

RESOLUTION NO. 22837

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF  
PALM SPRINGS OPPOSING THE PROPOSED  
WHITEWATER LOCATION OF THE RIVERSIDE COUNTY  
REGIONAL DETENTION CENTER.

WHEREAS, the City of Palm Springs is world-renown as a tourist destination and place for relaxation and escape; and

WHEREAS, the economy of the area has grown to both nurture and rely on the area's reputation as the "ultimate desert playground" where visitors can enjoy natural beauty, a relaxed urban scene, unique cultural events, and a connection to the ancient past and recent modern history; and

WHEREAS, the City recognizes that the continued success of the local economy is greatly dependent on the preservation the area's recreation and tourism appeal; and

WHEREAS, the County of Riverside has determined that there is a need for additional jail facilities; and

WHEREAS, the County has selected a site for a new regional detention center located in the Whitewater area, north of the Interstate 10 freeway, west of Highway 62; and

WHEREAS, the proposed site is located at the entry to the Coachella Valley and the City of Palm Springs and will be one of the first desert landmarks encountered by commuters, tourists, vacationers and others who travel to or through the Coachella Valley; and

WHEREAS, the impact of such a facility on the perceptions of visitors and tourists could significantly and detrimentally affect their desire to visit Palm Springs and surrounding areas, such that the City and local businesses could experience losses in convention bookings, hotel and lodging reservations, and retail sales; and

WHEREAS, the County has identified other sites which could serve as a location for the proposed detention center, yet which would not pose a threat to any local economy; and

WHEREAS, the County has prepared a draft Environmental Impact Report, which insufficiently and inaccurately analyzes the adverse economic impact that the proposed detention center would have on the Palm Springs and the Coachella Valley; and

WHEREAS, the City of Palm Springs has offered separate comment on the draft EIR, identifying how the proposed detention center would create significant and manifest economic losses to local businesses and the City.

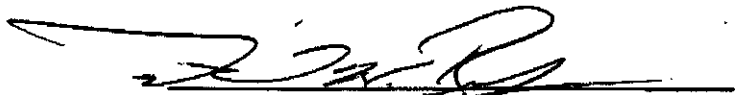
NOW THEREFORE, THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PALM SPRINGS DOES HEREBY RESOLVE AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. The City Council calls upon the Riverside County Board of Supervisors to recognize that the Riverside County Regional Detention Center at the proposed Whitewater location would have a detrimental affect on the economy and residents of the City of Palm Springs and the Coachella Valley.

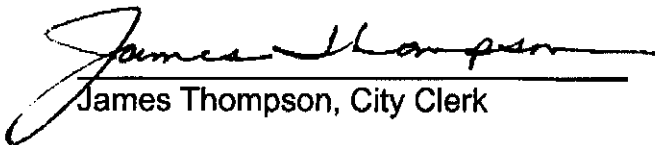
SECTION 2. The City Council hereby opposes the development of the Riverside County Regional Detention Center at the proposed Whitewater location.

SECTION 3. The City Council further recommends that the County Board of Supervisors immediately halt the CEQA review of the Whitewater site and identify one of the alternative locations as the preferred site for the Riverside County Regional Detention Center.

ADOPTED THIS 1<sup>ST</sup> DAY OF DECEMBER, 2010.

  
David H. Ready, City Manager

ATTEST:

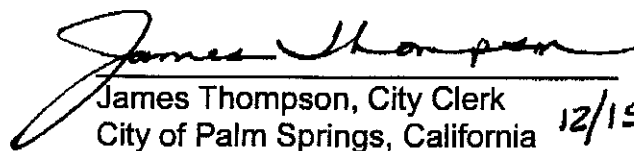
  
James Thompson, City Clerk

CERTIFICATION

STATE OF CALIFORNIA )  
COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE ) ss.  
CITY OF PALM SPRINGS )

I, JAMES THOMPSON, City Clerk of the City of Palm Springs, hereby certify that Resolution No. 22837 is a full, true and correct copy, and was duly adopted at a regular meeting of the City Council of the City of Palm Springs on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of December, 2010.

AYES: Councilmember Weigel, Mayor Pro Tem Hutcheson, and Mayor Pougnet.  
NOES: None.  
ABSENT: Councilmember Foat and Councilmember Mills.  
ABSTAIN: None.

  
James Thompson, City Clerk  
City of Palm Springs, California 12/15/2010



# City of Palm Springs

Steve Pougnet, Mayor

3200 E. Tahquitz Canyon Way • Palm Springs, California 92262  
Tel: (760) 323-8200 • Fax: (760) 323-8282 • Web: [www.palmsprings.ca.gov](http://www.palmsprings.ca.gov)

February 5, 2009

County of Riverside  
Department of Facilities Management  
Attn: Ms. Claudia Steiding  
P. O. Box 1468  
Riverside, CA 92502-1468

E-mailed to: [Saferstreets@co.riveride.ca.us](mailto:Saferstreets@co.riveride.ca.us)  
Via On-trac - overnight delivery, and  
Via Facsimile 951/955-4828

RE: *Comments on the Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the "Riverside County Regional Detention Center Project"*

Dear Ms. Steiding:

*Thank you for the opportunity to provide early input to the EIR for the proposed detention center. The City of Palm Springs recognizes the need for additional facilities to accommodate the County's growing inmate population, and acknowledges that any locational and design decisions regarding a new incarceration center will be a challenge.*

*After reviewing the Notice of Preparation (NOP) and related materials, the City Council voted unanimously to offer the following comments.*

- 1. The EIR must evaluate the project as defined at full build-out. The County's information indicates a clear understanding of the ultimate size and scale of the project, including site plans and staffing needs. Consequently, the EIR must address more than just the "first phase", but provide a complete impact analysis of the detention center with 7,200 beds. While the NOP indicates that a Program EIR will be prepared, it is imperative to the City of Palm Springs that a full disclosure of the impacts of the entire scope of the project be provided in this EIR.*
- 2. Alternative sites must be fully explored in the EIR:*
  - a. The City of Palm Springs acknowledges recent reports indicating that the County continues to explore alternative sites, including locations on federal lands and in other parts of the mid-county area. The EIR must take account of these efforts and provide a discussion of alternative sites that consider locations significantly distant from the proposed site to provide a meaningful consideration of reduced-impact options for the project.*
  - b. The EIR's discussion should include an alternative that provides the needed capacity through a smaller new jail combined with an expansion of existing facilities throughout the County.*
- 3. In addition to the impact issue areas identified in the NOP, the City believes that following areas must be examined and evaluated in the EIR:*

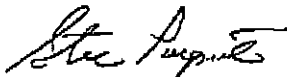
- a. *The potential impact on tourist facilities in the region. Several major centers of visitor-serving activities have a marketing "reach" that includes the proposed project site, including the Cabazon Outlet Malls, the Palm Springs Convention Center, downtown Palm Springs, the Agua Caliente Spa Casino, the hot springs hotels of Desert Hot Springs and the like. These centers generate jobs and tax dollars, as well as contribute to the urban fabric of the region. The EIR should evaluate the potential environmental effects of the proposed detention center on these facilities, particularly the adverse physical impacts that would occur should the detention center reduce the attractiveness of the area for tourism.*
- b. *The potential impacts of increased mortality / morbidity rates. The establishment of a detention center may introduce persons into the region who carry with them infectious diseases. The EIR should evaluate the potential environmental effects of an increase in mortality and morbidity rates of the surrounding population, particularly the direct and indirect loss of population and how such losses impact the local physical environment.*
- c. *A complete project description. The EIR's description of the project should include a discussion of how many inmates at the proposed facility will be from the local area, including Beaumont, Banning and the northern Coachella Valley (Palm Springs and Desert Hot Springs), as compared with the number of inmates expected from other parts of the County. The City believes that one goal of the project should be to incarcerate criminals as near to their home communities as possible.*

*In addition to these comments on the proposed EIR, the City of Palm Springs maintains that the proposed site is not a remote rural location, but is in the midst of a growing suburban and urban community. A detention center of this size and scale is best located far from population centers, where its impacts are not imposed on the local built environment. This site will soon be surrounded by urban development and the recent experience in the City of Riverside is instructive: An urban jail should be of limited size.*

*The City of Palm Springs recognizes that the County of Riverside is seeking to add capacity to its jail system. However, the County must also consider that in the decades to come, the Cabazon / Whitewater / western Coachella Valley will be a growth center made up of homes, shopping centers, hotels, schools, churches and all the other uses that make up a healthy community. It would not serve any of these uses' long-term viability to have amidst them and their residents a jail of the size and scope envisioned here. We urge you to identify an alternative and more remote location as the County's first choice for this facility.*

*Feel free to contact Mr. David Ready, City Manager, at 760-322-8362 if you have any questions.*

*Sincerely,*



Steve Pougnet, Mayor  
City of Palm Springs



# City of Palm Springs

## Department of Planning Services

3200 E. Tahquitz Canyon Way • Palm Springs, California 92262  
TEL: (760) 323-8245 • FAX: (760) 322-8360 • TDD: (760) 864-9527

December 9, 2010

Ms. Claudia Steiding, Senior Environmental Planner  
County of Riverside Economic Development Agency  
P. O. Box 1468  
Riverside, CA 92502-1468

RE: Revised Draft Environmental Impact Report (RDEIR) for the Riverside County  
Regional Detention Center (RDC), State Clearinghouse No. 2008121012

Dear Ms. Steiding:

The City of Palm Springs thanks the County of Riverside for providing us with an opportunity to provide comment on the Revised Draft EIR. The City understands that a Revised DEIR has been prepared and recirculated in response to previous comments regarding the Regional Detention Center's potential to inhibit the ability of wildlife in the area to cross Tamarack Road.

We wish to take this opportunity to supplement our comment letter of January 7, 2010 with additional information regarding the economic impact of the proposed RDC and resulting adverse physical impacts on the City of Palm Springs. In July of this year, the City received a report from Dr. Philip G. King, Associate Professor of Economics, San Francisco State University titled, "The Economic Impact of the Proposed Riverside County Regional detention Center." That report is attached to this letter.

A summary of Dr. King's findings are provided below as comments for the RDEIR:

1. The economic impact analysis in the DEIR has a number of serious flaws. In particular the DEIR assumes:
  - a. A jail facility near Palm Springs will have no impact on traditional Palm Springs vacationers. The recent literature cited in the DEIR contradicts this conclusion.
  - b. Jail visitors can be represented by a sample of California travelers who had a median household income of \$79,478, far above Riverside County's median income or that of prisoners' families.
  - c. Jail visitors will spend 0.97 nights on trips to the Palm Springs area even though the RDC is a county facility easily visited on a day trip.
  - d. Jail visitors will reside outside the Palm Springs area.
  - e. 50% of RDC employees will be new residents to the Palm Springs area, an assumption contradicted elsewhere in the DEIR.

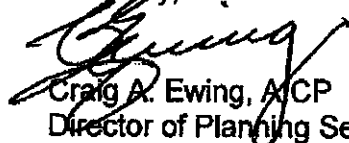
2. The above assumptions are inconsistent with empirical facts, studies cited in the DEIR or assumptions made elsewhere in the DEIR. Dr. King's study corrects these flaws. Otherwise, Dr. King's study accepted the DEIR's assumptions and methodology.
3. Correcting these flaws leads to a different conclusion than the one presented in the DEIR. Overall, the tourism industry in the Palm Springs area (as defined in the DEIR) will lose \$90.0 million per year in lost revenue even accounting for some increase in sales generated by the RDC.
4. The loss in sales will also lead to a reduction in the local share of sales taxes and transient occupancy taxes of \$2.2 million per year. Other losses (e.g., potential loss in property taxes) were not estimated but some loss in these revenues should also be expected.
5. These impacts to the tourism industry can also be expected to negatively impact other industries in the Palm Springs area. These impacts have not been estimated in Dr. King's report, but they could be significant.
6. The Palm Springs area has pockets of urban decay and blight as well as a high vacancy rate in commercial property due to the current economic downturn which may last for some time. The negative impacts from the RDC could seriously exacerbate existing urban decay in the area.
7. There is also the possibility of a negative event at the RDC that would generate media attention and could lead to even greater losses. This outcome may be unlikely, but is far from impossible.

These comments are derived from the study identified above and which is attached to this letter.

**Conclusion**

As described above, the City remains concerned about the adequacy of the RDEIR. Without further analysis and the correction of errors in the document, the RDEIR is inadequate and does not provide the public or decision makers with accurate or sufficient information on which to base a decision. Given the significance of this project to the Coachella Valley, we strongly urge the County to again re-write and recirculate the RDEIR.

Sincerely,

  
Craig A. Ewing, ACP  
Director of Planning Services

Attachment

cc City Manager  
City Attorney