



COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

For the meeting of: 1/6/2026

File #: 26-13

To: Board of Supervisors

From: County Administrative Office

Agenda Section: Departmental

Vote Requirement: Majority

SUBJECT:

Recommendation to Cease Courthouse Security Screening Services Following Reduction in Court Funding

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That the Board of Supervisors:

1. Direct the Sheriff's Office, in coordination with the County Administrative Officer (CAO), to cease Courthouse entrance security screening services as soon as administratively feasible, following the development and implementation of revised Trial Court Security operational procedures to accommodate the reduced service levels; and
2. Authorize the Sheriff to assign one Deputy Sheriff to Board of Supervisors meetings to provide security for the Board, staff, and members of the public; and
3. Direct the CAO and Sheriff to notify the Superior Court of these actions and to continue coordination to ensure continuity of core Trial Court Security responsibilities as mandated under Government Code § 69922; and
4. Authorize the CAO and Sheriff to negotiate and execute an amendment with American Guard Services to continue services after Dec. 31, 2025 until services are ceased.

STRATEGIC PLAN:

This action supports the following areas of your Board's Strategic Plan.

Area of Focus: Core Services/Other

Strategic Plan Category: 9999 - Core Services/Other

DISCUSSION:

The issue of Courthouse entrance security screening funding and operational responsibility has been the subject of an extended intergovernmental dialogue between the Superior Court and the county throughout 2025. A detailed history is provided below to document the progression of negotiations and the conditions that culminate in the present recommendation.

Initial Court Notification - July 22, 2025

On July 22, 2025, the Superior Court issued its first formal notice that it had not been receiving Entrance Screening Funds and lacked the financial capacity to continue funding security screening, therefore, notifying the county of the intent to terminate the 2012 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which established that the Court would contribute 83% of the cost of entrance security services. The CAO requested a meeting per the provisions of the contract. This meeting occurred on July 28, 2025, in which the Court clarified that it intended to terminate the contract immediately and would not make any further contributions.

Initial County Response - July 29, 2025

On July 29, 2025, the county responded to formally reiterate the contractual obligations pursuant to Section 10 of the 2012 MOU in

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which the Court did not provide the proper notice of termination in order to immediately cease payments. Further, the county offered to negotiate in good faith to find a solution that is feasible for both parties.

Court Proposal - Sept. 9, 2025

On Sept. 9, 2025, the Court responded and proposed a phased reduction and eventual cessation of its contributions, including:

- Maintaining current contributions of 83% of actual costs through December 2025;
- Reducing its contribution to \$7,000 per month beginning January 2026; and
- Ending all contributions beginning July 2026.

The Court's proposal further assumed that the 4th Street entrance would remain in service as the sole screening location and indicated that elimination of both weapons screening stations would necessitate a modification to the proposal.

County Counterproposal - Oct. 6, 2025

On Oct. 6, 2025, the County responded by:

- Accepting the Court's continuation of current contributions through December 2025;
- Countering the proposed \$7,000 monthly contribution with a \$12,520 monthly requirement to maintain service at the 4th Street entrance and reduce hours to 7:30 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. at the 5th Street entrance; and
- Proposing that all entrance screening services cease on July 1, 2026 given the long-term funding deficit.

The county emphasized that the outcome of the negotiation would have direct impacts on how the county would move forward and the need for certainty in the Court's ongoing participation in order for the county to fulfill its obligation to notify American Guard, the current security services provider, of potential changes and prepare a Request for Proposals (RFP) under revised service levels.

Request for Clarification - Oct. 17, 2025

In response, on Oct. 17, 2025, the Court sought detailed clarification regarding:

- Whether the Board of Supervisors had been formally consulted;
- Whether other county departments had been approached to subsidize screening;
- The basis for the county's cost calculations;
- Confirming the terms that the county negotiated with the current security services vendor; and
- Confirming screening would be eliminated at the end of the fiscal year absent a resolution in the negotiations.

This letter reaffirmed the Court's priority of maintaining weapons screening but acknowledged the need to understand operational and fiscal assumptions before responding formally.

County Clarification - Nov. 4, 2025

On Nov. 4, 2025, the county clarified that:

- While not yet formally presented to the Board of Supervisors, the Board had been copied on prior correspondence and was aware of the ongoing negotiations and that it would be brought to the Board in public session in the future;
- Screening costs are borne by the County General Fund as most of the county department occupants in the Courthouse are funded by the County General Fund;
- Minimal savings would be realized by reducing service hours at the 5th Street entrance due to break coverage and the required guard presence, hence the calculation for this level of service resulting in a minimal reduction in cost for the Court; and
- The county would adjust or cease screening in direct proportion to Court funding, and the county is not in a financial position to absorb reductions in the Court's contribution.

The county also reiterated to the Court that this was under a tight operational timeline, noting that an updated contract for revised services would need to be in place by Jan. 1, 2026. American Guard Services has proposed an increase to the hourly rate due to minimum wage and cost increases. Should services continue beyond Jan. 1, 2026, the Sheriff and CAO are requesting authority to negotiate a short-term amendment to continue services until such time that they are administratively feasible to cease.

Final Court Position - Dec. 16, 2025

On Dec. 16, 2025, the Court responded to the county's October 6 and November 4 letters and issued its best and final offer:

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- A continuation of its reduced contribution of \$7,000 per month for the remainder of the fiscal year;
- Formal rejection of the county's proposed \$12,520 monthly rate due to budget limitations; and
- A statement that the current cost of screening was an "undue and extraordinary" burden the Court could no longer sustain.

The Court proposed a series of potential adjustments, including:

- Closing the 5th Street entrance as the most feasible short-term option;
- Exploring a Court employee-only entrance through the Clerk's Office;
- Staffing screening stations with retired deputies or community officers with limited hours; and
- A public communication strategy encouraging the use of remote appearances.

The Court also invited the county to revisit the concept of relocating screening to the 2nd floor, noting logistical and spatial constraints that would require additional detail from the county.

These proposals did not include funding sufficient to maintain security screening.

Summary

Across five months of correspondence and negotiations, the following emerged:

- The Court is unable to sustain prior funding levels, and its maximum contribution of \$7,000 per month does not meet even minimum operational costs of a single entrance;
- The county cannot absorb the funding gap, as screening is not required for county operations and the General Fund is already structurally constrained;
- Multiple operational ideas were discussed (reduced hours, single-entrance screening, retired deputy models, relocation to 2nd floor), none of which were feasible without either increased funding or substantial capital and staffing changes; and
- Both parties sought a collaborative solution, but no mutually sustainable agreement could be reached.

Government Code § 69922 requires the Sheriff to provide Trial Court Security, which includes courtroom security, in-custody movement, and judicial protection. It does not mandate the provision of unfunded public entrance screening.

Given the Court's financial withdrawal, the Sheriff and CAO jointly recommend that the county proceed with orderly cessation of public entrance screening. The Sheriff will develop updated Trial Court Security deployment plans to ensure compliance with statutory mandates without subsidizing services the Court is unwilling or unable to fund.

Additionally, given concerns regarding safety and heightened public engagement at Board meetings, the CAO and Sheriff will coordinate having one Deputy Sheriff present during Board of Supervisors meetings to provide security in Board Chambers.

SOURCE OF FUNDING:

General Fund (1100-221610)

Humboldt County Superior Court (1100-221610-800870)

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

Expenditures (1100-221610)	Jan - June 2026 Budget	Explanation
Budgeted Expenses	\$108,250.00	American Guard Contract
Additional Appropriation Requested	\$ 20,347.00	Increase cost of American Guard Extension for 6 months
Total Expenditures	\$128,597.00	

Funding Sources (1100-221610)	Jan - June 2026 Budget	Explanation
General Fund	\$ 18,403.00	Current contribution
State/Federal Funds	\$ 42,000.00	Court proposal reduces their contribution for Jan-June 2026 from 83% of total cost (\$106,735.00) to \$7,000 per month (\$42,000.00).

Contingencies	\$ 68,194.00	Increase GF contribution needed for courts funding reduction and contract increase.
Total Funding Sources	\$128,597.00	

Narrative Explanation of Financial Impact:

American Guard Services is in a month-to-month contract after the court security screening RFP was withdrawn due to the proposals coming in at substantially higher costs than current funding allowed for. American Guard has made it clear that they will require an increase to their current rates effective Jan. 1, 2026 to continue the month-to-month agreement. The proposed increase is to raise the rate from \$23.64 per hour to \$28.43 per hour per guard, a \$4.79 per hour increase per security guard. In addition, overtime would also increase from \$33.10 per hour to \$42.65 per hour. Based on minimum staffing requirements, the anticipated fiscal impact increase is estimated at \$20,347 for the remaining 6 months of the fiscal year in additional contract costs.

In addition to the contract increases, the Court's final proposal reduced their contribution from 83% of actual costs (estimated at \$17,790 per month) down to \$7,000 per month (roughly 33% of estimated costs) through June 30, 2026, with all contributions ceasing July 1, 2026.

Should your Board wish to continue security screening services at minimum staffing and accept the Courts reduced funding, the General Fund would need to contribute an additional \$68,194 for the remainder of fiscal year 2025-26, with ongoing costs increasing by \$213,480 in fiscal year 2026-27. In addition, if the county continues security screening services, a new RFP and contract will need to be negotiated, and it can be anticipated those costs would increase significantly in future fiscal years.

STAFFING IMPACT:

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impact:

There is no request for additional FTE's. Should the Board agree to cease all security screening services and direct the Sheriff to provide one Deputy Sheriff for all Board Meetings, then there is a need for additional Deputy Sheriff overtime or extra-help in order to staff the Board Meetings.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

Humboldt County Superior Court

ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

Board discretion.

ATTACHMENTS:

N/A

PREVIOUS ACTION/REFERRAL:

Meeting of: N/A

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