



MEMORANDUM

Date: December 13, 2021

To: The Honorable Chair and Members
Pima County Board of Supervisors

From: Jan Leshner 
Acting County Administrator

Re: **Update on Jail Population**

On December 6, 2021, I provided you a memorandum regarding the potential impact on staffing at the Pima County Adult Detention Center (PCADC) of the January 1, 2022, vaccination requirement for staff who work with vulnerable populations, and regarding a working group looking at safe reductions in the jail population. The purpose of this memorandum is to provide an update regarding the preparations by our justice system partners to minimize the impact of this potential reduction in Corrections Officer staffing.

Let me be clear, however; public safety is at the forefront of these deliberations. Neither the current discussions to reduce the population of the jail nor those that have regularly occurred over the past several years allow for the release of violent or dangerous inmates.

I asked Ellen Wheeler, former Assistant County Administrator for Justice and Law Enforcement, to assist in convening the working group of justice system leaders to consider strategies to address the impact, if any, of potentially reduced corrections staffing. Ms. Wheeler met separately with various justice system departments to seek their input on possible strategies to safely lower the jail population and/or reduce the number of individuals being booked into the facility.

On Wednesday, December 8, 2021, the working group of senior leadership met, including: Pima County Attorney Laura Conover; Sheriff Chris Nanos; Public Defense Services Director Dean Brault and Public Defender Joel Feinman; Assistant Chief Kevin Hall of the Tucson Police Department; various leaders of the Pima County Superior Court, including Criminal Bench Presiding Judge James Marner and leadership of Adult Probation and Pretrial Services; Pima County Justice Services, and leadership of the Adult Detention Center. The group considered data provided by the Sheriff's Department showing more than 500 detainees awaiting trial who are classified as nonviolent/non-dangerous. Often, these detainees would have been released by now if they could afford the required bond. In addition, more than 100 nonviolent/non-dangerous inmates have been sentenced to the jail for low-level offenses and probation violations, and some of those inmates might be considered for modified sentences.

Sheriff Nanos made clear during the meeting that if there is a reduction in Corrections Officers, the Sheriff's Department is able to adapt as needed to meet the jail's staffing needs.

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Among the points of consideration discussed by the group were various jail-reduction strategies that were safely and successfully utilized at the beginning of the pandemic, enhanced community supervision resources such as electronic ankle monitoring where appropriate and prioritizing public safety. The working group will continue to consider individual detainees on a case-by-case basis to determine if release may be appropriate and whether post-release supervision of some type is appropriate. Each proposed release will have to be agreed on by the County Attorney and Public Defense Services, and Superior Court judges will review recommendations and make the ultimate decisions on releases.

In addition, the Courts and the Sheriff are working together to reduce the number of Corrections Officers used for court proceedings by increasing the use of video courtrooms at the jail (which reduces the transportation of inmates downtown for court hearings).

The working group plans to continue to work together over the next few weeks. I will continue to keep you apprised on the status of these efforts, as well as the updated vaccination rates of the Sheriff's Department.

JL/anc

c: The Honorable Laura Conover, Pima County Attorney
The Honorable James Marner, Presiding Judge, Criminal – Superior Court
The Honorable Chris Nanos, Pima County Sheriff
Dean Brault, Director, Public Defense Services
Joel Feinman, Public Defender
Kevin Hall, Assistant Chief, Tucson Police Department
Domingo Corona, Director, Pre-trial Services Division, Superior Court
David Sanders, Chief Probation Officer, Adult Probation - Superior Court
Ms. Ellen Wheeler