima County, Issaquah cannot replace the services Shoreline currently depends on King County for.

2. What are the potential solutions to Shoreline's jail bed problem?

By law, Shoreline is obligated to provide housing for its misdemeanor population. Sentencing misdemeanants to alternative programs or providing treatment can reduce the number of jail beds used, but utilizing such alternatives will not eliminate the need for a jail altogether. In addition to needing a booking facility to house inmates immediately after arrest, by law there are several misdemeanors that require jail terms, such as people with a history of driving while impaired. The law also mandates booking and jail time for anyone charged with domestic violence. Public safety demands that some people spend time in jail in order to protect others. In addition, one-third of the people booked into jail are people who were released from jail but failed to appear in court or to an assigned alternative program, resulting in their rearrest and a new jail booking.

Shoreline has three options: 1) continue to contract with other jurisdictions to house its inmates, 2) build its own jail, or 3) work with other cities to build a regional jail.

Option 1, Shoreline gets to stay out of the jail business. Shoreline has no experience operating its own jail. By continuing to contract with other cities, Shoreline would avoid going into the jail business, which can involve potentially substantial liabilities. The downside to the contracting option is that Shoreline would not be guaranteed bed space anywhere and it could easily find itself in the same position it is in now of being kicked out of jails. If that happened and the other King County cities had proceeded with building regional jails, Shoreline would be in an even worse situation than it finds itself currently. The contracting option also would not allow the City any say in controlling costs or in operational issues. Finally, no jail currently exists in King County

that meets Shorelines needs except for King County and it has already said it will not have space for Shoreline after 2013.

Option 2, Shoreline chose to build its own jail. The City would have much greater control over its inmate population, jail operations, and costs. However, operating a single city jail would be expensive compared to participating in a regional jail. With a regional, the City could share the administrative and overhead costs, and the potential liabilities associated with operating jails. The City would also most likely have to contract with another jail to house those inmates needing medical or psychiatric care, which would also be expensive.

Option 3, being part of a regional jail would provide the most certainty at the lowest cost to Shoreline. Building a regional jail would allow cities to combine resources for the construction and operation of the jail and they would share the liabilities. The City would also have guaranteed beds and a say in controlling costs and jail operations.

3. How are the cities responding?

In 2006, King County cities hired a consultant to study long-term jail needs. The study projected that the cities need approximately 1,175 jail beds by 2011 and 1,450 by 2026. Of that 1,450, Seattle will need 440 beds and the other north and east cities will need 200 beds. Shoreline will require approximately 50 jail beds per day by 2026.

Currently, jail planning efforts are developing along the regional lines outlined in the study. The South County Correctional Entity (SCORE) is representing the south King County cities and is in the process of selecting a site and drafting plans for the construction of a 650-bed jail, which it expects to complete by the end of 2012.

Bellevue, Kirkland, Redmond, Seattle, and Shoreline have been working as a group of North and East Cities (NEC) in planning for a jail to address their and 17 other north and east cities collective jail bed needs. The NEC conducted a feasibility study to determine whether it makes more sense to build one large 640-bed jail or two smaller ones - a 440-bed jail for Seattle and a 200-bed jail for the other north and east cities.

The study clearly showed that building one 640-bed facility was the most cost effective approach for the cities due to the economies of scale achieved with a larger jail. The NEC is now proceeding with plans to construct a 640-bed jail.

4. What is the process and timeline?

We are early in a long process that will include opportunities for public comment and environmental review. The Principal Cities have started conducting environmental reviews on each of the identified sites. The cities

anticipate completing the environmental review by the first quarter of 2010. As part of the environmental review process, the participating cities will choose a preferred site from the identified sites.

Once a preferred site is chosen, the architectural and design phase of the project will begin and run through the first quarter of 2011. Groundbreaking will be during the third quarter of 2012, with completion anticipated by the third quarter at 2013. The jail will be open for business by January 1, 2014. The timeline is very ambitious and is dependent on King County cities being able to negotiate at least a one-year contract extension to the current contract with King County.

Throughout the process, the public will have many opportunities to provide input.

5. How much will it cost to build a regional jail?

Building a regional jail will be expensive. However, while most people focus on the construction costs, it is the operating costs over the life of the jail that will have the biggest impact on the City's finances. By way of example, the cumulative projected annual operating costs of a 640-bed jail exceeds the projected construction costs by the fifth year of operation.

6. If the County can't afford to build a jail, how are the cities going to come up with the money to build a jail?

Cities have the ability to sell bonds to pay for building a new jail and to pay off those bonds from existing revenues. King County has said that it currently doesn't have the debt capacity to fund any jail related projects. It's not that the County can't issue bonds -it's that it has already reached its bonding capacity after having issued bonds for other a number of other projects.

7. How much will it cost to operate a regional jail?

It is still very early in the process, but according to the results of the feasibility study conducted on behalf of the north and east cities, the per diem cost of operating a 200-bed facility is by far the most expensive option, whereas operating a 640-bed facility is the least expensive due to the economies of scale.

The affect of the staffing disparity shows up in the operating costs. A 200-bed facility has an estimated per diem cost of \$311, a \$125 difference per diem. The biggest driver in this disparity is staffing ratios. A 200-bed facility has an inmate to staff ratio of 1.56, whereas a 640-bed facility has a ratio of 3.43 or 1:3.

8. Will Shoreline continue to use the Yakima County jail?

Shoreline will continue to contract with Yakima County in the short term. However, once a new jail is built, all of Shoreline's inmates will be housed in the new jail.

9. What types of offenders will be housed in the new jail?

The jail will be a regional municipal jail that houses the north and east King County cities' misdemeanor populations. Misdemeanor convictions carry maximum sentences of 365 days (1 year) or less. It is important to remember that a jail is not a prison, which is a state or federal facility that houses the felon population.

10. What is the difference between a misdemeanor and a felony?

Misdemeanors are relatively minor crimes that can carry maximum sentences of 365 days (1 year) or less. Felonies are more serious crimes that can carry maximum sentences of more than 1 year. The majority of Shoreline's misdemeanants are in jail for driving under the influence (DUI), domestic violence (DV), or driving while license is suspended (DWLS.) In addition, while the average length of jail stay for Shoreline inmates is twenty-one (21) days, the majority of inmates spend 3 days or less in jail.

11. Will juveniles be housed in a new regional jail?

No. Only the adult misdemeanor population will be housed in the new jail. King County continues to house juvenile detainees at its Youth Service Center.

12. What is the difference between a city jail, a county jail, and a state prison?

City jails hold a city's misdemeanor population. County jails house a county's misdemeanor population and its felony population. State prisons house convicted felons serving sentences longer than one year. It is important to remember that the jail the north and east cities are planning for will be a regional city jail that houses the cities' misdemeanor populations.

13. Can a city choose not to put people in jail and just use alternative programs? What are the alternatives?

Cities use a variety of successful alternative programs, including electronic home monitoring, day reporting, and treatment for substance abuse. However, no matter how many alternative programs a city utilizes, it will still need jail beds.

The trend in the region has been for fewer misdemeanants to spend time in jail. However, state law requires that some offenders, such as people with a history of driving while impaired, be jailed. The law also mandates booking and jail time for anyone charged with domestic violence. Public safety demands that some people spend time in jail in order to protect others. In addition, a large segment of Shoreline's inmate population is made up of people who were previously diverted or released from jail, but then failed to

come back to court or report to an alternative program, resulting in an arrest and a new booking.

14. How did Shoreline choose the Aldercrest Annex site?

One of the most challenging aspects of developing a regional jail facility is identifying a site that is acceptable to all of the jurisdictions. Shoreline considered four overarching criteria when evaluating sites to put forward for the possible siting of a regional municipal jail:

- Adequate acreage: acreage required for either a multi-story 200-bed facility at 4 acres, or a single level 640-bed facility at 12 acres.
- Ease of Acquisition/Ownership: focus was on public property, as the City wanted to avoid extensive negotiations or possible condemnations.
- Current use: the City sought vacant or underutilized property.
- Regional access: as a regional jail, it was important to find sites with easy freeway access.

Shoreline identified three initial sites: Aldercrest Annex, 2545 NE 200th Street; Fircrest Campus, 15th Avenue NE and NE 150th Street; and Seattle City Light Property, between N163rd Street and N 163rd Place behind the Metro maintenance facility. After careful analysis, the City identified the Aldercrest Annex as the site that best addressed the needs of the regional jail planning effort and the citizens of Shoreline.

In July 2008, the Shoreline School Board voted to surplus the Aldercrest Annex property, making it available for purchase. The site has enough acreage to accommodate a 640-bed jail facility with sufficient buffers to help minimize its impact on the surrounding neighborhood; it has easy access to I-5 and State Highway 522; and the buildings located on the site are no longer in use. At the time Shoreline selected the Aldercrest Annex, no other entity had expressed interest in the property.

15. What else could be located in the same building as the jail?

Depending on where a jail is finally located, it could house a number of justice-related programs/services in addition to a jail. The NECC anticipates that the jail itself will include a 24/7 booking area, beds for medical/mental health populations, and an arraignment court. Additional items could include a municipal court, a police station, and other justice or municipal operations.

16. Will there be mitigation of some kind for whichever city ends up siting the jail?

Most likely. To begin with, depending on which site the NEC chooses, there could be site-specific mitigation to lessen the impacts of a jail on the surrounding area. This could include traffic or environmental mitigation. In addition to site mitigation, the host city might also be entitled to mitigation,

which could include discounts on maintenance fees or the inclusion of a municipal court or other municipal facility in the development.