

# Funds For Bigger Jail Supported

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A major step toward solving the county's decade-old jail problem was taken Wednesday in Sacramento with an advisory committee recommending to the state Board of Corrections that the county get a \$5.5 million grant to expand the new Water Street Jail.

It is believed the committee's recommendation will carry a lot of weight as two of its members also sit on the corrections board, which is expected to make its decision Dec. 16.

The Water Street jail with 92 cells opened in August and before completion was known to be too small to handle the inmate population of 182 prisoners a day, with peaks up to 229.

The expansion would add 138 beds for a total holding capacity of 230.

Limited jail space has meant the county's keeping two jails open, including the old Front Street jail which once was condemned by a federal judge as being

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unfit for human habitation. It has been renovated since that decision.

The \$5.5 million grant would be less than the \$6.1 the county requested in its grant application. A contingent of administrators, including a representative of the sheriff's office and county administrative office, is going to Sacramento Friday to discuss the recommendation with the advisory committee.

County Administrator George Newell and Sheriff Al Noren say they are happy

with the committee's recommendation and that grant will make the expansion possible. If the grant is approved, it is expected the expansion of the present new jail could be completed in two years.

According to the grant request, the total cost of the 138-bed expansion would \$6.8 million, meaning the county would come up with \$700,000.

The county's funds are to come from increased parking and misdemeanor court fines that are allowed by Assembly Bill 189.

In recommending the money for Santa Cruz, the committee also split the entire \$20 million the board will allocate this month.

Shasta County was given top priority with a grant recommendation of \$7.5 million, Santa Cruz County second, and then Santa Clara and Sacramento counties with \$3.5 million each.

Said Noren, "The county is the winner in this funding (and) while it's \$600,000 short, that's still much better than a sharp stick in the eye. Now, we have something to go on," the sheriff said.

County Chairman Gary Patton said, "The county has to be very happy these funds were allocated and I'm sure we will do whatever we can to get the full amount of money. We don't have any surpluses that I'm aware of to make up the shortage."

County Administrator George Newell and grant analyst Pat Busch said they will approach the state to get the full amount, but without jeopardizing the recommendation.

Newell said the argument the county will carry is that the plans as submitted are exactly what the county needs in its expanded jail and that there's no known funds to make up any deficits in the local treasury.

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