Statement from Richmond Mayor Tom Butt
Regarding State’s Decision to Reject Contra Costa County’s Proposal
to Expand the West County Detention Facility

Richmond Mayor Tom Butt issued the following statement today in response to the California Board of State and Community Corrections’ (BSCC) announcement awarding the top four large California counties that applied for jail construction grants through SB 863. Although Contra Costa County had submitted an $80 million grant to expand the West County Detention Facility, which is located within the City of Richmond, the BSCC ultimately decided to approve applications for San Francisco, Santa Clara, Alameda, and Ventura Counties but not for Contra Costa County.

“We supported the expressed intent of the application, which was to provide expanded mental health, education and re-entry services,” said Mayor Tom Butt. “However, the Sheriff’s Office failed to provide a plan of how these programs would be funded at a cost of $4 to $5 million annually and a commitment to permanently close down unneeded facilities in Martinez.”

This past August, the Richmond City Council adopted a resolution officially opposing the jail expansion proposal and took legal action challenging the County’s Environmental Impact Report.

“This project on its face was simply a major expansion,” said Mayor Butt. “It would have made the West County Detention Facility, by far, the largest jail in the County.”

The Sheriff’s Office manages the county’s three detention facilities. The $80 million jail expansion application -- which would have cost the County an additional $10 million in general funds to complete -- would have increased the West County Detention Facility in Richmond by more than 400 jail beds, increasing that site’s total to more than 1,000 inmates. The Martinez Detention Facility would be decreased by nearly half to 300 jail beds. The East County Detention Facility, which is a low security campus, would remain at around 70 even though it has a capacity of nearly twice that.

“Let’s be clear, we’re extremely supportive of meaningful mental health and other services for inmates,” said Mayor Butt. “Those programs should already be in our jails. More importantly, I believe that if the County has money for these types of programs, it could be spent supporting residents in our community who desperately need help right now, not when they’re in jail.”

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