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San Mateo County Jail in Redwood City. Photo from Sundt Companies website.



BY **EMILY MIBACH**

Daily Post Staff Writer

Burlingame attorney Paula Canny is suing San Mateo County for not having soundproof attorney-client rooms in the new jail in Redwood City.

Canny said she can't fulfill her constitutional obligation to provide her client with legal counseling when there is the constant possibility of being overheard.

She said that the jail is legally required to provide a confidential setting for such meetings, which are private due to lawyer-client privilege.

"The condition is deplorable and not workable," Canny said Monday (Jan. 22).

Canny said that with the \$165 million the county spent on building the jail, which opened in March 2016, someone ought to have checked whether the attorney-client rooms were soundproof or not.

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Canny said she raised her concerns with the county late last year and was told the county was “working on it.” So she set a deadline of January for the rooms to be fixed, and filed the suit on Friday (Jan. 19) in San Mateo County Superior Court.

However, the county Board of Supervisors today is set to approve a contract for \$118,000 in upgrades for the jail, including soundproofing the rooms.

County Counsel John Beiers said in an email that he’s “bewildered” that Canny filed the lawsuit, calling it “unwarranted and pointless.”

Beiers said that Canny was told multiple times that the contract was being brought to the board and could meet with her clients in private in the meantime.

“Why Ms. Canny believes it is necessary to file this lawsuit, in which she requests attorney’s fees, is quite difficult to fathom as the county has already willingly and readily agreed to make improvements. In any event, now that the lawsuit has been filed, the county will vigorously defend itself and work diligently to protect the monies entrusted to it by all county residents,” Beiers said in an email.

‘Expeditiously’

Beiers also sent the Post a copy of an email Chief Deputy Counsel David Silberman sent to Canny alerting her to today’s agenda item. In the email, Silberman said he expects the work will be done “expeditiously.”

“If they fix it, then there doesn’t have to be a lawsuit,” Canny said. “This needs to be fixed right away and shouldn’t have been like this in the first place.”



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