



# Richmond Confidential

## Contra Costa supervisors fund Richmond-based prisoner re-entry program on heels of beef with sheriff



By [Alex Nieves](#) Posted September 20, 2017 8:11 pm

Two weeks after Contra Costa County Sheriff David Livingston questioned whether to fund Richmond-based prisoner re-entry organization Rubicon Programs, prompting accusations of political retaliation, supervisors voted unanimously to approve a \$400,000 contract with the longstanding group.

The vote capped off a week in which Supervisor John Gioia accused the sheriff of seeking revenge against Rubicon due to the organization's opposition to the West County jail expansion.

"As I said publicly last week, I think it was an attempt by the sheriff to retaliate against Richmond and Rubicon," Gioia said. "I think the issues he's raised were bogus."

Prior to the vote, County Administrator David Twa read a message from Livingston. It stated that he received a letter from Rubicon, which addressed a number of issues highlighted in his own September 6 memo to the board, and that it eased his concerns with the program. This paved the way for a discussion and voting process that only lasted five minutes.

The county's contract with Rubicon earmarks funds to allow it to continue operations out of the West County Reentry Success Center. The contract runs from October 1 through June 30, 2018.

What initially was assumed a formality, the motion to renew Rubicon's contract grew heated when the sheriff questioned the price tag of the organization's job-placement efforts, and whether workers were being funneled to Rubicon's landscaping business.

Rubicon responded with a letter, which was made available to the board, arguing that Livingston misrepresented the numbers behind its operations.

"The concerns raised by the Sheriff appear, unfortunately, to be misunderstandings of Rubicon's operations," the letter read. "Had the Sheriff come to us with these concerns, we could have addressed them at that time."

Rubicon estimates that it spends around \$7,000 on each job-placement effort, compared to Livingston's estimate of \$28,000. The group also claims that only one of 657 prior job placements was in its landscaping division.

Gioia expressed a more pointed view on Livingston's actions. He argued that the sheriff targeted Rubicon because of an op-ed piece it co-wrote with him, which opposed the jail expansion.

Rubicon Programs has operated out of Richmond for 45 years and works on career planning and job placement for both formerly incarcerated individuals and the general public. On Tuesday, Richmond City Councilmember Melvin Willis spoke in support of the organization's efforts.

"Rubicon does a lot for those who are previously incarcerated, making sure people aren't getting into a track of recidivism and getting them back into society," he said. "It's a major benefit to this community, and the fact that they were under attack ... it's just kind of an insult."