



Staff Report

File #: 23-0240

REQUEST FOR CITY COUNCIL ACTION

DATE: 03/15/2023

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council Members

FROM: City Manager's Office

SUBJECT:

REQUEST FROM THE CITY OF NORCO AND THE CITY OF BLYTHE TO SUPPORT THE CLOSURE OF THE CALIFORNIA REHABILITATION CENTER IN NORCO AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO CLOSING THE CHUCKAWALLA VALLEY STATE PRISON IN THE CITY OF BLYTHE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This staff report asks the City Council to consider a request from the City of Norco and the City of Blythe to support the closure of the California Rehabilitation Center in the City of Norco as an alternative to closing the Chuckawalla Valley State Prison in the City of Blythe. Both the City of Norco and the City of Blythe are requesting support from the cities in Riverside County on this issue.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

That the City Council consider a request from the City of Norco and the City of Blythe to support the closure of the California Rehabilitation Center in Norco as an alternative to closing the Chuckawalla Valley State Prison in Blythe.

BACKGROUND & HISTORY:

The State of California is proposing to close the Chuckawalla Valley State Prison (CSVP) in the City of Blythe, with an anticipated closure date of March 2025. Blythe is a small city of approximately 18,000 residents located in eastern Riverside County on the border of California and Arizona. The closest City within California is the City of Indio, located approximately 100 miles west of Blythe. Due to its isolated location, many families of incarcerated individuals have chosen to live in the City of Blythe, and most of these families live at or below the poverty level and will be the most impacted by this closure. Due to the disproportionate impact the closure of CSVP will have on Blythe and the Palo Verde Valley, which is one of the most economically disadvantaged areas in the state, the City of Blythe is asking the State to reconsider the closure of this prison.

ANALYSIS:

As an alternative to closing the CSVP, the City of Norco is requesting that the State of California close the California Rehabilitation Center (CRC) instead. The CRC was originally built in Norco in 1941 and is among the oldest prisons in California, while the CSVP opened in 1988 and is one of the newer facilities in the State Prison System. Due to the older condition of the CRC, the estimated cost for maintenance and repair projects at this facility is \$1.116 billion as compared to \$430 million at CSVP. Furthermore, the CRC is located on prime real estate land that could be redeveloped into projects that provide millions of dollars in economic investment to the region, while the CVSP is located in an isolated area with minimal opportunities to repurpose this facility.

Both the City of Blythe and the City of Norco are requesting support from Riverside County cities in their request for the State of California to reconsider the closure of CSVP in Blythe, and to close the CRC in Norco instead.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

There is no financial impact associated with this action.

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

This action is exempt pursuant to Section 15061(b)(3) of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Statute and Guidelines, which states that a project is exempt from CEQA if the activity is covered by the commonsense exemption that CEQA applies only to projects which have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment. Where it can be seen with the certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment, the activity is not subject to CEQA. This action is to consider a request from the City of Norco and the City of Blythe to support the closure of the California Rehabilitation Center in Norco as an alternative to closing the Chuckawalla Valley State Prison in Blythe, and there is no possibility that this action will have a significant effect on the environment. Therefore, no environmental analysis is needed.

PREPARED BY: DONNA FINCH, ASSISTANT TO THE CITY MANAGER

REVIEWED BY: JACOB ELLIS, CITY MANAGER

Attachment:

1. Support Letter