

SUBMITTAL TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE, STATE OF CALIFORNIA



ITEM: 3.2
(ID # 21904)

MEETING DATE:
Tuesday, May 09, 2023

FROM : SUPERVISOR KAREN SPIEGEL AND SUPERVISOR V MANUEL PEREZ :

SUBJECT: SUPERVISOR KAREN SPIEGEL AND SUPERVISOR V. MANUEL PEREZ:
Addressing the Proposed Closure of Chuckawalla Valley State Prison [\$0]

Recommended Motion: That the Board of Supervisors:

1. Authorize the Board Chair to sign a letter on behalf of the Board of Supervisors to the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation opposing the closure of Chuckawalla Valley State Prison and suggesting the California Rehabilitation Center as an alternate facility for closure.
2. Authorize the Board Chair to sign a letter in support of Senate Bill 418 (Padilla), which would create the California Prison Redevelopment Commission to identify clear and credible recommendations for creative uses of closed prison facilities that would turn those sites into community assets.
3. Direct the Executive Office to work with all affected County departments to determine the impact of a prison closure on those served by our various programs and how to mitigate the negative effects.
4. Direct the Executive Office to continue to work with the City of Blythe and community stakeholders to identify and quantify the potential economic impact of the closure of Chuckawalla Valley State Prison and to advocate for necessary and appropriate State funding to help support workers, offset the devastating financial burden and implement an economic resilience plan for the region, should the State move forward with the closure.

ACTION:Policy

Karen S. Spiegel ✓ *V. Manuel Perez*
Supervisor Karen Spiegel, Supervisor 2nd District 5/3/2023 Supervisor V. Manuel Perez, Supervisor 4th District 5/4/2023

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

On motion of Supervisor Spiegel, seconded by Supervisor Perez and duly carried by unanimous vote, IT WAS ORDERED that the above matter is approved as recommended.

Ayes: Jeffries, Spiegel, Washington, Perez, and Gutierrez
Nays: None
Absent: None
Date: May 9, 2023
xc: BOS-Dist. 2, BOS-Dist. 4, E.O.

Kimberly A. Rector
Clerk of the Board
By: *Kimberly A. Rector*
Deputy

**SUBMITTAL TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE,
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Background:

The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) has announced a plan to close Chuckawalla Valley State Prison (CVSP) by March 2025. This decision is a part of CDCR's response to budget cuts outlined in the 2022-23 State budget proposed by Governor Gavin Newsom in January of this year.

According to a CDCR press release, the prison was chosen pursuant to criteria set forth by the State legislature in Penal Code section 2067. CDCR's leadership evaluated the options for prison closures, pursuant to the 2022-23 budget and Penal Code requirements, and considered several factors including impact of closure on the surrounding communities and the workforce; cost to operate; housing needs for all populations; long-term investments in state-owned and operated correctional facilities; public safety and rehabilitation; and durability of the state's solution to prison overcrowding.

Careful consideration of the factors set forth in Penal Code section reveals that the closure of another California prison makes more sense. Specifically, the California Rehabilitation Center (CRC) in Norco would be a more fitting candidate for closure.

- Impact of Closure on the Surrounding Communities and Workforce. The City of Blythe, located in the heart of the desert along California's eastern border, is relatively secluded from other urban areas. It is a rural community with few economic prospects. In 2020, the California State Auditor Dashboard ranked Blythe as 9th on the Distressed Cities Index, which ranks 430 California cities based on their financial health. Blythe's residents are also challenged with the "Disadvantaged Community" label with a median household income of \$49,235 and 22.4% of people living in poverty. The Riverside County Grand Jury has gone as far as declaring that "Blythe is Dying".

CVSP is Blythe's second-largest employer, providing over 800 jobs to a population of 17,793 residents. If it were to close, the jobs and income spent in the community would be lost. The economic impact would be devastating.

It is also not clear how its facilities could be usefully repurposed by the State or private industries for that matter. Given that maintenance services would be required to keep CVSP's infrastructure from deteriorating, CVSP's closure would render these facilities a sunk cost for the State of California.

Further, the families of CVSP inmates have made Blythe their home. With a lower cost of living (median home price of \$219,528 vs. Norco's \$775,089), Blythe makes it financially feasible for inmates and their families to stick together. Closing Blythe and relocating inmates would mean the families of inmates would also have to move to stay near their loved ones, and this could spell an intense financial burden for these families. Families of prison employees, many of which include Blythe's teachers, public servants, and essential workers, would also have to relocate.

**SUBMITTAL TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE,
STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

Additionally, Palo Verde College in Blythe relies heavily on those associated with CVSP. Whether it is the training the future workforce or the continuing education of the staff and incarcerated people, the CVSP plays an outsized role in the healthy community college ecosystem.

Finally, CVSP plays a crucial role in maintaining Blythe's Palo Verde Hospital. This hospital serves both Palo Verde Valley and La Paz County and is the only community hospital within 50 miles of Blythe. It is not clear that the hospital's continued operations would be viable if CVSP were to close.

On the other hand, CRC lies in the heart of California's Inland Empire and is surrounded by several bustling economies. CRC plays a relatively less crucial role in sustaining the economy of its respective community. CRC has a very opportune location that is ideal for the repurposing of facilities, and this is evidenced by the fact that it is the location of the Norconian, a now-vacant Art Deco hotel.

In addition to better serving the State's interests, closing CRC is also better aligned with the interests of Blythe residents who are, unlike nearly every other community, enthusiastic supporters of the prison in their community. This is in direct contrast to Norco residents, who have been advocating for the closure of CRC for years.

- Costs to Operate. CVSP is relatively less expensive to operate than CRC, with annual per capita operational expenditures of \$58,101 and \$68,250 respectively (in 2019-2020). At around 2,000 inmates, CRC costs the State about \$20 million more than CVSP to operate.
- Long-Term Investments in State-Owned and Operated Correctional Facilities. As one of the 12 oldest prisons in California, CRC's aging infrastructure represents a significant financial burden on CDCR. The *Legislative Analyst's Report on State Prison Infrastructure (2020)* suggests that CRC requires \$1.1 billion in infrastructure improvements, while CVSP requires \$430 million in repairs.

CRC has received no significant capital investments since 2012. Meanwhile, the State invested in a zero net energy (ZNE) health care facility at CVSP three years ago. These modifications result in lower operational costs and have allowed for the allocation of funds to other areas such as CVSP's state-of-the-art energy efficiency equipment including solar panels, a water treatment plant and a new energy-efficient air conditioning unit.

- Public safety and Rehabilitation. CRC was built between two fault lines and, as a block prison, it's harder for emergency medical services to respond during a natural disaster. On the other hand, CVSP is not in a wildfire danger zone or on or near a fault line. CVSP also has an offering of 24 inmate rehabilitation programs, while CRC has 20.

**SUBMITTAL TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE,
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- Durability of the State's Solution to Prison Overcrowding. The durability of the State's solution to overcrowding would be affected by either prison closing. Though CRC and CVSP have inmate capacities of 2,491 and 1,738 respectively, closure of CRC would save the State more money while keeping the less overcrowded CVSP at a manageable capacity as inmate populations continue to decline.

The Californians United for a Responsible Budget's (CURB) report on *People's Plan for Prison Closure* proposes a list of prisons that are top contenders for closure on the basis of the following criteria: overcrowding, cost of incarceration; location of the prison; distance from loved ones; and homicide/suicide rates. Number one on the closure list? CRC. Meanwhile, CVSP is not mentioned.

While closing any of the three prisons located in Riverside County would result in an impact to the region and we would rather not see any prison closed, if the State must shutter a facility it should be CRC. After careful consideration of the factors listed in Penal Code section 2067, and almost every other conceivable factor, closing CVSP would be devastating to an already challenged community. Put simply, replacing Chuckawalla Valley State Prison with the California Rehabilitation Center is the right thing to do.

If CDCR continues to move forward with closure of CVSP, the State must work directly with stakeholders in Riverside County to help support workers and foster a community-led economic resilience plan for the community impacted by the closure. Additionally, the legislature should establish a California Prison Redevelopment Commission tasked with preparing a report with the commission's findings and recommendations that deliver a set of clear and credible recommendations for creative uses of closed prison facilities that will turn those sites into community assets, as specified in SB 418 (Padilla).



COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE

Board of Supervisors

District 1	Kevin Jeffries 951-955-1010
District 2	Karen Spiegel 951-955-1020
District 3	Chuck Washington 951-955-1030
District 4	V. Manuel Perez 951-955-1040
District 5	Yxstian Gutierrez 951-955-1050

March 15, 2023

The Honorable Steve Padilla
Member of the Senate
1021 O Street, Suite 6640
Sacramento CA 95814

**Re: SB 418 (Padilla) – California Prison Redevelopment Commission
As introduced 2/9/2023 – SUPPORT
In Senate Appropriations Committee**

Dear Senator Umberg:

On behalf of the County of Riverside Board of Supervisors, I am writing in support of SB 418, your measure that would establish the California Prison Redevelopment Commission, specify its composition, and set forth its responsibilities with respect to developing recommendations on creative uses for repurposing closed state prison facilities.

As you are aware, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) recently announced the planned closure of the Chuckawalla Valley State Prison (CVSP) located in the City of Blythe that sits at the eastern edge of Riverside County. Despite the economic benefits and employment opportunities associated with being host to a state prison facility, Blythe is a disadvantaged rural community where more than 20 percent of its population live in poverty. If the closure of CVSP is carried out, more than 800 well-compensated jobs would evaporate – resulting quite literally in devastating economic impacts from which the region is unlikely to recover unless the facility is successfully repurposed. Our county will continue to advocate for alternatives and mitigations to this closure proposal.

As it relates specifically to your measure, SB 418 recognizes the need for longer-term planning and more comprehensive consideration of the impact of prison facilities closures statewide. We appreciate that your measure would incorporate community input into this process, focus on the needs of impacted communities, and drive toward a set of clear and credible recommendations for economic redevelopment opportunities of these important public assets. Given the state's stated objectives regarding further reduction of the state's carceral footprint, it is more important than ever to establish a thoughtful framework with a broad array of perspectives and expertise to inform decisions about sustaining economic resiliency in affected communities.

For these reasons, the County of Riverside is pleased to support SB 418. Thank you for your leadership in this area, and we look forward to an opportunity to participate in this important policy conversation in the months ahead. Should you have any questions regarding this letter of support, please do not hesitate to contact Carolina Herrera, Director of Legislative Advocacy & Governmental Affairs at the County of Riverside Executive Office (951) 955-1180 or csherrera@rivco.org.

Sincerely,



Supervisor Kevin Jeffries
Chair, County of Riverside Board of Supervisors

cc: Members and Consultants, Senate Appropriations Committee
Honorable Members, County of Riverside Legislative Delegation



Board of Supervisors

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June 8, 2023

Mr. Jeff Macomber
Secretary, California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation
1515 S Street
Sacramento CA 95811

RE: Proposed Adult Institution Closure in Riverside County

Dear Secretary Macomber:

On behalf of the County of Riverside Board of Supervisors, I write to share our perspective regarding the planned closure of Chuckawalla Valley State Prison (CVSP), located in the City of Blythe at the easternmost edge of Riverside County. The Board of Supervisors joins other community voices in urging you to consider an alternative plan that would help the state meet its goals of reducing the state's prison footprint, while protecting a vital community asset in Blythe that offers well-compensated and likely irreplaceable jobs along with an array of broad economic benefits.

CVSP serves as an anchor in the community of Blythe, acting as a multiplier of community vitality as well as economic and educational benefit. Families of CVSP employees as well as families of those who are incarcerated make Blythe their home. It is a more financially feasible housing market with median home prices hovering around \$220,000, meaning home ownership is far more within reach than in most other parts of the state. CVSP also plays a critical role in maintaining Palo Verde Hospital, which is the only community hospital within 50 miles of the city. Additionally, Palo Verde College has many critical ties to the facility ranging from workforce training to continuing education of CVSP staff and incarcerated persons. Further, the local K-12 schools are educating the children of both staff and those in custody in the institution. If the facility were to be shuttered, it is difficult to imagine the extent of the devastation – widespread job loss, a cratered real estate market, diminished tax base, and a hospital, schools, and community college that may no longer be viable.

The California Rehabilitation Center (CRC) in Norco, situated in the western edge of the County, would be far more suitable for closure instead of CVSP. CRC is a much older facility with considerably higher costs of maintenance and operation. Unlike the community support enjoyed by CVSP, the community of Norco has called for CRC's closure for some time. Further, by virtue of its location in a highly urbanized part of the County, CRC presents far

more opportunities for reuse. Simply stated, CRC is a much more fitting candidate for closure than CVSP.

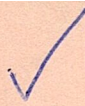
While the County of Riverside would prefer that none of its three prison facilities would be subject to closure – out of concern for the disruption to the region, the facility’s employees, and those who are incarcerated within – we urge CDCR to reconsider its decision to shutter CVSP and, instead, focus its decommissioning on CRC. We thank you for considering our perspective along with the perspective of other communities and voices in the Palo Verde Valley.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Kevin Jeffries".

Supervisor Kevin Jeffries
Chair, County of Riverside Board of Supervisors

cc: Honorable Members, County of Riverside Legislative Delegation
City of Blythe, Mayor, City Council & City Manager
City of Norco, Mayor, City Council & City Manager



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 to Board Rules listed on the reverse side of this form.

SPEAKER'S NAME: Ray Barrow

Address: _____

City: _____ Zip: _____

Phone #: _____

Date: _____ Agenda # 312

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: _____

BOARD RULES

Requests to Address Board on "Agenda" Items:

You may request to be heard on a published agenda item. Requests to be heard must be submitted to the Clerk of the Board before the scheduled meeting time.

Requests to Address Board on items that are "NOT" on the Agenda/Public Comment:

Notwithstanding any other provisions of these rules, a member of the public shall have the right to address the Board during the mid-morning "Oral Communications" segment of the published agenda. Said purpose for address must pertain to issues which are under the direct jurisdiction of the Board of Supervisors. YOUR TIME WILL BE LIMITED TO THREE (3) MINUTES. Donated time is not permitted during Public Comment.

Power Point Presentations/Printed Material:

Speakers who intend to conduct a formalized Power Point presentation or provide printed material must notify the Clerk of the Board's Office by 12 noon on the Monday preceding the Tuesday Board meeting, insuring that the Clerk's Office has sufficient copies of all printed materials and at least one (1) copy of the Power Point CD. Copies of printed material given to the Clerk (by Monday noon deadline) will be provided to each Supervisor. If you have the need to use the overhead "Elmo" projector at the Board meeting, please ensure your material is clear and with proper contrast, notifying the Clerk well ahead of the meeting, of your intent to use the Elmo.

Individual Speaker Limits:

Individual speakers are limited to a maximum of three (3) minutes. Please step up to the podium when the Chairman calls your name and begin speaking immediately. Pull the microphone to your mouth so that the Board, audience, and audio recording system hear you clearly. Once you start speaking, the "green" podium light will light. The "yellow" light will come on when you have one (1) minute remaining. When you have 30 seconds remaining, the "yellow" light will begin to flash, indicating you must quickly wrap up your comments. Your time is up when the "red" light flashes. The Chairman adheres to a strict three (3) minutes per speaker. ***Note: If you intend to give your time to a "Group/Organized Presentation", please state so clearly at the very bottom of the reverse side of this form.***

Group/Organized Presentations:

Group/organized presentations with more than one (1) speaker will be limited to nine (9) minutes at the Chairman's discretion. The organizer of the presentation will automatically receive the first three (3) minutes, with the remaining six (6) minutes relinquished by other speakers, as requested by them on a completed "Request to Speak" form, and clearly indicated at the bottom of the form.

Addressing the Board & Acknowledgement by Chairman:

The Chairman will determine what order the speakers will address the Board, and will call on all speakers in pairs. The first speaker should immediately step to the podium and begin addressing the Board. The second speaker should take up a position in one of the chamber aisles in order to quickly step up to the podium after the preceding speaker. This is to afford an efficient and timely Board meeting, giving all attendees the opportunity to make their case. Speakers are prohibited from making personal attacks, and/or using coarse, crude, profane or vulgar language while speaking to the Board members, staff, the general public and/or meeting participants. Such behavior, at the discretion of the Board Chairman, may result in removal from the Board Chambers by Sheriff Deputies.