



MINUTES
Cheshire County Commissioners Meeting
Wednesday, December 08, 2021
County Hall Building
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 Robert Englund, and Terry Clark (Jack Wozmak absent w/notice)

Staff: County Administrator Coates, Finance Director Trombly, and Assistant County Administrator Bouchard.

Guest(s):

I. Public Comments

Upon recognition from the Chair, a Public Comment on topics of interest may be made, not to exceed three (3) minutes in length.

II. Elected Officials & Department Head Updates

To receive, as informational, departmental updates requiring Commissioner review, participation, approval, and impactful departmental and operational issues.

III. Scheduled Items

Master Agenda Item #939: Review of proposed new uses of monies from the Inmate Canteen Fund

Action Expected: To receive as informational a report from the Superintendent on using the Inmate Canteen Fund.

Iosue discussed using the inmate canteen funds and said that the present funding level is \$195K, up from \$165K since last year. He reviewed a list of proposed uses and presented the following list of ideas to be implemented in the facility. He discussed the use of funds to offer a stipend to some volunteers to incentivize more recovery support programs such as alcoholics anonymous, narcotics anonymous, and recovery coaches. A discussion of the cost of canteen items was considered, and the type of items available was covered. The payment of sentenced and pre-trial inmates (10-12) for work completed in the facility is about \$310 to \$350 per week.

The quality of the canteen items was covered. The list of ideas was discussed, and other incentives for good behavior, vaccinations, and other incentives for inmates were covered.

Cheshire County DOC
Expanded Use of Canteen Fund to Benefit Inmates
Budget: \$30,000 annual

Rank/ (Avg Score)	Program Idea	Objectives/Details	Estimated Cost
1 (3.44)	Replace garden beds/boxes, possibly construct a greenhouse	-continue our 'in-house' garden. Benefits: inmates gardening skills, fresh vegetables added to the menu -4 boxes @\$600 each	\$2,400 (1x cost)
1 (3.44)	Clinical Services: psycho-educational materials, workbooks to support individual and group counseling	- expand clinical tools and resources clinicians – to the benefit of inmates receiving these services.	\$1,000 year
1 (3.44)	Cleanest dayroom contests	-work ethic, builds community -K, D, F blocks -inmates get soda & movie -weekly contest – evaluated/scored by 3 rd shift	\$2,600 (\$50 for reward(s) for winning dayroom)
4 (3.6)	Pay a stipend to Volunteers (SUD and Recovery support programs -AA, NA, Recovery Coaches)	- increase the frequency & consistency of these programs -\$50 per group	\$7,800 year (avg of 3 groups/week)
5 (4.11)	Incentivize inmate vaccinations	-Increase vaccination rate from current 40% -\$25 deposited to inmate acct.	\$7,500 year (300 inmates estimated)
5 (4.11)	Incentives/Prizes for On-Unit inmate contests and games	-builds a sense of community, encourage prosocial behavior -1 game/context per dayroom/per week (\$25 value)	\$3,900 year
7 (5.89)	Monthly Inmate Good Behavior Raffle	-incentivize good behavior -K, D, F blocks -\$25 deposit to the canteen by a raffle (3 winners)	\$2,700
	Purchase canteen cups for all inmates	- Inmate and officer convenience - hydration, especially during detox	\$520 year (@ \$.65 per cup)

Total: \$28, 240

The activities program at Maplewood was compared to the DOC program, and it was discovered that they are very similar in some respects.

It was learned that there are five positive employees at the nursing home and that the DOC has one positive. On the other hand, Keene State College had 34 new cases last week.

The poor condition of the existing facility sanitary grinder was discussed and it will need to be replaced shortly due to wear and damage.

IV. County Administrator

Weekly Operations Report - The County Administrator will update the Commissioners on activities that have taken place since the previous meeting.

Coates was recognized for the Weekly Operations Report and provided the following information.

Coates said that 1,150 COVID tests were completed at Cheshire Medical Center last week and, there were 919 negative and 231 positive cases for a positivity rate of 20.1%. The overall positivity rate has risen from 8.6% to 20.1% in four weeks. As a result of this high rate, all non-emergency surgery has been halted and the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) is full and the acuity levels of the patients are very high.

The current state COVID rates can be found here: <https://www.covid19.nh.gov/dashboard>

Coates then said that the Business NH magazine article about Cheshire County and the use of the American Recovery Act Plan (APRA) in this month's edition.

Coates then said that he had received a request from one of the State Representatives asking if the Commissioners would support a strong recommendation for urging all towns and cities in the County to strongly recommend the wearing of masks when in public given the dramatic increase in cases throughout the state. **Commissioner Englund then made the following motion, "Given the dramatic increase in COVID-19 spread in Cheshire County along with a surge in hospitalizations that are straining medical resources at our major medical center, the County urges and support our towns and the City of Keene in adopting a mask mandate through the month of January". Commissioner Clark seconded the motion and upon roll call vote the motion passed unanimously, two to zero.**

Coates related that he has now visited 14 towns and the city of Keene to discuss the creation of a County Emergency Medical Services department for the County and discussed the impact on each town and the associated costs that could be incurred for ambulance services in the future.

He then said that the Monadnock Interfaith Group for affordable housing meeting on Monday went well and that a meeting with the Commissioners will be scheduled in January to follow up on the initial meeting.

Coates then said that the regional marketing team from the Promoting the Region team will meet with the Commissioners next week to bring them up to date on the efforts and plans of the group.

Coates said that the implementation planning for the Energy project has begun on the Keene campus and that the swale cleaning trenching for runoff water will begin next week.

Coates stated that the draft of the final asset purchase agreement for the ambulance acquisition was underway. He said that Human Resources has been interviewing applicants and things are moving forward.

At 9:54 AM A non-meeting pursuant to RSA 91-A:2, I (a)) to review and discuss strategy or negotiations with respect to collective bargaining was made by Commissioner Clark and seconded by Clark Englund. Upon roll call vote the motion passed unanimously.

At 10:20 AM, the Commissioners voted unanimously to return to the public session.

At 10:27 AM, The Commissioners recessed to conduct the Department of Corrections second Semi-Annual 2021 inspections as required by RSA 30-B 12.

The Commissioners adjourned to a meeting room in the facility and met with two female inmates. One is a federal inmate and the other is a local county inmate. The federal inmate responded to a question from the Commissioners asking how she liked the facility and she responded by saying that it was by far the best facility she has been in anywhere. She said that it is neat and clean and that the Correctional Officers (CO's) are polite and treat you with respect. She also stated that she found the other inmates to be much less petty than the prior institutions where she has been held. She went on to say that CO's in other facilities have a power-trip problem but it is not a problem here.

She noted that there were no fights over the use of equipment, phones, tablets, microwaves, etc.

The use of tablets and the cost of video visitation costs were discussed. She said that she thought the phone calls and tablets for the inmates are very expensive and remarked that a surcharge of \$1 is applied to their accounts for the simple transfer of funds into the accounts.

The cost of headphones was covered and the lowest price available is \$7.00 per unit and the next unit is priced at \$35.00. The lack of hairbrushes on the canteen was discussed and the lack of the ability to have family send "care packages" was noted as a problem for inmates without sufficient funds. Also reviewed is the cost of denied letters for inmates.

The county incarcerated inmate then said that she was in for a habitual offender for driving. When asked if she had local support and a place to live when she is released she said that she has had a boyfriend for 13 years who works at a local manufacturer and that they plan to move to North Carolina next June to be closer to family.

The Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) program was discussed and other programs were covered but it was stated by both inmates that there are not enough programs in general because volunteers are reluctant to come into the facility during the pandemic.

The ability to get COVID vaccinations was discussed and both inmates agreed that the food is good but there are a lot of carbohydrates and the same vegetables can be served three days in a row at times.

Both inmates agreed that the allocation of inmates to cells in Block F and inmates doubling up in rooms is common on the first floor with only 3 inmates on the second tier. They weren't sure why that was the case.

The MAT program was again discussed and the federal inmate said that there is not much enthusiasm for the program by inmates except to use the drugs in the program to get high.

The County inmate said that over-the-counter drugs are provided at .50 per pill and the nonfederal inmates pay \$10 per month for all meds. The federal inmates also pay .50 for Over-the-counter drugs and said that it costs \$5.00 to see the Physician's Assistant.

They both are assigned to work in the laundry and said that getting to deliver the meals and see other people and is fun for them and a good break from staying the cell block all day.

Signing up for work was discussed the use of sentenced vs pre-trial inmates was covered.

The federal inmate said that the mattresses are great and profanity by CO's is very rare and the interaction with them is very helpful.

Both inmates said that the interaction between inmates and CO's is respectful on both levels.

At 11:00 AM, The Commissioners recessed the meeting at 11:00 AM to address Master Agenda Item #941: To conduct a graduation ceremony for Correctional Officers moving from training recruits to certified Correctional Officer status

At 11:46 AM the Commissioners met with two CO's a male with eight years of experience and a female who has approximately 5 months as returning employee who left for a new job some months ago and decided to return as a CO.

The female said that she worked at the DOC and left and then returned after a number of months because she really liked the people she worked with here and wasn't has happy with the job that took when she was at the job she took when she left. She said she liked her work here very much and wasn't planning on leaving again.

The male officer has been employed here for eight years and now works in the booking department. He stated that he found the job through a former employee who recommended the job to him.

A discussion began of the classification system and the distribution of inmates in the pods was covered and the different levels of interaction and with hardened inmates vs. local or first-time inmates was had.

He said that the use of respect with the federal inmates, in particular, works well and that the local inmates are the cause of most of the incidents with the federal causing the most dangerous incidents.

The Commissioners asked about how ready the new graduates that just received their certifications were able to fit in and the male CO said that they wouldn't have graduated if they didn't fit in and weren't doing a good job.

The officers were asked what keeps them coming back every day. The male said that in the past year a change in some management personnel has made the environment much better.

The past management environment was discussed and it was said that the prior toxic environment because of one individual was a huge morale killer to many of the CO's but that has been rectified and things are much better now that the individual is no longer employed at the facility.

The opportunity to advance was covered and the male stated that he was interviewed for a management position that someone else was awarded but he will apply again if there is an opening.

The stressors of being a CO were addressed and the female spoke to the flexibility of the management team when family issues have occurred for her in the past.

How shift assignments are allocated by seniority was covered. The elimination of the swing shift has helped stabilize the lives of the CO's and is greatly appreciated.

The shift from group II to group I retirement plans were discussed and the reasons for its institution was discussed.

At 12:22 PM the interview ended and the Commissioners conducted a facility tour.

At 12:27 PM the Commissioners entered K Block with the Superintendent and CO Thompson to inspect the space. Thompson explained how the dayroom operates and the procedures for cleaning and maintaining the cell and common space was covered.

He said that currently there are 24 inmates in K Block and 42 inmates in D Block which houses lower classification inmates.

Cell K-104 was then inspected and Thompson gave an overview of inmate housing and how inmates with different classifications are assigned to various cell blocks.

Also covered was the way that inmate mail is handled and the difference between family mail and legal mail procedures was explained.

At 12:31 PM, the Commissioners return to the executive conference to complete the business of the weekly commissioners meeting.

V. Old Business

VI. New Business Coates said that the New Hampshire Association of Counties (NHAC) had renewed the Dupont Group contract to manage the association. He stated that the NHAC conference in November was discussed and that the 2022 Conference will be at the Graconi Center in Manchester with Merrimack County hosting.

VII. Consent Agenda Items:

Vote to accept the Weekly Manifests and Minutes of December 01, 2021. Commissioner **Englund moved to accept the consent agenda and was seconded by Commissioner Clark. Upon roll call the vote the motion passed unanimously.**

VIII. Calendar

Action Expected: To accept the calendar as informational and to make necessary changes/additions.

IX. General Discussion for Commissioners

Master Agenda Item #673: Commissioners - State Cost Shifting Letter and Restorative Justice Program

X. Nonpublic Sessions

1. A non-meeting pursuant to RSA 91-A:2, I (a) to review and discuss strategy or negotiations with respect to collective bargaining.
2. A nonpublic session pursuant to RSA 91-A:3, II(d) to discuss the consideration of the acquisition, sale, or lease of real or personal property which, if discussed in public, would likely benefit a party or parties whose interests are adverse to those of the general community.

XI. Adjournment

12:55 PM, There being no further public business, Commissioner Clark moved to adjourn the meeting and was seconded by Commissioner Englund. Upon roll call vote the motion passed unanimously and the meeting was adjourned.

Recorded and edited by:
R. Bouchard
Assistant County Administrator

Reviewed and submitted by:
Terry Clark
Clerk, Board of Commissioners