

MINUTES
Cheshire County Commissioners Meeting
Wednesday, June 09, 2021
County Hall
12 Court Street, Keene, NH 03431

Conference Call Information
Phone Call-in Number: +1 646 558 8656
Meeting ID: 409 748 8803
Pin #: 6031233

Present: Commissioners: Jack Wozmak, Robert Englund, and Terry Clark
Staff: County Administrator Coates, Finance Director Trombly, Assistant County Administrator Bouchard.
Guest(s):

At 8:30 AM, Commissioner Wozmak opened the meeting, and County Administrator Coates conducted a roll-call of the Commissioners attending the meeting. Commissioners Englund and Clark responded as "present."

At 8:32, AM the Chair opened the meeting and recognized Superintendent Iosue, who discussed the upcoming semi-annual tour today. He handed out a document that covered the past six months' overview of the facility's operations. Iosue spoke to the federal inmates in-house, that has grown this year and are currently approximately \$425K over projected income.

Douglas L. Iosue, LICSW- Superintendent

To: Commissioners Wozmak, Englund and Clark
From: Doug Iosue, Superintendent
Re: Semi-Annual Report – June 9, 2021

There are just several areas I would like to briefly review as part of the June Semi-Annual report:

Federal Inmate Numbers

Federal Inmate population has been running well ahead of budget.

- Budgeted at 35
- Avg. YTD approximately 48

- Reason: Due to COVID 19 outbreak in Strafford County and NH, sending approximately 9 or 10 in late January. Numbers don't change quickly. Other than our ongoing commitment to providing a high level of customer service, the flow and numbers of federal inmates into the facility is not within our control

Inmate Paid Work

- Started 9/2020
- \$4 per shift
- Canteen balance has increased \$6,000 in 8 months

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- Has met its goal (to increase the inmate workforce)

COVID 19

- Cases: March 2020-present
 - total of 3 staff cases from start to present
 - 0 confirmed inmate cases
- Total staff fully vaccinated: 53
- Current protocols:
 - No more screening/temps in the lobby if fully vaccinated
 - Masks optional for all fully vaccinated staff and volunteers (exception of any interactions with inmates still in their quarantine phase)
 - Relaxation of some dining room protocols (relating risk of contact transmission)

Facility/Maintenance Dept

- The bore field is returning a temperature in the 80s.
- This is adequate in our relative experience.
- However, the field has not reached its point of saturation
- Concern: it will, over the course of the summer, reach a saturation point
- Timeline for the upgrade, chilling loop?

Staffing/Personnel

- Current openings:
 - 3 officer positions
 - 1 full-time nurse*
 - 1 Prep cook (32 hours)**
 -
- *Nurse ad on Indeed since 3/9 with sign-on bonus (only two applicants, both declined for pay). Have had an open position approaching 1 year
- **Prep Cook search is approaching two months (only one applicant, on Indeed, did not show for interview)
- In general, I am increasingly concerned about the trend towards an unfavorable job market (from the standpoint of the employer).

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- We are seeing fewer applications for all of these open positions, and for many that apply on Indeed, there is a lack of follow-through.
- I foresee a need to reassess staff wages in the next budget cycle in order to stay competitive in the job market.

He then spoke to the inmate pay-for-work plan that was started, and he said that the program has been successful and has not impacted the inmate canteen budget.

COVID-19 status. A discussion of the low infection rates was covered, and it was learned that the facility has one of the lowest, if not the lowest, infection rates of any of the correctional facilities in the state.

As of today, if individuals are fully vaccinated, then masks are not required except for entering the inmate population pods and a few other areas.

Geothermal

Staffing/Personnel

The Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) program is going well with approximately 18-20 participants. 2-3 inmates are on methadone, and the therapy continues when they are incarcerated.

The Commissioner's thanked Iosue for his report, and Administrator Coates was then recognized for the Weekly Operations report.

Coate said a meeting with the NH Community Development Finance Authority (CDFA) in preparation for the Hundred Nights Shelter public hearings for their request for a \$500K grant from the Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG) hearing was held this week. He said that the documents to conduct the hearings will be ready for the meeting and will walk the Commissioners through the process.

Coates then said that a farewell party for Judge Ruoff was held yesterday in Swanzy at the Keene State facility at Wilson Pond and it was very well attended.

Coates noted that he spoke with the Nursing Home Administrator about continuing the Telehealth program at the nursing home. He stated that it was learned that the federal programs would allow the program to continue with the same full reimbursement policy.

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Coates then addressed the pending Joint Participation Agreement (JPA) that the County anticipates signing shortly to join the Community Power Coalition of NH to purchase power for the County in the coming year. He said that he expects that the document will be ready in a few weeks for review and signatures.

Coates then addressed the work to be completed at the nursing home in Westmoreland and pointed out that the cost of the COVID-19 work delays is being calculated with the hope of getting federal funding reimbursements so that the work remaining can be completed within the original budget.

Coates said that a second bid for the cupola rehabilitation has been received from DEW and that a meeting will be set up to review the submissions, and a recommendation will be made on how to proceed with the work this year.

In reviewing the income of the County thus far this year, Coates said that the Federal inmate income could be in excess of the budgeted amount by between 300-600K, and the Connected Families of NH (prior System of Care) is projected to be about \$900K greater than projected due to the rapid growth of the project. A lengthy conversation concerning the services, funding and reimbursement rates for the CFNH began, and concern was expressed for the continued funding of the program by the State and Federal authorities.

He went on to say that the amount of Proshare funds received last year by the nursing home was \$4.281M, with the expectation that this year would be significantly less. Instead, he noted that the actual amount received is \$5.2M, which is very welcome news.

Coates then discussed proposed leasing rates for the acquisition of equipment to complete the Countywide Energy upgrade project. He said that three bids were received and that Municipal Leasing Consultants of Vermont was the lowest bidder for the project.

Following discussion and a question and answer period, Commissioner Wozmak moved to award the lease financing of the equipment to Municipal Leasing Consultants of 7 Old Town Ln, Grand Isle, VT 05458, with bids of 2.470% for the 20-year portion of the project and 1.997% for the 10-year portion, and to authorize the Administrator to sign the leasing documents for the costs of implementing the County Energy Project. Commissioner Englund seconded the motion, and upon roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously.

Old Business: None

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New Business: None

Consent Agenda: Minutes of 06/03/2021 and Manifests for the week. Commissioner Englund moved the consent agenda and was seconded by Commissioner Clark. The motion passed with unanimous consent upon roll call vote.

General Discussion:

Master Agenda Item #891: Department of Corrections – Semi-Annual Report
Action Expected: To conduct the Department of Corrections first Semi-Annual 2021 inspections as required by RSA 30-B 12.

At 10:05 AM, the Commissioners began an inspection tour of the facility. Recently appointed Superintendent Iosue accompanied the Commissioners and staff for the tour.

At 10:07 AM, the Commissioner's entered the maintenance facility to inspect the geothermal system and to meet with the Maintenance Director Bogar. Bogar described some of the concerns with the existing configuration of the geothermal system and stated that he is seeing the premature failure of the compressors on the heat exchangers because of high temperatures returned from the wellfield. After an in-depth study by several engineers, he said that a recently proposed solution should permanently fix the problem. An added positive result should be a greatly diminished use of propane used to heat and cool the 90,000 sq. ft. building.

He went on to say that the proposed conversion of the lighting from the current fluorescent tubes to LED fixtures should dramatically lower the overall electrical costs.

Bogar answered some follow-up questions, and at 10:17 AM, the Commissioner left the maintenance area and re-assembled in the main hallway to discuss the Moral Reconciliation Therapy (MRT) Program that is underway in one of the meeting rooms adjacent to the hallway.

It was discussed that MRT is a unique cognitive-behavioral treatment approach designed for criminal offender populations. The program is designed to alter how offenders think and how they make decisions about right and wrong. Iosue stated that the program runs for a total of sixteen weeks. The classroom portion runs for two hours, and typically four hours of homework is assigned to each participant. In addition, each person also meets with mental health counselor during the course of the class.

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He said that although most of the participants attend voluntarily, some are mandated to attend by the Courts as part of their sentence, and early release can be predicated on successful completion of the program.

At 10:23 AM, the Commissioners visited the D and K block area remarked on the deteriorating condition of some of the Pod floorings throughout the building.



A further review of some maintenance issues with carpeting, paving bricks at the entry, storm drains, and other exterior spaces that need to be added as capital items to the upcoming budget items was discussed.

One of the items covered during the visit to the Pods was the introduction of the new inmate electronic pads that can be used for entertainment, emails, and communication with family and friends. It was discussed that almost all of the inmates use the device, and the cost is \$5.00 per month, which is withdrawn from each person's canteen account.

At 10:30 AM, The Commissioners moved to examine the Control Room. Iosue said that the Control Room is usually staffed by one to two Correctional Officers, and they function as the eyes and ears for maintaining security in the facility. A review of the camera's use and technical capabilities and functions throughout the building and the issue that many cameras need to be upgraded was reviewed in some detail. It was learned that over thirty-two cameras are constantly monitored, and some of the monitors also need to be replaced or upgraded.

At 10:36 AM, The Commissioner's entered the Medical area to meet the staff and review the area. A discussion of inmate processing and screening began, and it was learned that the Physician's Assistant was available if needed and a follow-up assessment could be done if

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required due to health issues. Medication and mental health treatment medications were discussed. The medical staff said that about 80% of the inmates enter the facility with drug dependencies, including smoking, and more smoking cessation programs would be helpful to the inmate population.

The new case manager's role and progress were covered, and the programs for inmate follow-up post-release were discussed.

At 10:44 AM, the Commissioners proceeded to F Block to examine the physical condition of the block and to interact with the Correctional Officers and inmates. No notable exceptions or other items of interest were noted.

At 10:49 AM, the Commissioners went to meeting room RO-2 to meet and interview inmates and Correctional Officers.

Correctional Officer "R" then entered the room to meet with the Commissioners. He said that he has been working at the facility for three years. He said that he really likes his job compared to his previous manual labor jobs and said that working at the facility allows for floating working environments.

The CO outlined the way they work with new inmates and tries to make them feel comfortable and to also establish a good working relationship with both inmates and colleagues.

Commissioner Wozmak outlined the reason that the Commissioners are conducting the tour, and he asked if the environment is good to work in. "R" said that it was and that the job allows them time to be able to interact with his family and kids, which couldn't happen in their previous jobs.

"R" stated that more training in some areas such as defensive tactics would be welcome because, without practice, it is hard to do correctly without hurting yourself or the person being restrained. They thought that some Jujutsu training would be helpful in that regard. "R" said that some of the cell extraction gear is very old, poorly fitting, and unsuitable for today's environment.

At 11:08 AM, Commissioner Wozmak and Administrator Coates left the facility for a previous appointment.

At 11:09 AM, Officer "U" entered the room to meet with Commissioners Englund and Clark and Assistant County Administrator Bouchard. "U" stated that they had four years on the job and had a split job function as Correctional Officer and as a part-time facilities maintenance staff. They said that they have been working since they were 21 and worked in security at local

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manufacturers in a security position before coming to the department of corrections and that their family has a strong background in law enforcement.

They said that the training materials need to be updated and the classes need to offer much more hands-on training.

In response to the Commissioners' question concerning their understanding and support for the medicated assisted treatment (MAT) program, they said they support the program but have some reservations due to some participants abusing participation in the program. Another issue raised by "U" is that more training in de-escalation techniques is needed as it is unique to this facility based on talking with other CO's and inmates from other facilities.

They said that overall the food is excellent and today is burger day which is the best.

"U" said that the facility runs very smoothly, but the physical environment is overall too humid on sweltering days, but they know that the problem is actively being addressed.

"U" said that they are vaccinated and past the two-week post-period tomorrow and did it despite not having any family support to safeguard the inmates and other staff.

The Commissioners asked "U" if there was anything that could or should be considered to be changed. "U" responded that nothing, in particular, came to mind, and the environment is constantly changing for the better. A short discussion about the transition from the old management to new management approaches was had.

"U" ended their interview by saying that they see this job as a career and that they like all the time spent in all the different areas in the facility.

At 11:30 AM – Inmate "B" entered the room to meet with the Commissioners and began by saying that they have been incarcerated for two months this time around. "B" said that there are not enough programs available but thought that much of the reason was due to COVID-19 restrictions. "B" then stated that they were arrested for drug use and sale and have been in jail four times before, the last time for a year. In response to a question concerning the coordination of inmate release programs, they said that the previous Case Manager (now the Superintendent) had helped them set up housing before the last release. They discussed participating in the MAT program and stated that the motivation to stop using drugs was the ultimate goal. "B," said that they had been out for three years but had gotten into a bad relationship and slipped up. "B," said they would like to see Narcotics Anonymous (NA) or Alcoholics Anonymous back in the facility running sessions. They said that they thought the food was okay but that it is high in carbs with

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lots of pasta being served. When asked about changes they would like to see, "B" said that they use the exercise room would like to see more equipment made available for the inmates.

At 11:41 AM, the Commissioners thanked "B" for their input, and they were escorted back to their housing Pod.

At 11:44 AM, Inmate "L" entered the room to meet with the Commissioner and said in response to a question that they had in jail this time for three months due to a probationary violation and had been in a prior time about twenty months ago and are now waiting for a release date in July. "L" said that this is one of the best facilities that they have been in and rate it an A+, saying that the general hygiene and cleanliness is top drawer compared to the other jails that they have been in.

They said that the programs are okay and that overall, the environment here is very good as you are treated as a human being and shown respect, unlike the other jails they have been in.

"L" said that their goal, when they are released, is to go to barber school. "L" stated that they are 36 years old and only have Grandparents left who live in Battleboro. "L" then said that their substance abuse issues have generated all the charges that have landed them in jail and were exacerbated by being in bad relationships. "L" said that they were previously in the MRT program but that the current program is being manipulated by the presenters and everyone is not being held to the same standards. They also said that some rules are made up on the fly and that there isn't a way to bring up issues without being penalized.

"L" thought that the MRT program was more effective than AA/NA because it was more interactive and said that the program was very helpful in helping recognize their shortcomings and deal with issues.

Lastly, "L" said that the current canteen vendor is "garbage" and that they greatly preferred the previous vendor's products and better pricing, liking the current vendor's products to Dollar store items at 3-4 times the cost.

At 12:05 PM, there being no further public business to conduct, Commissioner Englund moved to adjourn the meeting and was seconded by Commissioner Clark. Upon roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously.

Minutes recorded by:
Assistant County Administrator Bouchard

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Reviewed and submitted by:
T. Clark, Clerk