



# Orin Allen Ranch Closure

Contra Costa Juvenile Justice Commission Fact Finding Report



# Agenda

Time Limits will be strictly enforced

- Commission Fact Finding Report (15 min)
- Statements:
  - Board of Supervisors, Candace Andersen (5 min)
  - Probation Department, Esa Ehmen-Krause (20 min)
  - District Attorney, Diana Becton (5 min)
  - Public Defender, Jonathan Laba (5 min)
  - Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council, Various (10 min)
- Commission Questions (20 min)
- Public Comment
- Adjournment
- Next Session: July 29, 2020 @ 5:30 p.m.
  - Topic: Ranch Closure - Commission Deliberation & Policy Statement Drafting

---

# The Proposal: Commission's Current Understanding

**The Proposal is coming from  
the County Administrator's  
Office**

---



# What is Being Proposed

- The physical Orin Allen Youth Rehabilitation Facility (the “Ranch”) would be shuttered.
- The youth located at the facility would be relocated to the John A. Davis Juvenile Hall’s Tamalpais Unit.
  - This unit is currently being used as the Hall’s “incentive room.”
- All program staff would be transferred with the OAYRP.
- The programming and opportunities available to the youth at OAYRF would continue to be provided at the Hall
  - To the extent possible, the spirit of the OAYRP would continue.
  - For example - the doors to the youth’s rooms would remain open from 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.



## Why Now?

- Budget: COVID-19 is causing the County to reduce budgets beyond the current forecasts.
- Growing List of ADA, Title 15 and Title 24 Compliance Issues
- Deferred Maintenance Issues at the Ranch

**Note:** The Commission has been unable to find budget forecasts that have been updated in light of COVID. The Commission calls on the County Administrator's Office to provide such forecasts so that it can evaluate the severity of any budget cut on the Probation Department and properly evaluate the budgetary need of the proposal.

---

# Commission Fact Finding



# Key Activities

- Ranch Interviews (July 13, 2020)
  - 10 Youth
  - 7 Staff
- Written Materials Review
  - Grand Jury Reports
  - Facility Study (2019)
  - Letters of Interested Parties
- Physical Inspection of the New Site
  - John A. Davis Juvenile Hall -  
Tamalpais Unit



# Ranch Interviews



# Youth Interviews

- Conducted July 13, 2020
- 5 Commissioners interviewed 10 youth.
- Interviews were done **in person** at the Ranch.
- On a scale of 1-10 (1 is good):
  - Youth rated the Ranch a: **2.9**
  - Youth rated the relocation: **7.6**

**Important:** The findings discussed here are what the **youth** reported. The Commission takes no position on the accuracy or validity of these statements. We only emphasize the importance of the voices of the youth.



# Youth Interviews - Ranch Positives / Negatives

## Ranch Positives:

- Freedom / Personal Autonomy
- Outdoor / Open Setting
- Staff / Programming at the Ranch offer superior rehabilitative support to the youth

**Note:** each of these points was seen in a significant number of the interviews.

## Ranch Negatives:

- Distance
- Weather / Temperature Regulation
- Showers
- Only 1 Cook
- Maintenance of sport equipment

**Note:** these points were usually voiced by 1 or 2 youth, there did not seem to be significant agreement on key negatives. Several youth said they had “no” negatives about the Ranch, especially as compared to the Hall.



# Youth Interviews

## Concerns About Transition to Hall

- Access to outdoors
  - Basketball / Baseball / Pool
- “Vibe”
- Commissary
- Point System
- Inability to “work” - do dishes, landscaping / Ranch maintenance, etc.

## Features to “Transfer” with the Program

- Staff
- Weight / Exercise equipment
- Rides (ability to leave facility and visit family)
- Program Schedule
- Food



# Youth Interviews

## What Could Improve at the Ranch

- “Nothing”
- Showers / Bathrooms
- Facility maintenance
- Bugs
- Animal therapy

## Visitation Access at Ranch vs Hall\*

- Some youth said visitation would be easier at Hall, some at the Ranch
- Significant feedback that visitation at the Ranch is preferred, as it’s more open / outdoors, etc.
- One youth expressed concern about the Byron roads, saying that a cousin of his had died on the roads near the facility within the last 2 weeks.

**NOTE\*:** COVID has made the feedback on this a little mixed, as several youth have been there largely during the pandemic which has changed visitation to Zoom/Facetime.



# Staff Interviews

- Conducted July 13, 2020
- 5 Commissioners interviewed 7 OAYRF staff.
- 1 additional interview done via Phone on July 19, 2020
- On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 is good):
  - Staff rate the Ranch: **3.6**
  - Staff believe youth feel about the relocation: **7.9**

**Important:** The findings discussed here are what the **staff** reported. The Commission takes no position on the accuracy or validity of these statements. We are only reporting the opinions of the Staff.



# Staff Interviews

## Staff's Feelings About Relocation

- Sad
- Many feel that it is a closure, not a relocation
- More opportunity for staff 1:1 interventions and counseling w/ youth
- Some staff concerned about new work commutes / changes in work shifts

## How Will Youth Handle Transition?

- Not Well - Less Freedom / Concern over being locked in cells
- Youth opinion on relocation is divided
- Youth will handle it well because they anticipate the relocation.

**Note:** As the feedback above suggests, staff opinion on this question seems mixed.



# Staff Interviews

## Positives of the Relocation

- 24/7 nursing, more medical care
- Privacy / individual rooms
- Cleaner facilities (janitorial staff at the Hall)
- 

## Relocation Challenges

- Less behavioral health staff availability
- Concern about maintaining positive staff relationship with youth in the Hall setting.
- Fewer private spaces for youth to regulate their own emotional state, especially outdoor space.
- Small rooms.



## Staff Interviews - Additional Themes

- **Life Skills:** Staff believe that youth pick up basic life skills, such as doing dishes, cleaning windows, and landscaping.
- **Staff Remaining with Program:** Many staff believe that there will be significant transfers, retirements, and staff departing the program within 6-12 months of the program relocation.
- **Staff Cross-Pollination:** Some concern that if staff from Hall programs are shared with Ranch program, it may be difficult to keep the success of the program going. It can be difficult to change mentalities just by crossing a hallway.



# Probation Responses

The Commission shared its preliminary, anonymized, findings from the Youth and Staff interviews with the Probation Department.

The Commission received the following feedback from the Probation Department regarding the accuracy of the opinions stated in the Youth and Staff interviews.



# Probation Responses

- **Behavioral Health Access:** Access to Behavioral Health will increase, as the Behavioral Health staff at the Ranch will transfer to the Hall with the OAYRP, and will supplement the existing Behavioral Health staff at the Hall facility.
- **Retirements:** The average age of staff at the OAYRF is mid to late 30s, so there are probably only 1 or 2 staff who may be eligible for retirement.
- **Effect of Staff Cross-Pollination:** Probation has confidence that program quality will not suffer based on sharing staff between OAYRP and Hall programming.



## Probation Responses - Cont'd

- **Space to Regulate:**
  - OAYRF: Youth currently have 2 spaces to regulate at the Ranch - breezeway outside dorm and outdoor benches by kitchen.
  - Tamalpais: Youth would be able to regulate in the kitchen, courtyard, and their own rooms.
- **Hall Staff Training:** Staff at the Hall are already trained in CCP and BMS, and staff at the Hall have been using these techniques longer than the current Ranch staff.

---

# Written Materials



# Grand Jury Reports

- Reports issued in 2009, 2011, 2013, 2014 and 2020.
- 2009: Recommendation called for **closing the Ranch**.
- 2011: Recommendation was to **keep the Ranch open**, with programming improvements.
- 2013: No change in overall recommendation. Grand Jury Found the facility to be **well managed and maintained**.
- 2014: No change in overall recommendation. Grand Jury Found the facility to be **well managed and maintained**.
- 2020: Grand Jury recommended the County consider **expanding** the Ranch program to include girls in detention.



## Facility Study - March 2019

- Analyzed 3 Scenarios:
  - Closing Ranch and Relocating Youth to Marsh Creek
  - Upgrading Ranch
  - New “Urban Camp” Facility.
- Did not review plan to relocate youth to Juvenile Hall.
- Prepared by Vanir Construction Management.
- Facility Assessment reviewed the adequacy of the facilities based on Vanir’s prison metrics database.
- Some of the noted inadequacies appeared to be based on the square footage of the facility and low security.



# Facility Study - ADA Compliance Issues

- Administration Locker Room Shower
- Lobby Water Fountain
- Lobby Front Desk
- Visitation Areas - Lack of ADA Compliance
  - This note is not clear, and visitation areas have been expanded since the report was issued.
- Medical Exam Room Cabinets
- Indoor Recreation Water Fountains



# Facility Study - Title 15 and Title 24 Compliance

- Currently using the lobby as an Intake/Release and processing area. Regulations require these to be separate.
- NOTE: The report outlines Title 15 and Title 24 requirements, but is not so clear about where the Facility is violating those standards. More clarity on what specific things are needed to address these issues would be useful.



# Facility Study - Estimated Financial Impact

- Cost of Repairing & Upgrading Existing Structures: \$3,170,790
- Cost to Build New Structures at Ranch: \$8,772,768 - \$9,800,226



# Letters from Interested Parties

- The Commission received copies of 5 letters from either ex-residents or close associates of those detained at the Orin Allen Youth Rehabilitation Facility.
- Key Themes:
  - Hope: OAYRF provided these youth with hope for their future.
  - Program Structure: The OAYRF program structure provided more opportunities and improved mental state over the Hall.
  - Additional Recreational Activity Options: Outdoor recreational activities improved the mental state of the youth.



The following groups signed a letter in opposition to the proposal:



# Community Letter in Opposition

- Alliance for Californians for Community Empowerment
- Asian Pacific Environment Network
- Blue Water Foundation
- Building Blocks for Kids
- California Alliance for Youth and Community Justice
- Communities for a Better Environment
- Contra Costa Budget Justice Coalition
- Contra Costa Public Defender's Association
- Contra Costa Immigrants Rights Alliance
- Contra Costa Youth Council
- East Bay Community Law Center
- Ensuring Opportunity
- Good Shepherd Ministry
- Healthy Richmond
- Lift Up Contra Costa
- Multi-Faith Action Coalition
- National Center for Youth Law
- Orin Allen Boys Ranch Staff
- Pacific Juvenile Defender Center
- Richmond City Council Member: Eduardo Martinez
- Dr. Charles D. Tinsley
- Richmond LAND
- Richmond High Ethnic Studies Department
- Richmond Progressive Alliance
- Richmond Promise
- RYSE Center
- Safe Return Project
- Senior Tutors of Rossmoor
- St. Perpetua Church
- Urban Tilth
- United Teachers of Richmond
- Together We Will Contra Costa
- YES Nature to Neighbors

---

# Tamalpais Unit Tour



# Commission Tours of Tamalpais Unit

- Probation provided 3 groups tours of the Tamalpais Unit on July 3rd and July 17th.
- 9 Commissioners + 1 Emeritus Commissioner toured the facility
- Recommendations for improvements/modifications will be reserved for the Commission's final report.



# Tamalpais Observations

- Probation is making best-effort attempts to translate the Orin Allen Youth Rehabilitation program to the Hall.
- The furniture in the Tamalpais Unit is much more domestic, *when compared to the other units on the Hall.*
- The shared/open common room area does have windows, though they are mostly placed well above eye level.
- Probation intends to put snacks and beverages in the common area.
- There are phones on the unit.
  - Probation is working on changing the phone system to ensure calls are provided to youth free of charge.



# Tamalpais Observations - Outdoor Space

- There is an open basketball court immediately off the unit.
- The outdoor space is on one side of the large common area, and is the only area where the outdoors is visible at eye level.
- The outdoor courtyard is enclosed with a concrete wall, and there are an additional 4 feet of chain link fence above, and a chain link “roof” or “cage” feature above.
  - **Note:** The Commission was notified that the Department has greenlit a bid to remove the chain link fencing and the “cage” element.
  - **Note:** The Commission was notified that the Department is *soliciting* bids to blow out the concrete wall to make a much larger, unified outdoor space.
- There is an additional “outer” outdoor area accessed via a metal door in the concrete wall, which contains a larger basketball court and patches of grass.



## Tamalpais Observations - Outdoor Space (2)

- Probation intends to allow family visitation with youth in the outer courtyard area.
- There will be a horticultural program in the outer courtyard area that will be installed closer to any relocation.
- Probation intends to re-landscape the area to improve attractiveness.
- Probation intends to install a mural on one side of the framing building that recalls the Byron Ranch. (The subject of the mural may change)
- Probation will make certain upgrades over time to allow youth to provide feedback on the desirability of the improvements.



## Tamalpais Observations - Kitchen

- There is a kitchen/dining area immediately on the unit, which will be locked except when staff is specifically in the room.
- This would largely be used for meal times.
- The kitchen has a working stove/oven where staff and youth can make simple meals and snacks (such as cookies), together.
- Probation is considering the types of tables/chairs used in the space to ensure safety while also feeling less institutional.



# Tamalpais Observations - Individual Cells

- Each of the individual cells/rooms has:
  - A toilet
  - A concrete slab bed, with a mattress and bedding selected by the youth.
  - A cubby
- Youth will be allowed to put up calendars and posters.
- Probation is considering adding a desk/table and chair but wants to evaluate the impact of adding new furniture, as it may make the rooms feel smaller.
- The lighting is fluorescent.