



NAPA COUNTY GRAND JURY 2022-2023

FINAL REPORT
April 26, 2023

NAPA COUNTY JAIL
Out With the Old, In With the New
Serving Time in the Meantime

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SUMMARY

The California Penal Code Section 919(b) mandates a yearly inquiry into the management and conditions of all detention facilities in the County. The 2022-2023 Napa County Grand Jury (Jury) conducted a physical inspection of the Napa County Jail (NCJ) in 2022. The Jury also met with and interviewed several Jail staff members and administrators.

The NCJ no longer meets the needs of our County, and construction of a new jail is underway. Incarcerated persons (hereby referred to as IPs) are now incarcerated for longer periods creating the need for programs that support rehabilitation and re-entry to society. The physical limitations of the building have hindered the NCJ's ability to provide programs, and the programs that had been offered were halted due to Covid-19 restrictions in the last three years. The Jury does not believe it is in the best interest of the IPs or the County to wait for the new jail facility to open before offering increased programming to the IPs who are serving out their sentences. The NCJ found innovative ways to function under the restrictions of the pandemic. The Jury is hopeful that this creativity will be utilized to provide programs while the new facility is under construction.

BACKGROUND

The NCJ qualifies as one of two detention facilities in Napa County. The NCJ is managed by the Department of Corrections which is part of Public Safety services. Napa is the only county in California with its jail directed by a County employee administrator, rather than the Sheriff's Department. The NCJ is inspected biannually by the State of California Board of State and Community Corrections and annually investigated by the Napa County Grand Jury.

In 1976, the Napa County Jail, near Third and Coombs streets, opened with 60 beds at a cost \$4 million dollars (approximately \$24 million in today's dollars). In 1989, the jail was remodeled and expanded at a cost of \$8 million (approximately \$19 million in today's dollars).

In October 2022, the Board of Supervisors unanimously approved the \$133.3 million budget to build a new jail. Construction started in early 2023 and is scheduled to be finished in December 2024, with plans to open in March 2025. The new NCJ will have 332 beds, including 28 beds in a mental health/medical unit, and will replace the existing 276 bed jail in downtown Napa.

METHODOLOGY

Interviews conducted:

- Interviewed Administrative Staff at NCJ

- Briefings and Q & A with NCJ staff
- Toured NCJ and Re-entry facility

Documents reviewed:

- The NCJ Procedures Manual
- The 2020-2022 Biennial Inspection Penal Code Section 6031 and Welfare and Institutions Code 209
- The guidelines outlined in the State of California Title 15 Minimum Standards for Detention Facilities
- The 2020-2022 Board of State and Community Corrections Biennial Inspection Report
- Previous Napa County Grand Jury reports
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DISCUSSION

The NCJ was originally designed to hold IPs only until sentencing. Since 2011 IPs without current or prior serious or violent offenses have stayed in county jails to serve their sentences.¹ Napa County has run into space constraints at the existing jail due to the need to separate IPs because of Covid-19 isolation and quarantine guidelines, mental and behavioral issues, and consideration of other factors such as gang affiliations.

The physical building is too small, housing only 276 IPs with ten mental health/medical beds. The jail population occasionally exceeds this capacity, requiring the use of temporary mattresses that rest on the floor. The physical layout of the jail contributes to other challenges. The NCJ has three levels. When IPs need to be transported, they walk through a maze of hallways and use elevators. This layout creates an increased safety risk by providing opportunities for violence and attempted escapes. Despite the aging facility, the NCJ passed the 2020-2022 California

¹ Governor Brown signed into law Assembly Bill (AB) 109 and AB 117 in 2011.

Board of State and Community Corrections biennial inspection with no outstanding items of noncompliance and has had no escapes in recent years.

Work opportunities are provided as incentive for good behavior but are generally not offered to the female IPs due to the proximity of the kitchen/laundry facilities to the cells designated for male IPs. The new jail will offer work incentives to all qualified IPs.

Under Covid-19 restrictions, group programming was put on hold. IPs can receive limited services individually at their cell, however there is no regular group programming such as educational classes, recovery programs, job training or religious groups, even as the restrictions are being lifted. As of January 2023, there was no definitive plan for programs to resume after the state of emergency came to an end in March 2023. The new jail will have large group spaces and classrooms for various programs, including career training.

The NCJ has kept Covid-19 outbreaks to a minimum. The implementation of a quarantine unit also provided an extended opportunity for observation of new IPs that can make their future cell placement more appropriate and safe. The NCJ has started the Early Access Stabilization Services program which addresses mental health issues at intake and secures mental health treatment options earlier in the booking/holding process.

Another positive change that the NCJ has implemented during Covid-19 restrictions has been video arraignments. IPs have the option to conduct their court arraignments over a video visit. Video arraignments save time and travel, and will hopefully continue when IPs are housed in the new jail as it is about three miles from the courthouse.

The Jury did note that NCJ has many long-term staff working with minimal use of overtime or mandated shifts. The interactions observed between staff and IPs were cordial and respectful. The facility appeared clean and well-run. The administration and staff that the Jury spoke with were passionate about their work and excited for the benefits and opportunities that the new jail will provide.

In 2014, the County secured a \$13.5 million bond-funded state grant to help build a \$23.4 million re-entry facility that was completed in 2019. The facility was designed to house IPs who are nearing release. These IPs were to receive counseling and skills classes to help them successfully reintegrate into society. The facility lacks the traditional security measures of a jail, including fencing, razor wire, and locked cells. Since the pandemic, however, the Superior Court releases low-level offenders from custody and uses alternatives to jail, such as electronic home monitoring. More lenient sentencing laws have also resulted in a smaller pool of inmates eligible for programming at a re-entry facility.

For these reasons, the County has never used the re-entry facility for the intended purpose of housing IPs and trying to reduce recidivism. The facility has been used to house people displaced by the 2020 wildfires and as an isolation-and-quarantine COVID-19 shelter for those who couldn't isolate in their own homes. Due to the fact that the re-entry facility was funded in part by a state grant, the County cannot repurpose the facility, even for temporary uses, without state approval. Current discussions between jail administration and other County departments are in the works to find a practical use for this building that fits the state mandates. Also the County is seeking to negotiate with the State to find a way to implement a more practical and cost-effective use for the re-entry facility.

The 2022-2023 Jury has three findings and three recommendations for the interim period until the new jail is built and running.

FINDINGS

The Jury finds that:

F1. The Napa County Jail lacks adequate programming, especially for long-term incarcerated persons. Now that the Covid-19 State of Emergency has been lifted (March 2023), it is not reasonable to wait for the new jail to provide broader programs for incarcerated persons.

F2. Women are not offered equitable work opportunities at the Napa County Jail.

F3. The re-entry facility is not currently used and is likely not going to be used for its intended purpose.

RECOMMENDATIONS

R1. The Napa County Grand Jury recommends that the Director of Corrections increase programs for IPs by December 31, 2023. If the space constraints are a limitation, the jury recommends NCJ increase online programs.

R2. The Napa County Grand Jury recommends that the Director of Corrections implement work opportunities for women by December 31, 2023.

R3. The Napa County Grand Jury recommends that the Board of Supervisors continue to work diligently with the State to find and implement a long term solution for the use of the re-entry facility and provide quarterly updates to the public until a long term solution is implemented.

COMMENDATIONS

1. The Napa Grand Jury commends the NJC for managing the Covid-19 pandemic with innovative solutions to keep outbreaks to a minimum.

REQUEST FOR RESPONSES

The following responses are required and requested pursuant to Penal Code Sections 933 and 933.05:

From the following county officials within 90 days:

- Director of the Department of Corrections: F1, F2, R1, R2
- Board of Supervisors: F3, R3

Reports issued by the Grand Jury do not identify individuals interviewed. Penal Code section 929 requires that reports of the Grand Jury not contain the name of any person or facts leading to the identity of any person who provides information to the Grand Jury.