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Brevard to privatize probation services

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Shifting misdemeanor probation-pretrial services to the private sector should save Space Coast taxpayers roughly \$1 million over the next three years, records show.

The Brevard County Commission has approved a three-year contract with Judicial Correction Services, effective Jan. 31. The Atlanta-based company already handles these services for bordering Volusia and Osceola counties.

JCS is interviewing the county's 30-odd, soon-to-be-displaced criminal justice services employees, said Dennis Moon, director of Florida operations.

JCS will employ 30 to 34 workers in Brevard, Moon said -- "the faces, for the most part, will stay the same."

Operating at the Brevard County Jail Complex and a Rockledge office, the county department cost \$2.86 million to operate last year, budget records show. The county collected nearly \$2 million in fees from supervised offenders.

JCS will station staffers at the jail and a larger office in the Rockledge area, Moon said. This site has not yet been determined.

County Manager Howard Tipton said taxpayer savings should total \$211,000 to \$250,000 this fiscal year. He anticipates annual savings of \$400,000 the final two years of the contract.

The commission vote on the JCS contract was 4-1. Commissioner Chuck Nelson cast the no vote, saying he wanted to reconsider other bidders. The county's second-ranked contender, Professional Probation Services, had offered 10 percent pay raises for affected employees.

"Some of them are staring at a net loss because of additional costs for insurance, and those kinds of things," Nelson said of workers. "It's going to be pretty significant."

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