

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS, WASHOE COUNTY, NEVADA**

THURSDAY

2:00 P. M..

SEPTEMBER 7, 2000

**PRESENT:**

**Ted Short, Chairman**  
**Jim Shaw, Vice Chairman**  
**Joanne Bond, Commissioner**  
**Jim Galloway, Commissioner**  
**Pete Sferrazza, Commissioner**

**Amy Harvey, County Clerk**  
**Katy Singlaub, County Manager**  
**Mark Gregersen, Assistant County Manager**  
**Madelyn Shipman, Legal Counsel**  
**Leslie Admirand, Deputy District Attorney**

The Board met in special session in the Commission Chambers of the Washoe County Administration Complex, 1001 East Ninth Street, Reno, Nevada. Following the pledge of allegiance to the flag of our Country, the Clerk called the roll with four members present and Commissioner Sferrazza participating by telephone, the Board conducted the following business:

**AGENDA**

In accordance with the Open Meeting Law, on motion by Commissioner Bond, seconded by Commissioner Galloway, which motion duly carried, Chairman Short ordered that the agenda for the September 7, 2000, special meeting be approved.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Sam Dehne addressed issues regarding the voting system noting it as a corrupt system and stressing the need for boycotting the voting booth.

Guy Felton introduced himself as an angry and aggrieved citizen and made comments against County government accusing the Board members of exhibiting the County's "Vision" statement sign as propaganda.

**00-851      REGIONAL JUSTICE CENTER – BALLOT ISSUE**

Dan Wiley, Tate and Snyder Architects, Dan L. Wiley Associates, distributed material and displayed models and charts of the Regional Justice Center. He

advised that the stated needs cannot be addressed in the existing facilities and these conditions will exist whether the bond issue is passed in November or not.

He advised that they have developed three options: one is based on the bond issue not passing, two is constructing a new building on the Pioneer site, and three would retain Justice and Municipal Courts at One South Sierra to allow continued use of the courtrooms. A model of existing and proposed buildings was displayed as well as a chart showing the layout at different stages and options. He noted that the components of this project are based on need and this cannot be addressed with existing facilities.

He then proceeded through the analysis and presented comparative uses. He expressed his gratitude to all for the helpfulness in providing information and offering suggestions. He noted that they were able to establish functional courtroom sizes and that they would hope it would be developed in a flexible way. He advised that they have developed a ratio of courts to judges and courtrooms to jury rooms.

He then referred to the written Master Plan Update dated September 2, 2000, and reviewed in detail each of the options, which included parking, needs to the year 2015, and the costs of each option. As he reviewed the plans and described the possible options in providing future space for the Courts, the Clerk, the D.A, and the Public Defender, he indicated the pluses and the minuses of each.

In response to Commissioner Sferrazza stating that utilizing the existing courtrooms at One South Sierra is more appealing to him, County Manager Singlaub stated that there are some tradeoffs with operating plans in all the options. Mr. Wiley then cited these tradeoffs, as he reviewed the Comparative Development Analysis and the Potential Staff and Salary Savings Analysis where certain positions could be eliminated for each option including the department of the District Attorney Clerk or Clerk Typist, the District Court Administration Court Courier or Clerk, Sheriff's Transport Officer, and the Municipal Court Entry Screener through the year 2015.

Richard Gammick, District Attorney, spoke in support of Option 2, where the entire D.A. operations would be located at One South Sierra Street. He noted the salary savings in eliminating positions needed now to provide services needed which are complicated by the need to travel to different locations, as well as others.

**3:30 p.m.** County Manager Singlaub left the meeting and Assistant County Manager Mark Gregersen entered.

Mr. Wiley stated that Option 2 has all three courts together in the same complex where Option 3 would have Justice Court remaining at One South Sierra with the addition of Municipal Court, and would develop a new District/Family Court on the Pioneer site. He stated that this would require two points of delivery by the Sheriff's office. Some discussion ensued on this, and it was noted that if this option would be done without municipal court, there would be no improvement and no savings to be calculated and the economy will be lower.

It was noted that the inclusion of Municipal Court helps in the overall analysis and all options represent improvement of public service as well as other enhancements. It was further noted however that there has been no commitment from the City of Reno of its participation in the Regional Justice Center.

A short discussion among Commission members and a question and answer session with Mr. Wiley ensued.

Commissioner Galloway stated that he believes the best plan is the consolidated; Commissioner Bond questioned the impact on the bond issue without a firm commitment from Reno to participate; Commissioner Shaw asked if the City of Reno had seen this analysis. Mr. Wiley stated that it would certainly be helpful to have the City of Reno's commitment. He advised that they will meet with Steve Verela, City of Reno Public Works Director, to talk over the Regional Justice Court program.

Second Judicial District Court Judge Brent Adams stated that both the Municipal and Justice Court judges have stated their support of this. He advised that when plans for the courthouse at One South Sierra were in progress, the process was not very good, and that it is quite opposite this time as the process is very good. He then stated his respect for and favorable impression with Board leadership in this process and the decision to place it before the people.

District Attorney Richard Gammick stated that the quality of life in Reno is probably one of the best in the country and it is very unfortunate that we are stuck with an inefficient court system. He stated his gratitude to the Board members that they have determined a need and have supported the Judges in their presentations. He stated that to degrade and criticize the system does nothing to improve the quality of government services. He then spoke in favor of Option 2 and gave his reasons for that selection. He advised that one Courthouse, one security door, and a consolidation of personnel all make a lot of sense to him.

Reno Justice Court Judge Fidel Salcedo stated that seven years ago this concept was considered and plans were somewhat designed toward that direction; but in reducing the cost, many of the features were removed which is why the need still exists. He advised that the Courthouse at One South Sierra has fulfilled their needs for a period of time, and sitting in that building he does not favor getting out of their, but he realizes that the Regional Justice Center is the way to go and it is the right thing to do.

Dave Howard, Reno-Sparks Chamber of Commerce, expressed concern regarding the timing. He stated that as an organization involved in this bond issue, they are concerned about the lack of time to sell this issue. He noted that this is a part of the development of downtown Reno and they see this as an important project. He stated that there are less than 60 days until the November 7, 2000, general election to have everyone in the community on board, and he is not sure the votes will be there for this project. He

indicated that there have been two presentations to the Chamber and he believes there is confusion existing as to what is planned.

He advised that another concern is that it is his understanding that Chief Justice Rose is intending to overhaul the State's entire judicial system. He added that, if the Board decides to go forward, the Chamber is committed to support the project..

Guy Felton, citizen activist, contended that the courthouse on One South Sierra is an atrocity and was the product of a fraud. Sam Dehne, Reno Citizen, objected to plans being in progress prior to the bond election final outcome being known.

Chuck Weller, practicing attorney in the City of Reno, advised that he is on the Committee on Ballot Question Language and he needs clarification of several issues. On the issue of the ratio of courtrooms to judges, it was noted that, although there are 11 district court judges, it must be recognized that the courtrooms are also used by judicial officers. He stated that these are TPO Masters, URESA Masters, and Juvenile Court Masters, and there are planned 19 courtrooms for 22 users to start with, but it is anticipated more users will be added.

He then asked about transportation of incarcerated persons. He also inquired if an examination was done to have all criminal functions housed in the vicinity of the Washoe County jail.

Commissioner Galloway stated that moving the Courthouse in the area of the Washoe County jail was discussed although there was no formal study done on this. He said that the future of downtown support services would suffer if there was a dislocation from the nature of economy.

**4:30 p.m.** Legal Counsel Madelyn Shipman left the meeting and Deputy District Attorney Leslie Admirand entered.

Second Judicial District Court Judge James Hardesty responded to Mr. Weller's comments concerning the location of the courts on Parr Boulevard. He stated that it would further proliferate courts around the County and would complicate the jury system of selection and locations for victims assistance services. He noted that this would not save any construction costs and would still have to build at \$195 per square foot. He advised further that it would imply a division in the handling of criminal and civil cases and that is the last thing you want to occur, as it can become a disaster from a management standpoint. He noted further that judges have been petitioning the courts to reverse that decision as it demonstrated a backup of civil cases of as much as two or three years, and therefore, this can't be considered as the whole entire system is affected. He further added that as a result of family court being in one building and the other courts in another, \$118,000 has been wasted per year in the filing office alone.

In response to Commissioner Shaw's question, Judge Hardesty stated that they have scheduled over 64 engagements in furtherance of informing the public of what

is planned. He said they have scheduled appearances at Rotary meetings, Kiwanis sessions, etc., and every judge has agreed to participate to provide information at such events. He then responded to the timeliness of doing this now and advised that the fact that the study validated the proposal selected in the first place is to our advantage. He pointed out that if the municipal courts are not a party to this, there are still opportunities available in the operation of the courts and the public must be informed of that. He commented that the voters are very receptive and, after a presentation, they are very appreciative.

Commissioner Galloway stated that he supports Option 2, even though there has not been a commitment from the City or Reno, and the Pioneer site is the only location agreed upon, and if the bond passes, this is how we should proceed.

Commissioner Bond agreed and advised that she believes this is the only option the Board could go forward with; that she appreciates the efforts and wishes that an effort could be made in broadening the scope outside the judicial system and the District Attorney.

Judge Hardesty stated that there are committees, and in fairness to them, there needs to be another meeting scheduled with them. He advised that over 35 to 40 people have committed to support this project, and they have received a commitment for funding of a packet, which is money that is being contributed, and this is all information the Chamber should have.

Chairman Short commented on the numbers in growth in the jails, and noted that the current case load in the District Court is higher than anticipated and there are serious delays, and therefore, the need for this project exists.

Commissioner Sferrazza stated that he has not been convinced that having the criminal courts collocated in the same area with the County Jail would not work. He also expressed concern with dismantling the courtrooms at One South Sierra Street in order to build offices for the District Attorney staff.

On motion by Commissioner Galloway, seconded by Commissioner Shaw, which motion duly carried with Commissioner Sferrazza voting “no,” Chairman Short ordered that Option No.2 be selected for the Regional Justice Center Facility to be cited in the General Election on November bond issue to the following effect:

This will fund a new Regional Justice Center consolidating all District and Justice Courts (as well as Municipal Courts) and their immediate supporting agencies into one facility located on the Pioneer site. It would convert One South Sierra to office space for the District Attorney and refit 195 South Sierra for the Public Defender. Eventually, the Historic Courthouse would be renovated for the County Clerk and the Law Library. The Jail and Courthouse Annex would ultimately be demolished to make way for a Public Plaza and new Plaza entry to the Historic Courthouse.

- Assumptions:
1. All components will remain accommodated within existing area allocations pending new facility construction (assuming a late 2003 or early 2004 move in).
  2. Municipal Court can be developed either separately or integrally with the RJC though greater economies can be developed if planned and constructed together.
  3. Parking for about 500 cars can be provided on the Pioneer site with another 400 to 500 cars accommodated on the back of 195 S. Sierra.

- General Observations
1. This concept appears to offer the most simple approach to public access and use of court facilities.
  2. This concept offers the most opportunity for economies of scale.
  3. This concept offers the greatest potential staff and salary savings.
  4. This concept does not have a clear reuse for the prisoner delivery infrastructure in One South Sierra.
  5. This concept offers the simplest approach to security enhancement for all courts.

#### **MANAGER/COMMISSIONER COMMENTS**

All members of the Board joined to compliment Dan Burk and his staff on the efficient handling of the primary election and the smooth operation which took place in tallying the votes and the timeliness of the final results.

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 4:55 p.m.

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TED SHORT, Chairman  
Board of County Commissioners  
Washoe County, Nevada

ATTEST: AMY HARVEY, County Clerk

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