

Frequently Asked Questions regarding Jail and Headquarters Bonds

Q: Why do we need a new jail?

A: The current facility was built over 30 years ago and is experiencing many problems. Maintenance costs on the facility are increasing as the building ages. Old technology is not able to be used with newer technology so many safety features are “homemade”. The current facility can only hold 135 inmates; Forsyth County’s average inmate population is around 286, forcing the Sheriff’s Office to house out the inmates at a cost of approximately **\$9,000 A DAY**. That totals to over **\$2 MILLION** dollars a year of your tax money going to other counties.

Q: Why can’t the new jail be built on other land owned by the county?

A: The County owns two pieces of land other than the property suggested in the bond. The first property is located near the old landfill; this location is near a river that floods at least once a year which would make it impossible to get a fire truck or patrol cars to the jail during this period. Also, the site does not have water or sewer available which a jail of any size would require. State law prohibits paying for such water and sewer lines to the site through the bond referendum. The second property is located near the Fulton County line and is completely in a floodplain and cannot be built on. The current property the jail sits on is small so the jail would have to be built going up; unfortunately the ground is not able to support the size structure needed based on a soil survey.

Q: Won’t the jail be an eyesore to the residents nearby?

A: No, a large earthen berm will be built with mature trees on top to prevent the only residential area bordering the property from seeing the facility. Also, due to the required green space needed, you will not be able to see the jail from the roadway as you pass.

Q: Won’t the lights, gates, and towers of the recreation yard be a nuisance?

A: There is no outdoor recreation yard as seen on television. The recreation area for inmates is an enclosed area off the housing units. The walls in this area are over 8 feet tall then protected by glass the remaining distance so no noise will escape this recreation area. Also lighting will meet county ordinance and not bleed over into bordering property. Also there are no towers anywhere in this plan; these are seen more in a correctional facility and not a county jail.

Q: Why can’t the county add to the current jail?

A: The current facility was not designed to be expanded. Also due to the cemetery and two major roadways bordering the property we are unable to expand outwards. As described earlier, we are unable to build up because the bedrock underneath cannot hold a taller facility.

Q: Why will this jail cost so much?

A: Steel is the driving factor of the cost. The facility will take a large amount of steel to build. As the price of steel goes up, so will the cost. The cheapest time to construct the facility is today. Hall County was able to build a larger facility with less cost; however they locked into that price almost 4 years ago. Today, that facility could not be built for the cost they received.

Q: Won't it be dangerous if inmates escape?

A: The facility was designed with the latest technology and information to prevent inmates from escaping. Our current facility stands a greater chance of escape than the new facility will. Also with a reduction of movement of inmates from one facility to another, the chances of escape decrease.

Q: Who cares if criminals have to stay in crappy conditions?

A: Not only do the criminals have to stay in such conditions but employees must work in the same unsafe conditions. As conditions become worse in the current jail, the possibility of an inmate suing over the unsafe conditions increases, many counties are ordered to build new facilities as a result of such lawsuits. If this becomes the case, the decision of the citizens of Forsyth County is removed as to how the new county jail will be built and how much a new jail will cost.

Q: Wouldn't it be cheaper to just continue housing inmates out?

A: No, in an independent audit it was determined that in 12 years the county will pay out the amount of the current bond without having built a facility.

Q: Will the new jail house inmates from other counties?

A: There are no plans to house inmates from other counties.

Q: Why can't the county add to the current Headquarters building?

A: Because such a facility does not exist. Currently the Sheriff's Office is spread out over seven different buildings, two of which the county currently rents. Most of these buildings were built in the 1950's and 1960's and are deteriorating at an alarming rate. Most have Asbestos so no remodeling or additions can be made without cleaning the hazardous material. One building currently does not have water because the pipes have collapsed. In another building, employees cannot drink the water because it is contaminated and will make them sick.