OKLAHOMA COUNTY
CRIMINAL
JUSTICE
ADVISORY COUNCIL

Oklahoma County Criminal Justice Advisory Council Quarterly Report to Interlocal Partners

For the Third Quarter of FY 2023
April 2023

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Christy Gillenwater, President of the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber

Wade Gourley, Chief of Police of Oklahoma City

Judge Philippa James, Presiding Judge of Oklahoma City Municipal Court

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Rick Warren, Court Clerk of Oklahoma County

Vacant, Fifth Community Representative

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BACKGROUND

In response to the growing concerns about chronic overcrowding in Oklahoma County's jail facility, the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber announced the creation of a special task force in December 2015 to evaluate Oklahoma County's criminal justice system. With collaboration and input from a diverse group of community members, the Chamber contracted with the Vera Institute of Justice to complete an initial analysis and make recommendations for reform of the Oklahoma County criminal justice system. Vera released their recommendations in December 2016. As a central recommendation of the report, an interlocal agreement between Oklahoma County, the City of Oklahoma City, the City of Edmond and the City of Midwest City created the Oklahoma County Criminal Justice Advisory Council (CJAC) in November 2017. The Advisory Council continued to evolve with the hiring of a full-time executive director in February 2018 to provide support to the CJAC's efforts. The creation of this permanent oversight body is key to implementing the proposed criminal justice reforms which can be summarized in these six key recommendations:

1. Create oversight and accountability mechanisms for the local justice system.
2. Reduce jail admissions for municipal violations and low-level misdemeanors.
3. Create a fair and efficient pretrial release process that safely reduces unnecessary pretrial incarceration.
4. Identify and address district court case processing delays that increase jail admissions and length of stay.
5. Expand meaningful diversion program options, focusing on those with mental illness and substance abuse disorders.
6. Reduce the impact of justice system fines and fees as a driver of jail growth and recidivism.

Although each of the six recommendations carry numerous challenges and barriers to improvement, the good news is that because of the cooperative effort of the Advisory Council's stakeholders, progress continues to be made on each of the six recommendations.

THIRD QUARTER HIGHLIGHT: NEW INTERIM JAIL ADMINISTRATOR BRINGS NEW MISSION, VISION AND VALUES

In January 2023, the Trust Authority overseeing the Oklahoma County Detention Center (OCDC) named Major Brandi Garner as interim CEO/jail administrator. Fortunately, Maj. Garner had been working at the OCDC for a year already and was familiar with policies and procedures to allow for a seamless transition. Previously, Garner worked in a variety of roles for the Cleveland County Sheriff's Office, where she was integral in collaborating with internal and external stakeholders to build trust and provide accountability.

"Maj. Garner is the ideal person to build on the progress the Jail Trust and the staff in the detention center have accomplished in recent years. She has developed a positive rapport within and outside the facility and has spearheaded many critical improvements. Most recently, she helped increase out-of-cell time for detainees," then Trust Authority Chair Jim Couch said. "I expect she will bring new ideas and new energy to the organization."

Maj. Garner welcomed the opportunity sharing, "My career in law enforcement and corrections, including my time in Oklahoma County, has given me experience and insight I'm excited to bring to this position. I'm looking forward to ensuring we continue our positive growth, prioritizing the safety and well-being of our detainees, our staff and our community."

Interim Administrator Garner has hit the ground running, developing numerous positive community relationships and interactions. Additionally, she worked with staff to renew the detention center's mission, vision and values.

Oklahoma County Detention Center Mission, Vision and Values

Oklahoma County Detention Center members are expected to conduct themselves with a commitment to themselves and others, to their mission, vision, and values, and to provide a safe environment for all persons within the detention center.

Our Mission Statement

The Oklahoma County Detention Center is here to exhibit professionalism, courtesy, ethical conduct, and moral standards to Oklahoma County and the State of Oklahoma.

Our Vision

The Oklahoma County Detention Center will strive to provide a safe and secure detention facility that cultivates a positive and empathetic culture, provide transparent and accountable service, and positively impact the lives of all individuals.

Core Values

Professionalism: Competency, character, or skill that is expected of a professional

Respect: Having a high regard for someone

Accountability: Being responsible for what you do and able to give a satisfactory reason for it

Integrity: The quality of being honest and having strong moral principles

Service: Being of help or assistance to others

Empowerment: Giving or delegating power or privilege through encouragement

The members of the Oklahoma County Detention Center will strive daily to instill and promote Professionalism, Respect, Accountability, Integrity, Service, and Empowerment to strive for excellence and **PRAISE** others.

CJAC commends the Trust Authority for acting swiftly to appoint Maj. Garner and stands ready to assist her as she implements new policies and procedures and helps with planning for the new detention center.

CJAC WELCOMES THREE NEW MEMBERS TO START 2023

Since the majority of CJAC members are appointed or elected officials, the makeup of the 19 members fluctuates from year to year. In 2022, the November elections and retirement of Greater OKC Chamber President Roy Williams in December resulted in three new CJAC members.

Brian Maughan

First, **Brian Maughan**, Oklahoma County Commissioner for District 2, is the newly designated CJAC member from the Board of Oklahoma County Commissioners. Although Commissioner Maughan is new to CJAC, he is not new to county government. He was first elected in 2008 then re-elected three more times either with no opposition or solid victory margins, making him one of the longest-serving commissioners in Oklahoma County history. He is also not new to the Oklahoma County justice system. Maughan created the SHINE (Start Helping Impacted Neighborhoods Everywhere) program to organize work crews made up of low-level non-violent offenders sentenced to community service. The program has saved millions in jail costs. Commissioner Maughan was also the first to advocate for the creation of an independent trust authority to oversee the operations of the jail after years of problems with previous sheriffs operating the jail.

Next, is the newly elected district attorney for Oklahoma County, **Vicki Behenna**. DA Behenna is new to elected politics but not new to the courtroom, having served 25 years as an Assistant United States Attorney for the Western District of Oklahoma, as well as serving as the Executive Director of the Oklahoma Innocence Project at the Oklahoma City University School of Law. Among her noteworthy prosecutions, Behenna was selected to participate in the Oklahoma City bombing case against Timothy McVeigh as a special attorney to then U.S.

Vicki Behenna

Attorney General Janet Reno. Upon completion of the case, Behenna was selected by U.S. Attorney Pat Ryan to serve as senior litigation counsel for the Western District of Oklahoma where she prosecuted numerous public corruption and fraud cases. Behenna has hit the ground running with several initiatives, including: creating a Death Penalty Review Committee; working to develop new administrative procedures for own recognizance bonds for medical and mental health reasons, especially when a detainee death is imminent and a release plan is in place; reducing the delay in filing charges; and supporting the graduation of more than 160 participants through the Oklahoma County Diversion Courts so far in 2023.

Christy Gillenwater

Finally, **Christy Gillenwater** started her work as President and CEO of the Greater OKC Chamber in January, 2023. Christy previously led two chambers – the Southwest Indiana Chamber and the Greater Bloomington Chamber – to win the National Chamber of the Year by the Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives (ACCE) as well as the Indiana Chamber of the Year by the Indiana Chamber Executives Association. In 2017, the Indiana Chamber Executives Association recognized her as Executive of the Year. More recently, Christy served as President and CEO of the Chattanooga Chamber of Commerce. In 2012, Christy was named a Certified Chamber Executive, the only national certification for chamber professionals. She currently serves as the Chair-Elect of the ACCE Board of Directors and also serves on the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Committee of 100.

CJAC welcomes the new members and looks forward to working with them to improve the county's justice system.

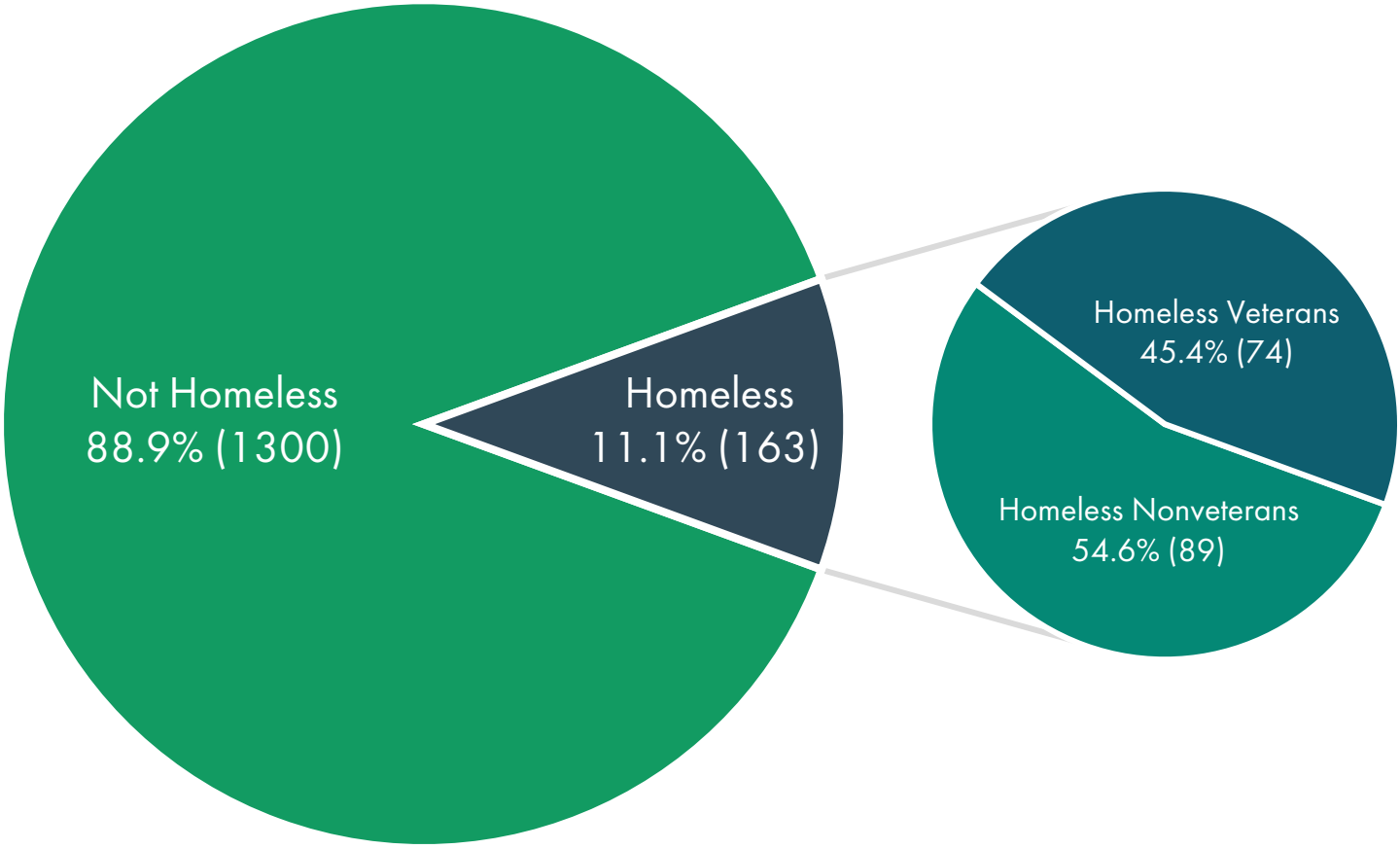
HOMELESS POINT-IN-TIME COUNT RENEWED FOR OKLAHOMA COUNTY DETENTION CENTER

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) mandates that all communities receiving federal funds through assistance grants conduct a Point-in-Time (PIT) count, which is a count of sheltered and unsheltered people experiencing homelessness on a single night. Each community is required to individually plan and carry out its PIT count on a single day during the last 10 days in January, at least every other year. Oklahoma City conducts the count annually, and this year, that date was January 26, 2023.

In previous years, the PIT count included numbers of homeless people who were in jail but when COVID hit, that count stopped. However, for 2023, the PIT count was renewed for the Oklahoma County Detention Center through a collaboration between CJAC data analysts, CJAC member Dan Straughan of the Homeless Alliance, and diversion liaisons imbedded in the jail. The result of the collaborative effort discovered that there were 163 people in the jail on Jan. 26, 2023, who met the criteria of homeless at intake. The total jail population count on Jan. 26 was 1,463, thus making the homeless count 11.1% of the jail's population. The data also revealed that of those 163, almost half of them (45%) were veterans. To put that number in further context, the total PIT count for OKC homeless was 1,339 in 2022, which was higher than both 2018 and 2019 pre-COVID.

As the city of Oklahoma City embarks on a new implementation strategy to address homelessness, CJAC looks forward to working with government partners and community service providers to address this challenge.

Homelessness Point-in-Time Count OCDC Jan 26, 2023 (Total 1463)



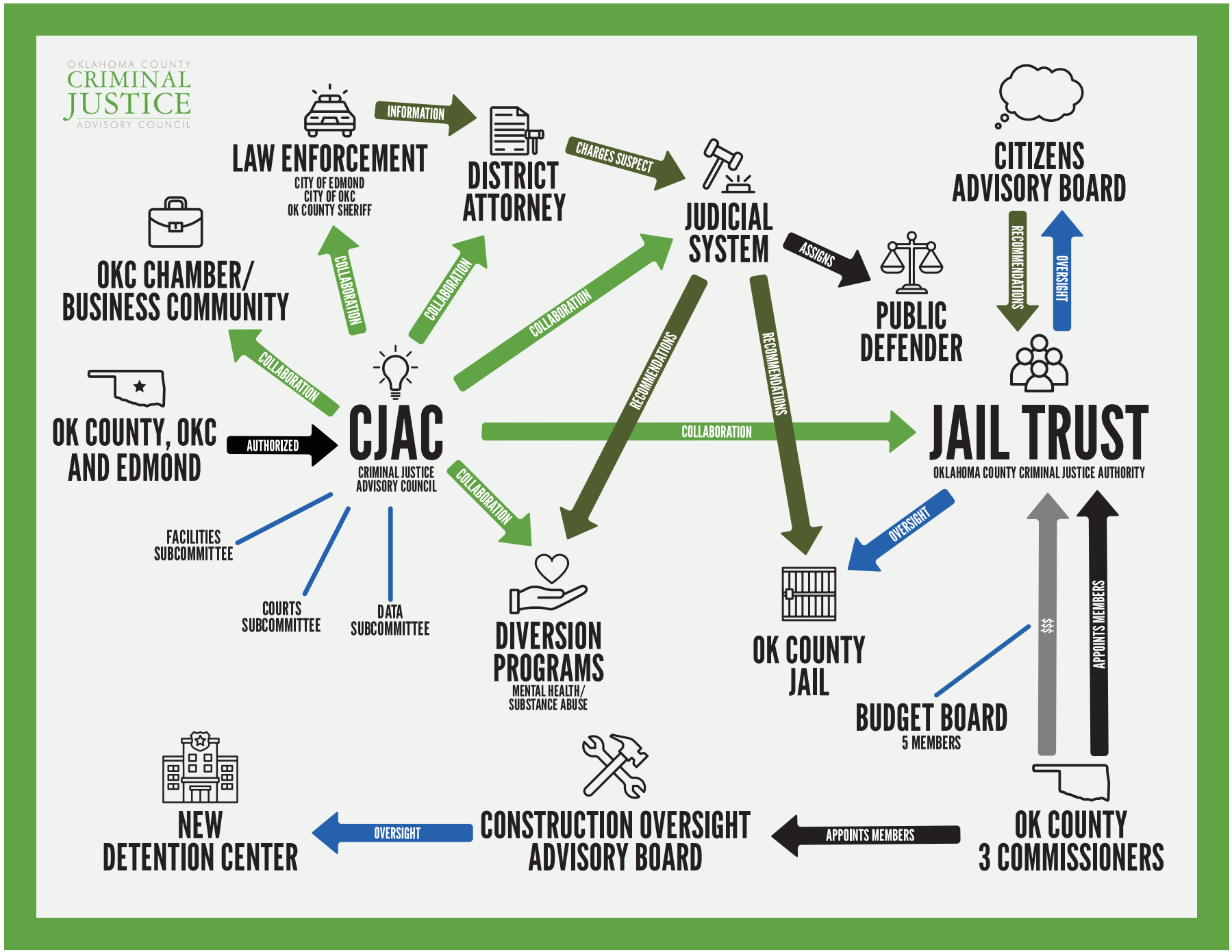
THIRD QUARTER JAIL POPULATION AVERAGE CONTINUES FY23 DOWNWARD TREND

Continuing the trend that was revealed at the midpoint of FY23, average jail population continues the downward trend in the third quarter against the backdrop of chronic and concerning jail overcrowding over the last two decades. As the chart below shows, the total average for the jail population in the third quarter of FY23 was 1,513, with 164 of those awaiting transport to the Department of Corrections after their judgement and sentencing has been determined. The FY23 average so far is lower than any of the previous three-year averages, which all were significantly lower than the previous 20 years. The third quarter average population would meet compliance of being under capacity if the new detention center was already open.

Oklahoma County Jail Totals
Total Average Population

CJAC RELEASES OKLAHOMA COUNTY JUSTICE SYSTEM OVERVIEW DIAGRAM

Recently, numerous community members have asked how anyone keeps up with the various players, committees and community members involved in the Oklahoma County justice system. Responding to the challenge, CJAC released the accompanying comprehensive diagram to explain the process and organizations involved. Special thanks go to Anglin Public Relations for their design work.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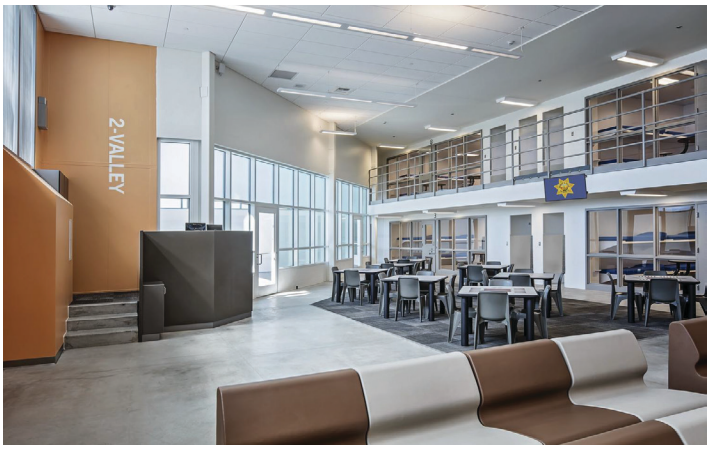
CITY OF EDMOND
CITY OF OKC
OK COUNTY SHERIFF
INFORMATION
DISTRICT ATTORNEY
CHARGES SUSPECT
JUDICIAL SYSTEM
ASSIGNS
PUBLIC DEFENDER
CITIZENS ADVISORY BOARD
RECOMMENDATIONS
OVERSIGHT
OKC CHAMBER/ BUSINESS COMMUNITY
COLLABORATION
COLLABORATION
COLLABORATION
COLLABORATION
OK COUNTY, OKC AND EDMOND
AUTHORIZED
CJAC
CRIMINAL JUSTICE ADVISORY COUNCIL
COLLABORATION
RECOMMENDATIONS
RECOMMENDATIONS
COLLABORATION
JAIL TRUST
OKLAHOMA COUNTY CRIMINAL JUSTICE AUTHORITY
OVERSIGHT
FACILITIES SUBCOMMITTEE
COURTS SUBCOMMITTEE
DATA SUBCOMMITTEE
DIVERSION PROGRAMS
MENTAL HEALTH/ SUBSTANCE ABUSE
OK COUNTY JAIL
$$$
APPOINTS MEMBERS
BUDGET BOARD
5 MEMBERS
NEW DETENTION CENTER
OVERSIGHT
CONSTRUCTION OVERSIGHT ADVISORY BOARD
APPOINTS MEMBERS
OK COUNTY 3 COMMISSIONERS

NEW JAIL DESIGN, LAND ACQUISITION, AND BOND FUNDING PROCESSES MOVE FORWARD

One of the promises that came with the strong public vote to approve bonds for a new jail in June 2022, was a commitment to more transparency and accountability in the design and construction process. In an effort to provide Oklahoma County residents and taxpayers a higher level of information, the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) unanimously created the Oklahoma County Citizen's Bond Oversight Advisory Board for the construction of a new Oklahoma County Detention Center.

The oversight board moved forward with two major projects on new jail design: considering land for the new location and seeking bids from design architects. Five land parcels were submitted by private sector actors and two land parcels were submitted by government agencies. The oversight board will consider those seven in their upcoming meetings in the fourth quarter of FY23. Government agencies still have time to submit land parcels and the oversight board is expecting more submissions soon, providing more options for the new jail site. Also, four bidders responded to the design architect bids which will also be decided in the fourth quarter.
The BOCC moved to sell the first set of bonds of $45 million to facilitate contracting the design architect, purchasing land, and other initial items. Fortunately, the bond market responded positively to the bond sale offering, bringing in an interest rate of 3.23% APR. That 3.23% APR is lower than the new jail bond campaign projected at 4.5% and much lower than the 10% that critics of the new jail bond falsely promoted.

Rendering of the OK County Jail's proposed minimum security area.



Rendering of the OK County Jail's proposed medium security area.

Rendering of the OK County Jail's proposed maximum security area.

WORK ON NEW WINDOWS TO IMPROVE SITE LINES IN THE DETENTION CENTER

Numerous reports have mentioned that one of the major problems with the current jail is the difficulty in keeping up with visual site checks. Not only does the design and structure of the current jail make site checks exceedingly difficult, requiring high staffing rations, but conducting the site check is problematic because the view into the cell is extremely limited as can be seen by the small window on door five in the accompanying picture.

To address this challenge, the Oklahoma County Detention Center maintenance team has designed and refitted cell doors with a much larger window, dramatically increasing the view when doing site checks as can be seen by door six in the accompanying picture.

Due to the importance of site checks in the medical and mental health areas of the jail, including monitoring suicide watch patients, the doors in those areas of the jail will be refitted first, followed by general areas of the jail. However, the effort to refit the windows is time-consuming, in addition to other maintenance needs for the beleaguered building. This effort highlights the importance of properly designing medical, behavioral health, and other general population site lines in the new facility.

CONCLUSION

Quarterly reports are functions of good and bad news; some progress but nagging awareness that much work still needs to be done. The encouraging numbers on declining total jail population, new leadership at the jail, progress on the new jail, and other highlights are tempered by sobering numbers on homelessness and veterans. Yet, the effort of two steps forward but one step back reminds us and our community partners that forward progress, albeit ever so slowly, is still better than the years, even decades, when progress was hard to find. As the Oklahoma County Criminal Justice Advisory Council moves into the last quarter of the year, it must keep taking steps forward toward a brighter future for a more fair and more effective justice system.

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