



Board of Supervisors Memorandum

January 24, 2023

Formation of a Blue Ribbon Commission to Review the Needs of the Pima County Jail

Background

At the Board of Supervisors meeting of December 6, 2022, Sheriff Nanos asked the Board to consider adoption of a sales tax to construct a new jail. My memorandum of [December 28, 2022](#) provided the Board a preliminary overview of possible funding options, the condition of the jail facility, jail capacity and staffing levels, noting that staff will continue to review and provide information and options to the Board.

As noted in the December 28 memorandum, initial estimates suggest that a new jail could cost between \$250 and \$380 million. It is critical, therefore, that we plan appropriately for the possibility of such a significant endeavor. Very simply, more information is required before determining the need and feasibility of a new jail and the associated staffing, maintenance and operations of the facility.

Key to the discussion is an understanding of what defines a new jail. Rather than simply repairing or rebuilding the current facility, which may be needed to respond to issues that may result from age of facility and deferred maintenance, this could be an opportunity for Pima County to develop a more modern jail or detention facility in which case the term 'new' describes enhanced programming and/or operational efficiencies. The design, construction and operations of the jail must ensure a safe and secure facility that can operate at maximum efficiency with minimum cost.

I propose that Pima County launch a process to explore the improvements needed and the potential cost and possibilities for funding through the creation of a Blue Ribbon Commission comprised of subject matter experts to provide the Board with recommendations.

The Commission would have a Chair and three Vice-Chairs. Each Vice-Chair would lead one of three Committees: Facilities; Operations; and Finances. Five additional members will be added, bringing the total composition of the Commission to nine. I will provide a slate of recommended members of the Commission to the Board for approval. While representatives of the Pima County Sheriff's Department and other County employees will serve as staff they will not be members of the Commission.

The Commission will have no more than 180 days to develop initial recommendations to the Board of Supervisors regarding condition of the current jail, needs for a modern or expanded facility and the funding mechanism to provide for such. As part of the deliberations, the Commission may be briefed on such issues as the criminal justice system, changes in technology, facility needs and other factors.

The Honorable Chair and Members, Pima County Board of Supervisors
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Recommendation

I recommend that the Board of Supervisors direct the County Administrator to return to the Board on February 21, 2023 a plan to develop a Blue Ribbon Commission to review the needs of the Pima County jail. The plan to be presented to the Board shall include a charter for the Commission's work, the names of the individuals proposed for membership, and the timeline by which the Commission should return to the Board with recommendations.

Sincerely,



Jan Lesher
County Administrator

JKL – January 11, 2023

c: The Honorable Chris Nanos, Pima County Sheriff
Carmine DeBonis, Jr., Deputy County Administrator
Francisco García, MD, MPH, Deputy County Administrator and Chief Medical Officer
Steve Holmes, Deputy County Administrator
Diana Durazo, Senior Advisor, Pima County Administrator's Office
Michelle Campagne, Senior Advisor, Pima County Administrator's Office