

**WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

**COMMITTEE: COUNTY FACILITIES**

**DATE: MAY 26, 2009**

---

---

| <b>COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:</b> | <b>OTHERS PRESENT:</b>   |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| SUPERVISORS THOMAS                | WILLIAM LAMY, SUPERINTENDENT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS   |
| O'CONNOR                          | FRANK MOREHOUSE, SUPERINTENDENT OF BUILDINGS                     |
| CHAMPAGNE                         | JEFFERY TENNYSON, DEPUTY SUPERINTENDENT OF ENGINEERING           |
| VANNESS                           | FRED AUSTIN, BUILDING PROJECT COORDINATOR                        |
| GIRARD                            | FREDERICK MONROE, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD                          |
| GOODSPEED                         | PAUL DUSEK, COUNTY ATTORNEY                                      |
| PITKIN                            | HAL PAYNE, COMMISSIONER OF ADMINISTRATIVE & FISCAL SERVICES      |
|                                   | JOAN SADY, CLERK OF THE BOARD                                    |
|                                   | KEVIN GERAGHTY, BUDGET OFFICER                                   |
|                                   | SUPERVISORS BENTLEY  |
|                                   | STRAINER   |
|                                   | TESSIER  |
|                                   | BUD YORK, SHERIFF  |
|                                   | SHEILA WEAVER, COMMISSIONER OF THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES |
|                                   | KATHLEEN HOGAN, DISTRICT ATTORNEY                                |
|                                   | ROBERT IUSI, DIRECTOR OF THE PROBATION DEPARTMENT                |
|                                   | CHARLENE DIRESTA, SR. LEGISLATIVE OFFICE SPECIALIST              |

---

---

Mr. Thomas called the meeting of the County Facilities Committee to order at 12:05 p.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Champagne, seconded by Mr. O'Connor and carried unanimously to approve the minutes of the previous Committee meeting, subject to correction by the Clerk of the Board.

Mr. Thomas advised that due to the fact that there were Department Heads present to discuss a possible use for the old jail, the Committee would proceed with that portion of the agenda.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Kathleen Hogan, District Attorney (DA), who advised that the DA's Office and the Department of Social Services (DSS) had been working to eliminate fraud perpetrated by some recipients of Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) benefits. She said that as part of the narcotics enforcement, they needed a way to ensure that drug dealers were unable to fraudulently claim the need for temporary housing, in order to secure a place to deal drugs. She apprised the Committee that as a result of several discussions with representatives from the DSS, the DA's Office, the Probation Department and the Sheriff's Office, they had developed an idea to convert the old jail into temporary assistance housing units, as opposed to expending the funds to

have the recipients reside in local hotels. She advised that the TANF applicants would be able to walk across the parking lot to the old jail, as opposed to the County having to pay the cost of a taxi cab transporting the applicants to a local hotel. She added that the plans would need to include a way to encapsulate the asbestos and install sheetrock over the lead paint.

Ms. Hogan stated that the average number of people on TANF benefits was 25 to 30 persons per week. She said that if the County housed the recipients of TANF benefits in the old jail, the savings would be approximately \$500,000 per year, not including the cost of transportation. She added that housing the recipients in the old jail would allow the County to comply with their obligation to provide safe housing, as well as discourage recipients from abusing the benefits. She advised that when the recipients were housed in local hotels they received luxuries, such as housekeeping services and cable television, which deterred any motivation to improve their situation. Ms. Hogan added that one person had stayed at the Red Roof Inn using TANF benefits for a period of 19 months, which had cost the County in excess of \$7,000. She stated that to qualify for TANF benefits it was necessary to report to the Social Services Department every Wednesday by 1:00 p.m. to confirm that they had investigated 10 employment opportunities and 10 housing opportunities.

Ms. Hogan questioned the cost per week to house a person in a local hotel and Sheila Weaver, Commissioner of the DSS, responded that the average cost was \$300 per week and \$450 per week in the summer. Ms. Weaver advised that the location of the Madden Hotel was desirable for some of the more unscrupulous TANF recipients, due to the high number of bars and the accessibility to drug dealers. She added that one of the benefits to housing the recipients in the old jail was that the location was devoid of bars and drug dealers.

Ms. Hogan apprised the Committee that there were three issues that she predicted would arise if the County decided to convert the old jail into temporary housing, which she listed as follows:

1. the concern of the total cost of the project;
2. would the location isolate the recipients from potential employment and housing opportunities; and
3. the reaction of the residents of Courthouse Estates.

Ms. Hogan said that she was unsure of the total costs; however, she added, if there were issues that could not be overcome, then they would not proceed with the project. She advised that an increase in the frequency of the Glens Falls Transit bus runs would ensure transportation to and from potential employment interviews. Ms. Hogan voiced her opinion that the people who would utilize the temporary housing in the old jail were already making trips to and from the Municipal Center for court appearances or probation appointments; therefore, she continued, their presence in the area had already been accepted by the residents of Courthouse Estates.

Mr. VanNess said that he had spoken with Ms. Hogan, Ms. Weaver, Sheriff York and Robert Iusi, Director of the Probation Department, regarding to this concept. He added that he felt that the idea was worth exploring. He stated that he had attended an Open Door meeting a few weeks ago, at which he had been informed of \$22.4 million in available funding, although one of the restrictions had been that the funding could not be used for construction or rehabilitation of buildings. He advised that there was other funding available for construction and rehabilitation of buildings and if the Committee considered converting the old jail into temporary housing, they should research if such funding was available to assist with the asbestos abatement and the rehabilitation of the old jail.

Mr. VanNess stated that he felt that a program administrator would be necessary to oversee the temporary housing in the old jail. He said that if temporary housing was less desirable, the recipients would be motivated to improve their situation and he added that there was not a law that required those in temporary housing to be provided with luxuries, such as television. He advised that the old jail was heated in the winter but did not have air conditioning for the summer months. He continued that if the concept could save the County taxpayers \$500,000, then it needed to be explored.

Referring to recipients of TANF benefits who had a criminal background, Ms. Hogan stated that the close proximity of the Sheriff's Office would have a deterrent effect on crimes being committed while in temporary housing. Mr. VanNess interjected that the expectation of privacy would be limited for temporary housing in the old jail; however, he added, in the hotel rooms the recipients were able to have unauthorized guests and had more privacy. He said that monitoring abusers of the system would be more effective in the old jail. Mr. Girard stated that sex offenders were difficult to place in housing and employment situations and asked if they would be placed in the temporary housing in the old jail. Ms. Weaver responded that the County was obligated to provide housing for the homeless regardless of circumstances. She added that it was difficult to provide permanent housing for sex offenders, due to the restrictions as to where they could reside. She said that the temporary housing would be utilized by sex offenders, drug addicts, and people who were for whatever reason temporarily homeless.

Mr. Champagne questioned if they were discussing reconfiguring the jail cells and providing a microwave and refrigerator. Ms. Weaver responded that they did not need to provide a refrigerator and added that there would be separate rooms with a common bathroom.

Discussion ensued.

Mr. Goodspeed asked if the average of 25 to 30 people per week included any families with children and Ms. Weaver responded that they had an average of one family per month with one to two children which would require an area separate from the sex offenders. Mr. VanNess noted that the old jail was currently configured so that there were separate

sections for males and females and would allow the County to keep the sex offenders separate from the families. Mr. Goodspeed said that he was concerned that the cost would be prohibitive. He stated that although some of the recipients on TANF benefits were sex offenders and drug dealers, it was important to acknowledge that some were individuals and families who had become temporarily indigent and required assistance. He added that it was one thing to monitor a person who had an issue with drug abuse or who was a sex offender but the County should not apply the same standard to indigent families. Mr. VanNess noted that it would still be necessary to cover the cost of families staying in a hotel room; however, he added, \$660,000 had been expended on TANF benefits in 2008 and converting the old jail to temporary housing would significantly reduce that amount. Ms. Weaver stated that the people who received TANF benefits had to sign an agreement, which required them to search for employment and housing, did not allow them to have guests in their room or use drugs or alcohol. She added that the DSS performed sporadic checks after hours.

Mr. Girard advised that the program cost approximately \$500,000 per year, of which \$250,000 was reimbursed by the State or Federal government and he asked if the County would qualify for reimbursement if they had their own temporary housing. Ms. Weaver responded that she was investigating the rules for reimbursement; however, she added, she believed the County would continue to qualify for some amount of reimbursement.

Discussion ensued pertaining to the potential cost of the project and the possible need for additional staffing.

Following the discussion, it was the consensus of the Committee that they would investigate the feasibility of proceeding with the concept of converting the old jail into temporary housing units and the availability of State or Federal funding to cover the cost of rehabilitating the old jail.

Ms. Hogan, Mr. Iusi and Sheriff York exited the meeting at 12:45 p.m.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Frank Morehouse, Superintendent of Buildings, who distributed copies of the agenda to the Committee members; *a copy of the agenda is on file with the minutes.*

Mr. Morehouse stated that the next item on the agenda was to update the Committee on the progress of the construction of the Human Services Building. He said that the interior walls were being constructed, although the installation of the sheetrock had been postponed due to the damp weather. He advised that the majority of the duct, plumbing and electrical work had been completed and it was probable that they could begin occupying the building in October. Hal Payne, Commissioner of Administrative & Fiscal Services, noted that they would still need to pay rent on the Medicaid office space until December 31, 2009 and for the Office for the Aging (OFA) until February 2010.

Ms. Weaver exited the meeting at 12:47 p.m.

William Lamy, Superintendent of the Department of Public Works (DPW), apprised the Committee that they had auctioned items from the Gaslight Village Property online and had received revenue of approximately \$5,000.

Mr. Thomas stated that the next item on the agenda was to discuss the concept of moving some departments to the third floor of the Human Services Building, in order to use their current offices for additional court space. He said that it had been suggested that the Employment & Training Administration (ETA) and the Department of Labor should remain at the Northway Plaza and the Planning Department, the Board of Elections and the fiscal employees in the Public Health Department should be moved to the third floor of the Human Services Building. He added that if the Planning Department was relocated, the northern portion of the Municipal Center could be used as dedicated court space. Mr. Payne interjected that the rent for office space at the Northway Plaza, which was approximately \$156,000 per year, was paid using Federal funds. He added that the County could charge the Department of Labor a similar rent if they were to be relocated to the Human Services Building and those funds could be applied to the debt service for the bond. He stated that the cost of the building was approximately \$17.5 million and the annual payment on the bond would be \$1.3 million for 20 years; \$1.2 million for 25 years; or \$1 million for 30 years.

Mr. Payne apprised the Committee that if the first floor of the Municipal Center north of the elevator was secured for the courts, it would save money in the future, due to the fact that the Office of Court Administration (OCA) would cover the cost of the renovations. Mr. O'Connor stated that the government would discontinue the payment for renting office space for the OFA and the ETA if the offices were relocated on campus. Mr. Payne said that he had received a letter from William Resse, Director of the ETA, who had inquired with the State and had been informed that the State had indicated that they anticipated paying rent to the County if the ETA was relocated; however, he added, there was no formal documentation at this time other than a letter of intent. Chairman Monroe stated that the insufficient space for the courts needed to be addressed and it was preferable to renovate existing County office space as it would be partially reimbursable, as opposed to new construction which would not qualify for reimbursement. He added that he had discussed the concept with the Honorable David Krogmann, Supreme Court Judge, who was in favor of the idea. Mr. Morehouse suggested that if the concept were considered, the Space Committee should hold a meeting to discuss the particulars.

Mr. Payne reiterated that if the space was designated as court space, the OCA would cover the cost of the renovations following six months of occupancy. He advised that in the space currently occupied by the Planning & Community Development Department, there was a conference room and five offices which would make the space usable by the courts, as is. Mr. Morehouse said that he did not believe that a judge would be willing to use the space; however, he added, the courts needed two conference rooms and a second jury deliberation room.

Discussion ensued.

Mr. Goodspeed noted that two of the three courts did not have an overcrowding issue. He advised that they should not construct a new courtroom, rather they should make better use of the existing two courtrooms and should use the space currently occupied by the Planning & Community Development Department, as office space for the new judge. Mr. Payne stated that the Public Health Department was overcrowded and relocating the fiscal employees of the Department would alleviate some of the issue. Mr. Girard advised that the space should be designated as court space and the courts should use the space as it exists until they had occupied it for the required length of time for the OCA to cover the costs of renovations. Mr. Morehouse pointed out that the OCA would not pay for renovations to the stairways or elevator. Mr. VanNess stated that they were required to have two exits from the second floor and therefore they would need to find a way to allow the second floor access to the north stairway and exit, while still securing the court area. Mr. Payne said that the door at the top of the north stairway could be alarmed and would only be used for emergencies, such as fire drills. He stated that they had also discussed relocating the Board of Elections (BOE) to the third floor of the Human Services Building in order to make more space available due to possible security issues. He said that if the BOE was relocated, anyone who visited the office would have to go through the magnetometer and up an elevator to the third floor. Mr. Thomas questioned if voters would be required to go through the magnetometer in order to vote and Mr. Payne responded that Room 6-103 in the Municipal Center could continue to be used as a polling place.

Motion was made by Mr. VanNess, seconded by Mr. Pitkin and carried unanimously to relocate the Planning & Community Development Department, the Board of Elections and the fiscal employees of the Public Health Department to the third floor of the Human Services Building; to have the Employment and Training Administration and the Department of Labor remain in their current location; and to designate the first floor of the Municipal Center Building north of the elevator as court space.

Mr. Morehouse stated that the next item on the agenda pertained to access control for the new electronic locks on the Municipal Center Building doors. He said that the Buildings & Grounds Department currently handled the issuing of keys for the Municipal Center and he believed that they should also issue the electronic key fobs for the new electronic locks. He said that he would need guidance as to who should have access to the building and at which times. He added that there would be three separate access time periods: from 7:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.; 4:00 p.m. to 12:00 a.m.; and one for 24 hours a day. He suggested that the Department Heads should decide which of their employees should have access to the building and during which time periods. Mr. Champagne interjected that the lists prepared by the Department Heads should be approved by Mr. Payne prior to issuing the key fobs. Mr. Payne suggested that he and Mr. Morehouse meet with the Department Heads to determine which employees should have access.

Mr. Thomas said that when the bond on the Human Services Building was issued, the demolition of the Social Services Building had been removed from the project, in order to reduce the total project costs. He apprised the Committee that once the Social Services

Department vacated the building, they would need to decide if they wanted to demolish the building or merely board it up. He noted that if the building remained vacant there was a risk of vandalism. He added that if they decided to demolish the building they would need to salvage items, such as heat pumps.

Following a brief discussion, it was the consensus of the Committee to discuss the Social Services Building at the next meeting to determine if the building should be demolished or boarded up.

As there was no further business to come before the County Facilities Committee, on motion made by Mr. Champagne and seconded by Mr. VanNess, Mr. Thomas adjourned the meeting at 1:18 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Charlene DiResta, Sr. Legislative Office Specialist