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REQUEST IOWA INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDS FOR WOODBURY COUNTY LEC

INTRODUCTION

In 2018, officials in Woodbury County, IA evaluated alternatives to reconstruct, repair, or replace the Law Enforcement Center (LEC). While the entire facility was in dire need of renovation, the jail/detention portion required immediate replacement of infrastructure, security systems, inmate housing and services. Having completed a thorough needs analysis, the County Board of Supervisors determined the only logical course of action was to replace the LEC.

Planning and design to replace the LEC began over one year prior to the initial reports of what is now known to be Covid-19. The design team and County have consistently communicated and weighed options as to proceeding, stopping, or considering deeper value engineering. That said, Woodbury County has continued on the course with a best practices design and commitment to quality construction materials and workmanship, to deliver a multi-purposed LEC to serve the County, State and Federal partners well into the foreseeable future. The County will continue to seek resources to deliver a well-engineered facility, quality building systems, and design enhancements to meet the needs mental health issues.

FUNDING AND BIDS

A referendum was passed in March 2020, authorizing the sale of \$50.3 million of bonds to fund a new LEC. The \$50.3 million included hard costs (construction budget) and soft costs (consulting fees, land acquisition, and bond costs). The project design process moved forward into 2021, even as measures to control the spread of Covid-19 began to impact costs and the availability of materials. Value adjustments were incorporated in the planning and budget to offset the known impacts of Covid-19. The new LEC construction budget was estimated to be \$43 million.

Competitive bids were solicited and produced two submissions, the lowest bid at \$58.39 million, the second at \$59.3 million. The lowest responsive, responsible bidder has now been approved as we continue to move forward given the immediate need to replace the current facility. Regrettably, the project is \$15.5 million over the estimated budget; without question, a direct consequence of the unprecedented cost escalations resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic.

BACKGROUND

The 1985 facility, designed to house 90 inmates has been modified over time to current capacity of 234 detainees. It is imperative to note the modifications to increase inmate capacity failed to include essential redesign or expansion of heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) and life safety systems which all remain original. The original HVAC systems do not meet air quality standards, the design circulates return air throughout the building. Thus, stale and potentially infectious air is shared amongst detainee housing, courtrooms, judicial chambers, the county Sheriff's headquarters, jail staff, security officers, and all public spaces.

The 1985 jail design included only two medical exam rooms. This area is undersized to provide safe and efficient treatment and is also subject to previously identified HVAC deficiencies. *Jail staff must manage*

inmates with psychological, or mental health issues; this while lacking the availability of protective, segregated detention space suited for this purpose. Detainees lacking normal cognitive and behavioral capabilities are placed in areas lacking the proper environment and treatment, while remaining a danger to themselves and others.

CURRENT CONDITIONS

With the direction to replace the LEC to include adequate space for effectively housing current prisoners, the design team produced a plan to construct a 448-bed detention facility. The planned capacity is in stark contrast to the current facility, initially designed to house 90 inmates.

Developing plans for the new LEC centered on establishing a safe and stable environment for all facility users. Given the lessons learned from the Covid-19 pandemic, the LEC building design team incorporated engineered HVAC systems to prevent dangerous cross contamination. The design will minimize the risk of airborne health hazards in a building delivering critical governmental functions. The new LEC design incorporates elements specific to the needs of inmates with mental health needs.

In consulting with many experts in the mental health field and reviewing published papers on detainee mental health, it is agreed upon that at least 44% of the inmate population are there because of mental health needs or the inmates committed the crime because of mental health deficiencies. The recent pandemic has caused many of the experts that Woodbury County LEC Authority have either interviewed or attended presentations that indicated the number is closer to 60%. By the numbers, 448 inmates, assuming 40% have mental needs, this calculates to 179 inmates. The newly designed jail will have 68,345 SF for detainees and jail staff. The cost of 68,345 SF is \$44.5 million using the 40% number for mental health needs calculates to the cost of \$17.45 million.

The following list highlights design enhancements to meet current and future needs:

- Designated areas are included for the provision of medical and mental health treatment, as well as offering programs tailored to inmate mental health care.
- Steel cells with polyurea coating versus porous masonry and paint. This translates into a product with premium cleaning and sanitizing results in the event of any contamination.
- Traditional shared showers have been replaced with individual showers in each cell to limit inmate close interaction, enhance hygiene and improve water management.
- Floor plans offer correctional officers enhanced visual supervision of inmates. This reduces the need for officer-to-inmate interaction.
- Laundry capacity is increased to provide improved cleaning capabilities that effectively sanitize articles.
- The placement of correctional polymer furniture in lieu of concrete, offering a non-porous surface that is easily sanitized.
- Increased separation in critical areas including booking, intake, attorney visitation, prisoner dayrooms, and activity areas, for the purpose of enhancing safety during proximity interactions with inmates.
- Secure transport devised to maintain inmate/staff separation enhancing officer safety while managing multiple inmates during transitional duties.
- Video visitation will prevent close contact interaction.
- Attorney client visitation is redesigned to provide separation and limit contact between attorney and client.
- A modernized property bagging system will seal inmate personal effects in a vacuum bag to prevent cross-contamination and unpleasant odors in the workspace.

- Expanded number of custodial facilities will be available to promptly address incidents of exposure to biohazards, bodily fluids, etc.
- Staff will be added to provide consistent and frequent cleaning.
- Controllable air handlers enable staff to establish negative air pressure in cells, preventing the spread of infectious diseases.
- Modern air-handling equipment will offer significant improvements with delivery of improved air filtration, including ultra-violet lighting to eliminate contaminants.
- A variable design pod system provides staff the flexibility to establish additional areas to properly secure an influx of inmates suffering from mental health issues, or inmates suffering from infectious diseases, including isolation cells if necessary.
- Staff and inmate mental health work environment is improved with the use of Water Management coupled with Modular LED lighting controls.
- Utility infrastructure to provide fiber to an area of Sioux City that has been undeveloped.
- Utility infrastructure to bring water and sewer to same area, as well as, oversized for future expansion.

The new LEC detention area will include an office for a staffed mental health professional, three (3) padded cells to prevent inmate self-injury, six (6) isolation/exam rooms, inmate segregation pods, and program rooms. Each of these items represent features, safety improvements, and a designated space for mental health inmates, all which have not been available in the current jail.

CONCLUSION

Well before the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, Woodbury County officials committed to the replacement of an undersized, poorly designed, and deteriorated detention center. After the design process had concluded, bids were let in accordance with Iowa statute. While the design team had anticipated some cost escalation, all those associated with the project were dismayed by bids exceeding professional estimates by 33%.

The previously outlined design improvements, coupled with the cost escalations in building materials and related supplies, are costs directly connected to the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. As such, we respectfully request the opportunity to seek State of Iowa infrastructure funds on this project.

Yours very truly,



Ron Wieck

Authority Chairman

Woodbury County LEC Authority