



Waynesboro City Council Agenda Briefing

Meeting Date:	March 22, 2021	Staff/Council Member(s): City Manager
Agenda Item #	9	
Resolution#		
Department:	City Manager/Middle River Regional Jail	
Subject:	Status Report and Discussion Middle River Regional Jail Expansion	

Background: The Middle River Regional Jail is overcrowded and has been experiencing daily populations that exceed operational capacity by 200 to 400 inmates. The overcrowded conditions are impediments to providing healthy and safe care for inmates, especially in a pandemic, and are risks to the health and safety of employees. While special efforts to reduce the population at the facility during the pandemic have been successful, for years prior to the pandemic the population has periodically spiked exceeding 1000.

An expansion of the facility is recommended for a number of reasons, chief among them: to address the increasing jail population, to restore and increase the capacity of the core facilities such as kitchen, laundry, visitation, and other support functions, and to diverse housing options based on classification and improve program options to serve the diverse needs in the population.

While the need to expand the jail is apparent; the decision to expand the jail is difficult and complex. The capital and operating costs associated with an expansion of any scope are significant and compete with other service and project demands, state and federal mandates and local preferences for limited local financial resources. Cost estimates range, based on the scope of expansion options, from \$92 million to \$40 million. Further, various community groups and citizens have expressed opposition to jail expansion and encourage local investment in mental health, substance abuse, public education, diversion and social support programs.

The Authority has an obligation to oversee the facility in a manner that is safe and healthy for inmates and employee, that treats inmates humanely, is fiscally responsible and operationally-compliant.

The MRRJ Authority Board is schedule to meet in early April and I expect that expansion of the facility will be on the agenda.

The subject of the expansion appears on the Council's meeting agenda at the Council's request with expressed intention of discussing the jail and communicating specific direction to the City Manager and in doing communicating a position to the community.

City Manager's Recommendation: I recommend that City Council endorse the concept of renovation, improvement, and expansion in some form providing specific guidance to the City Manager as the Council is able.

If the MRRJ Authority approves an expansion project, each member jurisdiction will be required to vote to approve the recommended project.

Suggested Motion(s): None required.

Attachments: None.