FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 7, 2021

Special Meeting of Coffey County Board of Commissioners

Date, Time, and Location

A special meeting has been scheduled by the Board of County Commissioners of Coffey County ("Board") to discuss the jail/justice center project:

Date: Wednesday, September 8, 2021
Location: Kelley Hall Building (located in Kelley Park), 615 South 3rd St., Burlington, KS
Time: 7:00 p.m.

This special meeting has been scheduled by the Board to discuss the jail/justice center project. The meeting is an official meeting of the Board and the only topic to be discussed is the jail/justice center project. The commissioners, as well as the Sheriff, Undersheriff, County Attorney, and the County Clerk plan to be in attendance.

Live Streaming

If technology is available, the meeting will be live streamed. If the technology is not available, the meeting will be recorded and uploaded to the Coffey County Commission web page and posted with the other meetings the following morning. For reference, all meeting agendas and recordings are available at any time here: https://www.coffeycountyks.org/agendacenter.

Meeting Format

The meeting will commence with a brief procedural matter that is required to initiate a special meeting. Next, there will be a presentation on the jail/justice center project. This presentation may include comments by each commissioner, the Sheriff, the Undersheriff, and the County Attorney. After the presentation, the floor will be opened for citizen comments. Citizen comments will require each individual who desires to speak to sign in on a separate document that is specific to public comments. Each citizen will be called in the order in which they sign in for public comment. Once a citizen’s name is called for comment, the citizen will need to step to the podium, state their name, and city of residence. All comments are expected to be made with
courtesy and respect for all sides of the issues presented and specific to the jail/justice center project.

Jail/Justice Center Project

1) Why is the current jail not a viable option moving forward?

- **Linear Design:** Although this is a question better addressed by the sheriff, the current jail is inadequate and has internal safety issues for both jailers and inmates alike. Not unlike Jail facilities in similar-style Courthouses, the Jail is single-story, linear-style with very limited support facilities or separation of housing for classification. The current jail is a turn key facility which means that a jailer has to open and close a cell with a physical key. The current jail design is a linear design with cell doors separating rooms or sections down a corridor. The Drive-in Vehicular Sallyport (vs. drive-through) has been converted into badly-needed storage.

- **Current Standards Inadequate:** Aside from Bed-capacity issues, the layout of the present Jail fails to meet most Jail standards established by (a.) the American Correctional Association (ACA, "Small Jails ed.", 2018) for cell layout, dayrooms, activities, booking & intake, medical and other facilities expected in a modern Detention Center; and (b.) PREA ["Prison Rape Elimination Act," 2012] which seeks to reduce sexual assault within the institution through violations of personal privacy.

- **Increasing Maintenance Costs:** The current jail has multiple maintenance issues that create constant and reoccurring issues internally. For example, one of the cells is currently shut down due to issues with plumbing. The problem is that the plumbing cannot be addressed because the parts needed are no longer available for purchase and any parts that can be purchased have to be specially fabricated. This cell requires jailers to routinely shop vac standing water from the plumbing area of the cell. Until this issue is resolved, the cell is not usable by inmates.

- **Jail Capacity:** The current jail capacity is approximately 26 inmates -- which requires the sheriff to place inmates in portable beds on beds on the floor of each cell. The current jail is routinely at capacity and Coffey County inmates are being housed in adjacent counties on a regular basis. In 2021, Coffey County paid out approximately $30,000 to adjacent counties to house Coffey County inmates. Please keep in mind that this was during the COVID pandemic when extra efforts were made to issue citations in lieu of arrest.

2) Why is the county not considering renovating the current jail?

- **Renovate v. New:** The architect, Goldberg Group Architects, has provided the county with figures related to renovation of the current jail. The anticipated cost to renovate the current jail is $850-$1,350 per square foot compared to $485 to $535 per square foot for a new justice center. A renovation concept increases the jail capacity from 14-15 to 18-20 beds.

- **Design:** The linear structure of the current layout provides some creative opportunity for wholesale upgrades to the Jail. Upgrades are largely accomplished by (1.) incorporating the smaller (probate) courtroom and adjacent Court Service's offices into the jail envelope, plus (2.) demolition of numerous existing walls within the jail itself and (3.) adding a new vehicular sallyport and outdoors activities area to the south side of the Courthouse, requiring relocation
of the emergency generator, transformer, and other equipment located there. No provisions for a Jail kitchen or laundry have been included in this plan.

- **Cost to Renovate:** The cost: "gut" renovations to existing jail space are extremely expensive. Renovating old jail space into new jail space may run as high as $850-1,350 per square foot and, in this case, yield 18-20 beds or 25-30% of the bed capacity our Needs Assessment indicates. If this is correct, the 6,540 square foot project may run as high as $5,560,000 to $8,830,000, excluding miscellaneous provisions such as boarding detainees elsewhere for the duration of the project, or for 10-12 months at $40 per diem, or approximately $173,000 plus transport costs, bringing this estimate to $5,733,000 to $9,003,000, or an average of $314,650 to $494,650 per bed. If this cost range seems unnecessarily high it should, when compared to new Justice Center construction at $485 to $535 per square foot, including on a pro-rata basis, less expensive administrative office space, as well as courtrooms. On the other hand, our renovation concept includes no less-expensive space, plus it requires painstaking piecemeal demolition at $30 to $40 per square foot as a single line-item cost. Should renovation of the existing jail merit further consideration, then relocation and/or new location(s) of the following facilities and/or services will be necessary: 911 dispatch; probate court & offices; jail offices (1-2); jail kitchen & laundry. An upgraded dispatch center, along with an emergency operations center (EOC), increases our adjusted renovation estimate to $6,883,000 — $10,153,000.

3) Where would the new jail/justice center be located?

- **City of Burlington:** Multiple locations within the corporate boundary of the City of Burlington were considered. The location that seemed to fit with the needs of a potential justice center was the city owned property that has been mentioned now multiple times on the south end of town. Initially, Sheriff Rogers had been made aware of the 19.67 acres located south of Burlington. Sheriff Johnson had a dialogue with the mayor dating back to April 2021. Sheriff Johnson’s dialogue with the mayor included how long the city has owned the property, the purchase price for the property, the specifics related to electric/water/sewer/fiber/casements, and permission for the county to test for rock and soil density. As a result of this communication, a “purchase option agreement” was prepared to preserve the right of the county to purchase the parcel from the city of Burlington. The “purchase option agreement” first brought before the City Council of Burlington on July 21, 2021 and, to date, has not been addressed by the city council other than by citizens who presented inaccurate and misleading information related to the justice center project. An attempt was made by Sheriff Johnson, Undersheriff Eric Smith, and County Attorney Wade Bowie to address the inaccurate and misleading information to the Burlington City Council at the August 4, 2021 meeting. To date, no substantive conversation has taken place by the Burlington City Council related to the willingness of the City of Burlington to sell the property to the county. In addition, even should the City of Burlington decide to sell the property to the county, the use of the property will require the city zoning board to decide if the county can use the property for its intended purpose, and, if it is approved, must go back before the Burlington City Council for final approval.
  - Burlington City Council meeting minutes can be found here: https://burlingtonkansas.gov/government/council-minutes/

- **Airport:** This potential site for a justice center was mentioned as the county owns a large parcel of property. This is the current conversation although a final decision has not been made in reference to specific location at the county owned airport property.
4) Will my taxes be raised to build the new jail/justice center?

- **Taxes:** The Board has stated since the inception of the jail/justice center project that they did not want to raise taxes for this project. However, the Board did recently increase the mill levy requiring a “Revenue Neutral Rate” hearing. This hearing took place on August 30, 2021. On July 26, 2021, the county auditor, Philip Jarred, CPA of Jarred, Gilmore & Phillips, PA, presented to the Board related to the county budget and discussed the “Revenue Neutral Rate” process and the options for the county moving forward. Of particular note is the difference between the state assessed property valuation for 2020 ($493,391,191) and 2021 ($541,700,467) or an increase of $48,309,276. The current 52.308 mill levy rate is the same rate as it was in 2020. In the current 2022 budget, 1.492 mills (or $1,318,321) is attributable to the needs requested for additional budgetary expenditures necessary for the operation of the county hospital. The remaining $2,526,962 is attributed to the increase in state assessed property and $500,000 is being budgeted to transfer from the general fund into the Special Law Enforcement Center Fund. According to the auditor, “the additional taxes levied on the ‘regular’ taxpayers are the 1.492 mills for the hospital. 1 mill on a $100,000 house is equivalent to an increase in taxes of $11/year. The rest of the dollars being levied are due to the increase in assessed valuation from the previous tax year, the bulk of it from State Assessed Property.”
  - See auditor comments at approximately 1:36:00 and 1:55:00 of the July 26, 2021 board meeting: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gl62xGmxVOU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gl62xGmxVOU)

- **Reserves + Bond Issue:** The Board has decided that the best way to move forward with the jail/justice center would be to pay 20% from reserve funds and 80% from bond financing. This would not require that taxes be raised.

5) What is the anticipated cost to build a new freestanding jail/justice center?

- **With and Without Judicial Facilities:** The architects recommended that the Board and county citizens “consider construction of a new, freestanding Law Enforcement Center, consisting of Detention Housing, Detention support, and Sheriffs Offices; plus Judicial facilities for a self-contained Justice Center.” The average construction cost per square foot is $415 to $435. In the original proposal submitted by the architect, the project was anticipated to cost approximately $18,000,000, excluding off-site utility extensions and property acquisition. These costs, however, include construction, fees, furnishings, expenses, site improvements and contingency: aggregately representing a complete “turkey” budget. If the project is implemented without the judicial facilities included, approximately $1,200,000 may be subtracted from the aforementioned budget, reducing overall estimates to $16,720,836, excluding off-site utilities and site acquisition.
  - The rationale for including judicial facilities as an integral component of building a new county detention facility is pervasive: for a relatively modest (added-) cost, the expense and risk of transporting prisoners between jail and courts is largely eliminated; if the county prosecutor’s office is included, then the entire spectrum of services from arrest to arraignment, detention through trial and chain-of-custody storage is covered under one roof.
6) Why is the new jail projected to have 78-80 beds?

- **Detention Specialist:** As a part of the initial phase of the project, a detention specialist, Weber and Associates was consulted by the architect. The detention specialist reached preliminary conclusions based on the Coffey County Jail records of incarceration and compared this data to KBI statistics for the same time period. As a result, Weber and Associates concluded that there will be a likely need in Coffey County of an average of 75 beds by the year 2030.

  - In summary, Weber and Associates concluded that “the data would indicate a possible need for 75 beds if the jurisdiction experienced maximum growth over the next 10 years. While it is not probable that the jurisdiction would experience maximum growth consistently, it is recommended that this be considered in future planning.” The gender ratios recommended the following: 52 male beds; 23 female beds.

7) **Will the new jail/justice center be surrounded in razor wire fencing with armed guards patrolling the property?**

- **Office Building:** The concept for the new jail/justice center is for the building to resemble an office building. See included concept renderings for reference below:
Hopefully, the information provided above answers some of the questions generated in reference to the project. Please keep in mind that I have only summarized and included highlights of some of the talking points I have been made aware of recently or those that might generate the most discussion.

Please plan to attend the special meeting if you are able to do so. If you are unable to attend, please tune into the live stream of the meeting if at all possible. Special meetings are rare and the Board has scheduled this public meeting because it is aware of how important this project is moving forward.

Sincerely,

[Wade H. Bowie]
Coffey County Attorney