

August 3, 2021

Memo from: Margaret Brodtkin, Chair, Program Committee, Juvenile Probation Commission  
To: Juvenile Probation Commission, stakeholders, and the public  
Re: Summary of July 27 Program Committee discussion of Log Cabin Ranch

The Program Committee placed a discussion of Log Cabin Ranch on its July 27 agenda. The intent was to hear public opinion about the future of the Ranch. 63 people “attended” the meeting, 15 provided passionate and powerful testimony. The people who testified represented a diverse group that included representatives of agencies in neighborhoods where youth are most impacted by the justice system, people who had worked at the Ranch in the past, youth, advocates, and justice experts. Those testifying were from the following groups and agencies:

- Public Defender
- CARC – Huckleberry Youth Programs
- SF and CA Conservation Corps
- BMAGIC
- Both Sides of the Conversation
- Instituto Familiar de La Raza
- Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice
- Juvenile Justice Providers Association
- Stand In Peace
- 5 Elements
- Re-imagine Youth Justice Coalition
- Family Mosaic
- Young Women’s Freedom Center
- Sunset Youth Services

## INTRODUCTION

*“In June 2018, the City of San Francisco closed its Log Cabin Ranch juvenile justice facility. Nestled in the Santa Cruz Mountains, this 640-acre ranch property had served as a court-ordered residential camp for San Francisco’s toughest male juveniles since the 1950’s. Rather than sending juvenile to a jail-like setting, the goal of the Log Cabin Ranch was to provide youth with a supervised setting in nature and the academic and therapeutic programming needed to aid in their rehabilitation. While innovative for its time, in recent years, San Francisco’s courts and juvenile justice systems nationally have moved away from youth detention centers and toward finding alternative treatments and youth development opportunities for troubled teens. The property currently sits empty awaiting its next chapter.” – from written proposal of the Conservation Corps*

Chief Probation Officer Miller gave a brief overview of the current situation with Log Cabin Ranch, in which she emphasized that many groups, including the Juvenile Justice Coordinating

Council, would be addressing the future of the Ranch. She described the site and the fact that the property was originally two camps: Log Cabin for boys and Hidden Valley for girls. Hidden Valley is in disrepair, and Log Cabin would have to address some repair issues to be utilized including a water flow issue. Neither site is currently being utilized.

Presentation by Conservation Corps:

Marilee Eckert, ED of the SF Conservation Corps, supported by Bruce Saito, ED of the California Conservation Corps, presented a program concept (that was circulated at the meeting and is a part of the meeting) to repurpose the Ranch to establish a wildfire and forestry training center for at-risk youth. The center would include training and paid work experience, as well as education and counseling. The presenters maintained that it would lead to high quality jobs in forestry, firefighting, flood emergencies, arborist and tree services, restoration, recovery and hazmat services in addition to other trades. They point to the Corps' long history with the Ranch. They would like input into the proposed idea and emphasize their desire to partner with other agencies and organizations. They point to the high need due to the urgency of climate change and adaptation.

There was near unanimity about the following points among all people who spoke:

- The Ranch is a beautiful piece of property with great potential that should be utilized as a residential program for San Francisco youth.
- Community-based agencies should operate the program. The tone set by the program operators is very important.
- The programs established at the Ranch should be open to young people who are not in the "system" as well as those who are. It should aim to be transformative for traumatized youth.
- The program should be educational, healing-centered, therapeutic, non-institutional, and non-punitive.
- Multiple vocational options should be part of the program.
- Participation in the program should lead to good-paying jobs.
- The facility should be welcoming and homelike. It should not be a jail.
- The distance from San Francisco poses a challenge and must be addressed.

Other points that were made that were consistent with the above and articulated by many of the speakers:

- The outdoor aspects of the Ranch should be maximized with things like gardens, forestry, environmental training and programs, animals on the property and education about climate change.
- The program should serve transitional age youth and youth adults, ages 16 to 25.
- The program should be voluntary – and not be the alternative for DJJ and or as a sentencing order.
- Businesses and corporations in San Francisco should support the program and participate in training and career development opportunities.

#### Additional points made by various participants:

- Youth should be paid to participate in the program and to do whatever work is involved in the program.
- Young black men at the Ranch should not be exploited.
- Training and potential jobs should not just be about being a laborer, but should also focus on professional opportunities, particularly in technology.
- The program should be youth-led, not another institution.
- The program should provide an opportunity for youth to slow down and heal.
- Families must be involved.
- The facility should look like a boarding school. Life Learning Academy was mentioned as a model, as was Job Corps.
- The facility should have the ambiance of a small college.
- The program should be short-term – 6 -9 months.
- The program should not be too large – beds should be limited (no more than 25 to 30, otherwise it will just be a new institution that will be filled up).

#### Log Cabin History:

- While several speakers talked fondly about the strengths of Log Cabin in the past; others pointed out the troubled aspects of the history, such as recidivism, runaways and youth being bored and feeling warehoused.