



COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR'S OFFICE

PIMA COUNTY GOVERNMENTAL CENTER
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C.H. HUCKELBERRY
County Administrator

July 8, 2019

Most Reverend Edward J. Weisenburger
Bishop of Tucson
Diocese of Tucson Office of the Bishop
P.O. Box 31
Tucson, Arizona 85702

Re: Your July 3, 2019 Letter Requesting a Replacement Respite and Travel Processing Facility for Asylum Seekers

Dear Most Reverend Weisenburger:

I appreciate your recent request regarding a replacement respite and travel processing facility for asylum seekers.

Yes, the County desires to assist Catholic Community Services (CCS) in providing faith-based humanitarian aid and assistance to asylum seekers. We applaud your long-term provision of these services since 2014. It is only recently that the volume and number of individuals being released by Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the US Border Patrol has exceeded the community's capacity to provide humanitarian assistance.

I have instructed our staff to prepare a lease of Units 700, 800 and 900 of our Juvenile Justice Complex for the purpose of providing respite and travel processing, including food, shelter and travel arrangements for asylum seekers under the care of CCS. This lease will be for one year at a nominal cost of \$100 per year. The County will provide building maintenance, operating, utility, food and laundry costs and will seek reimbursement from the Federal government through humanitarian aid grants and programs. The proposed lease will be presented to the Board of Supervisors with my recommendation for approval at their August 6, 2019 meeting.

In the meantime, we are prepared to assist and work with your staff in making this facility ready for occupancy on the date of approval. Juvenile Justice Units 700, 800 and 900 are vacant and can be isolated from the balance of the Juvenile Justice Complex. Food service

Most Reverend Edward J. Weisenburger

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can also be provided by our Juvenile staff and laundry services are also available at the facility.

We appreciate the faith-based services provided by CCS and are pleased we are able to provide the assistance you have requested.

Sincerely,



C.H. Huckelberry
County Administrator

CHH/anc

Enclosure

c: The Honorable Chairman and Members, Pima County Board of Supervisors
Jan Leshar, Chief Deputy County Administrator
Tom Burke, Deputy County Administrator for Administration
Lisa Josker, Director, Facilities Management
Marguerite "Peg" Harmon, Chief Executive Office, Catholic Community Services



Roman Catholic

Diocese of Tucson

Office of the Bishop

P.O. Box 31, Tucson, Ariz., 85702 ■ 520-838-2500 ■ Fax: 520-838-2590

JUL 3 9:38AM

July 3, 2019

Mr. Chuck Huckelberry
County Administrator
Pima County
130 W. Congress St., 10th Floor
Tucson, AZ 85701

Dear Mr. Huckelberry,

For the past several months, Catholic Community Services, along with their faith-based and community partners, has been searching for a replacement respite and travel processing facility for asylum seekers deposited in Tucson by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) agencies. The facility currently in use, the former Benedictine Monastery on County Club Road, is privately owned and scheduled for reconstruction by its owner beginning in August. The owner has been extremely gracious and generous, allowing the community to use the Monastery since January of this year.

Our local community has been responding to this humanitarian challenge since 2014. There is no sign that the DHS drop-offs of asylum seekers, primarily from Central America, is going to abate. If the Tucson and Pima County community do not respond and provide aid to these desperate people then they will be left on the streets of Tucson to fend for themselves. We have no choice but to provide the much-needed aid, which is a moral imperative of our faith.

The team working on this new location determined that any replacement facility needed to meet the following criteria:

- Large enough to provide safe, sanitary overnight quarters initially for at least 200 people, with the potential to increase to 300 people assisted on a daily basis.
- Capacity for at least 50 volunteers per shift to provide humanitarian aid and travel processing.
- Immediately available and in good condition, not requiring extensive or expensive rehabilitation before guests can be accommodated.
- Affordable leasing terms for a minimum of one year with availability for the length of time DHS intends to release asylum seekers in the Pima County region.

- A centralized location to reduce the commute time for volunteers, and in proximity to both the Tucson International Airport and the downtown bus station in order to allow guests to make their way to their final destination.

After reviewing dozens of potential sites, the team working on this relocation has determined that the northern unused sections of the Pima County Juvenile Justice Complex on East Ajo Way meets every criterion above and is by far our best option. We are requesting that Pima County lease this facility to Catholic Community Services for a nominal fee.

As we make this request we want to emphasize that the asylum seekers are in the United States legally and have been released by a DHS agency to Catholic Community Services or another partner in order to remain in the US while their asylum claim is processed. We also wish to note that very few of the asylum seekers remain in Tucson. The overwhelming majority are traveling to other parts of the country where they have family or sponsors awaiting them.

We join with our other Christian, Jewish and Muslim brethren as we practice the call of our faiths to give food to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, and welcome to the stranger. This opportunity to be a part of Tucson's greater community, faith communities, and government agencies to meet the needs of those who come to us in the midst of what is for many a life-or-death crisis is one we hope you will answer with an unambiguous and generous yes.

As always, please be assured of my prayers along with my gratitude for your service to our community.

Very Sincerely yours in Christ Jesus,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Edward J. Weisenburger". The signature is written in a cursive style and is preceded by a small cross symbol.

Most Reverend Edward J. Weisenburger
Bishop of Tucson