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August 25, 2015

TO: California Department of Developmental Services
California Department of General Services

RE: **Sonoma County Comments Regarding the Future Use of the Sonoma Developmental Center's Property and other input to inform the closure plan**

Dear Director Rogers and Director Kim,

Attached is Sonoma County's response to a request from the Departments of Developmental Services and General Services for County input regarding the future use of the Sonoma Developmental Center (SDC) property and any other input to inform the closure plan.

Our community is extremely concerned about the future of the SDC and the impact closure will have on current SDC residents. We have been working closely with a coalition of local stakeholders to identify opportunities to preserve SDC's valuable health services for Sonoma County and North Bay residents as well as preserving critical environmental resources. Additionally, the SDC is the largest employer in the Sonoma Valley, and our coalition is also focused on how to meet the needs of these employees who rely on the SDC for their livelihood, many of whom have specialized training in providing care and customized equipment for the residents, expertise that we cannot afford to lose.

We urge you to work closely with the County as the plans for closure progress. If you are in need of any additional information or clarification, please contact Rebecca Wachsberg, Deputy County Administrator, at (707) 565-2431 or Rebecca.Wachsberg@sonoma-county.org.

Sincerely,

SUSAN GORIN, Chair
Sonoma County Board of Supervisors

Attachment: Sonoma County Comments Regarding the Future Use of the Sonoma Developmental Center's Property and Other Input to Inform the Closure Plan



Sonoma County Comments Regarding the Future Use of the Sonoma Developmental Center’s Property and Other Input to Inform the Closure Plan

Introduction

On May 14, 2015, Governor Brown released the May Revision to the proposed 2015-16 California State budget. The May Revision proposed to initiate closure planning for the remaining developmental centers. The 2015-16 State budget, adopted on June 25, 2015, required the California Department of Development Services (DDS) to submit a closure plan to the California Legislature for the SDC on October 1, 2015, with intended closure by 2018. Pursuant to the 2015 State Budget Act, the California Department of Development Services (DDS) will submit a closure plan to the California Legislature for the Sonoma Developmental Center (SDC) on October 1, with intended closure by 2018. The Legislature has the responsibility for additional public review and related modifications followed by adoption as part of next year’s budget cycle. This memorandum is in response to a request from the Departments of Developmental Services and General Services for County input regarding the future use of the SDC property and any other input to inform the closure plan.

Since 2013, County of Sonoma staff has been closely involved in working with the SDC Coalition, a diverse partnership committed to exploring options for the future of SDC and comprised of the County of Sonoma, the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District, the Sonoma County Water Agency, the Parent Hospital Association, the Sonoma Land Trust, and the Sonoma Ecology Center. In 2014, the SDC Coalition launched a broad-based community driven-effort – ***Transform SDC*** –to transform the site’s unique health service programs and preserve its natural resources.

This document builds on the community’s ***Transform SDC*** dialogue that defined initial elements of a vision for the future of SDC, explored possible reuse options, and identified areas for further inquiry and investigation. For the next several years, the SDC Coalition, which includes dedicated Sonoma County staff, will continue to engage the residents of Sonoma County and beyond in the future of the Sonoma Development Center through ***Transform SDC***.

Sonoma County Supports the SDC Coalition’s Guiding Principles for the Future of SDC:

- Implement the recommendations from the 2014 “Plan for the Future of Developmental Centers in California.” This Plan was created by the California Health and Human Services Agency based on the deliberations of a statewide representative task force. As stated in the Executive Summary for the Plan, “...the future role of the State is to operate a limited number of smaller, safety-net crisis and residential services coupled with specialized health care resource centers and public/private partnerships...” Rather than simply closing SDC, we believe that the Center is a perfect location to achieve many of these objectives. Hence the critical distinction of “transforming” SDC.
- Seek an active collaboration and partnership with the Department of Developmental Services, the Health and Human Services Agency, the Governor and the Legislature to meet the state’s goal of caring for individuals with developmental disabilities in a safe, dependable and cost-effective manner while realizing the community’s vision for SDC.

- Develop permanent residential services on the SDC campus for current SDC clients and those Northern California individuals with developmental disabilities who are not able to function in community settings to ensure the safety of this vulnerable population.
- Broaden the impact of SDC’s staff expertise, customized therapies and durable equipment manufacturing by establishing an on-site specialized facility to serve developmentally disabled consumers throughout Northern California.
- Ensure that future uses of the Center preserve the distinct character of the Sonoma Valley’s rural communities and SDC’s natural, historical, and architectural integrity.
- Protect SDC’s open space, valuable natural and scenic resources to support healthy wildlife populations, water resources, and recreational opportunities for future generations.
- Establish complementary reuses on the SDC site that diversify and enhance the Valley’s economy and establish models for sustainable development and economic self-sufficiency.

Sonoma County 2015 State Legislative Platform: Sonoma Developmental Center

Each calendar year, Sonoma County adopts an annual legislative platform that provides a guide for Sonoma County’s legislative advocates, and highlights key issues important to the local community. The platform provides over-arching guiding principles, prioritizes State and Federal issues intended for specific legislative action, and lays out ongoing general State and Federal issues that the County will monitor for potential action should opportunities arise.

One priority area of the Sonoma County 2015 State Legislative Platform is the Sonoma Developmental Center (SDC). The SDC is the oldest facility in California established specifically for serving the needs of individuals with developmental disabilities. The facility opened its doors to 148 residents in 1891. Since that time, SDC has served as a critical resource to people in Sonoma County as well as throughout the North Bay Region. Today, SDC provides an extensive array of services that promote ongoing health, learning, self-advocacy and increased independence; and innovative social, recreational, educational, vocational, and other programs are continuously offered. Not only does SDC provide valuable services to individuals and families, it also serves as a significant scenic and environmental resource; SDC is adjacent to natural open space and park land, along with heavily traveled wildlife trails. Ensuring the land continues to provide these community benefits is of great importance to the Board of Supervisors and the community.

The County supports working with State and community stakeholders to sponsor and develop legislation, funding, and other opportunities to preserve SDC’s valuable health services for Sonoma County and North Bay residents as well as preserving critical environmental resources.

Specific Recommendations for SDC Closure Plan

Sonoma County’s (and its associated Agencies, collectively referred as the “County”) recommendations are drawn from the following resources:

- SDC Coalition/Transform SDC Project recommendations to DDS, dated August 7, 2015
- Input from various Sonoma County Departments.

1. Planning and Collaboration Protocol

DDS and other relevant state agencies such as the Department of General Services (DGS) should enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with the County of Sonoma to identify and describe mutual goals, guiding principles, roles and responsibilities, timelines, planning processes and other essential aspects of designing a new future for SDC. The MOU will specifically include the following provisions:

- Designate the County and the SDC Coalition as the Sonoma County organizations that the State will work with in a collaborative manner throughout the multi-year transformation process to provide:
 - 1) ongoing representation from the diverse interests most affected by closure, including the County of Sonoma, SDC consumers, family members and employees, land protection organizations, civic and business groups, and the residents of Sonoma County;
 - 2) mutual exchange of information and dialogue to simultaneously address the needs of both the State and Sonoma County; and
 - 3) transparency and accountability in the Department's decision-making process.
- Development of protocol for transparency in reporting health outcomes for individuals who have been moved from SDC as well as other developmental centers to inform and assist in the assessment of appropriate placement and support for those individuals who DDS currently intends to move from SDC.

2. Recommendations for Client Services

The County supports the inclusion of the following concepts and specifics be addressed in the State's SDC Closure Development Plan:

- Transformation of the SDC must be done in a manner that assures access to high quality medical and behavioral health services and respects and protects the unique and specialized needs of each resident, and their family or guardian.
- Additional health resources must be developed and available in the community prior to the transition of SDC to ensure that the existing system of care is strengthened to accommodate the complex care needs of this added population. The County encourages the development of a Health Impact Assessment to bring together scientific data, health expertise and public input to identify the potential effects of the proposed closure of the SDC and of a transformed service model.
- The County believes that services – when medically appropriate – are more effective when provided in a community-based setting with a compliment of necessary support/wrap-around services versus a more restrictive institutional setting.
- In collaboration with the County, develop a plan to ensure the ongoing legal representation of conserved SDC clients currently served by the County.
- For some SDC residents, a home or community-based setting is not currently available or appropriate. This may include SDC residents with significant medical conditions or behavioral issues; individuals in temporary crisis; and/or individuals who because of other circumstances have not successfully transitioned into a community setting.

- The County supports the transformation of the SDC from a state-run Intermediate Care Facility (ICF) to a service model that is community-based; developed through public-private-non-profit partnerships; and that serves as a “regional hub” - able to provide specialized services for all intellectually and developmentally disabled (IDD) individuals, including those who may not successfully transition into a home or other community-based setting.
- The County supports a transformed SDC to include the following array of specialized services:
 - ✓ An Acute Crisis Center to provide emergency and other necessary health services for IDD individuals in the community who are in need of short term transitional crisis services. The Acute Crisis Center could include a crisis response team that could support the regional centers and deflection of individuals into existing developmental centers or more costly institutional services; a crisis hotline that could serve the region and possibly beyond; and specialized day programs. The Acute Crisis Center could focus on providing services that address the immediate crisis but also on the development of best practices that support the return of the individual to a community-based setting.
 - ✓ A Health Clinic to include a focus on the specialized needs of IDD individuals and to provide a full array of services including primary care; care coordination; full array of dental services including preventative services, general and anesthetic dentistry; durable medical equipment and orthotics; behavioral; and preventative care. The clinic's patients could include individuals on site receiving specialized services; IDD patients living throughout the region; and non-IDD patients further integrating the clinic's operations with the community. The Health Clinic could be operated by the state, a private provider, non-profit, or through a public/private partnership. The Health Clinic could be a satellite of an existing clinic (FQHC or other) or could be a standalone.
 - ✓ A Health Resource Center to include health education and programming, life skills and care management, wellness, exercise and nutrition classes, job training, etc. The Health Resource Center could provide a place for health care advocates to meet with residents, family, guardians, and the community for enrollment into health coverage, and to problem solve on issues of coverage, care and general health. The Health Resource Center could also provide an opportunity for residents and the broader community to gather and access the natural health environment, including walking paths, other outdoor exercise opportunities and meditation resources.
 - ✓ Residential Health Services including housing for a subset of SDC residents with specialized needs should be considered in a transformed SDC. Residential health services could include housing for individuals with complex medical and behavioral needs; individuals in temporary crisis; and those who have prior unsuccessful transitions to a community setting and need a place of last resort while they gain additional services to assist them to successfully transition.
- The County supports the Coalition and the community in their goal to preserve the natural resources and open space of the SDC site. The SDC site contributes to the health of broader community on multiple levels including water/ground water capacity; climate change resiliency; and as a place the public can hike or bike while enjoying its natural beauty.

- The County will continue to work collaboratively with the SDC Coalition to develop financing and management recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature that will “create public/private partnerships to provide community integrated services.”

3. Develop a Reuse Strategy for the SDC Campus

In order to assess the opportunities for reuse of the SDC campus, it is essential that the State:

- Update the 1998 infrastructure and environmental assessment prepared by Vanir Construction Management Inc., and prepare a “Property Assessment Study” similar to that developed for Lanterman by RBF Consulting. The study should include a current “Infrastructure Capacity Assessment”, which reviews sewer, water, gas, electricity and storm drainage systems and a Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment.¹
- Conduct a historical resources assessment to identify structures and other site uses that may be subject to historic preservation requirements.²
- Work collaboratively with the County and the SDC Coalition to develop financing and management recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature to create public/private partnerships and other reuse options that are complementary to health care services and open space protection on the SDC campus

4. Protect SDC’s Open Space and Natural Resources

The SDC property is unique among the State’s developmental centers because it includes approximately 750 acres of open space and natural resource lands on Sonoma Mountain and in the Sonoma Valley. The site also provides significant public benefits to the region, including water and groundwater capacity, climate change resiliency, wildlife corridor and habitat protection, scenic qualities and access to open space that supports human health. The site is bounded by state and county parks and other protected land, connected to an existing regional trail system, and identified as a critical wildlife corridor.

The open space and natural lands of the property have been a directly beneficial to the well-being of the SDC residents and employees and the neighboring communities. The site is widely utilized by the community for recreation and enjoyment. Its tranquil setting and the ability for SDC’s developmentally disabled clients to get outside, walk around and enjoy nature has provided peace of mind and therapeutic benefits for residents, and for the family members and guardians who care deeply about their loved ones.

In order to fully assess and protect these resources, it is essential that the State:

- Coordinate complete biological and cultural resource assessments of the SDC property with the DGS, the Legislature and the California Natural Resources Agency, that builds on the work of the

¹ See Lanterman Closure Plan, page 26

² See Lanterman Closure Plan, page 26

April 2014 “Sonoma Developmental Center Draft Resource Assessment” and share the data with the County, the SDC Coalition and the general public.

- Work with the County and the SDC Coalition to prepare a summary of the property’s contributions towards the State’s environmental goals in the areas of how access to nature benefits public health, water management and conservation, climate change and habitat and natural resource protection.
- Initiate a collaborative process with DGS, the California Natural Resources Agency, California State Parks, the County and interested stakeholders to ensure permanent protection of the critical open space lands on the SDC site.
- Support expanding parks, for example, expansion of the Sonoma Valley Regional Park to include the open space lands east of Arnold Drive.
- In the event State Parks is unable to accept land resources within SDC, or is unable to manage the lands, the County supports acquisition and/or managing the lands with partners as appropriate, including Camp Via, ropes course, etc. The County would preserve the option of eventual transfer of the lands west of Arnold to State Parks.
- Work a broad coalition to determine the most appropriate ways to improve public use of the land as well as to enhance and preserve the wildlife corridor.
- DGS should reconsider granting a proposed trail easement with the County to connect Santa Rosa and Sonoma, a section identified as the “Sonoma Valley Trail.”
- The available water resources on the SDC site represent critical local resources that can assist the local agencies and community in complying with and meeting the standards of Sustainable Management Groundwater Act (SGMA). Should local agencies not be able to sustainability manage groundwater resources in Sonoma Valley, under the SGMA the State would be required to utilize its resources to step in and regulate groundwater use in Sonoma Valley.
- The County recommends excess water resources be used to reduce local well pumping (in lieu recharge), in order to preserve groundwater and aid in recharge, and offset peak season and emergency water needs in the community, as well as help in the immediate and pervasive drought conditions being experienced in the Valley and statewide.
- Any considerations for continued site use in any capacity will demand a thorough assessment, and/or replacement of the wastewater collection facilities.
- Conduct a complete study and report on existing, active, and historical water rights, in order to accurately identify the impacted agencies and limitations on site reuse and what can be stored and used offsite, as well as more accurately estimate available water resources. Confirm and validate the official SDC “Place of Use” map with the State Division of Water Rights and provide official map to the Sonoma County Water Agency (SCWA), Valley of the Moon Water District (VOMWD), and City of Sonoma.

- Conduct a complete and thorough condition assessment of the water and wastewater collection system facilities and infrastructure, provide the assessment reports to SCWA, VOMWD and the Coalition for review, and allow SCWA and VOMWD staff and Coalition members to access the site to evaluate site infrastructure.
- Following the collection system condition assessment, repair and/or replace any infrastructure in need of maintenance and restoration, to bring the infrastructure up to code and efficiently operating.
- Provide information on the current and historical (past 10 years) cost of operation and maintenance of all water and waste water systems onsite.
- Provide a copy of the master plan for the onsite water and waste water systems.

5. Policy and Legislative Recommendations

When the Agnews and Lanterman Developmental Centers (DC) closed, state legislation was developed to implement specific recommendations that resulted from dialogue with impacted families, the regional centers and DC state employees. DDS, the Legislature, Congress and federal agencies should develop legislative and policy reforms that will ensure that the recommendations we have provided can be implemented. These include:

- Extend October 1 plan deadline and 2018 closure timeframe to allow thoughtful exploration of transformation concepts
- Seek waiver to allow continued federal funding through 2020 to fully explore transformation process
- Support development of regional FQHC / Community Health Care Center at SDC to support needs of residents / former residents that have transitioned to community, acute care facility residents and transitional housing residents
- Look for pilot program opportunities and funding to support transformation effort
- Seek ways to retain State employees and expertise through process
- Support legislation to allow employees to work for the State and serve clients in the community simultaneously
- Evaluate lessons learned from Agnews and Lanterman to determine what worked and what didn't
- State legislation to ensure that open space and natural resource lands are permanently protected
- Other necessary policy and legislative changes needed to implement our recommendations

Contact: Rebecca Wachsberg, Deputy County Administrator, Sonoma County Administrator's Office at (707) 565-2431 or Rebecca.Wachsberg@sonoma-county.org.