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JUVENILE COURT JUDGE

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May 3, 2024

Williamson County Commissioners
1320 West Main Street
Franklin, Tennessee 37064

RE: JUVENILE JUSTICE COMPLEX

Dear Commissioner,

This letter is to provide you with an update to our new building project, including my opinion and overview of the current status of the project and, respectfully, state my position regarding how we move forward.

Current status/overview (see attached "Existing Site Plan")

Williamson County owns the following properties:

1. 306 Beasley Drive (site of proposed Juvenile Justice Complex to be demolished; current location of Sheriff's Special Ops equipment)
2. 300 Beasley Drive (site of overflow juvenile court staff)
3. 305 Beasley Drive (Property Management warehouse)
4. 420 Century Court (Recycling center/future home of Special Ops)

The original Master Plan (see attached "New Overall Site Plan") provided for refurbishing the Recycling Center to move and permanently store Special Ops that are being housed in 306 Beasley. When completed, this allows 306 Beasley to be torn down and 300 Beasley incorporated into the Juvenile Justice Complex to include the Alternative Learning Center (ALC).

There have been multiple delays with the Recycling Center that has caused the Special Ops equipment to remain in 306 Beasley. In addition, for the last six months, there have been discussions how to reduce the overall cost of our building. This includes reducing square footage and eliminating the ALC. We have also looked at other possible locations for our project, such as the Verizon building in Cool Springs.

Challenges with Cool Springs Verizon Building

1. Minimal, if any, reduction in cost or time once the Verizon building is purchased, designs reworked, and construction costs. This is in large part due to the recent reduction of square footage and the ALC allowing the cost of our current project to be substantially reduced.
2. Safety and security concerns with a location so far from the Sheriff's Department:
 - (a) Our cases involve highly emotional families in crisis, parents and children actively using drugs including methamphetamine, cocaine and fentanyl. The proximity of additional sheriff's deputies available within seconds provides an enormous amount of safety for everyone.
 - (b) We have many cases involving parents who are incarcerated (child support, custody, child welfare cases). Transporting for court hearings across town multiple times a week would be challenging and costly. Many of our hearings are emergencies, requiring assistance from the jail immediately.
3. Juvenile Detention Center: no one wants this in their back yard. It must be part of our design.
4. Proximity to our partners:
 - (a) District Attorney and Public Defender
 - (b) Court appointed attorneys for child welfare cases
 - (c) Department of Children's Services
 - (d) Davis House Child Advocacy Center
 - (e) Downtown courthouse for local attorneys
 - (f) Public Safety Center for all emergencies

My Request to the County Commission

Please begin the Juvenile Justice Project RIGHT NOW. Here's why and how:

1. Refurbishing the Recycling Center will take another year. The cost of our building will certainly go up. We can't wait.
2. Move the remaining Special Ops equipment currently in 306 Beasley to warehouse space in 300 Beasley and 305 Beasley RIGHT NOW. Both warehouses each have over 30,000 square feet of space. This will allow the immediate demolition of 306 Beasley so we can get started.
3. Approve funding for this project to begin in the next 30 days. This will still allow time for further discussions about cost reduction for the overall JJJ project.

Williamson County has spent a great deal of time and money employing experts from across the country to analyze data and project our needs for the next twenty years. We have developed a plan that incorporates the best practices nationwide. We have visited multiple juvenile facilities in numerous states as part of this process. The County already has an enormous investment in the planning of our new building.

To ask for additional funding for more design work when we are ready to begin this project, when we have dutifully reduced the cost, I respectfully submit, is unnecessary at this time.

Finally, you are all aware of the dire conditions in our existing space. The children and families of Williamson County deserve better. The dedicated employees we have taking care of them deserve better.

Please let me know if you have any questions. I look forward to continuing discussions.

Sincerely,

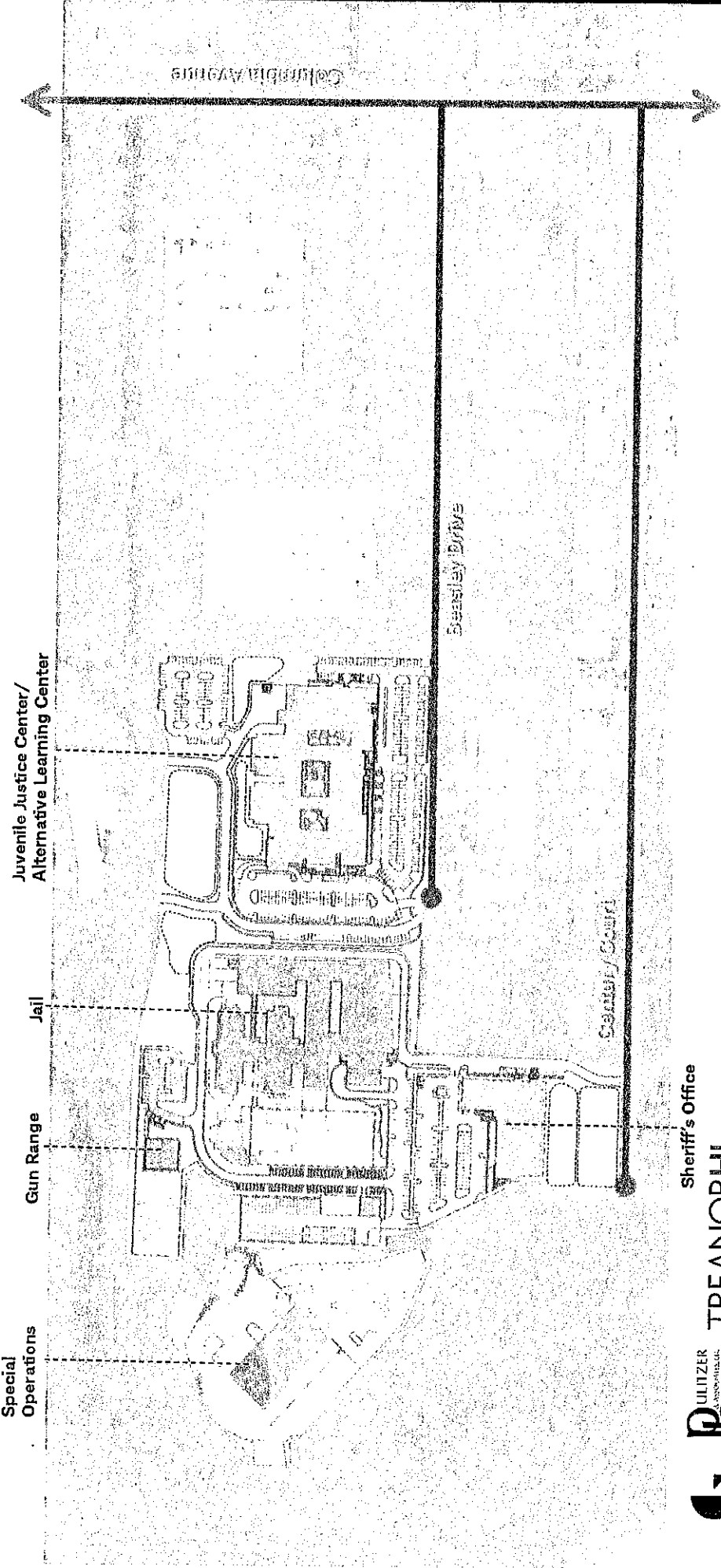


Sharon Guffee
Juvenile Court Judge

Existing Site Plan



New Overall Site Plan




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