

February 19, 2024

RE: Letter of Resignation

Oklahoma County Criminal Justice Authority:

Please accept this as my formal notice of resignation as Trustee for the Oklahoma County Criminal Justice Authority, effective immediately.

The Jail Trust has offered a valuable element of transparency to the people of Oklahoma County that did not exist prior to its creation. After decades of quiet deterioration, we made notable progress toward improving the condition of the building and the treatment of the people inside, all under the watchful eye of many ardent advocates. I am honored to have worked alongside these passionate individuals and my fellow trustees.

My decision to resign has not come lightly. I am proud of the hard-fought progress we have made, but there is still much left to do. Attaining the operations and staffing goals at the Oklahoma County Detention Center is not possible without adequate funding from Oklahoma County. Unfortunately, at this point, we have hit a critical impasse.

For years now, I have asked the County Budget Board to allocate enough funds to the jail for it to operate at an adequate level. Several County officials have pointed to a lack of funds across the board as a reason for not adequately funding the jail, but I contend that they need to prioritize their funding, looking to the County's primary responsibilities and liabilities first. Oklahoma County is responsible for the lives of every detainee at OCDC, and they represent some of our most vulnerable community members. Many are experiencing homelessness, mental health crises, or suffering from substance use.

The County has placed this responsibility in the hands of the Jail Trust, but the jail is currently operating with only half of the minimum number of staff recommended by the National Institute for Corrections. Additionally, the starting salary for a detention officer is approximately less than 75% of the starting pay for county law enforcement officers with the same qualifications. It is simply impossible to hire the necessary number of Detention Officers at the current starting salary and the funds approved and allocated to the jail by the Oklahoma County Budget Board.

For over two years, I have also pleaded, with no success, for \$1.5 million to remodel the booking area for the jail. The configuration of the current area creates an unsafe environment and is extremely inefficient. With approximately 70 people per day being booked into OCDC, along with at least 70 accompanying law enforcement officers, this high-traffic area should be remodeled to allow individuals to move more quickly through the book-in process and ensure the safety of employees and detainees alike. Even though there are plans to build a new jail, we are at least five years away from completion of the new facility. Every passing year we have multiple safety related issues arising out of the current booking area layout.

However, instead of providing the \$1.5 million for the jail remodel, the County Budget Board has deemed a \$17.5 million remodel of the Sheriff's offices more important. The reason stated was that the Sheriff wanted a lobby that was more user-friendly for the public. I seriously doubt that these offices have anywhere close to the same traffic as the jail booking area, let alone the safety issues.

Funds should be reallocated to allow the County to focus on its legislatively mandated responsibilities at the jail. We have all witnessed the consequences that occur when adequate funding for the jail is not prioritized, but we have yet to see the change that I believe is possible if the appropriate resources are allocated and the needs of the staff and detainees are met.

My pleas to the county to adequately fund the jail have fallen on deaf ears for too long. Despite carrying the highest cost and highest liability risk of any other county responsibility, the jail trust does not have a voice on the county budget board. Because of this, the jail trust receives what is left over after all other budget board members take care of their own department needs and pet projects first. I have little hope that adequate funds will be provided in the future. Because of this, I am unable to do the job for which I was appointed.

Respectfully,



Sue Ann Arnall