

August 14, 2017

Dear Bassett Neighborhood Committee,

The Baskerville Board of Governors met with Sheriff Dave Mahoney to get an update on where things stand with plans to address health and safety concerns at the jail, as well as plans to expand or relocate the Ferris facility.

Sheriff Mahoney provided us with a brief history of the three county facilities (the Ferris Huber center, the city-county building jail cells, and the public safety building) going back into the 1990s. Sheriff Mahoney believes the court house and jail facilities should never have been built downtown, and have led to the challenges we face today when it comes to necessary renovations. Bottom line, the jail is dangerous and not in line with current incarceration facility standards. Since 2002, Sheriff Mahoney has proposed total replacement of the facilities. Lacking accommodations for inmates with mental health issues and disabilities, solitary confinement cells are the only option for those inmates not able to be comingled with the general inmate population.

In the early 2000s, a study was done to examine a greenfield site that would consolidate the three facilities at an estimated price tag of \$130 million. This was rejected by the County Executive and Board as too expensive. Currently, the County Board is entertaining three different proposals for renovations, all three of which would keep the facilities in our downtown neighborhood, ranging from a cost of \$99 million to upwards of \$164.5 million.

No matter which option is ultimately chosen, this is likely to be the most “difficult and complex project” Dane County has encountered, according to David Way, project manager for the consulting firm Mead & Hunt, who addressed the County Board at a meeting regarding the least expensive of the three options on June 15th. This option will involve adding four new stories to the current 5 story Public Safety Building. Our downtown Madison community will be directly affected. Thus, we’d like to encourage our neighbors to actively participate in the discussion and preservation of our homes, businesses, and downtown tourism.

In addition to the immediate safety concerns, and as a member of our close, urban community, you are aware that the isthmus serves as a “hub” for business, social and recreational activities. The pending expansion of the jail and associated facilities would encroach on other development opportunities that could better serve our community’s visions, goals and economic development. It also raises serious concerns about downtown livability for increasing residential density.

The current jail site occupies what is arguably prime real estate best suited for businesses, residences, hotels, and parking that cater to our growing community and increasing numbers of visitors. Adding floors to the current jail building would significantly block sunlight to historic buildings and residences. It would also block lake

and skyline views for many residents and business owners, dulling the appeal for keeping those entities and individuals downtown. Adding an additional building to the jail on the Wilson Street side would further negatively impact everyone and everything in the area.

One of the largest downtown Madison developers has stated to us that, if given the opportunity, they would purchase the public safety building for redevelopment as a way to facilitate moving the jail to a greenfield site, instead of a downtown expansion plan.

We believe that a greenfield site reflects our first priority to have a safe facility with rehabilitation programming and access to outdoor space for the inmates and jail personnel. This priority ties in with the importance of taking the long-view on what is best for our downtown, the state capitol. And with a new, humane jail off the isthmus, we can focus on what County Executive Joe Parisi calls the “true priorities of this community: Cleaning up our lakes. Providing affordable housing. Conservation of our natural resources. Road construction and rehabilitation.”

We ask you to talk with your neighbors, associations, and elected officials about the effects a downtown jail expansion would have. Please let us know your views on the matter at your earliest convenience by emailing one of our Governors, Kerryann DiLoreto at kdiloret@gmail.com or by phone / text at 608.215.7896

Respectfully,

The Baskerville Condo Association Board of Governors

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