

October 24,2022

To: Honorable Judge D. McElfresh and Del Norte Board of Supervisors

Proposed Closure of Juvenile Hall

For the sake of our youth we must insure that all facts are presented to the community. There is one consistent problem area which is generated by two separate entities. This area was clearly identified to the Del Norte Board of Supervisor (BOS) in the Del Norte Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Commission's (JJ&DPC) confidential report dated July 7, 2017, at the time of the Del Norte Bar-O Boys Ranch Closure. The facts of that report essentially are the same and we stand by it as written. The only thing that has changed is that Probation Officers have joined in the claim of a hostile work environment. This has led to increased staffing vacancy issues in both areas. We recommended at that time that the BOS and the Del Norte County Administration Officer (CAO) do a close introspection of these issues.

Since the last BOS public meeting, in separate discussions with two of the new BOS members we learned that they were not aware of this confidential report. They were advised this report was available to them through the Del Norte County Counsel (DNCC) which were provided copies at the time.

In that report we advised you that when Chief Reyman was appointed Chief, in Juvenile Hall there were 4 employees with 10-15 years experience and the Bar-O's budget was in the black. Within approximately a year all 4 had left for other employment and Bar-O's budget was in the red.

Since then we have closed Bar-O to staff Juvenile Hall and now we are closing Juvenile Hall to staff Probation. We are running out of areas to close behind what appears to be the mismanagement of the Del Norte Probation Department (PD).

It should also be noted that except for court ordered placement the Chief of Probation has absolute control over what youths are referred to the Del Norte District Attorney for prosecution review as well as what youths are placed in the hall temporarily by law enforcement agencies. No one questions that there should be strict review of placement but it does give him total control of Juvenile Hall's population.

A Probation Officer's position is recognized throughout the State as an honorable prestigious position that interacts with the courts. Now we are suffering resignations from long term Probation Officers and Supervisors which are taking what they claim are less stressful jobs, i.e., county jail, planning department, code enforcement, unemployment, Pelican Bay State Prison and school bus driver. If there was some oversight of this department at least one or two of these resignations should have thrown a "red flag" of a potential problem. In the last 5 years there has been an estimated 21 employees separate from Juvenile Hall. In our 2017 report, we recommended that exit interviews be conducted on all separating employees. We have not been able to find any former employees that claim to have been interviewed upon separation of employment. The basic comment is, "No one cares".

The other problem is recruitment/hiring. We have been led to believe that current hiring process is slanted too heavy to strict law enforcement philosophy and is not in step with the custodial needs for youth. This is not an Adult Jail, security is important but treatment,

correction and diversion of youth should be the priority. You can train new employees security but it is more difficult to train them to work with youth. This will require a major change in philosophy and not rhetoric. We have also been advised that some resigned employees wanted to return as part-time on call employees but were denied the opportunity.

The allegation of a hostile work environment is extremely pervasive. Former employees are less reluctant to express their true feelings and acknowledge they worked in fear of retaliation for even a slight or perceived misdeed. They claimed they like the job but it was not worth their health. The numbers are sufficient to believe it is just a matter of time before someone files a Federal Title VII-Hostile Work Environment claim and there is a sufficient number of disgruntled former employee to be subpoenaed to substantiate the claim.

Our youths are expressing concerns and fear that Juvenile Hall is closing. It leaves them with less options, except running away, couch surfing or homeless. They deserve BETTER!

Paul Dillard, Chairman

David Dornaus, Co-Chairman

Mary Jo Duncan, Commissioner

Anthony Fabricius, Commissioner

Deborah Horner, Commissioner

Christy Hernandez, Commissioner223

