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SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO REVIEW JSO PRIMARY FACILITIES

Meeting Minutes

**May 8, 2024
9:00 a.m.**

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

In attendance: Committee Members Michael Boylan (Chair), Jimmy Peluso, Chris Miller, Rahman Johnson (arr. 9:18)

Excused: Committee Member Randy White

Also: Council President Ron Salem; Kevin Goff – JSO Director of Corrections; JSO Assistant Chief Adrian O’Neal – JSO Corrections; Carla Lopera – Office of General Counsel; Ivana Gavric – Legislative Services Division; Jeff Clements – Council Research Division; Kim Taylor and Phillip Peterson – Council Auditor’s Office; Joe Inderhees and Scott Wilson – Mayor’s Office; Public Defender Charlie Cofer; Beth Payne, Tyler Nolen, Ben McKissick-Hawley – Northeast Florida Regional Council;

Meeting Convened: 9:00 a.m.

Chairman Boylan convened the meeting and said the objective of today’s meeting is to receive the draft special committee final report prepared by the Northeast Florida Regional Council, get an understanding of how it was produced, and discuss any matters that may need the input of the Special Committee for the final draft. He hopes to have the final report ready for presentation to the City Council at its first meeting in June. The Sheriff’s Office will also give an update on the immediate improvements being made in the jail as recommended by the committee.

Council President Salem thanked the Special Committee for its work and said the draft final report appears to be a very good document that will guide the future of both the jail and a police headquarters. He thanked Beth Payne for the quality and design of the report and the hard work done by the Northeast Florida Regional Council staff to produce a quality product.

Chairman Boylan invited subject matter experts from the various working groups to make comments or suggestions on the draft report at the end of the meeting.

Presentation of Preliminary Report

Beth Payne, Executive Director of the Northeast Florida Regional Council (NEFRC), said her staff attended all the meetings of the Special Committee and the working groups and tried to provide as much context as possible on the various issues to frame the recommendations. She welcomed any additional comments from subject matter experts or other interested stakeholders to help improve the final product.

Working Group Chairs' Comments

Administrative Services: Kevin Goff, JSO Director of Corrections, thanked the special committee and NEFRC for all their hard work. He asked for a clarification on p. 9 of the report in the reference to the installation of temporary beds in the jail.

Improvements to Existing Facilities: Jeremy Wright, downtown facilities manager with the City's Public Buildings Division, said \$5.5M of the \$9M the City Council has appropriated for immediate repairs and maintenance needs at the jail have been encumbered. The work started with mold remediation and several RFPs have been issued for work on elevators, chillers, etc. which will take some time to procure and complete. Director Goff said more parking space is needed for both the jail and the Police Memorial Building (PMB). He said he was unsure if the PMB could be repurposed for other uses after it is vacated because of its age and design. Chairman Boylan said a due diligence study should be done to assess possibilities for reuse, including for jail-related purposes.

Housing and Custody: Beth Payne said she had met with Council Member Miller this week and he provided a list of specific things the JSO wants to be highlighted and emphasized in the report. Mr. Miller said he hopes the community will recognize what a good process this special committee undertook and how that produced a good result that will guide development of important facilities that will last decades into the future. His working group stayed strictly within its charge and made recommendations on that basis. There may be additions to the working group's recommendations as the report finalization process proceeds. One major finding is that the jail is currently the largest mental health provider for the community and that shouldn't be the case. The working group recommended a campus-style facility that has separate, specialized units for inmates with different need and is expandable over time, including for the provision of job training and pre-release programs to help inmates become ready for productive life after their release. The quality of the facilities plays a big part in JSO's ability to recruit and retain correctional officers. Mr. Miller thanked Assistant Chief Adrian O'Neal for all the information he has provided to the working group to help them understand the issues and finalize their report. He welcomed any additional input to his working group for the final report.

Chairman Boylan said in addition to the report itself there will be hundreds of pages of addenda that have all the specifics of the research and findings of the special committee for the public to access. Ms. Payne said a decision was made to keep the report relatively short and succinct, but it is backed up with 500 pages of addenda that will be made available on a website for anyone who is interested in the details.

Holistic Facilities: Council Member Johnson said he has come to understand that the new facility will be vastly more expensive than he was initially expecting, probably a billion dollars or more. His working group was focused on qualitative, rather than quantitative, data for both inmates and JSO teammates because that aspect is so important. He toured numerous correctional facilities around the country and heard about design trends from experts in the field to determine what is needed. A poorly designed facility leads to recidivism. An on-site medical clinic is an absolute necessity to prevent the need to transport inmates off-site for care. Multi-purpose rooms can provide flexible space to host a variety of

programs both for the Corrections Department and for the public. He said he was very impressed by Orange County, Florida's new campus-style facility which is very well-planned to meet multiple needs. It's important to remember that the jail is a pre-trial facility and most of the inmates have not been convicted of anything and need to be treated that way. Seemingly small choices such as the amount of natural daylight available in the building and paint color make a big difference in outcomes. He recommended that the final report not be so specific that it doesn't allow for flexibility and change.

Adjudication, Intake and Recidivism: Council Member Peluso said he had very knowledgeable experts on his working group and he also toured facilities in other jurisdictions to see how they operate. Tackling mental health issues is extremely important to future success. He still sees a need to get presentations on crisis stabilization and inmate diversion processes. The working group saw a clear need to get away from an antiquated paper records system and into electronic records for JSO, the courts, and the State Attorney's office to share to eliminate duplication and time-consuming repetitive data entry.

Chairman Boylan said the report should be an important education piece for the community and will explain and analyze important issues for the public's understanding and benefit.

Next Steps

Ms. Payne said the appointment of a Blue Ribbon Committee is anticipated to lead the design and construction process, which experts in the construction field strongly recommend. Public-private partnerships and a design-build methodology were the construction methods most favored in the working groups, but that is open for the special committee to debate and finalize.

Committee discussion

Council Member Peluso asked if the committee would be making a recommendation on a jail location. Chairman Boylan said this report should focus on what we want to build, leaving the where and how decisions for a later date. President Salem said the Beaches cities' police departments must transport prisoners a long way to reach the jail in downtown Jacksonville and that needs to be a consideration – some transportation system or satellite holding facility closer to the Beaches might be appropriate. He said the City has lots of available land at the Montgomery Correctional Center campus on the Northside and that should be considered. He believes the Sheriff should be the leader of the decision-making process since it will be his department's facility. Mr. Boylan said identification of all relevant stakeholders will be important so they can all be involved in the planning process – JSO, the courts, mental health providers, health care facilities, job training program providers, etc.

Public Comment

Carnell Oliver said he is focused on rehabilitation programs, particularly a re-entry center with affordable housing resources to give non-violent ex-offenders a place to start life over after their release. JTA has properties all over the city that may be available. He recommends more use of the civil citation option, especially for young offenders.

Chairman Boylan said he hasn't heard any proposed changes from the committee members in this meeting so he will present this preliminary report to City Council at its first meeting in June. He thanked the various private sector companies for their contributions to the work of the special committee and said it's important for the general public to understand how important a better jail is to the community and how it can save the City money in the long run.

Meeting adjourned: 9:52 a.m.

Minutes: Jeff Clements, Council Research Division
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5.9.24 Posted 10:00 a.m.