

# Jail: Lack of space affects crime stats

Continued from Page 1

booking paperwork, which is demoralizing to officers, Phillips said. Last year, 459 inmates were released early.

The jail bond would pay to convert and expand the former 50-bed Oregon Youth Authority facility in Warrenton into a 148-bed jail.

The state shuttered the local OYA program in 2017 during a round of budget cuts and ownership of the building has

reverted to the county. The building had housed juvenile facilities and a school.

The total estimated cost is \$23.8 million. The county would earmark \$3 million from its Special Projects capital fund toward the project.

The county has sought for years to address inadequacies in the existing jail, with bond measures in 2002 and 2012 that were rejected by voters.

The Grand Jury and the au-

thors of studies conducted in 1999, 2004, 2005 and 2008 found the county jail understaffed and inadequate to meet the need for bed space.

Meanwhile, Clatsop County is No. 1 in the state in arrests for behavioral crimes (disorderly conduct, possession of controlled substances, etc.) and No. 4 in the state for property crime arrests. There are 1,500 outstanding warrants countywide.



The former Oregon Youth Authority building on Southeast 19th Street in Warrenton.

There is no rehabilitation or assistance for substance abuse

and mental health issues because there is no space, time or personnel for it.

“Jails are safety nets where we can get them help or medications,” Phillips said. “We can’t provide those services now.”

Clatsop County previously had rented beds at Tillamook County’s jail until that facility filled up.

Mayor Henry Balensifer asked whether Clatsop County would rent beds to other areas lacking jail space and whether those inmates could potentially be released locally.

“We have the need here. We won’t release beds to other counties and we’re not building to lock up illegal aliens,” Bergin said. “So no, not to ICE, not to Tillamook County, not to Columbia County.”

The Clatsop County Commission increased the county’s transient room tax in July. Proceeds will fund the jail’s operating costs.

Tourists and others staying at local hotels and campgrounds pay transient room taxes.

The increase raised the tax rate from 9.5 to 10.5 percent.

Under state law, 70 percent of the proceeds must fund tourism. A portion of the resulting tax revenue collected from lodging establishments in the five cities will be distributed to the cities.

The remaining 30 percent, estimated to total \$420,000 a year, will fund operations of the proposed new jail.

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