

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE, STATE OF CALIFORNIA



9.15

During the oral communication section of the agenda for Tuesday, March 13, 2012, Julie Waltz spoke about proclamation for Thelma Grant, her concerns with jails releasing prisoners and submitted article.

**ATTACHMENTS FILED WITH
CLERK OF THE BOARD**

**AGENDA NO.
9.15**

RIVERSIDE COUNTY: Jail-plan void

THE PRESS-ENTERPRISE

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PM

Riverside County needs a better jail plan than whatever is most expedient at the moment. An infusion of state construction funds does not make up for the county's lack of a coherent long-range approach to jail space. County supervisors need to devise a realistic plan for handling a growing number of local inmates.

A Text Size

The state Corrections Standards Authority last week awarded Riverside County \$100 million to help expand the county jail system. The funding was part of \$602 million in state grants to 11 counties as part of the state's criminal justice "realignment." The current budget shifted responsibility for parolees and low-level criminals from the state to county jurisdiction, leading to an influx of inmates at county jails.

Riverside County can certainly use the extra help. County jail space had not kept pace with population growth even before the state sent additional prisoners the county's way. The county has space for 3,906 inmates at five jails, and has operated since 1993 under a court-ordered cap on the number of prisoners in county facilities. Riverside County has had to release more than 600 inmates early since January for lack of space to house them. The jail capacity shortage will only worsen over time, as the realignment program takes full hold.

But the county has no comprehensive plan for addressing that issue. Supervisors last year suddenly shelved plans for a new jail in Whitewater, saying the \$300 million price tag no longer made sense fiscally. That argument was hardly convincing, however: Any new jail plan will be expensive, and budget deficits now do not justify failing to plan for the future. The new "hub" jail was also the most efficient approach — and would have been cheaper to operate than expanding existing facilities.

That's right: The supervisors abandoned the most cost-effective strategy as too expensive. And the county has not replaced that proposal with anything nearly as feasible.

Expanding the Indio jail might make the most sense in the short term, Sheriff Stan Sniff suggested last week. But expanding jails is only a temporary fix, and not workable at all locations. The county really needs a long-range plan, not a series of stopgaps.

The county also needs to address the funding questions that swirl around jail capacity. The state money, for example, requires the county to provide \$10 million in matching funds. That task will not be easy for a county that faced an \$80 million shortfall in its \$652 million discretionary budget this year, and that projects a similar gap next fiscal year. And construction is only a one-time cost. The county also has to find money for ongoing staffing of new jail space — an expense the state grant does not cover.

Realignment has only worsened the county's jail space crunch, while making the county's lack of a real solution more obvious. The state money can help with the cost of addressing the county's jail limitations. But only Riverside County can remedy the absence of a credible long-range plan.

*Julie
Waltz
Oral Comm.
03.13.2012*

**Riverside County Board of Supervisors
Request to Speak**

Submit request to Clerk of Board (right of podium),
Speakers are entitled to three (3) minutes, subject
Board Rules listed on the reverse side of this form.

SPEAKER'S NAME: JULIE WALTZ

Address: _____
(only if follow-up mail response requested)

City: _____ **Zip:** _____

Phone #: _____

PUBLIC

Date: _____ **Agenda #** COMMENT

PLEASE STATE YOUR POSITION BELOW:

Position on "Regular" (non-appealed) Agenda Item:

_____ **Support** _____ **Oppose** **Neutral**

Note: If you are here for an agenda item that is filed
for "Appeal", please state separately your position on
the appeal below:

_____ **Support** _____ **Oppose** _____ **Neutral**

I give my 3 minutes to: _____