

Jail Study Committee
Regular Meeting Minutes (same as Notes) – Approved 10-20-2017
Thursday, September 15, 2016 5:00 PM
Legislature Chambers

Attendance

Attendee Name	Title	Status
Rich John	Chair	Present
Martha Robertson	Member	Present
David McKenna	Member	Present
Anna Kelles	Member	Present
James Dennis	Member	Present
Catherine Covert	Clerk	Present
Joe Mareane	County Administrator	Present
Ray Bunce	Jail Administrator	Present
Tom Walpole	Correction Sergeant	Present
Marcia Lynch	Public Info. Officer, County Administration	Present
Susan Cook	Chair, CJA/ATI	Present
Patricia Buechel	Probation & Community Justice Director	Present
Lance Salisbury	Supervising Attorney, Assigned Counsel	Present
Julia P. Hughes	Program Coordinator, Assigned Counsel Program	Present
Michael Sigler	Legislator	Present
Scott Miller	City Court Judge	Present
Josephine Cardamone	Ithaca Resident	Present

Call to Order

Mr. John, Chair, called the meeting to order at 5:03 p.m.

Public Comment

Josephine Cardomone, City of Ithaca resident, expressed her appreciation to the Committee for the work that will be done on the issue of the Jail. She shared information from other counties across the Country that are also trying to reduce jail population. Some examples of pre-arrest programs include: citation programs, programs for mentally ill, and improving release procedures for the pretrial and sentenced populations. She also spoke of a Community Crisis Center and other proposed alternative-to-incarcerations proposals discussed at a Criminal Justice Advisory/Alternatives to Incarceration Board meeting.

Ms. Kelles requested the Committee receive copies of the information Ms. Cardamone presented; Mrs. Covert agreed to disseminate it.

Mr. Miller, Ithaca City Court Judge and City of Ithaca resident, spoke about his experiences over the years as an attorney and a Judge. Each week hundreds of criminal cases are presented in City court and as a Judge he is forced to remand and incarcerate them under a variety of situations. He said right now there are no good options for many of them, such as when an individual is sent to jail for their own safety or because they are homeless, etc. He spoke of the number of people that are on drugs and the minor criminal acts they perform because of their addiction; he said because of concerns with their well-being the person is sent to jail.

He commented that Tompkins County and Ithaca is on the State's radar in terms of the Jail

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population and needs to take action in reducing that population. Building a bigger Jail does not represent the values of this community; the values are treatment and rehabilitation. He understands the charge given to this Committee and hopes that when a consultant is hired to do the study on the Jail, that the consultant understands what the values are in the community. There are so many people in this community suffering from addiction.

He brought to the Committee's attention a new program model that is a Detox Unit and has existed for approximately one year that is located in Essex County in the State of Massachusetts. It is a housing unit within a correctional facility that is set up similar to a hospital layout. He distributed an article on this from the Correctional News magazine. He spoke of the importance of treatments and of having a detox center. He asked the Committee to share this information contained in the magazine with the consultant.

Mr. John suggested the Committee consider hearing from other judges at a future meeting.

Changes to Agenda

There were no changes to the agenda.

Meeting Schedule

The Committee agreed to meet on the third Thursday of each month following the Public Safety Committee meeting.

Review of Committee Charge

Mr. John spoke of how he would like the Committee to proceed and the meetings be efficient. He asked Committee members to speak openly and make it very clear that these conversations are preliminary observations as there will be a lot of input from many directions as the Committee goes forward.

Mr. John said a consultant will be hired to do a Jail study and this Committee will be reviewing what has been done and attempt to forecast what it sees as the future for jail use. This exercise is similar to what the County did in 2002.

He said the analysis of assumptions is going to be one of the most important parts of the work of the Committee and members should approach it with some humility and an open mind. Members need to use their own experiences but be careful it does not overwhelm analytical responsibilities. It is important the Committee reach conclusions. At the end of the 2002 study, there was a lot of emphasis on alternatives-to-incarceration (ATI) programs and the County was successful in keeping people out of jail. Savings on the jail correlate with increased costs for ATIs.

Mr. John spoke of the statistics in Tompkins County compared to others. Nationally and Statewide, the prison population has been trending down since 2009. Tompkins County has a relatively low prison population as a percent of population within New York counties. Compared to other New York counties, Tompkins County has a low violent crime rate, but a higher property crime rate. Compared to similar-sized counties, Tompkins County has one of the lowest jail populations.

Mr. John commented that he viewed the video of the meeting where the State Commission granted the Jail variance through the end of the year. It is his opinion the Commission is very serious and

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Tompkins County needs to build more beds. Their concerns are the safety and security of the inmates. Boarding out prisoners also takes them away from their families and the community, as well as the services that are offered in Tompkins County.

He spoke of the space at the Jail and said that because of these variances allowing additional beds, it has limited the ability for other on-site programming. Many of the people in Jail have issues with alcohol, drugs, and mental illness.

In conclusion, he said that even with the study, there will not be easy answers and there will be difficult decisions to make. In the end, not everyone will be happy with the results and decisions that are made. It will be important to optimize available resources to make it better for the taxpayers, inmates, staff, and the community.

One idea he would like the Committee to look at is moving Road Patrol out of the Jail and use that available space for programming on-site, expand the beds to satisfy the State, and having adequate housing for inmates and not boarding people out.

Mr. Dennis and Ms. Kelles thanked Mr. John for his comments. Ms. Kelles said she, too, hopes the Committee will keep an open mind and also spoke of the importance of collaboration and involving the community as there are many experts in the area.

Ms. Robertson also agreed with Mr. John's comments. In addition, she learned today at an Advisory Board on Indigent Representation of a new program called Assertive Community Treatment that a couple of towns here have available and is being paid for by the State. Apparently there is space in the plaza where the Motor Vehicle Department is located, but a lease by the State needs to be signed before this program can be set up for the rest of the County. She also believes this Committee should hear a report about the recent Municipal Courts Task Force study as there may be important information contained in the study that could be beneficial. The Local Conditional Release Board was available many years ago and she believes it is still available and could be looked into again.

Mr. McKenna said he, too, will keep an open mind and that there is a lot the County can do. He further commented that his son is a police officer. At this time, his belief is that the Jail will have to be expanded. He also supports a detox center.

Ms. Kelles spoke of two gaps she has identified. One, there is no drug treatment center and second, there is not a clear comprehensive mental health system in the Jail. She also believes a thorough cost effectiveness analysis of the ATI programs needs to be done. She understands the County cannot do all the ATI programs, but wants to look at the ones that are the most effective.

Mr. Sigler referenced the Detox Unit model by Mr. Miller earlier in the meeting and believes it is worth looking into.

Review of the charge (ID #6567)

Mr. John asked Committee members if there were any comments on the Charge as directed by Chair Lane.

Ms. Robertson requested data on the defense counsel at first arraignment program and a progress report on the proposed LEAD (Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion) program.

Ms. Kelles said she hopes that the quality of the Jail will be part of this Committee's work as

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well. Mr. John agreed and said he would like to request appropriate staff from the Jail attend a meeting to address any issues.

It was the consensus of the Committee that the Charge was acceptable.

Presentation of the Jail Study RFP

Draft RFP for the Criminal Justice/Jail Population study (ID #6569)

Mr. Mareane briefly reviewed the Request for Proposals (RFP) and said the State Commission of Correction agrees with this being the next step. The document communicates the values of the community and how it asks the consultant to go beyond the demographic study. It also includes a review of current and proposed ATI programs and policies.

At this time, the Committee reviewed the document and offered a number of recommendations.

Following the review, it was MOVED by Ms. Kelles, seconded by Ms. Robertson, and unanimously adopted by voice vote, to direct the County Administrator to make the appropriate changes as suggested and circulate it to the Committee via e-mail for a final review prior to releasing it.

Presentation of Current Jail Conditions

Mr. Bunce commented on Mr. Miller's remarks earlier in the meeting and said he agrees with building a Jail around rehab facilities to take care of the population being incarcerated. He also thanked Legislators John and Kelles for their visit to the Jail. The employees work hard at the Jail and spoke of the conditions at the Jail including the overcrowding of inmates. He invited others to attend as well.

The Jail was built in the late 1980's and the style of supervision is linear as compared to new styles of supervision with an open concept of direct supervision. Mr. Bunce spoke of the building issues including the medical office space, storage issues, laundry area, etc. There has been an overcrowding issue at the Jail for 16 years and that has taken a toll on the building itself.

Overall he would like to see a new a Jail with enough space that is humane for the inmates and the employees. Community values and treatment plans are also important. He also said it is important to remember the victims as the people who are at the Jail have allegedly committed a crime that violated a law. He also suggested the Committee could consider holding some of its meetings at the Public Safety Building.

Mr. Bunce spoke of a recent protest at the Jail. This particular group is completely against any prison and any police officer. There were no issues from this protest.

Review of Current ATI Programs

Ms. Cook commented that there is a lot of information that should be shared with this Committee. It will be important to look at all the facts when looking into this.

Ms. Buechel said she too concurs with Mr. Miller's comments made earlier. Probation staff has similar fears and don't want to see loss of lives due to drug overdoses. She said thinking about treatment as a strong option is important and said she also forwarded information from Dutchess County as they have gone through a similar situation with their variances being pulled as well and

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came up with a creative solution. She said she would be happy to discuss with the Committee at a future meeting some of things the Department does.

Consideration of Guests the Committee wants to Invite to Speak

Mr. John asked Committee members to send him any suggestions or information to consider at a future meeting.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 6:45 p.m.