

Executive Summary

The Pueblo County Jail Task Force (JTF) was formed in March 2017 by Pueblo County Commissioner Garrison Ortiz in response to several tours, reports, incidents, and growing community concerns surrounding the Pueblo County Jail. Numerous tours of the jail by Commissioner Ortiz revealed, firsthand, the failing infrastructure and poor living and working conditions for both inmates and detention deputies.

Reports provided to the Commissioner included an Operational Assessment of the jail conducted by the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) (*Available upon Request*), dated February 2015, which thoroughly detailed the current conditions of the jail and recommendations for improvement. A prevalent theme of the report included a need for additional space to reasonably accommodate the current inmate population and the need to replace aging infrastructure. One particular recommendation in the report sites, *“The main facility, the Tower, is said to need nearly \$4 million in renovation simply to keep it running. Our general observations support this finding. This must be the focus of a Sheriff’s Office Master Plan for the jail and its ancillary services. **(The failure of this facility to function would create a dire situation in the way of adverse safety and security issues for the community. This appears to be one of those items in which it can be said “pay me now or pay me much more later”.)***

In addition, an incident occurring on March 3, 2017 at the current detention center, resulted in a brazen attack in which three deputies were injured. During the attack, a deputy was disarmed of his Taser by an inmate who then used the Taser on another deputy to attempt an escape. (*See Appendix for April 12 News Release_Inmate Attack*) As Pueblo County Sheriff Kirk M. Taylor stated, “These attacks are just the tip of the iceberg of what’s to come if we don’t figure out a way to get some relief in the jail with regard to overcrowding. At some point the bough will break and we’re very close to reaching that point.” Furthermore, it is the responsibility of the commissioners of each county in Colorado to own and maintain their respective county jail – Colorado Revised Statutes:

§ 17-26-126. Commissioners to examine jail

It is the duty of the board of county commissioners, as often as they deem necessary, but at least once annually, to make personal examination of the jail of its county, its sufficiency, and the management thereof and to correct all irregularities and improprieties therein found.

§ 30-11-104. County Buildings--acquisition of land or buildings by eminent domain authorized

(1)(a) Each county, at its own expense, shall provide a suitable courthouse, a sufficient jail, and other necessary county buildings and keep them in repair.

It has been well documented and known in the community that the overcrowding and other issues at the Pueblo County Jail have long needed to be addressed. Commissioner Ortiz felt given the magnitude of the situation, the current and future needs of the jail would be best studied through the formation of a task force comprised of experts in respective fields.

The first meeting of the Pueblo County Jail Task Force was held March 17, 2017. At that meeting, committees and guidelines were established so that task force members could study numerous aspects surrounding Pueblo County's detention facility.

Over the course of the past five months, sub-committee members have done an intense study on the following:

- Costs of the current facility, to include on-going maintenance and future capital costs
- Use of existing off-site buildings to augment current capacity
- Increased average daily population (ADP) in the jail
- Recidivism prevention measures
- Alternatives to incarceration
- Construction of a new jail
- Complete renovation of existing jail
- Overall public safety



It is through the rigorous study of these topics; the task force has rendered the following recommendation:

Pueblo County, and the community overall, will be best served from a financial and safety perspective, in constructing a new jail that will be built to properly accommodate the current average daily population of today and for decades to come. Pueblo County should exercise all available financial resources to construct a new jail and to refurbish the existing jail dormitory to become a detox and treatment center for the community. Given the costs of possible litigation, human lives, rising construction costs, urgent safety concerns, and the need for detox and treatment in our community, the Jail Task Force recommends that both components (a new jail and detox/treatment center) be acted upon as soon as possible.