

Tompkins County Correction Officer's Association Local 2062

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To Whom It May Concern:

Re: Jail Study Committee

We, the Correction Officers of Tompkins County, would like to address the County, Jail Study Committee, CGR Consultants and the residents of Tompkins County. All of us have a primary goal. The goal is 2 prong - managing the Jail AND providing necessary services to individuals entangled in the Criminal Justice System.

The Commission of Corrections has been extending variances to Tompkins County for the Jail since the 1990's; this is not a new issue. Multiple studies have been performed; hundreds of thousands of dollars have been spent for this, the Jail Renovation Project and temporary "band-aids" on the existing outdated facility known as the Tompkins County Jail.

Public perceptions of jails are often negative. Many small, rural or older jails have structures and environments that are not conducive to treatment. Tompkins County is exactly this. The jails of yesteryear were built to detain, process and house inmates, not treat, educate and reintegrate individuals back into society. This cannot be accomplished with the existing building. Working alongside other agencies and organizations within the Public Safety community can increase the sense of inclusion (positivity), as the Jail being a part of the communities' network of services.

Jails of today have an obligation to provide programs and services to incarcerated individuals. Whether an individual is incarcerated or out in the community, it is the individual that is ultimately responsible for their success. Currently the Jail makes available to inmates the following programs:

- Religious/spiritual faith based groups for males and females
 - Community Faith
 - Golden Key
 - Holistic Hardware
 - Catholic Mass
 - Brother Whyte –Church service
 - One on One Clergy visits
- Mental Health and Medical based for males and females
 - Talk
 - Wrap
 - Dept of Health HIV testing
 - Forensic Counselor
- Alcohol & Substance abuse for males and females
 - Alcoholics Anonymous

- Narcotics Anonymous
- Educational programming
 - GED
 - College Initiative
 - Tutoring (individualized)
 - Workforce
 - Parents Apart
- Community Outreach and Supportive Services
 - OAR- Opportunities, Alternatives and Resources
 - Re-Entry Program

According to notes from the December 2016 Public Safety Committee meeting, Mr. Schlather stated that “it would be beneficial to them(inmates) if they were able to access some programming that may be useful upon re-entry to the community”. He identified the barrier to be **the space availability at the Jail for such programs.** The jail has a grave need for space. Space for group treatment, individual interview rooms, medical treatment and group programming, etc. The jail was built for 59 inmates and 4 inmate workers. There was never a plan for program space outside of GED and visitation.

Current space available in the Jail consists of 3 interview rooms, 1 school room and 1 visitation room. These spaces are expected to provide the area needed to accommodate the above named programs AND:

- Inmate Visitation
- Parole hearings
- Attorney visits
- DSS child visits – supervised
- Probation and Parole visits
- Substance Abuse assessment for Rehabilitation placements
- Placement of additional new intakes
- Separation of inmates due to facility disturbances/fights.
- Barber visits (haircuts)

Other barriers that Schlather identified were:

- Access to health care that includes mental health care
- Access to health care that includes substance abuse care
- Employment, and
- Housing

The medical space in the current jail is a total of 207 square feet. That size is comparable to a master bedroom (23x9). This space is for providing medical treatment, medical supply storage, medical personnel office, storage of all inmate medical records and bathroom. There are no medical cells. There are no negative ventilation cells for infectious diseases. When an individual comes into the facility, they are booked and placed into the general population, in their own cell however share the same air, hygiene/shower space. There is no detox cell or observation area except the holding cell, which is for the purpose of holding a new intake prior to processing.

The jail medical staff consists of a jail physician, nurse practitioner, full time nurse. The doctor and or nurse practitioner come in for an hour or two a week and the nurse works 40 hours a

week. The nurse covers 40 hours out of 168 a week which equates to 24% of time to perform intakes screenings, assessments, medication set up and pass and sick call.

The County mental health employee that is assigned to see inmates is in the facility for 6 hours a week. That is 6 hours a week to see an average of 36 inmates out of 80 who need services as per the CCE study (40% of the jail population that has mental health issues).

A barrier that has not been identified in any of the discussions is the lack of communication between agencies (whose goal is to reduce the jail population, recidivism and re-entry into the community) and the correction officer. The officer's job is maintaining safety and security along with identifying needs of inmates. We do regular checks for physical plant deficiencies along with checking on inmates and their welfare. We are not counselors; however we do spend a great deal of time with these individuals and are able to identify changes. Dialogue between officers, supervisors and these other agencies/programs can be quite productive in accomplishing the goal that the County and it's residents want.

The Jail and its officers can be an integral part of reducing the rate of recidivism if a facility was built as a Criminal Justice Complex that screens, assesses, classifies and houses individuals. This can be achieved by having 24/7 medical staff, full time mental health personnel, secure rehabilitation program, increased staff training and manpower.

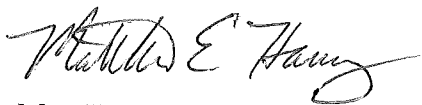
The effectiveness of substance abuse and mental health treatment services could be significantly enhanced by having dedicated program space in the Jail isolated from the general population. Benefits of building a new facility are numerous.

- Privacy can be achieved in conducting treatment and staff meetings.
- More readily available staff
- Reduced competition for treatment program space
- Reduction of inmate movement
- Space availability for proper assessment, treatment and housing of inmates.
- Provide more in-depth treatment encompassing intervention, self-help, life-skills, coping and positive social skills development.
- Employment, education, housing and financial workshops

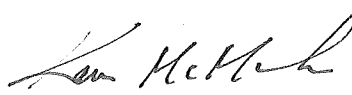
As observed time and time again correction officers have never been on these committees regarding the Jail, inmates or programs/services for inmates. The correction officers of the Tompkins County Jail are committed to serving the people of Tompkins County and welcome the opportunity to work alongside the other Public Safety agencies.

We would like to extend our appreciation to Peter Nabozny of CGR Consultants for sitting down with a couple of our officers to discuss the Jail Study and welcome further dialogue.

Respectfully,



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