

Angela Hubbard

From: Perry Huston
Sent: Wednesday, March 30, 2016 9:08 AM
To: Angela Hubbard
Subject: FW: Regarding Juvenile Detention

For the website.

From: Jake Rehm [<mailto:maximusjakeus@hotmail.com>]
Sent: Tuesday, March 29, 2016 6:03 PM
To: Perry Huston
Subject: Regarding Juvenile Detention

Hello,

Please consider this as public commentary regarding the proposed closing of the Okanogan County Juvenile Detention. My name is Jake Rehm, and I am a former employee of the detention. While the facility is not without its issues, as a former employee (and current public employee of Eastern Washington University), I strongly urge the county commissioners to dismiss this consideration.

Transporting county youth to Martin Hall (a privatized correctional facility) removes them from the community they are most engaged in. While on the surface this proposed closure may appear to save the county money, additional considerations such as transportation costs, court appearances, morale of youth, etc. make this only a candy-coated solution to the counties budget problems. While Martin Hall services several counties in the state, their motivation is only financial - nothing more. They are not connected to the communities of Okanogan County, and cannot do much to accomodate youth who will be separated from their families and loved ones.

Monetary considerations aside, let us not forget that this facility also employs 8 full time correctional officers, several part-time on-call officers, as well as an administrative staff. Does the county really wish to terminate the employment of loyal community members who dedicate their livelihood to managing our population of offenders? Having worked at the detention, I can tell you that stress levels are extremely high, morale is very low, and our officers do not get paid enough for the work that they do - period. I simply cannot mince words here. After I left Okanogan County, I spent three years working for the state Department of Corrections, working in several capacities at Coyote Ridge Corrections Center (the largest prison in the state by offender number). While working there, I marveled at how well staffed and trained DOC employees were. There was never concern about having enough officers working, nor was there any concern about morale, training, or compensation. There were specific staff for every aspect: A/C Cooks who prepared offender meals, Recreation Specialists who programmed recreation activities, Chaplains for offender spiritual needs, etc. The county juvenile has a skeleton crew that has to prepare meals, coordinate recreation, program visitation, and any other special event - all while maintaining order and having to drop everything without notice if a book-in occurred. I can honestly say that working in adult corrections was far easier than working at the juvenile detention. If anything, the county should consider allocating more resources to assist those employees at the juvenile detention for the work they do.

In summary, closing the county juvenile detention would further deteriorate the bleak economic outlook of Okanogan County. People with families would lose their jobs. We would lose a valuable resource and our youth

would be warehoused, not treated. Recidivism rates would not go down. Problems would not be solved. I urge you to dismiss the proposal to close the detention. The county will be better off for keeping it open.

Thank you.

Jake Rehm