



**OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL
RESEARCH DIVISION**

117 WEST DUVAL STREET, SUITE 425
4TH FLOOR, CITY HALL
JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA 32202
904-255-5137

**SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO REVIEW JSO PRIMARY FACILITIES
WORKING GROUP ON EXTENDED AND DIVERSE DETENTION**

Meeting Minutes

**September 22, 2023
10:00 a.m.**

Location: Don Davis Room, 1st floor, City Hall

In attendance: Council Member Chris Miller (Chair)

Also: Council Member Michael Boylan; Jeff Clements – Council Research Division; Carla Lopera – Office of General Counsel; Assistant Chief Adrian O’Neal – JSO Department of Corrections; Dan Lee – Perry McCall Construction

Meeting Convened: 10:04 a.m.

Chairman Miller convened the meeting and announced that the name of the Working Group has been changed to Housing and Custody. He invited Special Committee Chair Michael Boylan to provide an overview of his expectations for the working group. CM Boylan emphasized the wide variety of persons held in custody in the jail and the variety of housing needs they represent. He thanked the subject matter experts for their participation and expertise. Chairman Miller said he would not be appointing a co-chair to the working group and will have the subject matter experts around the table as active participants. He reviewed the working group’s charge. The first two sessions (today and October 13, 8 a.m.) will look at current conditions; the third and fourth sessions (November 3rd and December 1st, and more if needed) will look at recommendations for the future.

Other attendees in the audience introduced themselves: Mike Smith – 4th Circuit Court Technology Officer; Bruce Fouraker – Watson Commercial Realty; Annie Sieger – North East Florida Regional Council. Carla Lopera of the Office of General Counsel gave an overview of the state’s Government in the Sunshine Law and its application to the working group. Since only Chairman Miller is an official working group member, the rest of the subject matter experts are not subject to the Sunshine Law. She

recommended that everyone retain any written or electronic documents they may create to be as public records subject to disclosure under the state's public records law.

Assistant Chief O'Neal said the original jail capacity when constructed was 2,189 beds, now it is 2,625 through the use of triple-bed cells. There are 7 housing floors in the pre-trial detention facility: the lower level houses county court-sentenced working (2 dorms) and non-working (1 dorm) inmates; the first floor contains overflow housing and the medical housing dorm; the second floor houses non-violent and misdemeanor inmates (16 small dorms of 12 cells with 3 bunks each); the third floor houses the female inmate population; the fourth floor houses state-sentenced inmates (some long-term in certain circumstances) in large dorms and some violent felons; the fifth floor houses violent felons; the sixth floor houses a variety of specialized confinement inmates (mental health, disciplinary, self-harm, administrative) and juvenile inmates. Any juveniles in the jail have been adjudicated as adults; others not adjudicated as adults are held at the Juvenile Detention Center. Assistant Chief O'Neal said the Montgomery Correctional Center on Lannie Road today houses 440 inmates for whom there is no capacity in the jail. It is not a maximum-security facility like the jail, so that impacts the type of inmates who can be housed there.

In response to a question from Chairman Miller, Assistant Chief O'Neal described the use of portable bedding units which has inmates sleeping in the open area of the dorm rather than in closed cells. In response to another question, Assistant Chief O'Neal talked about the use of inmate work details. Those details used to work out of the Montgomery Correctional Center. Since there are now so many pre-trial inmates housed at Montgomery, there are many fewer inmates in that facility eligible for the work details. The work furlough program was suspended during the COVID pandemic and has not been restarted because of the housing problem at Montgomery. Assistant Chief O'Neal also discussed the Matrix drug rehab program for county sentenced prisoners and some volunteer participants. The program takes 4 months to complete after which the offender transitions to another housing facility or is released.

CM Boylan said it is important to recognize the changing nature of the inmate population and what that means for the design and capacity of a future facility, especially such as the growth in the female population. Bruce Fouraker suggested that future planning should consider options for separate housing for violent offenders. Chairman Miller said that JSO internal working groups have been considering proposals for planning for a new detention facility. He listed several of the ideas being considered: no dorms larger than 12 cells housing a total of 24-36 inmates; separate building for housing juveniles; appropriate interview rooms for law enforcement to interview inmates; new arrival housing area to house detainees until arraignment takes place; ability to directly supervise dorms; video courtrooms for first appearance and civil proceeding hearings; separate building for mental health inmates with room for step-down protocol; use of current Community Transition Center for intake and temporary pre-arraignment housing.

Mike Smith, 4th Circuit Court Technology Officer, talked about the technology currently in use for intake and first appearances. There is a first appearance courtroom at the jail now for initial arraignment, but there is insufficient capacity to handle pre-trial hearings. Virtual hearings work well for civil and family court proceedings, and everything was done remotely during the COVID pandemic. He noted that there are multiple computer systems – Clerk of Courts, JSO, State Attorney, Public Defender – that don't all work together smoothly all the time. The construction of new facilities offers an opportunity to take that issue into account and potentially unify all the systems so they work better, faster and more accurately and reduce the need to transport paper files from one place to another. CM Boylan asked if there are examples of such unified systems. Mr. Smith said there are some jurisdictions that do it better than Jacksonville, but there's always the problem of each agency insisting on their independence and use of their own system. There are ways to make things better if everyone would be willing to compromise and Chief Judge Lance Day is anxious to see that happen.

Chairman Miller asked Assistant Chief O’Neal to discuss the arraignment and first hearing process and its challenges with transporting inmates. The Assistant Chief said inmates are transported from the jail and Montgomery Correctional Center to the courthouse and back 5 days a week, as many as 200-300 a day, many of whom never see a judge on that trip. There is a lot of unnecessary movement of inmates that could be handled in a different way. CM Boylan said that in thinking about a new facility, consideration needs to be given to food preparation and service, medical care, parking, employee facilities, etc. The problem is much larger than just housing inmates.

Dan Lee of Perry McCall said his participation in the industry has mostly been in the construction end of correctional facilities, not so much on the planning end as this group is discussing. He will provide the group with copies a very good publication he’s been reading that discusses planning for the design and operation of correctional facilities. In response to a question from Chairman Miller, Mr. Lee said the current trend in correctional facilities is to build low-rise buildings with multiple specialized wings or multiple facilities for different functions and types of inmates. He said you can’t determine what the design will be until you decide where the facility will be located – the size and configuration of the site will drive what is feasible to construct. Mr. Miller said he believes that low-rise facilities will be the better option and provide for easier operations.

Chairman Miller thanked Chairman Boylan and Council President Salem for utilizing the model of a Council special committee with working groups and subject matter experts to examine this important issue and hopes that it will be used as the method for tackling other major issues in the city.

Public Comment

Bruce Fouraker asked Chief O’Neal if there are prisoner showers in the courthouse ; there are not. He asked Mr. Lee about the effectiveness of vacuum plumbing systems in multi-story correctional facilities in preventing the current jail flooding issues. Mr. Lee said he had no knowledge about vacuum plumbing systems.

The Chair asked CM Boylan about what specific issues he would like to see the working group cover in its upcoming meetings. Mr. Boylan suggested the following: 1) get a clear breakdown of the current number of populations of different inmate types and projections of how those populations are expected to change in the future; 2) determine how well is the current facility is operating – housing, food, transportation, staff facilities, DCPS school facility , courtrooms, JSO correctional officer needs (locker room, showers, meeting rooms, etc.). Mr. Lee asked what is the ultimate goal of the working group. Chairman Miller said to evaluate how housing and custody is currently working and ultimately what would we like to see in a new facility(s). This is one of five working groups looking at all aspects of the jail and its operations with the goal of developing a work program for the best possible future facility.

The next meeting will be on October 13th at 8 a.m.

Meeting adjourned: 11:24 a.m.

Minutes: Jeff Clements, Council Research Division
jeffc@coj.net 904-255-5137
9.22.23 Posted 3:30 p.m.