

**Knox County
Jail Study Committee
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, April 25, 2006**

I. Call to Order

The Jail Study Committee met on Tuesday, April 25, 2006 at the training room at the Sheriff's Office at 4:30 p.m. Sheriff Dan Davey opened the meeting at 4:42 p.m. Committee members present included Don Choquette, Chip Laite, Chief Deputy Todd Butler, Tammy Swasey-Ballou, and Frank Ross. Ex-Officio members present were Sheriff Dan Davey, Representative Chris Rector, Commissioner Lawrence Nash, Commissioner Anne Beebe-Center, Jail Administrator John Hinkley, and County Administrator William Post.

II. Election of Officers.

Sheriff Davey asked for a nomination for Chairman of the committee.

Butler and Laite nominated Don Choquette for chairman. There were no other nominations.

On motion of Butler/Laite, Don Choquette was elected Chairman of the jail Study Committee (Vote: 5 – 0).

Davey asked for nominations for secretary. Choquette suggested that a person not on the committee be asked to take notes and prepare minutes for the committee. It was agreed that the Jail Administrator would ensure that a secretary for the committee was available.

III. Discussion

Background:

Sheriff Davey stated that the population of the jail peaked at 111 inmates. As of this date, the jail was responsible for 91 inmates, with 33 of those being boarded outside the facility. He stated that the jail cannot continue to function with this number of inmates because overcrowding causes a large number of problems for the facility.

Choquette stated that over the past year, without a formal committee in place, information has been gathered to help understand the problem of overcrowding. He stated that the basic problem needs to be understood before it can be solved. The funding for the current facility was obtained through a bond in October 1991. The County has three more payments on the bond, ending in 2009. The current facility is located on 20 acres of land and was originally constructed with the idea that additional modules would be built as needed.

Choquette stated that the committee needs to determine how much of the problem the committee wants to solve. There is a critical lack of space for training, storage, office space, communications, and patrol, as well as the issue of overcrowding in the jail (Exhibit A). The best solution would be to develop a comprehensive plan to house the functions of patrol, jail and communications.

Inmate Population:

Choquette then handed out information on the inmate population in the jail from 1987 to present (Exhibit B). He stated that boarding out inmates in the first quarter of this year has cost over \$125,000, while the budget for board only equals \$325,000 (Exhibit C). The largest problem is the boarding costs for the inmates.

Laite asked if there were national projections for inmate populations, and if, so, those statistics could be used to determine what size facility was needed. Hinkley stated that national projections data can be obtained. Choquette stated that the projected numbers for inmates provided to the Sheriff in the past

proved to be inaccurate (Exhibit D). The best information that the committee can use is to use the facility's population trends.

Swasey-Ballou asked how many beds the Two Bridges Regional Jail (TBRJ) would be constructing in their new facility. Post stated that it would be able to hold 170 inmates. Davey stated that the facility would open with 120 and then have the ability to add 50 additional beds. Post stated that he spoke with the jail administrator at the TBRJ to ensure that they would have space for Knox's inmates and he was assured that there would be space for them.

Choquette then discussed the use of diversion programs and stated that the trend in those being placed in diversion programs is not increasing (Exhibit B). Rector asked which programs are being used for diversion. Davey stated that the jail is very careful with which inmates qualify for the diversion programs and that the jail contracts with Maine Pre-Trial to handle those inmates.

Laite asked the commissioners if discussions with Waldo County about a joint facility were still occurring. Nash stated that he believes that the Waldo is still open to discussion.

Funding Schedule:

Choquette stated that the county funded the current facility through the Maine Municipal Bond Bank and he would expect that would be done again if the county decided to expand the facility or build a new one. Funding through the band bank is available twice a year, in April and October. The application for October would need to be submitted by August 1st and it is not likely that the committee could have all the work done in time for the August deadline but may for the spring application.

Construction/Expansion (SMRT Proposal):

Laite asked what the expansion plan was when the facility was constructed. Hinkley stated that the facility was originally designed to allow for expansion, but adding one more pod will probably not provide adequate space to solve the overcrowding issue (Exhibit E).

Hinkley handed out a proposal from SMRT, Inc., the engineers that designed the facility. They propose two phases of work, with phase one to include establishing bed need projections for the next 20 years including peak projections and classification breakdown of the likely populations, developing a report on the feasible options for expansion and diagramming the most desirable option, determining a range of likely costs and other associated tasks. The estimated cost for phase 1 from SMRT is \$15,000. The committee asked whether this proposal needed to be brought to the commission and whether it needed to go out to bid as it is a specialized service. Post stated that he would check on that aspect.

Choquette stated that the committee needs a written description of what is needed for the facilities that are on the site currently, including the patrol division, the jail and communications. Laite stated that the consultant that is hired should assemble that information. Choquette agreed, but stated that the committee should have a list from the departments because that is the best source of that information and it should be done almost immediately.

Choquette asked if this committee should try to solve the problem of a communications facility. Beebe-Center stated that the county is looking at combining the EMA and Communications Departments. Nash stated that all the space needs should be addressed at once.

Public Relations:

Choquette stated that it is important that the public is informed and supports the committee and its work. Beebe-Center stated that the county does not do a good job of getting awareness out about its successes. Choquette stated that there is an information and public relations problem.

Rector stated that there needs to be a comprehensive media campaign a piece at a time covering the patrol division, the jail, and communications over the next six months to make the public aware of the issues in each area.

Timeline:

Choquette asked if the committee was comfortable in setting a goal of applying to the bond bank in the spring. The committee agreed.

Beebe-Center stated that a timeline could be established with that date in mind. Choquette stated that he would work with Post, Davey and Hinkley on the timeline format. A preliminary outline for an action plan has already been developed (Exhibit F)

Post asked if the committee wanted the proposal from SMRT to be reviewed by the commission at their meeting on May 9th, if it did not need to be put out for bid. The committee agreed that they did. Post stated that he still needed to determine if it needed to be put out to bid first.

Next Meeting:

Choquette stated that the next meeting should be in mid-May. The committee agreed to meet on May 17th at 4:30 p.m.

IV. Adjournment.

The meeting adjourned at 6: 20 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:

William S. Post
County Administrator