

EDC supes OK \$60 million sheriff's facility

By Kathryn Reed

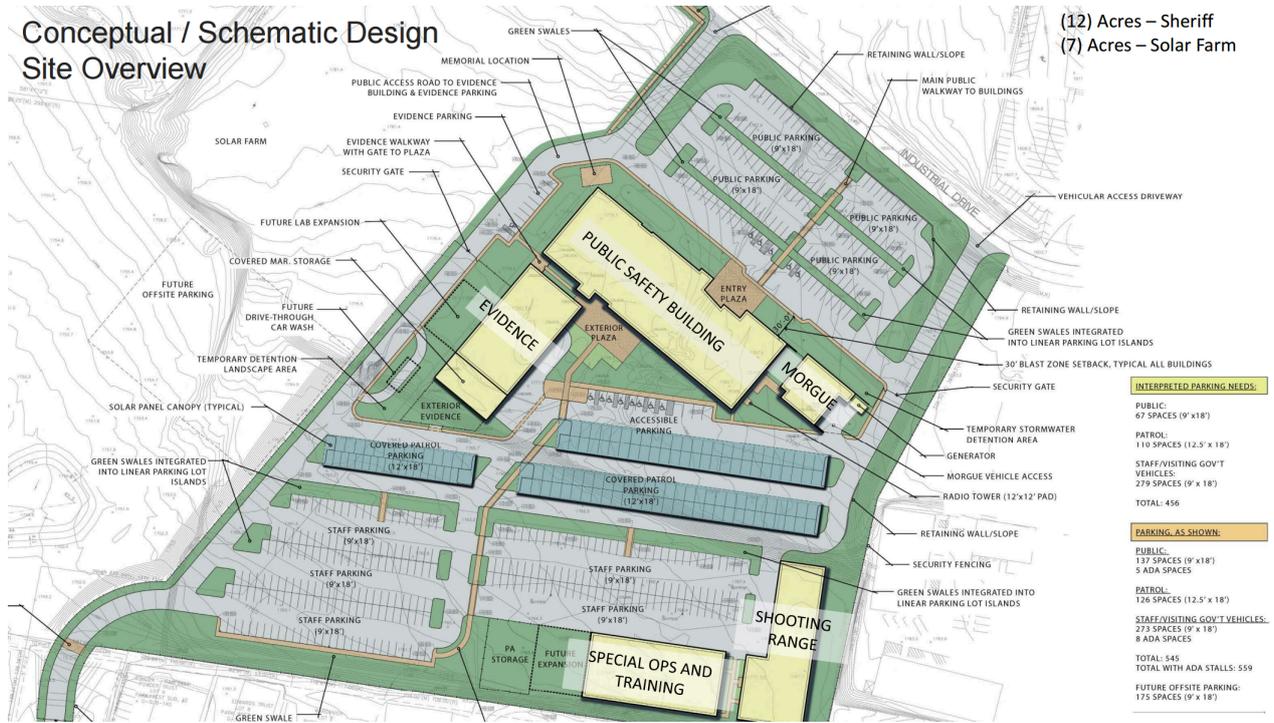
By March 2019 it's possible the El Dorado County Sheriff's Department will be operating at one facility instead of the current 13 on the West Slope.

A multi-million dollar public safety facility has been talked about for years as the current buildings kept losing their usefulness and the cost of out-sourcing some operations continued to escalate. The Board of Supervisors at a special meeting on July 11 pulled the trigger to go forward with the project.

"This project will finally bring all the functions of the sheriff's office to one location, enabling us to provide the best level of public safety to the people we serve and eliminate costly lease payments and create efficiencies in communication and crime solving," Sheriff John D'Agostini told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The board was presented with multiple projects. In the end the most expensive – \$60 million – was chosen. This provides the department with essentially everything it wanted.

Conceptual / Schematic Design Site Overview



In three years El Dorado County Sheriff's Department's operations should be on one campus in Placerville.

A 30.7-acre parcel off Missouri Flat and Industrial roads in Placerville had already been acquired, with the main use for the sheriff's department. Five buildings on 12 acres will be for law enforcement. Another 7 acres may become a solar farm. Development has not yet been planned for the remaining acreage.

To pay for the facility, the county is going after a loan from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Supervisors on July 26 will be asked to approve the final application. If the 40-year loan can be locked in by Sept. 30, the interest rate will be 2.75 percent, according to Shawne Corley, assistant chief administrative officer.

A criterion to qualify for this loan is to show five years' of future balanced budgets. When former CAO Larry Combs this spring released the budget it neither had the sheriff's department project in it nor future balanced budgets.

Supervisors at the June 28 meeting gave direction to current CAO Don Ashton to re-do Combs' work. This means staff will be

coming back to the electeds with ideas for how to fund the annual \$2.6 million loan payments for the public safety facility.

“First we’ll work on efficiency and not necessarily just cut things,” Corley told *Lake Tahoe News*.

She said it’s too soon to know what the cost containment plan will look like. The final county budget for the 2016-17 fiscal year is due in September.

The staff report from Monday’s meeting said, “Regardless of which construction option is chosen, there will be a significant impact on the budget, requiring difficult service level decisions beginning this year.”

Corley said with her and Ashton being new to their jobs, they are apt to see things in the budget that others might not have – places that can be tightened or cut made without being a drastic sacrifice.

“I understand this is the biggest thing the county has ever taken on and the huge responsibility the Board of Supervisors has in regards to the overall county budget,” D’Agostini said. “This project is absolutely essential in providing the most important service to our communities and the county as a whole, that of public safety that the Board of Supervisors placed in the county’s strategic plan as the top priority. This project will never cost less than it does today. Not tomorrow, next week, next month or next year.”

The new operation will allow the county to conduct forensic autopsies on site instead of going to Sacramento. The gun range will also be part of the new campus. A training facility will also be incorporated. In all, 99,000-square-feet of space will be developed.

“The sheriff has need for extensive storage,” Russ Fackrell, county facilities manager, told *Lake Tahoe News*. “They have to

keep evidence sometimes for more than 50 years. If the convicted person is in jail for life, they have to maintain that evidence for the whole time they are incarcerated.”

Land will also be used to store vehicles – from patrol cars, to boats, to command centers.

The main building being used today is slated to be demolished. In its place will be a juvenile detention center. The board has approved the project that comes with a price tag of nearly \$12 million. Most of that – \$9.6 million – will come from a state grant.

Many of the other facilities are leased, so that will be a savings.

Office space in the government complex now used by law enforcement will be taken over by other county entities.

These new buildings are expected to last 50 or more years.