

MINUTES
Cheshire County Commissioners Meeting
Wednesday October 5, 2016 09:30AM
Department of Corrections
825 Marlboro Road
Keene, NH 0341

PRESENT: Commissioners Stillman Rogers and Peter Graves (Commissioner Weed absent with prior notice)

STAFF: Administrator Coates, Finance Director Trombly, Superintendent Van Wickler, Sheriff Rivera, Capitan Croteau, Sheriff's Department Communications Manager Crowell, Dispatcher Jillian Robinson, Maplewood Administrator Kindopp, and Assistant County Administrator (ACA) Bouchard.

At 9:34AM Chairman Rogers opened the meeting and recognized Sheriff Rivera who addressed Master Agenda Item #417: Sheriff's Office – Semi-Annual Report.

Rivera said that thus far the department is on budget for the year and discussed that the number of “calls for service” to the department are running around 55,000 which is consistent with previous years. He also stated that the number of “papers served” is averaging about 2,700 for the year which is also consistent with last year's rate. He went on to say that the total number of prisoner transports is trending downward and is about 300 fewer than previous years. Despite the fewer transports overall, the implementation of the Felony First program in Superior Court requires the department to provide additional transports in each afternoon thus maintaining or increasing the total number of Deputy hours required.

Rivera then said that the number of Involuntary Emergency Admissions (IEA's) to the State Hospital in Concord had risen significantly from about 50 admissions last year to over 75 this year. Croteau made the observation that the rise in IEA's may be in part attributed to the closing of Cheshire Medicals behavioral unit this year.

Rivera then discussed the difficulty in filling vacant bailiff and deputy positions due to applicants not being able to pass physical and background checks. He said that the problem is statewide and it is becoming a bigger and bigger issue.

He then discussed the Dispatch Centers radio infrastructure that he said is in currently good shape. He discussed that he would like to investigate a Capital Improvement Program (CIP) to ensure the funds are available to repair or replace equipment as needed in the future.

A discussion of the mobile command trailer began upon a question by Commissioner Graves. Crowell said that the trailer was a huge asset during the recent cutover from the old dispatch center in the basement of the building to the new center located on the first floor. She said that the calls received were seamlessly routed through the command trailer during the cutover period with no loss of function or quality despite the very challenging logistics in swapping over the complete system from the old equipment to the new installation.

A discussion of how the dispatch center is backed up by the State Police was covered. Dispatcher Robinson said that the new facility is amazing and many of the staff feel like they have new jobs and are very excited to be in the new space with all of the proper equipment that they need to do their jobs.

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The Commissioners thanked the Sheriff and; his staff for their reports and recognized Superintendent Van Wickler who provided the following information to the Commissioners.

Van Wickler said that a new movie has just been released titled “Incarcerating US” that is a study of the jail and prison systems in the U. S. The film was premiered on Thursday, September 15th, at Georgetown Law School in Washington, D.C. and features footage of the Cheshire County Department Corrections as model of modern incarceration facilities. The website for the film can be found here: <http://incarceratingus.com/>

Van Wickler then presented a letter of appreciation to be signed by the Commissioners for Thomas Schoolcraft who presented a National Institute of Corrections training course recently at the DOC facility.

He then presented six (6) Correctional Officers (C. O.’s.) completed training packets to the Commissioners for certification as full-time certified C. O.’s. The Commissioners reviewed the materials and signed the certification documents.

An extended discussion of the value of in-house training vs. attending the NHAC academy began and Van Wickler said that empirical evidence shows that the C. O.’s who are trained in-house have longer job retention and are overall more satisfied employees.

A discussion of inmates who are found to have severe mental issues and their criteria for admittance to the State Hospital in Concord began and Van Wickler discussed the many specific requirements that an inmate must meet before being admitted to the unit.

At 10:34AM Pursuant to RSA 91-A (II) (a), (b) and (c), Commissioner Graves moved to go into non-public session to discuss the dismissal, promotion, or compensation, of a public employee or the disciplining of such employee, without that employee having requested an open meeting.

As a result of deliberations in non-public session a vote was taken and the Commissioners unanimously consented to extend the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) for M. M. until October 24, 2016.

At 10:56AM the Commissioners voted unanimously to return to public session.

At 10:58AM Pursuant to RSA 91-A (II) (a), (b) and (c), Commissioner Rogers moved to go into non-public session to discuss a matter, which, if discussed in public, would likely affect adversely the reputation of any person, other than a member of the body or agency itself, without that person having requested an open meeting.

As a result of deliberations in non-public session a request that was made to the Commissioners to admit a “safety-net” resident to the nursing home (a person with no

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viable means to pay for treatment) was unanimously approved based on extenuating and urgent medical circumstances.

At 11:09AM the Commissioner voted unanimously to return to public session.

Maplewood Administrator Kindopp then told the Commissioners that on October 14th the Workforce Healthcare Alliance that Maplewood is a member of, is hosting a meeting at the County Hall building to discuss regional and statewide healthcare training needs with candidates for elected office in local and statewide elections. The meeting will begin at 4:30PM and will run until approximately 6:30PM based on the number of attendees.

She said that on October 25th she would be in Concord present to at a legislative hearing on the same topic.

Kindopp then discussed the new State regulations requiring the certification of medical technicians such as the Personal Care Assistants (PCA's) that provide medications to the Assisted Living Facility residents in Westmoreland. She said that the new regulations will require a \$110.00 licensing fee and a \$49.00 fingerprinting and background check charge per applicant.

A discussion of the lack of applicants for vacant positions at the nursing home began and Kindopp said that it is becoming difficult to find and retain staff in the environmental services department. She said that multiple openings currently exist and that there are very few qualified applicants for the jobs.

At 11:43AM Pursuant to RSA 91-A (II) (a), (b) and (c), Commissioner Graves moved to go into non-public session to discuss the dismissal, promotion or compensation of a public employee or the disciplining of such employee, without that employee having requested an open meeting.

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

At 12:01PM the Commissioners voted unanimously to return to public session.

County Administrator Coates was then recognized and provided the following information:

He reminded the Commissioner that on October 11th a presentation from the Department of Revenue Administration (DRA) will be given at 12 Court Street at 6:30PM on Tax Equalization methods used by the state that establishes property tax values for all towns.

Coates then said that the on October 13th, from 5:30PM – 7:00PM at Keene State College in the Mabel Brown Room, the County Healthy Monadnock team is being recognized with a team

MINUTES
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Champion award for their work over the last year in making the County a healthy place to work. He encouraged the Commissioners to attend.

He said that on Friday October 8th the Maplewood annual craft fair would be held and that all of the tables have been sold out.

He then discussed that a temp to assist HR has not yet been hired but he was hopeful that someone could be found within the next week.

The Weekly Manifest was then reviewed and Commissioner Graves moved to accept the Manifest as presented and was seconded by Commissioner Rogers. Upon vote the motion passed with two (2) Yea's.

Commissioner Graves moved to accept the Minutes as amended of the September 28, 2016 meeting and was seconded by Commissioner Rogers. Upon vote the motion passed with two (2) Yea's.

The Commissioner's Calendar was then reviewed.

Director Trombly then reported that she had sent a letter to the Commissioner of the Department of Health and Human Services last week concerning the growing backlog of pending Medicaid cases. She said that shortly after receiving the letter DHHS assigned a case manager to work through some of the backlog and thus far four (4) cases have been resolved and the other cases are now being worked on. She will report back additional progress in coming weeks.

At 12:30PM the meeting was recessed to conduct the semi-annual Department of Corrections inspection pursuant to RSA 30-B: 12 and at the conclusion of the inspection, to report the findings to the Director of Administration of the New Hampshire Department of Justice.

At 12:32PM the Commissioners enter K Block with the Superintendent and discussed the classification of inmates in K Block pod. A cell was inspected by the Commissioners and the Commissioners discussed the operation of the Pod with the Superintendent and staff.

At 12:44PM the Commissioners and staff exited K Block

At 12:46PM the Commissioners and staff entered D Block and discussed the facilities Classification system and how inmates are assigned to various housing pods. Also discussed was the maintenance of the facility and the differences between the old building in Westmoreland that utilized in-direct supervision and the new building that uses the direct supervision model. He said that one of the foundational elements of a successful direct supervision model is mutual respect between staff and inmates.

MINUTES
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At 12:57PM the Commissioners and staff exited D Block.

At 12:59PM the Commissioners and staff entered the Medical department and discussed the operation of the facility with the new Mental Health Coordinator, Dr. Daniel Edwards. Edwards discussed the transition from his former position in a hospital sitting to a jail environment. He answered a number of the Commissioners questions and discussed his relationship with the inmates that he works with in the facility. Edwards discussed the classification system and said he is still learning how it functions but said that it seems to work very well.

The Commissioners then discussed medication supply needs and inmate requirements with the medical staff and they discussed how an inmate's medical needs for prescription drugs are assessed and addressed.

At 1:13pm the Commissioners and staff exited the Medical Department.

At 1:15PM the Commissioners entered one of the conference room to meet with DOC staff and inmates concerning the operation of the facility. The Superintendent left the room for the interviews.

At 1:15PM A male Correctional Officer (C. O.) was interviewed and he said that he has been at the facility for seven (7) months. He said that he was previously at another County's jail for a approximately eleven (11) years where he worked his way up to being the first shift supervisor.

When asked why he chose to come to work for Cheshire County he said that the facility was much newer and that the division of duties such as booking, court appearances, the intake process, releases, and so on, was handled in a much better way than at his previous facility and that he especially liked the direct supervision model used at Cheshire over his previous environment. He said that he was very happy with his decision to come to the facility and that he looks forward to a long association with Cheshire County.

At 1:24PM a female C. O. met with the Commissioners and they asked her how she liked working at the facility and if she had any concerns or issues she wished to discuss. She said that she was happy with her job and that she has been at the facility for about eighteen (18) months. In response to a question concerning the training that she has received, she said that she liked the in-house training program that she completed and that she enjoys being able to work in all of the different Blocks in the jail. She said that she knows other C. O.'s at other County jails and that Cheshire is the only environment that she is aware of that practices a mutual respect relationship between staff and inmates.

At 1:31PM "J" a federal hold inmate was conducted into the conference and the Commissioners asked if he had any concerns or comments he wished to share with the Commissioners. He said that he is from Vermont and was previously held at the Correctional Facility in St. Albans, VT, and that he much prefers the Cheshire County jail overall. He said the food was better but he

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doesn't like not being able to go outside into a recreation yard as he able to do at his previous facility. In response to a question from the Commissioners he said that he doesn't have any problems with the staff and he feels that he can talk with staff when he a problem or needs help with an issue. He also said when asked about inmates who may try to control other inmates within the housing Blocks.

He said that he didn't have that experience and as far as he knew there are not any inmate "bosses" in his block. He then said that he was incarcerated for conspiracy to distribute heroin and that he had completed attending some basic recovery classes but he wished that more substantial help was available beyond the basic classes. He also said it was his experience that the Commissary items were much more expensive than when he was held in Vermont.

At 1:39PM "C" a county inmate entered the conference room. It was learned that he was in the facility for probation violations and that he was been in both Sullivan County and Cheshire County jails multiple times in the past all for drug related offences. He said that the food was better here than in other jails and that he got along with the C. O.'s.

He said that he found that some of the newer C. O.'s seemed to be much stricter than the more experienced staff and he said it was probably due to them wanting to follow the rules to the letter so that they could get good ratings. He went on to say that he started smoking marijuana when he was sixteen (16) and tried cocaine when he was nineteen (19). He said then moved on to "pain pills" at twenty-two (22) and to Heroin when he about twenty-four (24) or twenty-five (25).

He said he started with drugs as a way to medicate himself over the loss of his mother when he was younger and his addictions spiraled out of control over time as he sought stronger and stronger drugs. He said that it is difficult to get help beyond basic classes and that he thought that one-on-one counselling is needed. He said that one issue that he finds to be a problem is the cost of the Commissary items at the facility but that he would also like to see the expansion of programs for drug rehabilitation.

At 2:00PM the Commissioners meet with Major Mousseau the facility Security Officer and discussed the security program at the jail and the problems faced with inmates, specifically issues related to inmate-on-inmate fights and attacks on staff. An extended discussion began and some recent incidents were reviewed.

At 2:14PM the Commissioners returned to the conference room to conclude the meeting.

At 2:15PM there being no further business to discuss, Commissioner Graves moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion seconded by Commissioner Rogers and upon vote the motion passed with unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,
P. Graves, Clerk