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RESEARCH DIVISION**

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SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO REVIEW JSO PRIMARY FACILITIES

Meeting Minutes

**February 27, 2024
1:30 p.m.**

Location: City Council Chamber, 1st floor, City Hall

In attendance: Committee Members Michael Boylan (Chair), Jimmy Peluso (arr. 1:44), Randy White, Rahman Johnson

Excused: Committee Member Chris Miller

Also: Council President Ron Salem; Director Kevin Goff – JSO Department of Corrections, Assistant Chief Scott Dingee – JSO General Support Section; Carla Lopera – Office of General Counsel; Merriane Lahmeur, Maritza Sanchez, Ivana Gavric – Legislative Services Division; Jeff Clements – Council Research Division; Kim Taylor and Phillip Peterson – Council Auditor’s Office; Public Defender Charlie Cofer; 4th Circuit Court Chief Judge Lance Day; Beth Payne, Annie Sieger, Tyler Nolen, Ben McKissick-Hawley – Northeast Florida Regional Council; Scott Wilson – Mayor’s Office

Meeting Convened: 1:33 p.m.

Chairman Boylan convened the meeting and reviewed the charge of the special committee and the working group structure. He thanked the Northeast Florida Regional Council for its valuable support of the work of the committee and their production of a final report to be reviewed and approved at the final meeting. The attendees introduced themselves for the record. Mr. Boylan said the committee had four goals: 1) assessment of the current facilities; 2) identify best practices in the industry around the nation; 3) formulate recommendations; 4) establish a process - where do we go from here?

Administrative Services Working Group Report

Chairman Boylan said the working group met 6 times and heard from a variety of experts about the conditions of the current facility and trends in the industry for construction of police headquarters

buildings. Adaptive reuse of existing buildings was also discussed, particularly after the Sheriff's Office indicated its preference for that option.

Director Larry Schmitt said the Sheriff's Office started the process thinking that building a new facility was needed to house all the employees who needed to be under the same roof in an administrative building. During the research process the idea of leasing an existing building was raised and a combination of the rising cost of new construction and the availability of large amounts of office space in the market due to the COVID pandemic made that the preferable option. Director Schmitt described the various criteria that went into the choice of a location (square footage, cost, central location near downtown, parking availability) that led to the selection of the Florida Blue building on Riverside Avenue as the preferred site. A portion of the building has already been leased to house the Investigations and Homeland Security Department. Working group co-chair Ryan Sitnik congratulated the Sheriff's Office's team for their good work in doing due diligence on various options and analyzing and quantifying exactly what type of facility and features are desired.

Improvement to Existing Facilities Working Group Report

Working Group Chair Randy White invited JSO Director of Corrections Kevin Goff to provide the working group report on immediate needs. Director Goff said a JSO working group developed a list of 17 immediate needs, some of which have been already been funded through a recent appropriation ordinance by City Council. JSO is working with the Public Buildings Division about what projects can get started first. Chairman Boylan recommended that JSO consider how the Police Memorial Building, when vacated, might provide overflow space for some jail functions to relieve the constraints in the current jail until it is replaced.

Intake, Adjudication, & Recidivism Working Group Report

Working Group Chair Jimmy Peluso invited Co-Chair Charlie Cofer to make comments. Judge Cofer said the group heard from a wide range of experts on how other jurisdictions are implementing programs and facilities to make them better for inmates in terms of diversionary programs, booking process improvements, technological improvements, etc. Mr. Peluso said he toured a new jail in Nashville, Tennessee, another comparable consolidated government, to see what state-of-the-art programs are doing in the way of an efficient intake process, job training, behavioral and mental health programs, transitional services out of incarceration, recidivism prevention, and the like. The working group's report recommends conducting a facility condition study every 5 years to ensure that conditions do not deteriorate over time.

Holistic Facilities Working Group Report

Working Group Chair Rahman Johnson said his group's report is not complete yet but will be finalized and posted shortly. His group noted that facilities serve both inmates and employees and that needs to be taken into account. It is unfortunate that the jail is the largest mental health facility in Northeast Florida; that shouldn't be the case because that isn't really the mission of the JSO. Mr. Johnson said he toured a number of correctional facilities around the country to get ideas about what is possible and brought back several, including the need for medical and mental health services in the facility to reduce transports to other facilities, the need for community understanding and buy-in of what happens in the jail, the need for robust rehabilitation services, and the necessity of integrated service provision. Emotional, mental and physical well-being need to be considered and addressed, including via programs outside of the jail to divert people from the correctional system who don't need to be there.

Housing & Custody Working Group Report

In the absence of working group chairman Chris Miller, Mr. Boylan made the presentation of findings on his behalf via a PowerPoint presentation. The group recommended a low-rise, campus-style facility sized for the expected population demand several decades into the future and be expandable thereafter. Long-

term maintenance of the facility is an important consideration due to continuing costs and logistics. The facility should incorporate a correctional center, treatment facilities, and programming (education, vocational training) that helps reduce recidivism. JSO be responsible for programming and operating the facility, but the City has a responsibility for the facility as well. Better health care facilities are needed.

Planning, programming and design process

Rodney Moss, a board member of the Association to Improve American Infrastructure (AIAI), discussed his organization's purpose and mission which is to promote improved provision of infrastructure by governments through P3 (public-private partnership) risk transfer mechanisms in the various project delivery methodologies ranging from traditional design/low bid/build to design/build to design/build/finance, etc. Each methodology has advantages and disadvantages and may be appropriate in different instances. Construction projects inherently carry several types of risks including: development risk (land acquisition, entitlements, permitting and environmental); completion risk (design, cost, schedule, site conditions); lifecycle risk (maintenance and repair, energy usage); and funding risk (revenue sources). There are various means of transferring these risks to other parties depending on what construction methodology you choose. The wrong people following the wrong process with the wrong information will inevitably produce the wrong result; the right people, right process and right information will produce the right outcome. Everyone who is involved in any aspect of a jail, criminal justice and correctional system (courts, governments, law enforcement, health care, not-for-profits, etc.) needs to be involved in the planning process so that the finished facility produces an outcome that works for everyone.

In response to a question from Chairman Boylan, Mr. Moss said the Council's planning process thus far has developed a political understanding of the nature of the problem and the needs for a new facility. The next step would be to invite construction companies to opine on the needs that have been identified and how they would propose to build a product to meet those needs. Building a jail is a large and complex task and it will take at least a year for the scoping, design, discussion of alternatives, financial modeling, etc. to take place before the City would be ready to select a design, a location and a contractor. Ryan Sitnik said his company, Gilbane Construction, is part of the AIAI and has done lots of P3 projects. He said communicating the P3 business case to the public is extremely important so that taxpayers understand what the process is about and why it is the way to achieve the best value for the public in the building process.

Audience member Jim Strollo said the groundwork process is vitally important to the overall success of a project. He is a jail architect who works for a company that does public education processes as was just suggested. Jails are not about cells and bars, they're about the people who are incarcerated in them and the people who work in them and the people in the community who deal with inmates when they are released.

Mr. Sitnik said a P3 process doesn't start from a predetermined answer but is a mechanism to convene all the relevant stakeholders to go through an organized process to reach the best outcome.

Public Comment

Carnell Oliver said the outcome of this process appears to be already pre-determined. Too many non-profit organizations are profiting from the City and they need to be cut out of the process.

Mr. Boylan announced that the next meeting will be held in several weeks when the Northeast Florida Regional Council has a draft final report ready for consideration.

Meeting adjourned: 2:47 p.m.

Minutes: Jeff Clements, Council Research Division
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