

OPINION

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Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

The county hopes to use the old youth detention facility near Warrenton for an expanded new jail.

Please vote 'yes' on Measure 4-195

As your elected sheriff of Clatsop County, I have always tried to do what is right for the majority of the people. This includes everyone, no matter what walk of life they may come from.

I can tell you all kinds of stories related to having an inadequate jail and the lack of accountability. We have more than 1,500 outstanding warrants. I can tell you people are released on a daily basis who consistently get out just hours or days after being arrested, then commit additional crimes at every level from shoplifting to domestic violence to murder.

I can tell you the vulnerable, mentally ill and those with drug dependencies default to the jail, where we do our best to take care of them — however, again due to lack of space, programs or proper treatment, real help is never fulfilled.

I can tell you the current jail was originally built for 29 inmates. It was overcrowded the day it opened almost 40 years ago in 1980.

Every study (four) over the last 20 years

has stated we need a minimum of 140 beds with room for future expansion. We have that opportunity now with the closing of the Oregon Youth Authority juvenile prison in Warrenton that was run by the state. It is in a good location away from neighborhoods and close to the current sheriff's office. We would be repurposing an old building into a modern facility able to meet the needs associated with keeping our community safe.

This building would not only create accountability for the incarcerated, but would also create a safer environment for mentally ill inmates. Most of them should not be there in the first place, but we often have many. It would also provide a better working environment for corrections deputies, mental health workers, drug and alcohol counselors, lawyers, doctors, nurses and clergy, all of whom work within the walls helping to create a place of rehabilitation and again accountability.

Some people say I want a remodeled jail because of my support of Measure 105, which would repeal the state sanctuary law. They say I want to lock up all illegal immigrants. That is the furthest thing from the truth. It just doesn't happen like that. There are still many laws in

place to protect everyone, no matter where they come from or what they believe. I have dedicated my life to protecting rights and upholding the law. I will continue to do so as long as I serve as your sheriff.

However, without the accountability of incarceration — coupled with treatment and compassion — we are just spinning our wheels and not helping anyone to become productive, sober or mentally balanced to integrate back into society.

Think what you may about me, but know I have spent 33 years serving this community and doing my best to maintain the integrity of the law. Clatsop County is in dire need of a jail facility that will work with our criminal justice partners such as the courts, mental health and the previously mentioned numerous other entities.

Clatsop County is a beautiful place to live and a beautiful place to visit. If you truly want our community to be a safer place through accountability and compassion, please vote "yes" on Measure 4-195 to fix our current situation.

Thank you.

Tom Bergin is sheriff of Clatsop County.

Jail remodel is a necessity, not a luxury

In many ways jails are orphans. Most of its "users," or those directly affected by them, are confined to the victims of more serious crime, the officers who arrest those accused, and the people accused of crimes.

On the November ballot coming soon to your mailbox is Clatsop County Measure

4-195, which would authorize bonds to remodel the mothballed Oregon Youth Authority detention facility in Warrenton into a much-needed county jail.

The cost to families with a house assessed at roughly \$200,000 would be about \$43 a year, a fraction of what is being asked for by local school districts and other local districts. The difference, of course, who does a jail actually serve?

As your elected district attorney for the last quarter century, I can say without hesitation, a jail is there to protect you, your family and your neighbors. Oregon has one of the lower incarceration rates in the nation and criminals need to really outdo themselves to actually get locked up. Even in more serious felony crimes, only 30 percent of convicted felons go to prison. That means 70 percent of convicted felons stay in the community, may do some local jail time and hopefully learn stealing, selling drugs, or driving under the influence are not good ways to live.

But even if you or your family don't "use" the jail, it is as necessary to a safe and livable community as a hospital. You probably don't want to go there, either, but you sure want it there if needed.

Some might say that as a career prosecutor, of course I advocate for a jail. However this winter, after 40 years in law enforcement, 38 years as a lawyer, and 25 years as your DA, I will become a private citizen, who hopefully has no more personal need for the jail as most of you.

There are many reasons this bond needs to pass. This is the third try in 15 years. It is a likely one-time use of an existing state facility that might otherwise cost taxpayers twice as much. But most importantly it is because for the entire justice system to work, from police to probation, prosecutors to judges, drug treatment to restraining orders, there has to be an empty jail bed available if a judge determines it is



Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

The visitation room at the Clatsop County Jail.

appropriate.

Most people arrested, even for their third drunk driving offense, do not await trial in jail. At a cap of 60, the jail is one-third its needed capacity and dangerous felons are released every week. A few years ago one of those men murdered two young women just a few weeks later in Portland. That should never happen.

Some people have claimed that the sheriff's political views should be punished by rejecting a desperately needed public building. That is spiteful and short-sighted. If I had a dollar for every time a crime victim or family member tearfully asked me why the abuser of someone's spouse or child was walking free, I'd be a rich man. Immigration cases have not been held in the county jail for at least a decade. It's far too full of people charged with violent felonies who are citizens.

There are a limited number of times the county is willing to go to the voters for a need like this, which many think will never impact

them. Women will be abused if their abusers are not held in jail, children will be beaten or worse. This is not a scare tactic. This is actual experience, in this county.

Measure 4-195 is a modest proposal, using the Oregon Youth Authority facility the state abandoned. I doubt it will be usable in the same way in four to five years.

Many people claim the jail does not affect them because 1) their family or friends aren't locked up, 2) they haven't been the victim of a serious crime, or 3) if we don't build a jail crime will magically decrease. That's called "magical thinking" for a reason.

Do not be misled by emotion or a lack of empathy for the victims of crime, who tend to be women, children, and the poor, far more than people like me.

Please join me in voting 'yes' on Measure 4-195.

Joshua Marquis is Clatsop County's district attorney.

Clatsop County jail woes

1976 \$2.1 million bond passes to construct a 76-bed jail. County leaders seek federal funds to supplement construction costs. Double-digit inflation eventually reduces available funds, resulting in design reduction to 29 beds.

1980 Current facility opens.

1983 Jail double-bunked increasing capacity 45 inmates.

1985 Further double bunking, conversion of gym into laundry facility and dormitory.

1986 Population reduced to 22 beds due to financial hardships.

1988 County passes new tax base increasing budgeted capacity to 45 inmates.

1999 Jail analysis study recommends construction of new 140-bed facility, expandable to 170 beds.

2002 Bond measure to replace jail fails.

2004 Grand jury investigation and report recommends new jail.

2004 National Institute of Corrections system assessment highlights current facility limitations, design constraints and staffing limitations.

2005 National Sheriff's Association study recommends increasing staff from 21 to 32 to meet basic needs of facility, staff and inmates.

2008 Study by Voorhis Associates estimates the need for a 137-bed facility by 2020; 194 beds by 2040.

Current status

80 Average daily population
2,471 Bookings
459 Forced releases



Forced releases

- 18.9% of bookings end in forced release.
- In the first half of 2018, 236 inmates determined as poor or dangerous candidates for forced release.
- June 2018, 50 inmates forced released, some for the second time or with prison sentences pending.
- Parole and probation clients commonly "day report" instead of serving jail time for violations.

Proposed facility

- Oregon Youth Authority facility closed in 2017.
- Reutilization of OYA could save approximately 50% over building new.
- Cost is estimated at \$23.8 million.
- Bond is \$20 million, with county contributing the rest from reserves and timber funds.
- Tax rate is estimated at 21 cents per \$1000 of assessed value.

Source: Clatsop County Sheriff's Office