

COUNTY PUBLIC SAFETY FACILITIES – Site Considerations – Part 1

The first serious discussions concerning alternative county public safety facility sites involved the concept of re-locating the north and south jails and courts into one criminal justice center located in Tonto Basin where there is adequate land at reasonable prices centrally located within the County.

That idea was abandoned after recognizing that to move the jails outside of the towns of Payson and Globe meant the project would entail the additional enormous expenses of building and operating a sewer plant, a water plant, a back-up power plant, vastly upgraded medical provisions to mitigate distance from a hospital and installation of fiber optics. The cost of these obstacles added another 33% to the total project. And this didn't begin to address the transportation and/or housing challenges of sheriff and court staff.

Then there were discussions of relocating the jail in Globe to a larger site, but the replacement of the north "leg" of the jail with a new 2-story 48-cell jail pod along with major re-furbishment of the remaining facility proved to be the most cost-effective jail solution for Globe.

However, the majority of the Committee's deliberations centered around the best, most cost effective location for the Payson area, and the best financing approach for the entire project (which we have covered in some detail in other articles).

Multiple sites for the Payson/Star Valley area were discussed. A professional site survey was conducted for the Committee by Cliff Potts, former Mayor of Payson and current Manager and Co-Broker for Prudential Arrowhead Realty.

In addition, Harry Jones, Committee member, undertook a community-wide site survey that included discussions with realtors, heads of economic development groups, US Forest Service property management, Town of Payson staff and others. (Harry Jones has a Ph.D in Economics and Finance, with 30+ years of experience as President of various manufacturing entities that leased or owned and developed commercial and manufacturing space of up to 200,000 square feet.)

The facilities location criteria used for this analysis included:

1. Convenience to public safety personnel (Sheriff, Payson and Tribe officers, USFS, DPS, and Az. Game and Fish)
2. Convenience to the general public (jurors, probationers, title companies, etc.)
3. Current access or availability cost of public utilities (water, sewer, gas, electric, fiber optics, etc.)
4. Availability to roadways and parking
5. Size of parcel (5+ acres), including parcel-consolidation costs
6. Hospital/healthcare access
7. Price of land
8. Required site improvements
9. EPA concerns (toxic waste, archeological, environmental, etc.)
10. Value or suitability of structures on site, and related demolition/remodeling costs

11. Displacement/relocation of exiting residents or businesses
12. Impact fees
13. Timing of availability of property
14. Non-usable aspects of property (floodplains, severe slopes, geotech, etc.)
15. Current availability of property for sale

Some of the sites evaluated with a generalized “thumbnail sketch of their fatal flaws” include:

- Vista Parcel. Located between airport and Payson Golf Course. Currently in a trade, not available to County.
- USFS Ranger Station on Hwy 260. Forest Service holding back on efforts due to lack of water in Payson. May keep 15 acres and move rest of Forest Service operations to area north of airport. Would like to build new ranger station on current site. Will be sold at market value. Seller not ready to sell.
- Star Valley site #1. County owned landfill. The small portion which can be built upon has County Yard located on it – the remainder of the site is an 18-inch clay-capped landfill that is restricted for use by Arizona Department of Environmental Quality to exclude any activity that would pierce or otherwise jeopardize the non-permeable clay cap. Not available.
- Star Valley site #2. Located between County yard and Diamond Point Shadows. No Townsite Act application has been filed by Star Valley. Will be sold at market value.
- Shumway Mining Site (across H-87 from Oxbow Estates. An EPA clean up of site has occurred, site is capped off and can't be used for anything because of contamination from old mining operations.
- Old mine site north of Oxbow Estates. Contamination litigation is currently in progress.
- Gila Community College site. Originally Forest Service property that was sold to the State College Board, and later transferred to the Gila County Board of Supervisors to be held in trust for the Gila Community College Board for Community College purposes. Not available.
- ADOT industrial space on Longhorn Road. (behind Chapman Auto). Tough to acquire in a timely manner.
- Main Street and along McLane south of Main. Identified 6-9 acre parcel with major floodplain issues.
- Old trailer park on south McLane. Nothing of adequate size for whole County complex and jail and high displacement/relocation costs for additional land.
- Hwy 87 and Tyler Parkway. Excess land size, high cost of land and very high cost of infrastructure.
- Site east of Rim Club Parkway. High price, size too small.
- Met with PREDC and Main Street. No other adequate size parcels known in the area.
- Town of Payson staff reviewed various parcels and utility situation with each. Added no new sites to list, and were able to clarify the very high costs of infrastructure improvements required on identified sites.

TO BE CONTINUED ON FRIDAY.