

**ALLEGANY COUNTY BOARD OF LEGISLATORS  
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE**

**February 26, 2018**

**CALL TO ORDER:** The meeting was called to order at 9:05 a.m. by Chairman Curtis W. Crandall

**LEGISLATORS PRESENT:** Chairman C. Crandall, G. Barnes, D. Decker, W. Dibble, B. Harris, D. Healy, J. Ricci, P. Stockin (Absent: J. Burdick, P. Curran, D. Fanton K. Graves, J. Hopkins, D. Root)

**OTHERS PRESENT:** D. Bentley, T. Boyde, P. Chamberlain, M. Evans, S. Grusendorf, R. Hartwick, C. Ivers, K. Morsman, R. Swarthout, M. Washer, R. Whitney

**Departmental Presentation and Tour of the Allegany County Jail and Public Safety Facility located at 4884 State Route 19S, Belmont, NY 14813**

Sheriff Rick Whitney introduced some key staff members from his department: Chris Ivers, Jail Administrator; Shawn Grusendorf, Deputy Sheriff Lieutenant; Lt. Kevin Morsman, Assistant Jail Administrator; Randy Hartwick, Accountant; Dawn Bentley, Sergeant; and M. Evans, Radio Technician.

Chairman Crandall began by stating that since the Jail was built, we relied on revenue coming in through housing prisoners outside of the County and asked if they have any concerns with the Federal changes happening. Sheriff Whitney stated there is some concern that they will be bringing in less than they typically do. Sheriff Whitney noted currently they have 55 Federal inmates, and numbers are always down this time of year. Jail Administrator Chris Ivers stated looking at the total population, Allegany County is still at or above 50 percent of our population. Legislator Stockin asked if it is unusual that the individuals from West Clarksville have waited a year to be indicted. Mr. Ivers stated it is unusual, and the Sheriff's Office has reached out to both the attorneys and District Attorney's office throughout the past year making them aware of the situation and asking that things move forward.

Mr. Ivers and Sheriff Whitney led the group throughout the facility. Mr. Ivers noted that they began occupying the Jail, which is a 164-bed direct supervision facility, in August 2006, and because the facility is used 24 hours a day for 365 days a year, its usage life when compared to an office building, is closer to 30 years old rather than the 11 years it's actually been open.

**Briefing/Training Room**

Mr. Ivers stated the employee corridor contains a women and men's locker room as well as a small fitness area available to staff only. All employees must report to the briefing/training room 15 minutes before their shift begins to be briefed on what is going on in the facility (i.e., incoming inmates, transports, policy changes, etc.). There are three shifts; 7:45 a.m., 3:45 p.m., and 11:45 p.m. Legislator Decker asked how transports are handled. Mr. Ivers stated two officers take one County vehicle, and they will bill 24 hours of maximum overtime plus federal mileage for use of the vehicle. The entire cost of the trip is billed and covered. Additional discussion was held regarding the process of transporting of inmates.

**Laundry Facility**

The group viewed the laundry room, and Mr. Ivers stated laundry is done seven days a week by working inmates.

## **Kitchen**

The tour continued to the industrial kitchen that contains a walk-in cooler and freezer. The Jail partners with the NYS Department of Correctional and Community Services who has a food service facility in Oneida County that has a capacity of 64,000 meals a day. Through them, they buy cook-chill products to supplement their menu. These food products are a relatively low cost and also fit well into their program allowing them to keep costs down while offering decent food during the holidays or on a Sunday. Mr. Ivers noted that part of their mission is to return people to the community in a better condition than they left it. If they enter jail and are treated poorly, it is likely they will enter back into the community in the same manner. Food service, human contact, access to programs, and counseling are all part of that mission to get these people in better condition when they re-enter the community. Legislator Decker asked how many pounds of vegetables they grew in the garden. Mr. Ivers stated a little over 16,000, and all of it is typically processed and utilized at the Jail. Legislator Healy commended the cleanliness of the kitchen, emphasizing the importance of it which is something that is difficult to maintain. Mr. Ivers thanked Legislator Healy and stated they have regular scheduled maintenance that contributes to the cleanliness of the kitchen. Legislator Ricci asked if inmates are cleaning the kitchen. Mr. Ivers stated, yes, anything they can clean in-house they do; however, the kitchen stack is hired out. Legislator Healy asked if there are trustees working through the facility. Mr. Ivers stated, yes, there are working inmates in the laundry facility, kitchen, and during the summer months they are outside working in the garden, picking up garbage, along with other community projects. In 2017, they had approximately 22,000 hours of working inmate labor. Legislator Healy asked how many inmates are currently incarcerated as well as how many total employees they have. Sheriff Whitney stated there are 103 inmates, and there are a little less than 150 employees which includes cooks, dispatchers, support staff, etc.

## **Contact Visitation**

The tour continued to the contact visitation area. Mr. Ivers stated that New York State Commission of Correction requires they have two one-hour contact visits per inmate per week. Visitations are held on Saturday and Sundays, and the Jail asks that individuals call and make an appointment. Commission states that they cannot prohibit individuals from walking in; however, it is more inconvenient to those who just show up, and you may be only allowed a non-contact visit. Mr. Ivers stated that while they do want to help these inmates get better and return them to the community better than when they left, it is still jail, and they are dealing with individuals who are making poor life decisions and more than likely are hanging out with individuals who are not making good decisions. The group discussed the issue of drugs and paraphernalia being brought in and passed to inmates as well as steps that are taken by the Jail to minimize it. Mr. Ivers noted that the general public is not allowed to stop by and drop off items to inmates. All items have to be sent from a vendor in a sealed, unopened package which is then inspected by administration and delivered to the inmate if deemed appropriate. Legislator Decker asked if conjugal visits are allowed. Mr. Ivers stated, never. They do allow marriages, but they are done in-house by a Correction Officer or Sergeant.

## **Intake**

The group visited the intake area and discussed the process of inmates coming in. Mr. Ivers stated this is where individuals are given a questionnaire (i.e., are you sick, are you on any meds, are you sad/depressed, have you been taking drugs or drinking) to get a baseline of where the person coming in is at. If the individual is sad/depressed they will be placed on a 24-hour watch in a suicide smock until they are feeling better and cleared by mental health. There is a cell that contains a restraint chair for any individuals coming in that are a danger to themselves or others. If placed in the restraint chair they have to be seen by medical every 15 minutes and released from the chair every four hours. Mr. Ivers noted it typically only takes an hour for the individual to be ready to be released. The facility also administers pepper spray which is effective in capturing the attention of

individuals coming in and causing problems. Chairman Crandall asked if there are individuals who only have to sit in intake. Mr. Ivers stated, yes, if someone makes bail. Chairman Crandall asked how long before the individual is moved to general population. Mr. Ivers stated they need a minimum of three days to classify them and move them into general population. Legislator Healy asked if classification is required by the state. Mr. Ivers stated, yes, it is required by the state; however, each jail runs their classification system differently. Legislator Barnes asked if there have been any suicides. Mr. Ivers stated, no, there have been attempts which is why they have officers do rounds every 30 minutes. Legislator Ricci asked how drug addicts are handled and if they are automatically cut off cold turkey when they come in. Mr. Ivers stated they are actively involved in that conversation right now. Mr. Ivers addressed the presentation done in Allegany County by Erie County Executives proposing the administration of Suboxone to substitute weaning individuals off. Philosophically, they detox people coming in by taking them off the drugs and not providing them anymore. Mr. Ivers noted they are currently certified to offer Suboxone to wean individuals off when they come in. Currently, it is not being offered as they are still working on a policy to administer it. The Jail facility does not believe in complete substitution therapy; therefore, they will only allow one to three days to help them feel a little less sick, and then they are done receiving it. It was asked how the Jail will handle the administration of Suboxone to repeat offenders. Mr. Ivers stated they will have to administer it every time. The current issue with the step down drug is that there needs to be a doctor in the community who will take responsibility for that prescription. Currently the County does not have one because it is a huge undertaking and issue to manage. Lt. Morsman stated the other issue is that doctors tend to keep individuals on Suboxone longer than the three days; sometimes months, and now the individual has become reliant on that.

### **Property Room**

The group toured the property room. Mr. Ivers stated property is important, and they do well with managing it. Mr. Ivers discussed the different processes and procedures with how property is handled for the different types of inmates. Mr. Ivers addressed the extensive DVD collection at the Jail, stating inmates can receive movies; however, it is not considered their property. They agree that once it's open, they donate it back to the facility when they leave. Legislator Decker asked how long they have to maintain records. Mr. Ivers stated, forever. They do have a digital system that is backed up daily, and they do have some paper records that are maintained. Legislator Decker then asked if they can use County storage or if everything has to remain at the Jail. Mr. Ivers stated they utilize storage at the Landfill and also have high density storage at the Jail.

### **Medical Suite**

The tour continued to the Medical Suite where Mr. Ivers introduced their Nurse Practitioner Cheryl Ralyea. Once an individual comes in, they are responsible for their medical needs (i.e. unmanaged diabetes, unmanaged hepatitis). Mr. Ivers stated they do have a dentist that comes in once a month; however, they are not a full service dental office. It is simply pull a tooth or basic filling to save the tooth. There are no advanced dental procedures done. Mr. Ivers address the criticism they have received for not doing extensive shopping for a pharmacy, stating Nicholson's Pharmacy in Belmont, NY, is competitive with some of the bigger pharmacies, and we're also spending money in Allegany County which is important. Lt. Morsman added that they have had times where inmates come in on the weekends and Nicholson's is willing to open up for them which is not something they will find with a big city pharmacy. Mr. Ivers noted that it's important to remember as well that we are not a county that has access to 24-hour pharmacies, and they have a really good relationship with Nicholson's for their needs. Legislator Healy asked what happens in the chance they can't reach Nicholson's. Mr. Ivers stated if it's an urgent need, they would contact the Jones Memorial Hospital pharmacy, but they have not run into that instance. Legislator Healy then asked if the inmates are seen within the first 24 hours of arriving. Mr. Ivers stated Commission of Correction requires they be seen within the first 14 days; however, it is the Jail's policy they been seen by a doctor within 24 hours. Lt. Morsman stated the shape some of these inmates are in when they arrive, you're opening

yourself up to liability waiting 14 days. Mr. Ivers indicated that the Comptroller's Office recently did an assessment of how the Commission of Correction is managing grievances, and 25 percent of all grievances that went to the state were medical related, adding that the Allegany County Jail has zero medical grievances. Legislator Harris asked what percentage of inmates are on at least one prescribed medication. Mr. Ivers stated 50 to 60 percent, noting that they do well with saying no and advocating for what the inmates really need and what they just want. Legislator Decker asked how pregnant inmates are handled. Mr. Ivers stated they do not accept pregnant inmates from outside counties. If they are from Allegany County they are required to take them, and they have good policies in place. Mr. Ivers indicated it can be dangerous managing pregnant inmates because you have an additional life to care for. Sheriff Whitney added there are also new rules in place where you cannot restrain pregnant inmates unless you can prove they are danger. Legislator Barnes asked if they have any situations where individuals purposely get arrested for the medical care. Mr. Ivers stated it is likely so, but not something they actively see.

### **Housing Units – Pod A and Pod B**

Mr. Ivers continued the tour to Pod A – Admissions Discipline Special Housing. It is a 24-cell housing unit with sub-day rooms that allow them to manage multiple classifications with a single officer. Legislator Harris asked what classifications are considered special housing. Mr. Ivers provided examples of transgender, sex offender, and/or special needs. Mr. Ivers gave a brief description of inmate commissary accounts, stating they can choose to buy snacks outside regular meals, candy bars, ramen noodles...etc. The profit from those purchase goes into the Jail Property Account and they are required to use it for inmate welfare (i.e. TV's, DVD's, exercise equipment, games, books, working inmate program supplies, etc.). Lt. Morsman stated that rec yards are the single most problematic place in a facility, and the way our Jail rec yard is set up we don't have the problems of fights, contraband, etc. There is no hourly limit to the rec yard with the exception of inmates who are in discipline. Chairman Crandall asked how often inmates are required to get up and move around. Mr. Ivers stated Pod A is treated a little differently. Inmates are required to stand for head count which happens three times a day, they have to stand for medications, and have to take a shower every day.

Mr. Ivers continued the tour to Pod B – Male General Housing. Mr. Ivers discussed the difference in space between Pod B and Pod A, stating it's bigger, more open, and easier to manage. The rec yard in Pod A contains exercise equipment that was purchased with federal government grant money. The group discussed the exposure inmates have to the outdoors and the effects it has on inmates who are in jail short-term versus long-term.

### **E-911 Dispatch Center**

The group toured the E-911 Dispatch Center where Dispatcher Penny Chamberlain discussed their processes and procedures and walked the group through what happens during a typical call. Legislator Healy asked about locaters for emergency responding vehicles. Ms. Chamberlain stated they are currently looking into this as they believe it would be very helpful in cases of a serious domestic situation to be able to locate the nearest vehicle. Chairman Crandall asked how they handle calls that come in from outside the County. Ms. Chamberlain stated depending on the seriousness of the situation, they either transfer to the individual's county dispatch or will assist them. Legislator Barnes asked if there is a difference in receiving calls from a landline versus a cell phone. Ms. Chamberlain stated when a call comes in from a landline, they are able to obtain everything they need to know (i.e. name, address, who their police dispatch is, etc.) whereas with cell phone calls, that information is not available. Ms. Chamberlain showed an example of receiving landline and the capability they have of pulling up the person's location on a map. Legislator Healy commented on the importance of E-911 Dispatch and getting people the appropriate help they need. Ms. Chamberlain indicated they are always looking for part-time and full-time Dispatchers.

## **Arrest and Evidence Processing**

The tour continued to the arrest and evidence processing room where the group briefly discussed storage of evidence. Legislator Dibble asked if they have adequate storage. Lt. Grusendorf stated for the most part, yes; however, it does get full from time to time.

## **Discussion**

The group had a brief question and answer after the walkthrough tour. Legislator Harris asked what their strategy is for Raise the Age. Mr. Ivers indicated they have a meeting coming up and anticipate waiting to see how other counties are going to handle it. Lt. Morsman noted there are not enough beds to accommodate it. Legislator Barnes asked what the smoking policy is. Sheriff Whitney stated no smoking is allowed. If they receive an inmate who is a heavy smoker, they are cut off cold turkey when they arrive. Legislator Stockin asked about providing the inmates with tablets. Mr. Ivers stated they are talking about it, and indicated it will be a good source of revenue because the inmates will have to pay for its use. Mr. Ivers discussed the benefits the tablets will provide in monitoring what the inmates are doing and stated the tablets will be considered a privilege that the inmates will get in the mornings, adding once the battery dies they lose it until the next day. The group discussed any possible security issues they may pose. Legislator Decker asked where the inmates get money to pay for them. Mr. Ivers stated it would come from their commissary account. Legislator Healy asked if family and friends are allowed to deposit to an inmates account. Mr. Ivers stated, yes, and they are also still required to accept money orders. Mr. Ivers briefly explained the policies and procedures of commissary accounts.

## **ADJOURNMENT:**

The tour was ended at 11:45 a.m., and the group was served lunch by kitchen staff at the Sheriff's Office.

Respectfully submitted,

Meghan Washer, Confidential Secretary to Clerk of the Board  
Allegany County Board of Legislators