



County of San Mateo

Inter-Departmental Correspondence

Department: BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
DISTRICT 5
File #: 21-773

Board Meeting Date: 10/5/2021

Special Notice / Hearing: None
Vote Required: Majority

To: Honorable Board of Supervisors

From: David J. Canepa, President, District 5
Don Horsley, Vice President, District 3

Subject: Adopt a resolution to establish a committee to examine youth facilities at the Youth Services Center and to provide recommendations creating a more receptive environment for youth at youth facilities.

RECOMMENDATION:

Approve a resolution directing the County to establish a committee to examine youth facilities at Juvenile Hall and make recommendations for a more receptive environment at the Youth Services Center.

BACKGROUND:

Youth involved in the juvenile justice system have experienced disproportionate amounts of childhood trauma in their lives before or during their involvement with the juvenile justice system, resulting in mental health and substance abuse issues. If left untreated, these issues may prevent them from leading healthy and productive lives into adulthood. Such youth are also more prone to re-offend, in increasingly severe ways. Youth in San Mateo County are detained at the San Mateo County Youth Services Center (YSC). Developing ways to create a less institutional setting for the youth at YSC will promote a more supporting environment to bolster the mental health and rehabilitative services provided to the youth at YSC.

DISCUSSION:

YSC was built in San Mateo in 2006 with a capacity to house 180 youth offenders and to provide a rehabilitative environment for juveniles, featuring modern educational, athletic and medical facilities, including institutional detention design features like metal furniture, concrete floors, and locked sleeping rooms.

An increased investment in community-based preventative measures, detention reform efforts by the San Mateo County Probation Department, increased community-based diversion opportunities, and decrease in juvenile crime have led to a decline of detained youth at YSC, bringing the current detained youth population below the YSC's 180 bed capacity.

The youth that are currently detained at YSC continue to live in an institutional detention setting, and the units they live on and the rooms they sleep in reflect a sterile institutional environment. To facilitate the rehabilitative efforts directed at detained youth, the County should establish a committee whose purpose is to create a proposed plan to modify the current institutional setting at YSC, so it conveys a more supportive environment. The members of this committee shall be a Juvenile Court Judge, a representative from the Private Defender's Office, a representative from the District Attorney's Office, the County Manager, and the Chief Probation Officer along with two members of the public selected by the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Commission.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact associated with the creation of this committee.