

New Adult Pre-Trial Detention Center

by Victoria Reinhardt

The Board of Ramsey County Commissioners will soon be making a major decision regarding the location and construction of a new Adult Pre-Trial Detention Center (ADC). This decision comes after several years of searching for the most appropriate and cost effective site as well as analyzing the problems associated with our current ADC facility. Of particular concern to me is the inability to expand our current ADC located on Kellogg Blvd. This facility, built in 1979, began experiencing overcrowded conditions as early as 1982, yet no provisions had been made to ensure the site could be expanded. I do not want to repeat such an oversight. I must be assured that any chosen location be large enough to handle 1) future expansion needs cost effectively; and 2) the possible consolidation of our current detention facilities. The current ADC located on Kellogg Blvd will need to be replaced or have major renovations within the next 20 years. Finally, I would like to see a chosen location that would be amenable to an expanded law enforcement center that would house both the Ramsey County Sheriff and the St. Paul Police Department while still being accessible to all police. Also, courtrooms are already included in the new ADC design. We have an excellent opportunity to consider other services that would fit well in an expanded law enforcement center.

Four locations have recently been discussed in regards to the new ADC. The first is adjacent to the Public Safety Building located in downtown St. Paul. The second, third and fourth are located in the northeastern quadrant of downtown St. Paul and are called, respectively the Volmela Site, the I-94 Industrial Site and the Custom Cuts Site. I would like to discuss each site as it relates to my concerns stated above.

The first location is adjacent to the Public Safety Building located in downtown St. Paul. The Public Safety Building houses the St. Paul Police Department. The new ADC would be built in the Public Safety Building parking lot. This in itself will require that a new parking ramp be constructed. Tax producing properties will have to be taken off the tax rolls to construct this parking ramp at a cost of over 3 million dollars over the other proposed sites. Because of limited space, the new ADC will have to be designed in a vertical manner. Because future expansion has to be high rise type construction over the original structure, the original structure becomes much more expensive. Operational disruptions will occur as elevators will need to be added and some workplace areas will be unusable. In addition, the soils situation could force the use of pilings or limit the height of such a facility. Operationally, vertical design impacts the staffing because of movement restrictions and delays. The transportation or escort staffing will increase 50 to 100% in a high-rise facility. Additionally, it would be impossible to consolidate the current ADC located at Kellogg Blvd with the new facility.

The positive side of this site is the co-location of both the Ramsey County Sheriff and the St. Paul Police Department. The St. Paul Police Department utilizes the ADC more than other police forces within Ramsey County and greater efficiency could be achieved through this synergy. While I think the Public Safety Building Site is a poor location for the above referenced reasons, I think the idea of co-location is a good one and should be considered in any final location choice.

The idea of co-location can easily be explored in relation to the other three sites. All three are well served by major highways, are more easily accessible to all police departments in Ramsey County, contain ample room for horizontal expansion and consolidation and are located in an industrial area.

The Vomela Site is owned by the State of Minnesota and contains 3.80 acres. This site would not take any properties off the tax rolls and has ample room for expansion, consolidation and co-location. .

The Custom Cuts Site contains 3.62 acres. Custom Cuts Produce company, formerly Beckman Produce, wants to move to a larger site in St. Paul so re-location of existing businesses is not an issue. This site has the advantages of the Vomela site.

The I-94 Industrial Site contains 1.82 acres. Of the 3 sites contained in the northeastern quadrant, this is the least desirable site because the tax producing businesses located there do not wish to move.

We have a great opportunity to work with the public safety system in place in Ramsey County. I view the new ADC facility as an opportunity to improve our current system as well as plan clearly for our future needs.