
Eye on Del Norte: The jail is not the Ramada Inn

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My publisher sent me an unopened letter stamped DEL NORTE JAIL MAIL and he asked me to follow up with its contents. Mail from the Jail.

The letter, handwritten in pencil with an apology about legibility was from an inmate at the jail leveling some pretty heady charges: leaky roof, flooding, lots of mold and mildew. The inmate, who shall remain anonymous for obvious reasons claimed the jail was not suited for human occupancy. The inmate was highly critical of staff who he/she claimed were indifferent, incompetent and ignoring of wanton fentanyl abuse including at least three recent overdose incidents, again according to the inmate.

Last year, the roof was replaced and there were some small leaks the roofer and County Building Services patched up. The flooding has been addressed and corrected. It's important to remind folks this is a jail not a Ramada Inn. The Jail is not designed for comfort. It's designed for confinement. Regrettably, too few of those who commit crimes see the inside of a jail.

It's also important to understand the difference between a jail and a prison. The Del Norte County Jail is for short term occupancy, usually less than a year for those convicted. The jail is also for those awaiting trial. The convicted are sentenced to prison or long term confinement.

The State has passed laws which may exclude bail mandates. This legislation allows for booking and release back into the community. Very dangerous and irresponsible. These laws compromise public safety in the City, County, State and across America.

The inmate's complaints about staff indifference and incompetence fall on hard of hearing ears. I know corrections staff to be vigilant and keenly aware of Corrections' mission. Again, I'd advise this individual currently incarcerated, the jail is NOT the Ramada Inn.

Last year, an incident took place showing a single trashed housing unit with a lot of folks upset inmates were being mistreated. Though a serious matter, it was an isolated incident. The trashed housing unit was ultimately cleaned up and stabilized. Nonetheless, the jail does have some issues.

Two months ago, Sheriff Garrett Scott requested a comprehensive, professional evaluation of the jail. Structural Engineering firm Nichols. Milburn and Rosetto, Certified Structural Engineers out of Redding conducted that evaluation and the results of jail deficiencies should be forthcoming, any day.

After the Report is studied by Sheriff Scott, I would hope the Sheriff would share the NMR Report with the Board of Supervisors and the Public. Then, implement a plan to address and prioritize needs.

My closing comment and advice to anyone sentenced to do time in our jail. Rethink your choices and behavior. Ask yourself, is it worth it? Obey laws and be good citizens. If you do that, guaranteed you'll not see the inside of the Del Norte County Jail.

EYE ON DEL NORTE

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