

COLUMBIA COUNTY

Board of Commissioners Office

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Dear Judge Clark,

November 14, 2025

Both OJD and the County agreed that an elevator serving the old courthouse was necessary for ADA compliance. Now that it is in place, the elevator needs to be accessible in the same way that the Old Courthouse is accessible to non-disabled persons during business hours. The County's policy simply reflects that fact. It is not a statement of the County's value of human life. We of course take security seriously and any suggestion to the contrary is simply incorrect.

In March of 2025 a security assessment was conducted by CIS at the County's request. A full walk through of the Courthouse and Annex was conducted and security recommendations were made. County staff continues to work towards those recommendations within our funding capacity. There were no concerns raised about the elevator.

As you know, the Sheriff will be conducting his own walk-through of the access points to the facilities and will make recommendations based on his findings. They will be presented to the Court Security Committee when done. In the meantime, Riley Baker has applied for funding to purchase a camera for the new elevator and will be looking at whether we can further limit access to the stairwell and also meet the fire code. This information will also be provided at a Courthouse security meeting.

As you know, the County has significant budget challenges. However, we will continue to diligently work with our staff and the Sheriff to improve security of the Courthouse and Annex. We recommend that the Courthouse Security Committee undergo a prioritization review of the security options and make the Courthouse Security Committee funds available to implement priority safety projects. We will continue to seek grant funds to implement improvements as well.

Kellie Jo Smith, Chair

Casey Garrett, Commissioner

Margaret Magruder, Commissioner