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July 20, 2015

VIA EMAIL

The Honorable Ben Zeller
Victoria County Judge
101 N. Bridge, Rm. 102
Victoria, Texas 77901

Joyce Dean,
Director of Administrative Services
115 N. Bridge, Rm. 127
Victoria, Texas 77901

Dear Judge Zeller and Ms. Dean:

The purpose of this letter is to respond to the recent inquiry concerning the Victoria County Regional Juvenile Justice Center. You have indicated to us that Victoria County owns the Juvenile Justice Center and approves the annual budget and that the Juvenile Justice Center is operated by the Victoria County Juvenile Services Department under the supervision of the Victoria County Juvenile Board and managed by the Chief Juvenile Probation Officer, Pana Hencerling, pursuant to an oral agreement. Finally, you have also stated that the Victoria County Judge and the Victoria County Commissioners Court approve all contracts and agreements for detention services for short-term and long-term detention of juvenile offenders between other Texas counties and the Victoria County Juvenile Services Department.

You have provided a copy of written contracts with Lavaca County for placement of juveniles in the facility. The contract for short-term detention services asserts that the facility is owned by the Victoria County Juvenile Services Department in Section 1.01. Interestingly, there is no assertion of ownership in the long-term detention services agreement. Neither contract contains any reference to the Victoria County Commissioners Court nor any requirement for approval by that body, although we understand that is the customary practice. If a written agreement or other written documents between Victoria County or the Commissioners Court and the Victoria County Juvenile Board concerning the operation of the Juvenile Justice Center have been executed or exist, please provide a copy for our review. We also recommend a review of the Deed Records to determine ownership of the underlying real property. Finally, a review of past state or federal grant records and financing documents may reveal whether Victoria County or the Juvenile Board obtained any grants or financing to construct the facility. Based upon the

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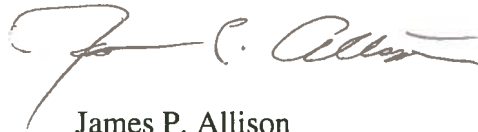
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aforementioned assertion that no such written documents exist and that Victoria County owns the real property and improvements, the Victoria County Commissioners Court would be the appropriate governmental entity to consider the future utilization of the property and improvements as a Regional Juvenile Justice Center, including potentially closing the Regional Juvenile Justice Center. Obviously, the Commissioners Court will need to weigh the benefits of a local facility against the cost of future operations to make this determination.

Of course, the juvenile courts and the Juvenile Board will remain responsible for the proper detention of Victoria County juvenile offenders, including any contracting with other facilities to house Victoria County juvenile offenders. The Juvenile Board will continue to consider and adopt the budget from all sources (federal, state, and local) to meet these requirements, and the Commissioners Court will determine the amount of county funds that will be available for this purpose. Coordination between the juvenile courts, the Juvenile Board and the Commissioners Court will be highly beneficial toward maintaining an efficient, effective program.

If you need any additional information or would like us to assist further with this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. P. Allison", written in a cursive style.

James P. Allison

JPA/jls