

BEFORE THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
FOR COLUMBIA COUNTY, OREGON

In the Matter of Instituting)	
Examination of the Columbia)	
County Jail For the Purpose of)	Order No. 6 -2014
Obtaining a Recommendation)	
Regarding the Maximum Number of)	
Inmates Held in the Jail)	

WHEREAS, ORS 169.042 authorizes the Board of County Commissioners to institute an examination of the Columbia County Jail for the purpose of obtaining a recommendation regarding the maximum number of inmates that should be held in the facility; and

WHEREAS, in 1998, County voters approved a bond levy for the purpose of constructing a new 255 bed jail; and

WHEREAS, while the cost to run the new larger jail was projected to be substantially more than the cost to run the old Courthouse Jail, the County did not immediately request an operating levy for the new Jail; and

WHEREAS, in lieu of an immediate request for an operating levy the County raised revenue for the Jail through federal bed rentals and an increase in general fund support; and

WHEREAS, the voters have rejected local option levies for Jail operating funds 7 times since 1998; and

WHEREAS, available general fund support for the Jail has decreased substantially in the last several years do to a steep decline in the County's second largest source of unrestricted funding; the O&C Forest payments, which dropped by 70% from 2 million in unrestricted funding in 2008 to \$600,000 in FY14 with no funding budgeted for FY15; and

WHEREAS, the Jail has experienced operating costs that exceed inflation, particularly in personnel categories given health insurance premium increases and pension costs that far outpace annual inflation; and

WHEREAS, as budgeted, the unrestricted general fund resources have decreased by one-third since 2005 from \$13.2 million to \$8.7 in 2014; and

WHEREAS, in 2011, due to the decrease in general fund support and increased personnel and operations costs at the Jail, the County adopted Order No. 79-2011, reducing the maximum number of inmates to be housed at the Jail from 255 to 150, including 65 local beds; and

WHEREAS, in 2013, due to the additional decrease in available general fund support and increased personnel and operations costs at the Jail, the County adopted Order No. 27-2013, further reducing the maximum number of inmates to be housed at the Jail from 150 to 110, including 25 local beds; and

WHEREAS, financial projections indicate that personnel and other expenses related to operation of the Jail will continue to increase in FY 15; and

WHEREAS, due to the substantially reduced unrestricted general fund and substantially increased personnel costs, over the last three budget cycles initial budgets showed deficits in the amount of 2.8 million in FY 12, 2.4 million in FY 13 and 1.7 million in FY 14; and

WHEREAS, in order to balance the County's budget as required by Oregon law, the County was forced to implement several extreme cost-cutting measures, including furloughing its courthouse employees by 10%, and reducing the amount of funding allocated to jail operations, while maintaining the overall percentage of general fund allocated to the jail; and

WHEREAS, in FY 15, the initial budget showed a general fund deficit in the amount of 2.4 million dollars; and

WHEREAS, given the FY 15 initial general fund budget deficit additional cuts to the Jail budget will be necessary to balance the budget; and

WHEREAS, it is necessary to again examine the County Jail for the purpose of obtaining a recommendation regarding the maximum number of inmates that should be held in the facility considering prevailing constitutional standards related to conditions of incarceration, design capacity, the physical condition of the Jail and the programs provided for inmates;

NOW, THEREFORE, it is ordered as follows:

1. The Board of Commissioners hereby institutes an examination of the County Jail for the purpose of obtaining a recommendation regarding the maximum number of inmates that should be held in the facility.

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2. The recommendation shall be based on consideration of the advice of the district attorney, county counsel and sheriff concerning prevailing constitutional standards relating to conditions of incarceration; design capacity of the Jail; the physical condition of the Jail; and the programs provided to inmates.

Dated this 19th day of March, 2014

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
FOR COLUMBIA COUNTY, OREGON

By:  _____

Anthony Hyde, Chair

By:  _____

Henry Heimuller, Commissioner

By:  _____

Earl Fisher, Commissioner

Approved as to form

By:  _____

Office of County Counsel