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## **New Gilchrist County Jail anticipated to open in 12 months**



**Breaking ground on the future Gilchrist County Jail are (from left) retired Gilchrist County Sheriff David Turner, Gilchrist County Sheriff Bobby Schultz, retired Gilchrist County Sheriff Daniel Slaughter, Gilchrist County Administrator Bobby Crosby, Gilchrist County Clerk Todd Newton, County Commissioner Sharon Akins Langford, County Commissioner Kenrick Thomas, County Commission Chairman Bill Martin, County Commission Vice Chairman Darrell Smith and State Rep. Chuck Clemons. This is the moment the first dirt flew. (There were other sets of people breaking ground, too, after this initial batch of officials broke ground first.)**

### **Story, Photos and Video**

**By Jeff M. Hardison © Aug. 30, 2022 at 11:12 p.m.**

**TRENTON** – A new \$10.6 million Gilchrist County Jail is set to open its doors in about 12 months, according to information shared at a groundbreaking ceremony Tuesday morning (Aug. 30).

Nothing is so constant as change. Just ask former Gilchrist County Sheriff David Turner (1997-2008), former Gilchrist County Sheriff Daniel Slaughter (2009-2012) or Gilchrist County Sheriff Bobby Schultz (2013-now).

Both former sheriffs and the current sheriff all have worked within the bounds created from having to house inmates in a structure built in 1967. In fact, the current Gilchrist County Jail is among the three oldest operational jails within the 67 counties of Florida.

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Click on the [photo above](#) to see the few seconds it takes to break ground. Preparing to throw the dirt here are (from left) retired Gilchrist County Sheriff David Turner, Gilchrist County Sheriff Bobby Schultz, retired

Gilchrist County Sheriff Daniel Slaughter, Gilchrist County Administrator Bobby Crosby, Gilchrist County Clerk Todd Newton, County Commissioner Sharon Akins Langford, County Commissioner Kenrick Thomas, County Commission Chairman Bill Martin, County Commission Vice Chairman Darrell Smith and State Rep. Chuck Clemons.



This is an artist's rendition of what the front of the future jail will look like.

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**This shows the easel used for the artist's rendition of the future jail.**



**Gilchrist County Commissioners (from left) Darrell Smith, Bill Martin and Kenrick Thomas enjoy some shade before the start of the event.**

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**Eighth Judicial Circuit State Attorney Brian S. Kramer and Eighth Judicial Circuit Public Defender Stacy A. Scott are seen prior to the ceremony.**

**Eighth  
Judicial  
Circuit  
State  
Attorney  
Brian S.  
Kramer,  
Eighth  
Judicial  
Circuit  
Public  
Defender  
Stacy A.  
Scott and  
Gilchrist  
County  
Sheriff  
Bobby  
Schultz  
agree to a  
request  
for a  
photo op**



**before the ground is broken for the future Gilchrist County Jail.**

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The architect for the future jail is Clemons Rutherford & Associates Inc. of Tallahassee. The contractor for the future jail is Allstate Construction Inc. of Tallahassee.

Among the representative of those two companies at the groundbreaking ceremony was Construction Administrator Will Rutherford of CRA Architects, and Allstate Construction President Scott Brewer.

Joseph N. Clemons started the architectural company in 1960 and he hired William D. Rutherford in 1979 to create what is now Clemons Rutherford & Associates Inc.

Before the ceremony, Allstate Construction President Brewer mentioned that he built the part of the Levy County Courthouse that was completed in 1995-97. The first part of the Levy County Courthouse was built in 1937 and it is constructed of red brick and accented by a cupola.

Brewer also built the parts of the Levy County Jail (pods) that were finished in 2005. Opened in 1916, the Levy County Jail continues to house inmates in Bronson.

While some transformations are not as welcome as other conversions, the future Gilchrist County Jail's ability to house about 90 inmates makes several people happy. Not only is Sheriff Schultz glad to see the light at the end of the hoped-for future jail, but Eighth Judicial Circuit Public Defender Scott and Eighth Judicial Circuit State Attorney Kramer share in this breath of upcoming fresh air.

Public Defender Scott mentioned in casual conversation before the start of the ceremony Tuesday that she will be glad to be able to interview female inmates in Trenton rather than having to drive to Cross City (Dixie County), which is in the Third Judicial Circuit.

The Eighth Judicial Circuit includes Alachua, Baker, Bradford, Levy, Gilchrist and Union counties. The Third Judicial Circuit includes Columbia, Dixie, Hamilton, Lafayette, Madison, Suwannee and Taylor counties. There are 20 judicial circuits for Florida's 67 counties.

Both Public Defender Scott, and the assistant public defenders in her office, and State Attorney Kramer, and the assistant state attorneys in his office, will be pleased to have a place where they can speak with defendants in the future Gilchrist County Jail.

State Attorney Kramer reminisced a bit during socialization before the ceremony started. Back in 1991, when the state attorney was Assistant State Attorney Kramer, he conducted his first in-jail interview -- in the Gilchrist County Jail -- of a man charged with felonies.

State Attorney Kramer spoke about sitting in a desk, like those found in schoolrooms years ago, during that first in-jail interview. Back then, former Assistant Public Defender Salvatore Dennis "Sal" Mollica was on the other end of that particular criminal trial where Kramer was the prosecutor, and he was conducting his first in-jail interview in Gilchrist County.

There was quite a bit of socializing before the start of the ceremony on Tuesday. While the temperature in the 80-degree plus (Fahrenheit) range combined with high humidity to make it relatively uncomfortable, everyone enjoyed the happy news event.

More than 50 people got together in Trenton near to the corner of Main Street (U.S. Highway 129) and Gilchrist County Road 339 (at 9239 U.S. 129, which is across the street from All Out Bail Bonds) for this relatively big announcement on that fateful Tuesday morning.

The outdoor shindig included water, cupcakes and some dirt-tossing groundbreaking

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action as the members of the Gilchrist County Board of County Commissioners heralded their success in the long-sought start of a new jail.

The current jail will remain intact, and not just as a museum but for some storage and administrative functions.

Meanwhile, the future jail will house inmates in a humane manner. In fact, with the advent of the global COVID-19 pandemic, the air ventilation system will provide methods for isolating inmates from contaminating the general population, should they be infected with an airborne virus.

## **The Groundbreaking Ceremony**

Gilchrist County Commission Chairman Bill Martin opened the program with prayer.

Sheriff Schultz then welcomed everyone to the event conducted to proclaim success of this project “that has been a long time coming.”

Before the ceremony, the sheriff had mentioned this construction of the new jail is a County Commission project, and that he is just there to operate the facility. After the ceremony, Sheriff Turner let Sheriff Schultz know that while the land is county government-owned, it was during Sheriff Turner’s time in office that he had all of the property within the four corners of the current Gilchrist County Sheriff’s Office campus declared for law enforcement purposes alone.

Even the old singlewide mobile home that once was used for driver license purposes belongs to the GCSO, former Sheriff Turner told Sheriff Schultz as they spoke after the ceremony.



**Gilchrist County Commission Chairman Bill Martin asks everyone to pray with him as the ceremony begins.**

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**Gilchrist County Sheriff Bobby Schultz welcomes everyone to the event.**



**Gilchrist County Sheriff Bobby Schultz passes the microphone to his friend and colleague in county government Gilchrist County Administrator Bobby Crosby.**

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**Gilchrist County Administrator Bobby Crosby laughs about not having the microphone turned on when he started speaking.**



**State Rep. Chuck Clemons thanks everyone from the state and county governments who helped bring Gilchrist County's dream of a new jail into existence.**

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As Sheriff Schultz opened the groundbreaking ceremony, he introduced some of the many dignitaries at the event, including Gilchrist County Judge Sheree Lancaster, County Commission Chairman Martin, County Commission Vice Chairman Smith, County Commissioner Langford and County Commissioner Thomas (County Commissioner Marion Poitevint was absent), and County Clerk Newton (who was noted as having been extremely helpful in the financial matters related to the project).

The sheriff had many elected officials in the audience to raise their hands as well to be recognized. Fanning Spring Mayor Trip Lancaster was among the many other officials recognized, as were elected folks who are part of the Gilchrist County School District.

The two candidates for Eighth Judicial Circuit Court Judge, Group 12 – Sean Brewer and AuBroncee Martin – were in the audience, too.

The members of the Gilchrist County Jail staff were commended by the sheriff at the outset of the program as well.

“Retired” sheriffs Slaughter and Turner were pointed out by Sheriff Schultz.

With that, Sheriff Schultz was the first to announce the plan to complete this project in 12 months or so, and then to have a ribbon-cutting ceremony to commemorate the fruition of this very long-proposed institutional construction project.

With that, Sheriff Schultz gave the microphone to Gilchrist County Administrator Crosby, who when he first started speaking learned the sheriff had accidentally turned the button to “off” on the device.

“He wanted this over real quick,” Crosby said as he joked about the sheriff turning off the mike before the county administrator started speaking about the project.

The county administrator said he and others have dreamed of starting this new jail construction project for many years.

The current 55-year-old jail was used for more than just the jail when it was first built, Crosby said. It was used as the GCSO, administration, dispatch and storage, as well as its function to house inmates.

Sixteen years ago, in 2006, CRA Architects was hired to design the new jail, Crosby said. Financing did not come through and the project was put on hold, he said.

Five years ago, in 2017, after two years of discussions among County Clerk Newton, Sheriff Schultz, County Administrator Crosby and others, the team looked at the cost to Gilchrist County to house inmates in other places, Crosby said.

In 2017, the county reached out to CRA for a new design of the jail, Crosby said.

That cost \$450,000 for the design and planning, Crosby said.

Back then, Gilchrist County commissioners reached out to their Legislative Delegation of State Rep. Clemons (R-Newberry) and State Sen. Rob Bradley (R-Fleming Island), Crosby said.

Clemons and Bradley were able to obtain \$200,000 from the Florida Legislature to help defray that cost, Crosby said.

Three months ago, Crosby said, in May, Gilchrist County entered into a contract with Allstate Construction Inc. to build the new jail. Crosby told the audience that the \$10.6 million price tag is the maximum cost for construction that was agreed upon by the parties.

Gilchrist County Administrator Crosby said the county already has \$6 million of the jail cost in cash. The \$4 million loan that the county secured, he said, is being offset by the \$350,000 the county was paying annually to house inmates in other counties. That

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actually covers “the mortgage” for the \$10 million jail, Crosby added.

“This is budget neutral for us in the county,” Crosby said. “There is no additional cost to the taxpayers. The funding of the \$6 million came from different funding (other than the general fund, which is from ad valorem property taxes).”

The county administrator said this county government is proud of its accomplishment in financing the jail project.

Crosby added one more jewel to the crown of financing this project.

A \$4.6 million grant has been sought from the state, Crosby said, thanks to the work of Rep. Clemons, who authored the request.

While Crosby said Gilchrist County is not assured the grant will be awarded, he has seen progress showing it is “making it up the ladder” toward approval.

“If we receive this \$4.6 million,” Crosby said, “then when we are sitting here (a year from now) next September, this jail will be paid for. There will be no debt on this jail.”

Crosby did add the obvious caveat that annual operational costs of the jail will exist, but that is anticipated.

Gilchrist County Clerk Newton, the members of the Gilchrist County Board of County Commissioners over the years, as well as Will Rutherford of CRA and Scott Brewer of Allstate Construction were especially thanked by Crosby for their work to bring this first shoveling of dirt to fruition.

After Crosby spoke, Rep. Clemons shared some comments.

Clemons mentioned that Crosby had said everything that was needed for information. However, Clemons said he wanted to let everyone know that he is thankful for the work of Sen. Bradley back when they accomplished persuading the Florida Legislature in the first round of funding for this project.

Clemons thanked Sheriff Turner, Sheriff Slaughter and Sheriff Schultz for their work as the leaders in law enforcement over the decades in Gilchrist County. Clemons mentioned that just as once a person is a Marine, he or she always is a Marine, the same is true for all elected county sheriffs in Florida. Once a sheriff, always a sheriff.

With that, the ground was broken for the future Gilchrist County Jail.