



Board of Commissioners

Jason W. Boyd, Administrator

lakecountyohio.gov

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County Commissioners Select Design Professional for Proposed Public Safety Center

The Lake County Commissioners passed a resolution on April 7, 2022 to enter contract negotiations with HOK for the new Lake County Public Safety Center, which includes the Sheriff's Office, Road Patrol, Correction Officers and Court Services. HOK firm was recommended unanimously to the Commissioners by the Selection Committee over three different firms. The selection committee consisted of:

Commissioners John R. Hamercheck
Commissioner John Plecnik
Commissioner Ron Young
Sheriff Frank Leonbruno
Captain Cynthia Brooks (Corrections)
Chief Craig Berry (Adult Probation)
Jason Boyd, County Administrator
Paul Stefanko, Telecommunications Director
Mark Iafelice, Buildings and Grounds Superintendent

The HOK team will be responsible for the programming phase and criteria architectural services which will provide the foundation for the project moving forward.

"Since 2012, the Commissioner's and Sheriff's Offices have been proactively analyzing the current Sheriff's Office and jail. After much review, research and deliberation, I fully support the concept of a new facility. Today's action is the first of many steps needed to ultimately construct a new comprehensive mixed-use facility that addresses the needs of the Sheriff, Adult Probation and our Courts. Unfortunately, the current facility was poorly designed and functionally obsolete the day the County took possession of the facility," said Commissioner President John R. Hamercheck.

The current Lake County Sheriff's Office and Jail was opened in 1991 with an approved capacity of 353 inmates. The physical condition of the jail, including a failing roof, façade concerns and outdated mechanical systems, coupled with forecasted inmate population projections and capacity scenarios have forced the Commissioners and Sheriff prepare a long-term plan and consider a new structure. Previous planning and engineering reports have also considered a renovation and addition to the current structure, but additional staffing and long-term capacity and general operational concerns have proved to be significant limitations to this option. Specifically, the studies have determined:

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- The current facility has significant structural issues and will require \$40-\$50 million dollars (at current construction rates) to restore it to its intended condition. Given the fact that the facility regularly exceeds its maximum capacity, such a financial investment by the County would do little to serve the future needs of the jail for the short and long term.
- The jail is at its maximum operational capacity and is unable to classify and house the detained inmates in a manner keeping with the offense of need. The facility is not designed to deal with the high rate of mental health issues, and woefully short on program space for treatment and education with the desired outcome being a reduction in recidivism.
- The facility design needs to be changed to meet changing requirements in law and liability exposures for which the current hardened structure is unable to be modified.

“The Lake County Sheriff’s Office, as part of our public safety and judicial system, is one of the most important offices and functions in County Government. I am grateful of the support of Sheriff Leonbruno and the Lake County Corrections Board, who voted unanimously at their 2021 meeting to support the project, as we begin this important community investment. Along with my colleagues, I understand the significance of this decision and we are committed to completing this project on time and under budget,” added Commissioner John Plecnik.

In addition to the physical limitations of the current structure, the facility does not possess the flexible design strategies and mixed-use areas required in today’s public safety and judicial systems. This includes enhanced video arraignment areas, medical / treatment facilities and required educational settings.

Sheriff Frank Leonbruno explains “Having seen the growth of this facility over the past 33 years and seeing firsthand the growing physical structural deterioration and financial drain on the County budget for repairs and upkeep, it is clear a new jail facility must be built. The new facility could be designed with modern mechanical systems that will reduce operational costs. The new design can address ADA compliance failures, flexible programming space deficiency, intake deficiency, medical area inadequacies, and mental health treatment for the jail population. Further, new construction will create workable space for drug and alcohol treatment areas. The modern design can reduce inmate movement, maintain as closely as possible staff neutral expansion. Remote access areas for court arraignments and other hearings for both municipal and courts of common of pleas will reduce law enforcement transports throughout the county, keeping more municipal officers patrolling in their communities.”

The proposed facility will address ADA compliance, flexible programming space deficiency, intake deficiency, and mental health treatment for nearly 70% of the jail population. Jails today are required to create workable space for drug and alcohol treatment, areas to effectively deal with the growing population of mental illness in Correctional Facilities (33% more mentally ill in jails and prisons than in mental hospitals), and areas to accommodate violent inmates versus minor offenders serving time.

“Today’s action is a critical first step in redefining and establishing the framework for the physical plant of the Lake Sheriff’s Office and jail facility for the next 50 years. A new public safety center must have the capacity, flexibility and programming to assist those with substance abuse, mental illness or other issues thus allowing them to become productive members of society. Certainly, the debt owed to society for violation of the law must be paid. However, without sincere and effective treatment programs a 21st century American county jail will not fulfill its commitment to its community” said Commissioner Ron Young.

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