



**OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL  
RESEARCH DIVISION**

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

**SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO REVIEW JSO PRIMARY FACILITIES:  
WORKING GROUP ON INTAKE, ADJUDICATION AND REHABILITATION**

**Meeting Minutes**

**October 13, 2023  
9:00 a.m.**

**Location:** Lynwood Roberts Room, 1<sup>st</sup> floor, City Hall

**In attendance:** Council Members Jimmy Peluso and Michael Boylan; Charlie Cofer, Public Defender; Asst. Chief Deborah Wesley, JSO; Coral Messina, SAO; Reggie Fullwood, Operation New Hope; David Kilcrease, MHOP and former JSO Assistant Chief; Eve Janocko, Court Administrator (Zoom)

**Also:** Brooks Dame, District 7 ECA; Colleen Hampsey, Council Research Division

**Meeting Convened:** 9:00 a.m.

Chairman Peluso convened the meeting and called for introductions. He spoke about his recent tour of the courthouse and the complex level of organization involved in the daily activities there. CM Boylan concurred, and he commented on the advantage of proximity between the courthouse and the jail. There was some discussion about first appearance hearings and whether it would be better to return to in-person proceedings held at the jail as they were pre-Covid.

Charlie Cofer, Public Defender, shared his viewpoint on the benefits of in-person first appearances. He said that format makes resolving misdemeanors easier and that separating clients from legal representation negatively impacts the number of cases resolved. Mr. Cofer commented on the physical condition of the J1 courtroom, due to mold. He also said that there could be issues if the public defender is not in the same room with the judge and prosecutor.

Coral Messina, SAO, said that in Clay and Nassau Counties the public defenders are in the jail building for first appearances, with the prosecutors and judges operating remotely. Mr. Cofer said he will speak with the 17 judges who are assigned to handle first appearance hearings and assess their opinions on the preferred format. He will report back to the working group at an upcoming meeting. Ms. Messina said

that in-person interactions make mental health issues more identifiable. CM Boylan reminded the group that the committee's charge is to focus on facility design and not dictate court processes.

Assistant Chief Wesley described the intake and booking protocols for defendants, including the removal of personal items, photos/fingerprinting, body scans, DUI testing as needed, and medical evaluations. She said that under ideal circumstances, the booking and intake process takes 2-3 hours, and that each arrestee goes through all of the steps in the same order. If the individual requires medical attention, they are transported to UF Health where they are treated under guard in a specific area of the hospital. This includes medical emergencies, and other conditions like pregnancy or dialysis. The costs for these services are covered through funds the City provides to UF Health for indigent care.

When asked, Asst. Chief Wesley said that the initial medical examination creates a bottleneck due to staff and space. Possible recommendations for improvement include an on-site infirmary in the jail, more isolation cells for those with communicable diseases like TB or COVID, a larger space for medical exams, and more mental health staffing to evaluate arrestees. Ms. Messina asked about the cost per person to go through the booking process, mostly staffing costs. Mr. Kilcrease said that a few years back it was estimated to be \$850 per defendant, not including housing costs.

CM Peluso discussed the issue of defendant related paperwork, in its redundancy, volume and inefficiency. In the current structure, JSO, SAO, and the Clerk of Court all use different systems and there is a large amount of hard copy paperwork associated with each arrestee and repeated data entry due to the separate operating systems. A more streamlined process could reduce errors and staff demands. Mr. Cofer said that Mr. Smith, the Court's IT director, is trying to find a solution for uniformity within the 4<sup>th</sup> Circuit. Mr. Fullwood suggested applying for state funds for a pilot uniform data management program. It was also noted that the holding area for those awaiting actions, sometimes for 6-8 hours, in the courthouse is too small.

Dr. Bell, Sulzbacher, gave a presentation about MHOP. MHOP is a jail diversion program for chronic non-violent misdemeanor offenders with mental health issues, intended to break the cycle of repeated misdemeanor arrests and provide them the wrap-around support they need to successfully treat their illness and reintegrate back into the community. It is a collaborative initiative among the Duval County Circuit and County Judges, State Attorney's Office, Public Defender's Office, City of Jacksonville, JSO, Sulzbacher Center, Gateway Community Services, and Lutheran Services. The program was inspired by the jail diversion program The Eleventh Judicial Circuit Criminal Mental Health Project in Miami-Dade County.

Dr. Bell spoke about the initial stages of MHOP, funded through monies directed by the Special Committee on Social Justice and Community Investment and JSO, and designed to serve 20 participants. MHOP now serves 40 individuals and Sulzbacher has applied for grant funds with the hope to expand to 150 and to have a full-time staff person located within the jail. She said they have held 4 graduations for those who completed the program, and she noted that Sulzbacher is relocating, and the new campus will include long term assisted living. When asked, Dr. Bell said there are at least an estimated 300 chronic arrestees who would be eligible for MHOP.

The group discussed "problem solving" courts, such as mental health, veterans, drug, and teen courts. It was requested that Ms. Janocko attend a future meeting to discuss those specialty courts. Mr. Cofer talked about the length of time from the time a case is adjudicated in court to when the individual is actually released. CM Peluso asked about MHOP's perspective on a potential new jail facility. Dr. Bell spoke about a new jail opening in Miami that has varying levels of housing security and a focus on diversion, crisis stabilization and substance abuse treatment.

Schedule updates for next meetings: The October 20<sup>th</sup> meeting will be rescheduled.

Public comment: Carnell Oliver talked about racial disparities in sentencing, substance abuse, mental health and criminal justice reform.

With no further business, CM Peluso adjourned the meeting.

**Meeting adjourned:** 10:41 a.m.

Minutes: Colleen Hampsey, Council Research Division

[CHampsey@coj.net](mailto:CHampsey@coj.net) 904-255-5151

10.16.23 Posted 5:00 p.m.