

County refuses city sidewalk around jail

By **STEVE PORTER**
The Coloradoan

It was the battle of the sidewalk, and the county was taking no prisoners Monday night.

County commissioners voted unanimously in a special meeting to overrule a vote last week by the Fort Collins Planning and Zoning Board that rejected

a county plan to expand the Larimer County Detention Center, 2405 Midpoint Drive.

The planning and zoning board on March 19 voted to reject the plan for a \$12 million expansion of the detention center because the county refused to put in a sidewalk along Midpoint Drive.

Before Monday night's vote, Sheriff Richard Shockley said putting in a sidewalk would threaten security outside of the detention center.

"We don't have foot traffic there on purpose because we don't want interaction with the general public," he said. "To put a sidewalk on land contigu-

ous to a jail is to invite people into that area and begin to erode our entire security."

Shockley said the detention center, built in 1983, relies on camera surveillance of the outside of the facility that reacts to movement. If a sidewalk is

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put in, Shockley said, the county likely would have to build a fence along Midpoint Drive, making it look more like a prison.

"Our intent for the last 15 years has been to maintain a facility that doesn't look like a jail," he said.

County Attorney George Hass said the county did not need to have its plan reviewed by the city's planning and zoning board but did so in a spirit of cooperation.

"It was a matter of courtesy to give them input," Hass said.

But senior city planner Ted Shepard said the city does have statutory authority to review projects built within city limits. Shepard said sidewalks are required by city code.

"We make sidewalk connections a high priority under City Plan," Shepard said.

Shepard said Fort Collins police chief Dennis Harrison advised the city that adding a sidewalk would

not affect the security of a detention center.

Harrison confirmed that stance Monday before the county vote.

"Try as I may, I don't see it as a security issue," Harrison said. "It's just a difference of opinion between myself and the sheriff."

Shockley said Monday night he wasn't budging on his view that a sidewalk would jeopardize security.

"If you're not involved in the day-to-day operations of it, you may have an opinion, but that's all it is," he said.

Shockley said he agreed to meet 41 of 42 land-use requirements by the city regarding the detention center expansion, but would not agree to a sidewalk.

"I'm not going to jump through that hoop because it's my facility to run," he said.

The county plans to break ground April 10 on the detention center expansion. County facilities director Dave Spencer said any delay in the project would cost between \$6,000 and \$10,000 per month.