

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF CALEDONIA, MINNESOTA
Thursday, March 16, 2006

CALL TO ORDER: Following due call and notice thereof, Mayor Morey called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. in the Auditorium, Caledonia Middle/High School, jointly with a meeting of the Houston County Commissioners.

ROLL CALL: Members present: Mayor Michael J. Morey; Council Members Paul Fisch, Randi Vick Gary Klug and Robert Standish. Members absent: Consultants and City staff present: Robert L. Nelson. Visitors present: There were approximately 100 residents of the City/County of Houston in attendance.

BUSINESS ITEM: Following introductions and welcoming by Commissioner Kelleher a summary of the historical progress on the study conducted for a future jail was presented by Mark Schiltz, Jail Administrator. He reported that the study committee was organized on May 16, 1996. On January 14, 1997, law enforcement was authorized to utilize electronic monitoring on prisoners, contributing somewhat to a decrease in prison population. On January 16, 1997, the Minnesota Department of Corrections approved the addition of four additional beds to the Houston County Jail. On February 7, 1997, legislation mandated incarceration for those apprehended for driving under the influence with a alcohol content of 0.15, increasing the prison population. On April 17, 1997, the recommendation of the study committee to the Houston County Commissioners was that the present jail was satisfactory for the immediate future. On February 18, 1999, the study committee joined with a regional committee to investigate the possibility of a regional jail system, perhaps including Houston, Winona and Fillmore Counties. By March 15, 2001, the practicality of a regional jail was abandoned. Commissioner David Corcoran briefly described a visit to Vernon County Jail, which is located on the outskirts of the developed portion of the City. He reported that the jail was a very attractive building and that video monitors observed activity from the parking lot throughout the building. He commented on the sally port design and said the facility had all amenities for being self contained, including a laundry, except that prisoners had to be transported back and forth to the Courthouse.

Mayor Morey indicated that he had concerns about locating the proposed Criminal Justice Center on site, questioning what impact there maybe on parking facilities, traffic volume and the like. He stated he was interested in hearing from the architects about the proposed layout of the Criminal Justice Center to further understand what impacts there may be to the City. Regarding selection of a location Commissioner Ann Thompson commented that the Commissioners had been contemplating the location of the proposed Criminal Justice Center for a couple years, considering open areas on several sides of the development portion of Caledonia, but finding the most desirable location at this point to be on site, keeping all departments together for greatest efficiency.

David Prachar, Consultant, informed the audience that he had 27 years experience in locating and constructing jails, currently working on three other projects in addition to the Houston County facility. Mr. Prachar said the facility had been planned to accommodate three divisions, the law enforcement division, jail (including dispatch) and court, including victim services, court administration, etc. The jail was designed to accommodate 82 beds when doubling up cells. Rich McCarthy, Klein McCarthy Architects, said that a 9 year study for a proposed criminal justice center is not unusual. Extensive recent study included thoroughly assessing space needs and device the concept for building design and layout. Among most recent alternate considerations was the possible location shown in option C1 and C2.

Following this presentation, questions were taken from the audience. Bob Klug, asked if 20 to 30 more parking spaces would be required above the approximately 70 spaces now existing and whether or not the property, now owned by Gengler's on the east side of Pine Street, was a certainty to be purchased for parking space. He also questioned why build a jail of 40 cells since the jail population is now stated at 40, meaning that a larger facility should perhaps be constructed. Other persons questioning the location, size or desirability of the facility, particularly in the courthouse square area were Dan & Faith Bergin, Ole Braaten, Peggy Eggert, Irma Klug, Mary Mell, Sheila Murphy, Scott Betz, Kathy Gavin – Krupa and Margaret Demmer. Some speakers asserted that the proposed building would be better located on an area outside the

developed portion of the City, contending that the proposed building was too large to locate in the courthouse square area, that it would ruin the neighborhood, that it was unnecessary to take residential properties to accommodate this structure and that its presence so near an elementary school cause concern for students safety. Questions included safety issues about police vehicles responding from the Criminal Justice Center, traveling city streets when responding to emergency calls, whether or not the sally port would have alarms, how prisoners would be diverted in the event of fire in the building, whether exterior lighting at night would be intrusive to the surrounding residential neighborhood, whether or not the facility would be built to federal standards for housing federal prisons and how prisoners would be released upon fulfilling their sentence. Should the proposed facility be built on site, a question was asked about what plans had been made for 50 or 100 years in the future when the size of this facility was deemed to be too small and required expansion. Lawrence Knutson, while not opposed to having the Criminal Justice Center built on site, asked if it could be located within the main courthouse square between the existing courthouse and jail to avoid taking residential properties. Again with regard to the nearby elementary school, a question was asked if there may not be safety concerns for visitors who stop to see prisoners as well as from prisoners themselves. Some persons questioned why there had not been more public notice concerning the development of the issue and more public discussion concerning the proposed facility. One inquiry questioned the practice of a prisoner, convicted of sexual assault or molestation, being released on furlough for a weekend, referring to another municipality.

Responses to those questions by County Commissioners included the fact that not all questions regarding traffic and parking issues were answerable at this time because the County Highway Engineer is currently analyzing the traffic impact and has not yet completed the study. The Commissioners contended that on site, according to their judgment, would be the best placement for the proposed facility with regard to efficiency, keeping all current county offices together. Regarding issues of safety, the Commissioners proposed that the new facility would have a far greater level of safety since prisoners would be retained to one building without need to be transported outside and this entire building would be secure. Regarding visitors who may be dangerous, acknowledging that was always a possibility, historically visitors to the jail have been screened and on a few occasions have been found to be "wanted" and were arrested on the spot. The architect responded with regard to a fire in the building that it would not be necessary to take prisoners outside. The building will be equipped with air flow devices of low and high pressure such that prisoners could be taken to one segment of the building and air pressure flow could direct smoke to other areas. With regard to the facility being constructed to federal prison standards, the architect explained that the additional requirements are extremely minimal such as having outlets in each cell. Commissioner Kelleher said there had been no discussion about housing federal prisoners. Explanation was made that with changing state laws, prisoners who are now assigned to state or federal prisoners for a long term sentence can be returned to a county jail when they have signed all but one remaining year of their sentence. With regard to extending Huber privileges to prisoners, Jail Administrator Schiltz said that supervision is typically provided by employer and that random contact is made with employers to check on the presence of those taking advantage of the Huber release. With regard to constructing a separate, less secure facility for Huber prisoners, Administrator Schiltz said the costs would increase because it would be a separately constructed building and would require separate staffing. Regarding information about the proposed facility being made available to the public at an earlier time, Administrator Schiltz informed the audience that the County had advertised for a public hearing on October 4, 2001. Only about 4 people attended.

Bob Burns spoke in favor of having the proposed facility located on site questioning whether there may be state or federal laws which would prohibit the facility having its own well if located on the outer perimeter of the developed area of the City where public utilities are not available. He commented that the courthouse has always been the center of town and moving it to an outside area would detract from downtown activity.

Mayor Morey summarized City concerns and to include an appropriate buffer zone or open space around the Criminal Justice Center, parking and traffic issues on South Street, Pine Street and Kingston Street and needs for future expansion. In response to inquiry from Council Member Paul Fisch, Commissioner Kevin Kelleher replied that a time line for initiating action of the facility could conceivably be as short as one month. Consultant Prachar responded to inquiry from Council Member Randi Vick that the ballpark estimate for facility cost was \$15.7 million dollars, but that would likely change by the time detailed plans were completed. Commissioner

Kevin Kelleher informed the audience that there would be no state or federal assistance to construct the facility; county residents would be taxed for the cost.

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business, a motion to adjourn was made by Member Fisch and seconded by Member Vick. All members voted in favor, the motion was declared carried and the meeting then adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Michael J. Morey

Robert L. Nelson
City Clerk - Administrator