



**Cheshire County Commissioners
Special Report to the Delegation on
Inmate Program Development at a Westmoreland-based
New Correctional Facility
January 19, 2004**

The site selection process has failed to identify a realistic alternative to the existing correctional facility site in Westmoreland. We do not believe that a fourth search effort will be any more fruitful than the first three search efforts. Thus, we continue to be left with the existing Westmoreland site as the most practical site for a new facility. As we have stated before, it is time to make a decision.

We have previously stated that we believe that we can overcome programmatic issues relating to the facility being in Westmoreland. Issues such as alternative sentencing, work-release programs, substance abuse treatment, transitional housing and day reporting in addition to the inmate programs may need to be provided under a different scenario other than if provided totally within the correctional facility. However, many current and/or needed inmate programs can be provided within the correctional facility using either a modified approach or by simply having enough program space.

In order that you might understand more fully these approaches to inmate programs, we have produced this report that identifies, program by program, how such services can be provided to inmates with the facility located at the present site in Westmoreland.

As an important backdrop, it is useful to be reminded that each person incarcerated in the correctional facility will be returning to our neighborhoods within 60 to 180 days. Many times, the length of stay is a mere 22 days. Regardless of their sentence, these individuals will be returning to society. We believe that efforts to make these individuals productive members of society are of great importance not only for the economic impact of incarceration, but for improving the fabric of our society.

Broad-based support for inmate programs is essential. We encourage you to support our efforts at developing these programs and invite you to participate in this development. Currently, the inmate program is comprised of the programs listed below. This list of inmate programs was initially included with our first report to you in December of 1999 regarding this topic. We have added to this list a

narrative of how these programs could be enhanced if the new facility were to be located at the existing site in Westmoreland.

EXISTING INMATE PROGRAMS

Male and female AA programs

Currently, there is only one room (in addition to the gymnasium) that can be used for programs. Regardless of where the facility is located our plans call for an increase of the number of multi-purpose rooms in which programs can take place. Currently, we utilize volunteers to hold these AA meetings. With suitable program space, the structure of AA meetings can be formalized using either existing volunteers or paid substance abuse counselors, or both. With physical space available and enhanced resources, this program can expand to meet the current needs of the inmates. Thus, this program need can be met in-house in Westmoreland.

Substance abuse programs

Currently, we provide little substance abuse intervention. There are no full-time in-house staff trained in substance abuse intervention and counseling which is useful as a precursor to attendance at AA meetings. We are prepared to present for funding a full-time counselor trained in substance abuse intervention and counseling. This counselor will be using facility-provided resources and supported by community-based programs. Thus, this program can be met in-house in Westmoreland if the appropriate level of resources are provided such as personnel and program space not presently available.

Church services, pastoral counseling and Bible study

While we have volunteers who make an effort to provide pastoral counseling and church services we have no room that is suitable for worship. Again, adequate program space that includes a quiet room for worship or personal reflection is a solution easily attainable in Westmoreland with adequate funding.

General Equivalency Diploma programs (GED)

Currently, there is only one room (in addition to the gymnasium) that can be used for programs. Frequently, programs must be delayed or postponed while other programs use the one room available. Regardless of where the facility is located our plans call for an increase of multi-purpose rooms in which such programs can take place. Currently, we utilize volunteers to teach the GED classes. With suitable program space, the structure of GED program can be formalized using either existing volunteers or paid teachers provided by the Department of Education, or both. There is a noticeable correlation between the number of recidivist offenders and the lack of a high school diploma. With physical space available and

enhanced resources, this program can expand to meet the current needs of the inmates. Thus, this program need can be met in-house in Westmoreland.

Poetry, and Journal Writing, Shakespeare

We currently have volunteers who conduct this program but, again, more often than not, they must limit their efforts due to lack of space. The room used for this purpose is also used for attorney-client meetings, video arraignments and virtually all other programs. Thus, this program can be enhanced with suitable small meeting rooms that will allow the volunteers to know that they have a place to conduct this program in Westmoreland.

Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (STEP)

This program, sponsored by the National Guard, utilizes a volunteer NCO. While it is free to the facility, there is, again, no space that can be reliably available. Thus, it cannot be regularly scheduled. This program can be enhanced with suitable physical meeting room space that will allow the volunteers to know that they have a place to conduct this program in Westmoreland.

Anger Management

This program suffers from the same problem as the programs listed above, that is, lack of available space to hold meetings. In addition, while there is a good community-based anger management program, we do not currently have the resources available to access this service. With appropriate funding, we would access the well-established community-based program by purchasing an additional van to transport inmates to this program. This would also necessitate additional personnel to transport and remain with the inmates. To access this community-based program, we have conducted preliminary discussions with Monadnock Family Services who would be willing to provide us with a anger management program for inmates, if we could get them to Keene and remain available during the session.

Stress Management/ Living Skillfully Group

This program suffers from the same problem as the programs listed above, that is, lack of available space to conduct this group. We currently use volunteers for this program but it may make sense to develop this program into a more formal program possibly using a paid individual. Again, appropriate program space is essential if this program is to be a success.

Dance and movement therapy & Yoga

This program suffers from the same problem as the programs listed above, that is, lack of available space to conduct this activity. We have used volunteers for this and have also received grant funds to

provide a financial incentive for program development. At the risk of sounding repetitive, appropriate program space is essential if this program is to be a success consistently.

NEW INMATE PROGRAMS

There are additional program needs that are not presently being met. We have identified those needs below with a discussion about how these needs can be met with the facility located in Westmoreland.

Batterers Intervention/Domestic Violence Prevention

There is currently an existing batterers/domestic violence program in the community. There is also a history of discussions of holding such a group at the correctional facility but lack of consistently available space and no present funding scheme have interfered with this program's development. We would propose that inmates be transported to the community-based group setting to participate in county-funded group sessions. This would be another use of the additional new van and program personnel who would be assigned to facilitate the community-based inmate program elements. Preliminary discussions with the provider have already begun.

Sex Offender Treatment

There is no sex offender treatment presently available at the facility. Discussions are presently underway with the regional prosecutors, County Attorney, the Keene director of the NH Probation Office, and a local specialist in sex offender treatment to provide this specialized treatment. The provision of this service will not be hampered by the facility being located in Westmoreland. Again, the funding, van and personnel will accomplish this goal. In general, this is a treatment program that would begin when an offender is incarcerated and would continue for approximately two years, extending well past the period of incarceration.

Detoxification services

The jail admissions data reveals an increase in the last five years of persons taken into the jail who are simply being held on protective custody (PC) for being drunk. The PC detentions are for anywhere between 4 and 24 hours, depending upon the availability of a responsible person to pick the individual up and/or the person becoming sober. The decision has to be made whether to continue the practice of PC bookings into the jail or expand the use of detox beds at Phoenix House or additional, new, detox beds elsewhere in Keene or the surrounding area. The goal is to hold the individuals until sober in a safe secure environment but also to encourage them to accept a referral for treatment.

Establishing a detox separate from the jail or a medical facility has certain problems that must be overcome. Some of those problems may require legislative changes that would empower detox units to

hold PC's for up to 24 hours, a power presently reserved for correctional facilities. In addition, a collaborative effort will be necessary to develop a plan to create a detox in either a freestanding setting or affiliated with an existing medical facility, such as Cheshire Medical Center. This programmatic element is perhaps the most difficult to attain and will take time to develop. Nonetheless, it is an effort that should be advanced, regardless of the location of a new correctional facility.

Day Reporting Center (DRC)

All of the research shows that having a released offender employed is the single most important step to insure that they do not return to the system. The work release program hasn't become a part of the normal continuum of sanctions used by the system. While electronic monitoring use has increased since a year ago, it remains underutilized. The establishment of a Day Reporting Center would oversee the coordination and development of post-trial services such as Vocational Services providing education, training and support within a vocational/recovery model. Components would include assessment, job-readiness training, vocational workshops, job club, individual support, job development and placement, and educational support. These components presently exist in the community and discussions have begun to utilize these services. We are reached a tentative agreement with the UNH Cooperative Extension to assist in the coordination and facilitation of some of the program elements listed above. This program would begin during incarceration, under the auspices of the corrections Inmate Program Director in cooperation with the UNH Cooperative Extension Educator to create a seamless transition from incarceration back to the community.

The DRC will also include a greatly expanded electronic home detention program. Offenders will initially check-in with the program daily and over time earn the right to less frequent check-ins. A case plan will be developed for every sentenced prisoner. The accomplishment of goals will be required, including making progress towards a GED, finding a job, and participating with necessary alcohol or drug program. We will also recommend that the court use this program for progress hearings. We will explore available federal funding sources that may be related to the alternative sentencing program and/or mental health court.

Plans are currently underway for a Day Reporting Center to be situated at the anticipated county complex at 350 Marlborough Street. Thus, the location of the correctional facility is not critical to the Day Reporting Center. As discussions are already underway with the UNH Cooperative Extension to relocate to be with the other county offices, this program's effectiveness will be greatly enhanced.

Full-time mental health services for inmates

The county currently employs a mental health clinician on a part-time basis providing assessment, referral and some in-house counseling for those inmates with mental health issues. However, it is not nearly enough. It is not enough in-house service and the service itself is not well connected to a continuum of mental health services. We have reached a tentative agreement with Monadnock Family Services (MFS) to provide a range of services at a new Westmoreland facility. These services include an on-site mental health clinician on a full-time basis during the daytime and a service system that provides 24-hour a day emergency interventions with psychiatric evaluations and timely referrals to appropriate services. The MFS relationship will be utilized to activate the treatment and support systems necessary to respond to psychiatric emergencies and to stabilize persons in crisis. This broad service agreement will also assist the transition of incarcerated individuals back into the community, maintaining the contact with treatment professionals. We will have access to a matrix of treatment professionals such as counselors, psychiatric nurse practitioners, psychiatrists and psychologists. This will bridge the distance between Westmoreland and Keene and will greatly improve our ability to deal with inmates who have a mental illness.

Transportation of prisoners to and from Westmoreland

A new correctional facility in Westmoreland could mean that the local law enforcement agencies would continue to transport offenders to Westmoreland. However, we have crafted a balanced approach that eases the burden on the local police. We propose, with the concurrence of the County Sheriff, to expand the availability of a Deputy to assist the towns of the County for transport. The Sheriff would have one to two Deputies on-call for prisoner transport between the hours of 8:00 PM to 1:00 AM, seven days a week. This would provide some relief for the transport of prisoners. Obviously, there may be times when there would be too many prisoners for the Sheriff's Department to transport in a timely fashion. Allowing the towns to elect to transport their own prisoners on a case-by-case basis could reduce this delay. The police would be billed a fee when transport was done by the Sheriff's Department. Each police department could make their own determination whether they would rather pay the fee or transport the prisoner. For the smaller towns with limited police resources this additional Sheriff support would be of great value.

Transitional Services and Housing for Inmates

A significant problem for many individuals released from the county jail is that they frequently have no place to live after release. We propose that the County purchase a small, residential-style building to provide transitional housing for up to approximately six months. This housing opportunity, in combination with the Day Reporting Center and the efforts at vocational and life skills training could be

pivotal in breaking the cycle of recidivism. The housing unit would be managed by a community-based housing entity not associated with the county except for subsidization of the building expenses to allow a sliding scale of rent that tenants would pay. This housing service would dovetail with the pre-release transition efforts currently in place as well as with the new additional services provided in cooperation with the UNH Cooperative Extension and other community-based providers.

New Costs Associated with Enhanced Westmoreland and Community-based Programs:

1. The purchase of a new van:	\$28,000.00
2. Two additional corrections staff members, potentially Correctional Officers (salaries plus benefits)	\$85,000.00
3. Program materials/fees related to programs including weekly group meeting fees, program materials, vocational assessment tools, etc.	\$20,000.00
4. Full-time contracted clinical position at new facility	\$60,000.00
5. Contracted medical/psychiatric services approximately 10 hours/month	\$20,000.00
6. Program fees specific to sex offender treatment for weekly meetings	\$20,000.00
TOTAL NEW PROGRAM EXPENSE:	\$233,000.00¹

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

While proximity to Keene is a potential stumbling block to accessing services for inmates, the most significant stumbling block has been the failure of the Delegation to make a decision to construct a new correctional facility on county-owned land. The programs outlined in this Special Report are programs that can be successfully accomplished out of a Westmoreland-based correctional facility. The programs are realistic, necessary elements of an effective approach to corrections. Programs like these are part of thousands of county jails across the country.

We have been consistent in our position that the facility belongs in Westmoreland even though we have been tantalized by the prospect of having the facility closer to Keene. However, the fervor of locating a Keene-area site has seemingly distracted many to the alternative ways we can overcome the distance to Westmoreland. Even if you launch another site selection search and could find a suitable site in Keene, we doubt that there is the political will to make a Keene-area location happen. If the political

and practical will were present, it would seem that the Bardwell site would have been chosen long ago as it remains the best site and will likely remain the best site even if another search is initiated.

We again stand ready to assist you in making this decision. In June of 1999 we commissioned the first study of the conditions at the correctional facility. In January of 2000 we followed this with a Phase I planning project that examined all components of the county's criminal justice system. In November of 2001, we initiated Phase II of our jail planning effort by creating an Objective Jail Classification System to maximize our operating procedures in a new physical setting. In September 2002 we created a Corrections Master Plan which was followed by the December 2002 Pre-architectural Program and Concept Diagrams for a new facility. At each phase, we have conducted meetings and posted most of our jail related information on the County website to keep the public informed and educated.

The search for a site began in July of 2002 and over 30 sites have come to our attention and been dismissed with the exception of the existing Westmoreland site and the Bardwell property. The search should now come to an end. As we said in October of 2003 the problem remains; the decision is due. We hope you will support this program enhancement and vote to construct a new correctional facility.

THE CHESHIRE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Roger Zerba, Chairman

Jonathan Sistare, Vice Chairman

Robert Moore, Clerk

¹ The cost of transitional housing is excluded from this total and would depend on whether property had to be acquired directly by the county or whether an existing housing provider would allocate such housing. In addition, it is possible that federally sponsored housing vouchers could be utilized to subsidize this housing initiative.