

## Staffing new jail puts another crimp in Calaveras' budget

By Dana M. Nichols  
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Record Staff Writer

SAN ANDREAS - Calaveras County will have to raise an additional \$4 million to \$5.6 million a year to staff the larger jail that will be finished and go into operation in 2012. That's a daunting task at a time when the county's \$100 million annual budget is shrinking by millions of dollars a year because of declining tax revenues.

A consultant spelled out the logic and math behind staffing for the new jail during Tuesday's Calaveras County Board of Supervisors meeting.

Karen Leah Chinn of Chinn Planning, based in Columbia, S.C., has spent a quarter of a century analyzing and planning jails and is a member of the team of consultants planning the new 240-bed jail for Calaveras County.

The current jail, with 65 beds, is so small that hundreds of inmates each year are released early, and those who are sentenced for misdemeanors are unlikely to serve much time at all. It costs \$2.1 million a year to operate.

The planned 240-bed jail, in contrast, would cost at least \$6.1 million a year to operate with the minimum staff level needed for safety, or about \$7.7 million a year if there were enough staff to allow correctional officers to do "direct supervision" of inmates, Chinn said.

The jail's buildings will be designed to allow the possibility for direct supervision, in which correctional officers spend much of the day in common areas with the inmates. Research has found that such direct supervision reduces violence, increases safety for both correctional officers and staff, and increases the chances that inmates will complete rehabilitation programs, Chinn said.

Capt. Eddie Ballard, who is in charge of the jail and is managing the project for the Sheriff's Department, acknowledged that he, like other law officers, was initially skeptical that it was better to have correctional officers spend significant time in the same rooms as inmates.

But Ballard said he has worked in both indirect supervision - where officers watch through bars, Plexiglas or television monitors - and direct, and direct works better, even if Calaveras County initially can't afford to use the method in the new jail.

"The beauty of this (design) is we are not tying our hands," Ballard said.

Ballard and Chinn said the jail's design still allows for traditional indirect supervision of

inmates. A single correctional officer, for example, could be in a secure area conducting indirect supervision of two different jail pods rather than having two officers doing the job, one in each of the pods.

Using indirect supervision, it would be possible to staff the jail with 50 employees, Chinn said. Doing indirect supervision and also having full-time staff assigned to maintenance and janitorial work would take the staff count to 71 employees, she said.

County officials are looking into ways to avoid having to find the full \$4 million or more by leasing out unused beds, negotiating a less expensive contract for jail medical care, or initially staffing only 160 of the jail's 240 beds.

According to a study conducted before the launch of the jail project, Calaveras County could get by with only 160 beds for the next six years.

"That 160 beds is what we absolutely have to commit to building and staffing," Calaveras Sheriff Dennis Downum said.

*Contact reporter Dana M. Nichols at (209) 607-1361 or [dnichols@recordnet.com](mailto:dnichols@recordnet.com)*