

# HARFORD COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

COURAGE HONOR INTEGRITY



September 8, 2023

Mr. Robert McCord  
County Administrator, Harford County  
220 South Main Street  
Bel Air, Maryland 21014

Dear County Administrator McCord,

I am in receipt of a recent letter from County Executive Cassilly (dated August 31, 2023) concerning the "independent evaluation" completed by MW Studios Architecture Master Planning (MWS). Although I, and my command team, have very serious reservations about the "findings," I do appreciate Mr. Cassilly publicly acknowledging a need for the Central Precinct, the Training Academy and additional deputies to serve our Harford County citizens. Not unnoticed are Mr. Cassilly's contradictory remarks before the County Council in April of 2023 where he questioned the need for a Training Academy.

As far as the MWS study is concerned, I have to ask if Mr. Cassilly really asked a firm with an interest in being awarded a much larger project, to conduct a "feasibility" study of a project that would need to be killed off in order to allow them to complete the new project at a much greater overall cost? I assume I am not the only person who saw the August 30<sup>th</sup> news article related to Baltimore's \$330 million proposed training center that sounds eerily similar to Mr. Cassilly's newest proposal and suspiciously enough it is a proposal by MWS. If this is their motivation, this raises so many ethical questions related to their independent review. I hope that is not the case and that this firm, MWS, would be excluded from bidding on the project Mr. Cassilly envisions in the future. This would demonstrate, to at least a slight degree, that this evaluation was actually independent.

As a public servant (and a taxpayer), I am very interested in learning how this firm was chosen, the cost of this study to Harford County taxpayers, and your commitment that this firm will not be included in whatever public safety project ultimately emerges. In fact, please consider this a Public Information Act Request for:

- 1) Any and all documents and correspondence related to selecting this specific company for this independent review;
- 2) Any and all documents and correspondence sent to any member or employee of MW Studios Architecture Master Planning related to this independent review;
- 3) Any and all documents and correspondence received by any Harford County Government employee from MW Studios Architecture Master Planning related to this independent review;
- 4) A copy of the evaluation done by MW Studios Architecture Master Planning of the specific "nearby property" mentioned in his August 31, 2023 letter;
- 5) Copies of all payments or payments due in total to MW Studios Architecture Master Planning related to this independent review; and

410-838-6600



- 6) Any and all documents, letter and/or emails to and from any County employee that mentions “MW Studios Architecture Master Planning” OR to or from an email address ending with “@mwsarch.com” since December 5, 2022.

As to the firm’s involvement in the public safety complex envisioned by Mr. Cassilly, if the Cassilly Administration would be willing to provide a response indicating MWS would not be included, it would be very much appreciated and again, would add a degree of credibility to the MWS memo.

That said, what is now 10 months of delay by the County Executive and with his “new” plan, Mr. Cassilly has no property identified (according to his press release, but maybe so according to his letter to me?), no design work done, no construction or engineering plans. All he has is a new idea, filled with unnecessary and unvetted supposed needs, some of what law enforcement has not requested, all with no plan on how he is going to fund it, and taxpayers can be assured that it will cost at least 4 or 5 times more than the existing project. I guess the good news we can all take from the County Executive’s lofty and expensive plans are that the supposed “structural deficit” must be behind us.

Regrettably for our citizens, all of these delays by Mr. Cassilly only serve to jeopardize public safety and increase the overall cost to the citizens. Not providing for the police coverage our citizens deserve, and the Training Academy that our law enforcement and correctional deputies need, is simply a poor decision we all know was made before he even took his oath of office.

Finally, our project team, headed by Major Lee Dunbar, has conducted a comprehensive review of MWS’s admittedly brief cursory review. MWS clearly states in their report that their review is not intended to be comprehensive; however, my team has developed a very comprehensive report in response. Our report findings are based on 15 months of planning, review, and approval from all levels of County Government, as well as the architectural firm selected and endorsed by the County, Crabtree, Rohrbaugh & Associates. This effort, of course, includes Harford County Capital Projects, the same Capital Projects and personnel who have spent more than \$1 million of taxpayer dollars for the engineering, design and stormwater management work already performed for the HEAT Center property.

Please see the attached review of the MWS “findings.”

Sincerely,



Jeffrey R. Gahler  
Sheriff

Attachments

cc: County Council President Patrick Vincenti  
Councilman Dion Guthrie, District A  
Councilman Aaron Penman, District B  
Councilman Tony Giangiardano, District C  
Councilman James Reilly, District D  
Councilwoman Jessica Boyle-Tsottles, District E  
Councilman Jacob Bennett, District F  
Dr. Theresa B. Felder, President, Harford Community College




# HARFORD COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

## COURAGE HONOR INTEGRITY

### MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** September 7, 2023

**TO:** Sheriff Jeffrey R. Gahler

**FROM:** Major Lee Dunbar, Bureau Chief, Services & Support Bureau 

**SUBJECT:** MW Studios Architecture Master Planning (MWS) – Independent Review (Central Precinct & Training Academy – Heat Center)

This memorandum is to serve as a response to Manns Woodward Studios’ - Architecture Master Planning (MWS) non-comprehensive brief, resulting from their “cursory review” (source: MWS memorandum to Barkley Creighton-Chief of Harford County Capital Projects, dated August 8, 2023) of the Harford County Sheriff’s Office (HCSO) Central Precinct, Training Academy, and Fuel Station (CPTF) project.

It should be noted, and of great concern to this office and the citizens we serve, that per Mr. Cassilly’s letter to you and his press release - both dated August 31, 2023, that he is heavily, if not solely relying on MWS’s non-comprehensive brief, resulting from their “cursory review” of the CPTF project to eliminate it while refusing to recognize and rely upon approximately 15 months of extensive and diligent research, analysis, site work, and testing conducted by a nationally recognized and award-winning architectural firm, Crabtree, Rohrbaugh & Associates - Architects (CRA). That firm, CRA, specializes in design and building of public sector and public safety buildings (to include our Southern Precinct, Harford County Detention Center, Northern Precinct renovations, and the new Bel Air Police Department), an engineering firm - Carroll Engineering, Inc. (Note: that MWS also employs), a 3<sup>rd</sup> party cost estimator - Forella (Note: that MWS also employs), coupled with a build team headed by myself, HCSO commanders, and current members of Mr. Cassilly’s Facility and Operations, Barkley Creighton of Capital Projects, and licensing and permitting divisions. It is also noteworthy that Ms. Creighton never brought up any of the principal concerns noted in MWS’s report during the aforementioned lengthy process of design, engineering, testing, and the development of final blueprints.

The following pages and attachments are my team’s responses to MWS’s report that have been verified by CRA’s, Forella’s, and Carroll Engineering, Inc.’s response letters to MWS’s report (see attachments).

The following reflects the headings and sub-headings of MWS's report:

**MWS Memo of Key Findings (8/8/23):**

**INTRODUCTION & KEY FINDINGS**

We need to know what “design documents” were given to MWS by Mr. Cassilly’s office and/or Ms. Creighton as MWS’s report appears to be highly flawed and inaccurate. It is contradictory regarding the facts and findings found in CRA’s, Forella’s, and Carroll Engineering’s extensive documentation and reports which were provided during this 15-month long design, engineering, and testing process.

**1.) Program Requirements:** There were noted compromises in a limited number of rooms due to this being a repurposed/adaptative use building and site, but no violations or undermining of any local, state, or federal building codes. It is not unusual for a needs assessment and program to conform so closely to an existing structure (the HEAT Center) when that structure’s original design so closely meets the needs of the end-user, in this case the HCSO. In the limited areas where the original HEAT Center structure did not meet the needs of the HCSO, they were designed and engineered to do so, for example - the main entrance and lobby, sally port, holding cells, prisoner and DUI processing, gym, and the tactical garage.

As it relates to (per MWS), there are “some rooms specified in the program... that are conspicuously absent,” there are none, unless MWS is speaking about the armory and ammunition storage, which was decided by the build team to be built at the Broad Creek range facility to provide better security and access to firearms and ammunition. These flawed assessments by MWS are most likely due to them being “conspicuously absent” from our 15-month design and build process and/or not being provided all the necessary documentation from Mr. Cassilly and/or Ms. Creighton.

**2.) Structural Upgrades and Compliance:** All design plans were thoroughly vetted and tested by the architects, engineers, and county inspectors, and were permit ready prior to this project being halted by Mr. Cassilly right before the bid process.

**3.) Shortcomings of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) Design Principles:** There were no shortcomings in CPTED as this project was never intended to be a new build, but instead a repurposed/adaptive use building site that meets the needs of the HCSO and the communities we serve, while saving our citizens millions of dollars. CRA did utilize CPTED principles and best practices in the CPTF project designs within the scope of an adaptive use building and site. New fencing, bollards, gates, access controls, reinforced doors and locks, new lighting, parking configurations, to name a few items were done with CPTED best practices in mind. All code and program requirements were met.

**4.) Limited Expansion Opportunities:** The HEAT Center site was chosen by the HCSO based on call for service data, Department of Emergency Services (DES) requests, manpower allocation, and the needs of the communities we serve in the Central Precinct envelope; all while saving Harford County taxpayers millions of dollars by utilizing a County owned building and site that remained vacant for 10 years. We designed this project to utilize every usable square



foot available to us on the site. Outside of the original HEAT Center structure, we expanded the lobby area, designed a new sally port and prisoner processing center, a new standalone tactical garage, a new gym and work out facility, and a new running track around the CPTF complex.

**5.) Energy Efficiency and Aging Infrastructure:** CRA, Master Code Professionals, and Mr. Cassilly's personnel from Facilities and Operations and Capital Projects - Ms. Creighton ensured that all building and energy code requirements were met. For example, the CPTF project called for all new HVAC systems, water heaters, electric, lighting, and energy efficient windows to be installed, which MWS failed to note in their report, again, because they were conspicuously absent from this 15-month in-depth planning session and or were not provided all the necessary documentation from Mr. Cassilly and/or Ms. Creighton.

My team and I find it interesting and concerning that MWS has such "significant concerns" with item numbers 1-5 and recommends building new structures versus renovating and restructuring adaptive use or repurposed buildings, but they were recently awarded a County contract to renovate the Circuit Court building, est. 1859

(<https://www.courts.state.md.us/clerks/harford/courthouse>) for more office and court space, and renovate and repurpose the now County owned old M&T Bank building located across the street from Circuit Court. If Mr. Cassilly were to follow MWS's report's recommendations, as he states he is concerning the CPTF project, then I can only assume that he will scrap this MWS contract to renovate the Circuit Court House and renovate and repurpose the Office Street building and build a new Circuit Court House complex to meet the needs of the State's Attorney's Office, the Clerk of the Court, and County personnel.

**6.) Need for Integrated Joint-Use Training:** The CPTF project not only offers the ability to host joint or multi-agency training but increases its ability to do so by increasing the number of classrooms four-fold compared to the current number of classrooms at the HCSO Academy located within the campus of the Harford Community College (HCC). For MWS to state that our CPTF project should have been designed for a larger integrated training complex is misinformed at best as this project was designed for a repurposed building and site. The larger complex that Mr. Cassilly is proposing is not needed or fiscally responsible at this time as the HCSO conducts joint training sessions on a variety of topics and real-life scenarios via tabletop and live exercises at our Broad Creek Range, DES complex, and in partnership with private organizations such as Upper Chesapeake Hospital and the Forest Hill Airpark/Airport. It was also stated by Mr. Cassilly in his previously mentioned letter to you and press release that he wants to build an indoor firing range. The concern with an indoor range is that it is not only extremely expensive to build and maintain, but also impractical, unnecessary, and does not serve the best interests of the HCSO. It is important to note that we, and many other law enforcement agencies, train with our firearms on outdoor firing ranges to mimic the real-life situations in all weather conditions we may encounter while conducting our daily missions. Furthermore, we already have a shoot-house onsite at our Broad Creek Range for indoor live fire exercises coupled with our virtual firearms training systems - VirTra, currently located at our Southern Precinct.

## **BUDGET REVIEW**

This is the principal point of MWS's report that our CPTF project's budget was "grossly underestimated and that they (MWS) "discovered shortcomings that would have likely required significant additional funding." MWS further stated in their report that "The overall project costs, inclusive of equipment and soft costs, might have exceeded \$29 million." These statements are completely inaccurate and contradictory to the facts and findings of the 3<sup>rd</sup> party cost estimator-Forella's report and CRA's Total Project Cost Estimate that were sent to the build team to include Ms. Creighton on June 30 and July 1, 2022, as well as my email dated December 13, 2022 addressed to Mr. Robert McCord, Mr. Cassilly's Administrative Assistant Kathy Stewart, Erin Schafer, and Ms. Creighton containing my report and justification statements, all of which contain total costs estimates to include equipment and soft costs to be in the range of \$28-30 million dollars. It is well documented via emails, reports, meeting minutes, and County Council presentations that that CRA's and Forella's total cost estimates dated June 2022 were then and now, based on their cost escalation calculations, in line with industry standards and were never "grossly underestimated" or "shortcoming."

It is of special note that MWS points out in their report that if "... the project was released for bid today and anticipating a 2025 delivery date, will likely result in a project cost that exceeds \$33M." MWS is clearly stating that Mr. Cassilly's continued delays of the needed and long overdue CPTF project will now cost Harford County taxpayers approximately \$4 million more from MWS's own estimation stating it could exceed \$29 million if the project had gone out to bid last December.

It is apparent that either Mr. Cassilly and/or Ms. Barkley did not provide all the necessary documentation to MWS or limited what they provided MWS. Other possibilities include that MWS does not know how to properly read and interpret the cost estimate reports provided by Forella and CRA, or MWS has skewed the numbers to denigrate CRA and promote their own interests in future County build projects, such as Mr. Cassilly's new joint public safety complex he mentions in his August 31, 2023 letter to you and his press release of that same date.

Regarding Mr. Cassilly's new idea of a joint public safety complex, based on MWS's own statements regarding budget analysis of square foot pricing, cost escalation due to inflation, risks of labor and supply shortages, building typologies, and economic forecasts, Mr. Cassilly's proposed complex would easily exceed \$150 million, which is quadruple the cost of the CPTF project. It is of note that a Baltimore Sun article dated August 30, 2023, regarding a very similar in scope proposed joint public safety training center was estimated to cost \$330 million or more by MWS. "A preliminary design report prepared by architectural firm Manns Woodward Studios now offers a price tag for such a move: \$330 million or more."

In closing, the CPTF project meets the current needs of the Sheriff's Office as it relates to training agency members and allied partners and the Central Precinct meets the current and future law enforcement coverage needs in the central part of Harford County. MWS's report, and, therefore, Mr. Cassilly's letter to you and his press release, are seriously flawed and contradictory to the facts and findings laid out in this memorandum's response to those

documents. It is concerning to all stakeholders, to include the most important stakeholders, our citizens and taxpayers of this County, that Mr. Cassilly would hire another architectural firm- MWS, with taxpayer money to target another award winning and highly respected architectural firm via a non-comprehensive brief, resulting from their “cursory review” in order to gain favor with the County for future, and apparently present contracts, such as the aforementioned Circuit Court House and Office Street contract. It is also telling that Ms. Creighton has consistently stated on multiple occasions that she prefers MWS based on her past relationships with them, but this bias should have no role in throwing away a completely approved, professionally designed, and much needed project that has already cost the taxpayers so much of their hard earned dollars.



**Crabtree, Rohrbaugh & Associates - Architects**

401 East Winding Hill Road

Mechanicsburg, PA 17055

Maryland • Pennsylvania • Virginia • West Virginia

September 6, 2023

Major Lee Dunbar  
Harford County Sheriff's Office  
45 South Main Street  
Bel Air, MD 21014

RE: Harford County Sheriff's Office Central Precinct & Training Academy  
Contract No. 21-145  
Cursory Review Response Letter

Major Dunbar,

I am writing this letter in response to concerns being raised in the cursory review conducted by MWS on the Harford County Central Precinct and Training Academy project. CRA understands that the reviewer was not involved in the design process and may not be aware of all the information provided and decisions made throughout the design process. We are happy to provide a factual response to the findings and challenges identified in the cursory report.

In October of 2021, Harford County requested CRA to conduct a site visit to review the property selected for the new Central Precinct and Training Academy. The Sheriff's office provided a needs assessment report identifying the HEAT Center as the ideal location for a new project based on the building size, its location, County statistical Data, and the reuse of a vacant existing County asset. The County hired CRA to do the initial programming and, subsequently, to provide professional services for the adaptive reuse of the former HEAT Center to be the new Harford County Central Precinct & Training Academy.

The program was developed and refined in collaboration with the County and Sheriff's Office to meet the current and future needs of the end user. The project stakeholders requested and reviewed any program modifications during design to ensure the final design met the end-user's needs. The County hired CRA to design the Central Precinct and Training Academy for law enforcement and correctional personnel; providing a multi-agency training facility was not part of this project's mission, program, scope, or budget.

As this is an adaptive reuse project of an existing County asset, the reviewer pointed out potential deficiencies based on the existing building structure and site area constraints. These items are laid out below, with CRA's response to each item following.

- **Structural Upgrades and Compliance:**

Carroll Engineering, Inc. conducted a complete structural analysis, ensuring the structural engineer's design met the change of occupancy requirements (including increases in risk category from II to IV).



## Crabtree, Rohrbaugh & Associates

September 6, 2023

- Shortcomings in CPTED Design Principles:  
CRA has multiple CPTED professionals on staff and conducts a Best Practice Review on all of its projects. CRA designed this facility using CPTED Best Practices within the constraints of the existing building and site while meeting all code and program considerations.
- Limited Expansion Opportunities:  
The County and Sheriff's office chose the existing site due to its close alignment to the present and future needs of the Harford County Sheriff's Office.
- Energy Efficiency and Aging Infrastructure:  
CRA has an in-house Master Code Professional on staff to ensure all building and energy code requirements are met.

Crabtree Rohrbaugh & Associates has built its reputation on cost-effective design. We achieve this by providing practical design solutions focused on the client's needs. On July 1, 2022, CRA provided three documents to the county stakeholders. The first document was a **Construction Cost Estimate** prepared by the Forella Group LLC amounting to **\$24,102,813.3**. The second document provided was a **Total Project Cost Estimate** outlining all soft costs associated with the project, amounting to **\$28,254,962**. This estimate closely aligns with the total project cost estimate presented in the MWS report. The third document was a letter outlining changes in market conditions and scope increases resulting from the collaborative design process. Mindful of the critical nature of the project, CRA offers to evaluate any cost-saving measures in the letter's closing.

The Forella Group, an independent cost estimator, provided the Detailed Construction Cost Estimate after thoroughly reviewing the Design Development Package. This estimate was based on applying the market cost to the specific assemblies and designs within the contract documents. The cursory review provided by MWS uses square footage average costs without referencing the design, neglecting to acknowledge cost-saving strategies. For instance, although the cursory review specifically states the Tactical Garage costs are not in line with costs experienced in similar specific project types, the reviewer fails to mention that although the projects may all be tactical garages, Harford County chose to use a freestanding pre-engineered metal building system rather than conventional construction, as a cost savings strategy.

I hope this factual response helps address any concerns alluded to in the cursory review. I am also attaching responses from our Civil Engineer and Third Party Cost Estimator reinforcing our response.

Thank you,



CRABTREE, ROHRBAUGH & ASSOCIATES  
Joseph M. Crabtree, RA  
Principal, Project Manager



## CARROLL ENGINEERING, INC.

215 Schilling Circle, Suite 102  
Hunt Valley, Maryland 21031  
(P) 410.785.7423 (F) 410.771.1313

### MEMORANDUM

Date: September 6, 2023  
From: Kevin M. Merriman  
Phone: 410-7847423

To: Joe Crabtree  
Company: Crabtree Rohrbaugh & Associates

Project: HCSO Central Precinct & Training Academy  
Re: Third party Review Comment Responses

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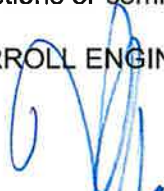
Carroll Engineering, Inc. (CEI) has reviewed comments from Manns Woodward Studios regarding the above-mentioned project dated August 8, 2023. The following is our response to the structural comment (Comment 2):

**Comment:** Structural Upgrades and Compliance: The existing building's historical context as an academic facility and its construction predating current building codes pose challenges in terms of structural integrity. While some structural updates are apparent, mostly within the proposed addition, there is a need for thorough reinforcement to ensure adequate seismic, wind, and snow load resistance. Essential public safety facilities demand designs capable of withstanding heightened structural loads compared to other building types.

**Response:** The Project was designed to meet the structural requirements of the International Building Code (IBC 2018) with Harford County Amendments. Per IBC 2018, the Change-of-Occupancy requirements (including increases to the Risk Category) must comply with the International Existing Building Code (IEBC 2018), Chapter 5. The Change-of-Occupancy from Academic to an essential Police Facility results in an increase of the Risk Category from II to IV. A structural analysis was performed by CEI for the existing buildings, based on a review of available existing drawings and site investigations to confirm conditions. Our analysis concluded that the existing structural systems, with improvements indicated on the structural plans, will adequately meet the Change-of-Occupancy requirements for Snow, Wind, and Seismic loads.

We thank you in advance for your consideration of the above response(s). Should you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact this office.

CARROLL ENGINEERING, INC.

  
Kevin M. Merriman, PE  
Vice-President



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Attention: Joseph M. Crabtree, RA, Principal  
Regarding: Harford County Heat Center  
Via: Electronic  
Date: 09/05/23

Dear Joseph:

Our response to the MW report:

We would have to investigate and analyze to render any meaningful opinion on the Manns Woodward Report. However, page 3 paragraph 4 of the MWA report appears to be comparing the Forella hard construction cost estimate only of \$24 million with a total project cost including equipment and soft costs of \$29 million. MWA may have not seen the CRA 06/30/22 document or they are otherwise confusing hard construction and project costs? In other words, they appear to be corroborating the CRA total.

We hope this is helpful.

Regards,

Israel

Sincerely,

*R. Israel Aguero*

R. Israel Aguero

File:  
CC:  
Attachments: