

MINUTES
Cheshire County Commissioners Meeting
Wednesday, November 06 2019
Department of Corrections
825 Marlboro Road, Keene, NH 03431

Present: Commissioners: Charles Weed, John Wozmak, and Robert Englund

Staff: County Administrator Coates, Director of Finance Trombly, IT Director Hummel, Sheriff Rivera, and Assistant County Administrator Bouchard.

Guests: Mike Davey, Energy Efficient Investments

At 8:30AM Commissioner Weed opened the meeting and recognized Sheriff Rivera who discussed a situation in Hinsdale that requires a number of local towns to help supplement the police department personnel as they are two officer positions unfilled and are losing three additional officers, leaving the town very shorthanded. Rivera discussed that the town anticipates that approximately 26 hours a week will be required to maintain an adequate police coverage and they have asked the Sheriff to consider covering some of the hours if possible.

A discussion of how the compensation potentially paid to the deputies would affect both the town budget and the NH Retirement System began and a number of issues concerning how the retirement system might be impacted was reviewed. The Sheriff's budget and the ability to absorb any department overrun by the County was reviewed and Director Trombly said that the overall County budget can handle the small amount of addition deputies' expenses.

The Sheriff will review the requests from the town as they come in and will decide on a weekly basis how to offer coverage.

IT Director Hummel was then recognized and discussed a company called Netwrix whose software the County uses to help secure the County network. The company is asking to be able to showcase the Counties use of the software in its advertising and has provided a release for the purpose.

The Commissioners reviewed the document and then authorized Hummel to sign the media release.

Hummel then presented a proposal for the replacement of computer workstations for the various County departments. He discussed three companies, Second Gear, Discount Computers, and third company that he received bids from for the project. He said the total cost would be \$22,600.00. He recommended that the Second Gear company be selected again for the purchase.

Hummel answered a number of questions concerning how he selected the companies to contact and the viability of other sources and answered the Commissioner's to their satisfaction. Hummel said that they have dealt with the Second Gear company in the past and have had a very good working relationship with them. He said that one of the other companies was a few dollars lower but they have only been in business for two years and he recommend awarding the bid to Second Gear.

Following discussion **Commissioner Wozmak moved to accept the bid from Second Gear of Lutherville, MD for \$22,606.18. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Englund and upon vote the motion passed unanimously.**

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At 10:06AM Commissioner Wozmak moved to enter non-public session to discuss RSA 91-A:3, II(b) *The hiring of any person as a public employee and* was seconded by Commissioner Englund. Upon vote the motion passed unanimously.

As a result of deliberations in non-public session no decision was made and no vote was taken.

At 10:29AM The Commissioners voted unanimously to return to public session.

Mike Davey of Energy Efficient Investments (EEI) was then recognized and presented the background of his company and reviewed the clients that he serves in NH and other states in New England.

Davey distributed a handout that outlines the work he has done in the local municipalities and school systems in and around Cheshire County. He said he was at the meeting to present some ideas to increase the energy efficiency of the County campuses and discuss the replacement of aged out HVAC capital equipment with energy efficient hardware.

He discussed grant funding that is available from the NH Public Utilities Commission (PUC) for making the switch from fossil fuels to renewable energy. He also reviewed other financing options and various HVAC technology options were covered. A spreadsheet was provided that outlines all of the options for a County-wide systems upgrade of all County campuses.

Following discussion of the limited grant funding from the state of NH, the commissioners authorized the staff to submit a grant in the amount \$250,000.00 to the PUC for non-fossil fuel HVAC equipment. The application is a preliminary option that could be used if the County makes the decision to move forward with the equipment upgrades that are being discussed.

It was decided that Davey and the staff will meet again in the next few weeks to continue a review and discussion of the most cost-effective way to proceed with the needed upgrades and create a campus specific time-line and investment return model before proceeding further.

Administrator Coates was then recognized for Weekly Operations Report:

Coates said that he and the HR Director will begin to prepare recruiting materials in anticipation of the search for a new department of corrections superintendent as the current superintendent has announced his intention to retire in the late spring of next year.

Coates said that documents from the Region 1 Integrated Delivery Networks (IDN) were received that caused a concern for the continued funding of the IDN and that the \$10 million total funding goal sought by the State may not be achieved. He said that the most likely scenario will be that approximately \$6.9M could be raised which is the same level that the IDN is currently being funded. He said he will keep the Commissioners informed as more information is received.

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Coates reminded the Commissioners that the public hearing concerning the purchase of the 33 Winter Street building will be held in Delegation Hall on November 18th at 7:00PM. He said a presentation is being created that outlines the salient details in an easy to understand format.

Coates then said that he will be attending the monthly New Hampshire Association of Counties (NHAC) meeting on Friday in Concord.

He then related a recent meeting with the Project Director of the System of Care and the Director of the Behavioral Health and Drug Court departments. He stated that the effort to bill Medicare / Medicaid for services provided to clients is almost ready to begin.

Coates then said that the Monadnock Broadband group will meet in Delegation Hall at 2:00PM on December 2nd and one of the highly anticipated topics will be the discussion of the use of the NH Bond Bank by the towns to fund the introduction of broadband for their citizens.

He then discussed a conversation with the County's insurance company, Primex concerning legal options for the County's employment and union matters.

Coates discussed that Monadnock Family Services (MFS) will be applying for a grant to run an on-site emergency mental health center at their offices for next year. He said that the County is strongly supporting the effort and has issued a letter of support to the funding agency. He said that the health center would operate very much like Convenient MD or the hospital emergency room except that focus is only on mental health which is very much needed.

He then discussed the preparation for the celebration of the County's 250th year and said that he will be meeting with a private foundation seeking assistance in off-setting the cost of the event.

New Business: None

Old Business: None

Consent Agenda Items:

1. Census
2. Manifest
3. Minutes of October 30, 2019

Commissioner Weed moved to accept the Consent Agenda and was seconded by Commissioner Englund. Upon vote the motion passed unanimously.

At 12:20PM there being no further public business to discuss, Commissioner Weed moved to recess the meeting to take-up Master Agenda Item #730: Semi-Annual Inspection of Department of Corrections as Required by RSA 30-B 12. The motion to adjourn was seconded by Commissioner Englund and upon vote the motion passed unanimously.

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The Second Semi-Annual inspection of the Cheshire County Department commenced at 12:22PM in an activity room where inmate and staff interviews would be conducted.

At 12:24PM a female inmate "E" was escorted into the room and Commissioner Wozmak described the reasons that she was invited to meet with the Commissioners to be interviewed. Commissioner Weed introduced the three Commissioners, County Administrator Coates and Assistant County Administrator Bouchard and asked the inmate about her impressions of the facility.

She said that as a federal inmate she has moved around quite a bit and that thus far she has been at the facility for four months but had also been here previously for 10 months before she last moved. She said if she was to be in jail she preferred to be in this facility as the food was far better than any other facility she has been in and that this jail was far cleaner and safer than the other facilities.

In response to a question from one of the Commissioners concerning the programs offered in jail, she said that the programs overall are deficient in her mind in terms of the number of programs available and frequency of classes.

When asked how she came to the jail she said that in 2017 she voluntarily terminated her stay at a sober house because the house was not well run and many of the participants did not remain sober when she was there. She was afraid of starting to use again and asked to be sent back to jail as the alternative and specifically asked if she could return to the Cheshire County jail as this was the place that she felt the safest.

In response to a question she said that she is now 22 years old but started with heroin at 15. She discussed that both of her parents are also recovering addicts and that she lost a brother to an overdose. She then said that she thinks she will be sentenced to time-served and will then enter a residential program in Chittenden County in Vermont. She explained that she got pregnant as a young teenager and was given Percocet following delivery of her son which she became addicted to almost immediately.

When asked what her goals were for the longer term, she stated that she would like to take college courses while at the sober house and then after leaving attend college to study accounting.

At 12:39PM E was escorted from the activity room.

At 12:40PM a male inmate "J" was escorted into the activity room to meet with the Commissioners and staff.

Following introductions, he was asked why he was in jail. He said he wouldn't be able to discuss the details but the overall charge was for domestic violence. He stated that was fearful of being held for an extended period because he has two children that he needs to provide care for and he has very limited contact with them now.

In response to another question he said that he was participating in some of the programs and was seeing one of the jail inmate counsellors and that she was very good and very helpful to helping him see what

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he needed to do to change. He said that he is due for plea bargain sentencing in December and if that fails, he will go to trial in January with the possibility of a 3-6-year sentence.

He said the Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) program that he is attending is just okay as there are not enough inmates participating in the sessions as many won't admit that they have drug dependencies. He said that his time in jail is the longest that he has been sober since he was a teenager and he now in his early thirties. He is hoping that he can maintain sobriety after he leaves as he feels better now than he has in years.

He said that the food is good and the Correctional Officers (CO's) are easy going and respectful which is not what he expected when he was sent to the facility. He had imagined it to be much harsher than it really is. He said that the CO's don't give anyone a hard time for no reason but that communication with the outside world including his family, friends, and attorney is very difficult. He stated that during his time in jail he has lost his job, his car, and home.

He said that the counselling classes are only once a week and it isn't enough because of all the free time that he has to think about what is discussed at each session makes his head spin and makes him anxious. He said that being able to take college courses would be very helpful and would help him not only take-up free time but would also possibly help in getting a job when he is released.

He said that better access to the library would be big help and suggested that maybe volunteers could be found to bring the library cart into the day rooms more frequently.

At 1:11PM "J" exits the activity room.

At 1:11PM CO "M" enters the activity room to meet with the Commissioners. He is introduced to each Commissioner and staff member and responds to a question asking how long he has been working at the jail. He said he has been at the jail for about 10 years.

One of Commissioners asks if the recently reduced staffing on the shifts is working out to everyone's satisfaction. He said that there are days that having two more CO's on shift would be much safer and in case of a medical or physical conflict with an inmate.

Responding to a question concerning overall morale he said that it is pretty good right now and overall the jail runs smoothly and he doesn't see a need to make many, if any, changes. He said that he likes the way the Superintendent works with the staff and enjoys his job.

At 1:14PM "M" exits the activity room.

At 1:15PM CO "P" enters the room to meet with the Commissioners. Following introductions, he said that he has been at the jail for 1.5 years and he likes his job. He has worked all of the shifts and thinks that communications between the staff and administration while okay could improve.

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He responded to a question concerning if he had ever received a written warning for his work and said that he was written-up and counselled early on in his training for what was described as a minor infraction which he has not repeated and has no intention of making that same mistake again.

He said that he does not have a lot of interaction with senior management but respects the Superintendent for his work in making the facility a good place to work.

Responding to a question he said that the Federal inmates both like and dislike the facility depending on who he talks to as they see all jails as “day care” and not real prisons.

At 1:26PM CO “P” exits the activity room.

At 1:28PM the Commissioners suspended the inspection for a lunch break.

At 1:50PM the Commissioners prepared for a tour of the physical plant and Commissioner Wozmak excused himself to leave for a previously scheduled meeting.

The Commissioners then toured the facility beginning in the Booking department where they discussed the care and handling of suicidal inmates.

The F Block was then visited and it was learned that 16 female inmates are currently in the Pod. The ongoing deterioration of the rubber floors in the block was noted and it was remarked that they will need to be replaced shortly as the building is now approaching 10 years old.

The medical department was then visited followed by a visit to R block where incoming inmates are held before being assigned by classification to housing Pods. It was noted that 9 new inmates are currently in the Pod awaiting assignment.

D block was then visited and both County and Federal inmates are housed. The use of the exercise room was discussed how the space was used most for basketball and handball was covered.

At 2:28PM the tour was completed and Commissioner Weed moved to adjourn the meeting and was seconded by Commissioner Englund. Upon vote the motion passed unanimously.

Minutes recorded by:
R. Bouchard, Assistant County Administrator

Reviewed and submitted by:
R. Englund, Clerk