

**Knox County Jail Study Committee  
January 22, 2007 Meeting Minutes  
Knox County Court House**

**I. Meeting convened at 4:30p.m.**

**Committee members present: Don Choquette, Bill Maddox, Tammy Swasey-Ballou, Terry Burgess, Chip Laite, Bruce Boucher, David Hooper and Mark Jensen DO**

**Ex-officio members present: Major John Hinkley, Anne Beebe-Center, Sheriff Donna Dennison and State Rep Chris Rector** The county administrator, William Post attended the first minutes of the meeting in order to introduce new members recently appointed by the Commissioners---Burgess, Boucher, Maddox and David Hooper

**Other: Shirley McAfee--Maine Pretrial Services**

**II. Sheriff Donna Dennison addressed committee. Jail is overflowing with inmates--presently responsible for 91 inmates, 58 at jail, 24 being boarded out and 4 out on bracelets. DOC reps visited jail-- more work to do before variance is approved---more painting mentioned which inmates will do. No date when variance will be in effect. Jail not in good shape---mentioned various deficiencies but most seemed to be minor---lifted tile, painting and hole (s) ? in walls. Bill Maddox requested time to discuss jail problems in general and had questions on some material presented in prior meetings. Committee agreed to defer from regular meeting agenda and to listen to Mr. Maddox's comments--- which resulted in a wide ranging discussion by the whole committee. The Chair acting as secretary could not keep up with a reasonable transcription of the meeting and thus asked Mr. Maddox if he would put his comments in writing, which he agreed to do. Mr. Maddox's theme was that many arbitrary decisions are made to incarcerate inmates and that we could do better.**

**Seriousness of the drug problem was discussed in detail and Dr. Jensen mentioned that even when drug cases are identified and inmates seek help there is a serious shortage of clinicians to provide needed service. Essentially, the problem is money, most inmates cannot pay for needed services either as clients or inmates and when provided by local hospitals, chances are they will not be paid for services rendered. State rep Chris Rector, with regret, stated that chances of more funding are nil considering all the other needs for service in the state budget. Chair was asked to contact Northeast Health and try and find someone who could talk to the Committee or serve on it. Choquette mentioned that an effort will be made to setup a Drug Court in Knox County that would work with Maine Pretrial Services. We also have to find a judge willing to administer the court. A rep from Hancock County will also be asked to speak to the Committee.**

**Feeling seemed to be that we have to find ways to offer a helping hand to addicted inmates---thru charity, religious groups or other local initiatives. There is no easy, short term solution to the drug problem. Choquette stated that he feels we are confronted with a drug epidemic and it is not just Knox County, it involves the mid-coast region and the entire state and country as a whole. Tense discussion lasted until 5:30.**

**Tammy-Swassey Ballou asked for time to address the Committee on the need for new members for the Jail Visitors Board which she chairs. The committee meets quarterly and tours the jail once a year. Some committee members agreed to help solve the problem and a suggestion was also made to request members thru the local newspapers.**

**Agenda Item III. The Chair informed the Committee that the vendor quotes for request for proposal (RFD) for two additional case workers will be opened at 1:00 p.m. on January 26, 2007. A formal request for the two added case workers will be on the Commissioners February 13, 2007 agenda. The Committee's recommendations will be forwarded ASAP, in letter form, to the county administrator. Choquette mentioned that he planned to attend the Commissioners meeting on**

February 13 and other committee members were asked to attend if possible. Choquette stated he would encourage approval or discussion for new Drug Court to work with Maine Pretrial Service or whomever is approved to provide the two new case workers. Once we have a decision on the number of added case workers, this info will be emailed to Rod Miller and Arthur Thompson, our SMRT consultants. This information will permit Rod Miller to provide long term estimates on the number of inmate beds Knox County will need in 20 years. Assumptions may include achievable reductions of bed space from 10, 15 and 20% targets and it may take several months for proposed new actions / programs to gel.

Committee member Chip Laité mentioned several times that the Jail Study Committee needs to progress down several “parallel” paths in order to keep our work on track. The perceived delay in development of a long term inmate forecast should be kept to a minimum since the Jail Committee can pick a number for the beds we think we need and then can “massage” the numbers later. Choquette stated that this has always been the Committee’s course of action and that we have been looking at and discussing alternative courses of action since May, 2007 (review May meeting minutes for an example) and January 7, 2007 dated handout titled, Investment / Program Alternatives---Need to Cost Out / Analyze Options. The County Administrator, William Post, had also prepared a handout for the meeting which included a paragraph on “Boarding Negotiations”---this handout was not distributed at the meeting but is included with the subject meeting minutes. Choquette also mentioned that he was discussing with Rod Miller the costing out of the following scenarios:

1. Projected bed space needs with no additional diversion.
2. Projected bed space needs with mid-amount of impact from expanded programs (from adding two case workers).
3. Projected bed space needs with maximum impact deemed possible from added case workers.

Floor space needs for the Road Patrol, Communications and EMS will be identified separately and will be the same in each scenario.

Discussion followed on when the Committee should schedule the next meeting. The problem being that the quotes for the two new case workers will be opened on January 26 and are scheduled to be on the Commissioners meeting agenda for February 13. In order for the Jail Study Committee to review the quotes and prepare their recommendations to the Commissioners, a meeting would have to be scheduled ASAP after January 26. It was agreed that a special Jail Study Committee meeting would be held on February 7<sup>th</sup> at 4:30p.m. and that a letter of recommendation (s) would be sent to the Commissioners ASAP thereafter.

Quitting time, 6:30 p.m. was approaching and agenda Item IV---discuss Jail Committee plans to inform public of jail history and progress to-date by the Jail Study Committee had not been covered. The Chair had prepared a handout to be used for discussion purposes; this item will be rescheduled for our next regular meeting on February 19. A copy of the discussion paper is attached.

Remember, three important meetings in February:

1. Special Meeting on February 7 at 4:30p.m.
2. Commissioners monthly meeting on February 13 at 9:00 a.m.--will consider two new case workers
3. Regular Jail Study Committee meeting on February 19 at 4:30 p.m.

Meeting adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

Don Choquette, Chair  
January 25, 2007