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RESEARCH DIVISION**

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

Meeting Minutes

**December 8, 2023
9:00 a.m.**

Location: Lynwood Roberts Room, 1st floor, City Hall

In attendance: Council Member Jimmy Peluso; Charlie Cofer, Public Defender; Chief Paschal, JSO; Kenyatta McCloud and Tyrone Johnson, Jacksonville Re-entry Center (JREC); Kristen Smith, River Region; Coral Messina, SAO; Reggie Fullwood (remotely); Major Scott Surrency and Colonel Joseph Wells, Putnam County Sheriff's Office (remotely)

Also: Brooks Dame, District 7 ECA; Colleen Hampsey, Council Research Division; Scott Wilson, Mayor's Office

Meeting Convened: 9:02 a.m.

Chairman Peluso convened the meeting and called for introductions. He said the focus for this "AIR" meeting will be "R" concepts, recidivism and rehabilitation.

Kenyatta McCloud and Tyrone Johnson, JREC, gave a presentation about the Jacksonville Re-entry Center programs and services. JREC was established in 2007 and is a part of JSO. They provide reentry services to Duval residents, who committed their offense in Duval County and are returning to Duval County after release. JREC works with inmates scheduled for release in 6 months to prepare them for life after incarceration. JREC assists with transitional housing, bus passes, skills training driver's licenses/identification/birth certificates, clothing, employment/social security benefits and required probation classes. Ms. McCloud said that to prevent recidivism, maintaining a job is essential. She said JREC partners with numerous local organizations and nonprofits. Mr. Johnson explained the housing component, wherein vendors register with the City to provide housing in locations throughout the city, preferably near a bus line. JREC offers rental assistance for the first 90 days after release. Ms. McCloud talked about the employment assessment she conducts, the individual is asked about their criminal history

to identify barriers to employment, what their experience and skills are, what jobs they are interested in, and geographic location and transportation. She said that there are roughly 90 active JREC involved released individuals and 300 with whom they are working with who are still incarcerated. Coral Messina, SAO, asked about a JREC wish list. Mr. Johnson said they would like to offer more training options. When asked about peer support specialists, they said that they have had some past participants return to speak to current JREC participants, but they do not have any dedicated peer specialists on staff.

Kristen Smith, River Region, talked about the MATRIX House Treatment Program, the correctional substance use disorder treatment program for clients who must serve a jail sentence and have been identified as having a problem with drugs or alcohol. It is a 16-month program with a capacity for 135 participants who enter into 120 days of in-jail treatment, and a year of aftercare treatment post incarceration. MATRIX is facilitated by River Region Human Services in partnership with the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office and funded by the City of Jacksonville and is housed at the minimum-security Community Transition Center (CTC). Participants also receive assistance with transportation, acquiring personal documents, housing and employment. Ms. Smith said that there is a staff of 35, including a peer specialist. The program holds 3 commencement ceremonies each year, and 86% of MATRIX participants do not re-offend within a year of completion. Some arrestees are turned away from the program due to capacity or due to the seriousness of their offense, since CRT is a minimum-security facility.

Major Scott Surrency and Colonel Joseph Wells, Putnam County Sheriff's Office, gave an overview of the re-entry program in Putnam County. Undersheriff Wells said that their detention facility houses between 350-400 inmates, 70% of whom are chronic offenders (arrested 3 times or more in 5 years). He estimated that 70% of the inmates have substance use disorders or mental health issues. Undersheriff Wells talked about their facility, which was constructed in 2016 and includes an in-house recovery pod for those who need substance use treatment, and an in-house mental health pod. Both pods segregate the participants from the rest of the general population. He talked about training programs in the facility like culinary and vehicle maintenance, as well as enhancement programs like art and yoga. He spoke about the need for case management post-release, and assistance with employment and document acquisition. Undersheriff Wells described their guiding correctional philosophy of inmate recovery and how most inmates are incarcerated due to life's circumstances. Major Scott Surrency, Director of Corrections, spoke about the difference between an old corrections mindset to lock up offenders and just keep them alive while they're in jail, versus a different approach to focus on how to help the inmates so they don't have to come back due to re-offending.

When asked about staff retention, Major Surrency said that before the new jail was built, facility deficiencies were cited as the primary reasons for staff quitting during exit interviews. He said they are currently almost fully staffed, with 60 full-time employees. He recommended gathering insights from corrections staff before proceeding with a design for any new facility in Jacksonville. Major Surrency talked about some changes they made when they moved to the new facility, including individual (instead of communal) showers, elevated security units, smaller dorm units and interior recreation rooms in the residency areas. The Putnam facility is 2 stories high and 2 miles from the courthouse. Major Surrency said almost all of their court appearances are conducted virtually, utilizing space in the former jail for virtual court rooms. When asked what they would have asked for in a new facility knowing what they know now, Undersheriff Wells said they would have accounted for growth when estimating needed space and the number of beds. He said that due to financial constraints at the time, some of the "extras" were not included or not top of the line, including water control systems to prevent flooding and an insufficient camera system. Major Surrency noted that builders of jails should be aware that the facilities operate 24 hours a day, and as such the life span of doors and equipment is shorter due to constant use.

Public comment: Carnell Oliver talked about better training programs in jail, racial and skills barriers to employment, and the need for educational programs for the incarcerated.

CM Peluso announced a plan to tour the Montgomery Corrections Center on December 19th at 9:00 am. With no further business, CM Peluso adjourned the meeting. The next meeting for this group will be December 15th.

Meeting adjourned: 10:57 a.m.

Minutes: Colleen Hampsey, Council Research Division

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