



VIA HAND DELIVERY

The Honorable Phil Heimlich, President
The Honorable R. Patrick DeWine
The Honorable Todd Portune
Hamilton County Commission
138 E. Court Street, Suite 600
Cincinnati, Ohio 45202

Re: Recommendation of the Hamilton County Corrections Review Task Force

Dear Sirs:

With this transmittal I am forwarding the recommendations of the Corrections Review Task Force. These recommendations are the culmination of the considerable effort of the Treatment Services Sub-committee, the Cost/Facility Sub-committee, and the Vera Institute of Justice. As is clearly demonstrated in the enclosed reports of the sub-committees and the Vera Institute, there is a need for a new jail—specifically a jail with treatment programs to limit re-entry into the criminal justice system.

I want to thank the County Commission for establishing the Task Force. I firmly believe that as a result of the work and dedication of the Task Force, the community will have a greater sense of confidence in the need for a new jail which includes treatment programs that will address recidivism and crime in our region. I especially want to commend Commissioners DeWine and Portune for their foresight in creating the Task Force and appreciate their personal involvement and their participation in the Task Force meetings. Their comments and insights were valuable as the Task Force developed the recommendations and conclusions included with this report. Crime and safety are crucial issues that must be addressed and acted upon immediately. I applaud the Board for addressing these critical issues and urge each of you to work together and take immediate action to ensure the safety of the citizens in our County.

The good and hard work of the members of the Task Force should be recognized. The members of the Task Force were from diverse backgrounds representing many different stakeholders and constituencies (see list attached). As you know the resolution establishing the Task Force was made on June 26, 2006 and instructed that the Task Force advise the Board with recommendations by July 31, 2006. The members of the Task Force displayed extreme dedication and commitment to perform the review and analysis necessary in the limited timeframe with which we had to work. Most members served on one of the two sub-committees for the intense review of the issues we were asked to study (Treatment Services and Cost/Facilities). The sub-committee for the Treatment Services was chaired by John Young and

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included David Singleton, Edith Thrower, and Pat Tribbe. The Cost/Facility sub-committee was chaired by Rick Tripp of MSA Architects and included Brian Frank and me. The entire Task Force met four times during the month of July to conduct its work and recommendations. The sub-committees held numerous additional meetings and discussions with consultants and other experts. We had excellent participation from each Task Force member. I was absolutely impressed by the depth and magnitude of the analysis and discussions that was displayed by the members so that we could arrive at solid recommendations that are critically important to our community. My appreciation goes to each member for this outstanding work.

The Committee relied in great measure on the Vera Institute of Justice and Voorhis Associates as well as County staff and other outside consultants. The leadership of the County Administrator and the assistance of his staff was also valuable. We were able to have in depth conversations with Wendy Niehaus of Pre-trial Services, individuals from Corrections Corporation of America (CCA), representatives of the Ohio Bureau of Adult Detention and Dr. Walter Smitson (see his letter to me attached). Rick Tripp and I also met with Sheriff Simon Leis to gain his perspective and thoughts on this important issue.

I am pleased with this transmittal to report that the Task Force (relying considerably on the in-depth work of the sub-committees) has fulfilled the Mission Statement enacted by the Commission on June 26, 2006. The recommendations enclosed herewith were adopted by the Task Force unanimously with one abstention.

After careful and thorough review and analysis of many alternatives, the Task Force approved the Cost/Facility sub-committee recommendation of an 1800-bed facility that consolidates the Queensgate, Reading Road, and Turning Point facilities because it is the most cost effective approach based on operating and capital costs (see analysis and cost comparisons of the different alternatives in the attached report). According to Dr. Walter Smitson, President and CEO of the Court Clinic "an additional reason for consolidation of our jail facility into one site is the improvement we could make in jail programming..." Dr. Smitson goes on to point out that although we have an abundance of programs in place, these services are not well coordinated and could be greatly improved in a single facility. Additionally, there is no treatment or programming at the Queensgate facility.

The Task Force also approved the Treatment Services sub-committee recommendation that a Criminal Justice Coordination Commission be established to evaluate the interaction and collaboration among the many institutions within the criminal justice system with the goal of reducing crime and re-entry into the criminal justice system. The report from the consultant that supported the Task Force, Vera Institute of Justice, goes into great detail as to alternative approaches and best practices that could assist our community in improving outcomes in the criminal justice system. The report from Vera states "if current processes and practices are not modified, it can be expected that jail crowding in Hamilton County will not be alleviated." The

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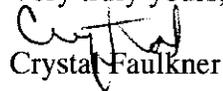
Vera report has a list of recommendations that can help the County manage present space as well as govern the use of additional beds. However, it is the feeling of the Task Force that only through the establishment of a Commission that will look at each piece of our current system and processes will any meaningful changes occur.

The Cincinnati metropolitan area is at a crossroads for the future of criminal justice. While it may seem obvious to many that a new jail facility is necessary, to most, the understanding that the jail is just one small part of the criminal justice system is less obvious. For example, the amount of resources required to build a jail is staggering, but consider that the proposed jail will cost approximately what the City of Cincinnati will spend on police protection over the next two years. Each part of the entire criminal justice system, such as police departments and social service agencies work diligently to solve the problems they are presented. These problems can be mitigated, or even avoided by proactive coordination across the entire system. Building a new jail is not the only immediate need.

This Commission is vitally important to the future of this region, thus its membership requires the many institutions that influence our future. These include not only elected officials, but the business community, education and health care sectors, social service providers, faith-based entities, and the media. The formation and leadership of the Criminal Justice Coordination Commission will require our region's most respected leaders to share their passion and vision that they demonstrate in their own fields of endeavor. The Task Force recommends that the Board of County Commissioners and City Council begin in earnest to tackle this most important issue using every asset of this region.

Thank you again for this opportunity to serve. It has been a thoroughly rewarding experience.

Very truly yours,


Crystal Faulkner

cc: Members of the Correction Review Task Force
Patrick Thompson, County Administrator

Hamilton County Corrections Review Task Force

Robert Biddle

Crystal Faulkner – Corrections Review Task Force Chair

Brian Frank

Rita McNeil

Dan Peters

Andrea Rehkamp

David Singleton

Edith Thrower

Pat Tribbe

Richard Tripp – Cost/Facility Sub-committee Chair

John Young – Treatment Services Sub-committee Chair

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July 18, 2006

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Cincinnati, OH 45202

Dear Crystal:

This is an updated letter to the one I sent to Todd Portune dated July 5, 2006. I would like to point out that the Court Clinic primarily does court ordered forensic evaluations and treatment recommendations. The Clinic also provides consultations to Probation Officers. Some treatment services are provided for both mental illness and substance abuse clients. A diversion program is available for court ordered non-violent offenders with dual diagnoses of mental illness and substance abuse. This service has received national recognition as a best practice program.

After considerable thought and after touring the Queensgate facility, I believe a consolidated jail facility would be in the best interests of criminal justice clients, community agencies who provide services to that population, and to the taxpayers. The current system of four fragmented locations is very inefficient and results in a waste of taxpayer money. One example of this is my forensic staff has to travel to the various locations in order to serve the criminal justice clients. Time lost through travel results in Central Clinic/Court Clinic having to hire excess staff in order to meet the demand.

An additional reason for consolidation of our jail facility into one site is the improvement we could make in jail programming for the inmate population. Through a new intake assessment center we could greatly expand our ability to screen and evaluate inmates. This would enable us to provide better information to Judges, better determine which inmates need mental health/substance abuse services, which ones should be further evaluated for diversion programs, and which ones could be given step down privileges. Through a centralized assessment center we could also better decide who should be linked to literacy classes and to GED classes. Of the inmates in Hamilton County who request educational assessments, the level of literacy for most is between the 3rd and 6th grades.

This means there is an urgency for us to find better ways to engage inmates in programs that have the possibility of improving their chances of succeeding once they are back in the community. The current system of fragmented locations does not support fully implementing a step down and a step back system. The step back is to return an inmate to full lockup if the try at a step down program is not successful. To do this now depends on transporting inmates from one site to another, which is costly and simply not feasible.

I believe our best chance of improving the level of functioning for selected non-violent inmates is through jail based services, as compared to trying to change behavior and improve educational levels once inmates are released and are on probation. Jail based services can have a greater impact on dysfunctional behaviors and on improving things like reading skills in part because the inmate population has much more time to devote to improving themselves as compared to being on the outside. There are also opportunities to use incentives with selected inmates to get them to participate in things like improving reading skills. While we already have some jail based services in operation, I am convinced a consolidated system would allow us to be far more effective in selecting additional inmates and offering more opportunities for their improvement.

Many best practice jail programs make use of inmates in improving other inmates. For example, a program I visited in California has convicts who read at the 8th grade level teaching convicts at the 4th grade level. A grandmother convict may be teaching young, first time moms how to be better parents. In addition to improving the level of functioning of inmates while they are incarcerated, this type system yields valuable information about those who are teaching and those who are learning. It gives important clues about a readiness to take on responsibility (the teachers) and the willingness to learn ways to improve their lives (the students). Given this information, it becomes possible to implement a rational system of increased responsibility for some non-violent inmates, as well as how to select inmates for additional learning opportunities. All of this prepares inmates to improve their functioning when back in the community.

As for mental illness and alcohol and drug abuse services, I believe the period of incarceration should be used to stabilize these inmates including detoxification and medications as indicated. In addition, the incarceration period should be a time for the criminal justice system and the community service providers to jointly develop a release plan whereby both systems will stay involved and work together to enhance the chances of these persons being able to live in the community. While some of these populations are going through the mental health court and the drug court, there are still significant numbers in jail. I am convinced that one solution is to bring the criminal justice staff, including probation officers, together with the service providers at the beginning of the incarceration to form a team approach once the inmate is released. Mentally ill offenders are noted for being non compliant regarding treatment. An ongoing criminal justice and community provider partnership would improve compliance upon release.

A check of the literature shows a great deal of information about reentry, but little about

interventions while inmates are serving time. Of course, any intervention during incarceration should help with reentry. North Dakota has long had some innovative services in place for their juvenile incarcerated population. These consist of careful up-front screening for treatment services and discharge planning. Their efforts are closely connected with law enforcement, county services, and public and private human service agencies. An individualized rehabilitation plan is developed for each inmate. Each juvenile is assigned a corrections specialist at the beginning and throughout the Court order. Each specialist has no more than twenty-five cases. One role of the specialist is to coordinate assessments and other interventions to reduce or eliminate duplication of services. While this is a system geared toward juveniles, there are some things to be learned about incarcerated adults.

One of the areas I believe needs to be restructured in our jail system is improved resource efficiency. Using resources effectively is equally as important as having additional resources. While we have an abundance of programs in place, as the first jail study pointed out, these services are not well coordinated. Such coordination is very difficult under a system of multiple locations. Having one jail system would facilitate moving inmates to different levels of interventions without being transported. Additionally, we all know that each organization of any type has its own culture and its own way of operating. The current multi jail system each with its own culture results in wasted resources, because of duplication and because of a lack of a coordination entity. If we had a centralized jail facility with expanded Pretrial services, up-front assessments, mental illness and drug abuse services, a system for upgrading information and skills, and a designated coordinating authority that would work with the Sheriff's office, law enforcement, and human services agencies it would not only improve our ability to help people succeed, but would make better use of the resources we have. It is interesting to note that the Cincinnati Public School System has instituted a resource coordinator in its schools. One human service agency is designated as the coordinator for a school. This coordinator agency provides services as well as coordinating all other agencies coming into the school. This has greatly reduced duplication and has allowed teachers to focus on teaching.

Another jail system, in Birmingham, England, has gone from its image as a "hell hole" to a model for improving race relations. Birmingham, one of England's largest jails, has instituted a combination of education, mediating racist complaints, and sanctions for violations to improve the atmosphere of the jail and to reduce anger and criminal thinking, which are important goals during incarceration. The Canadians have tended to focus not on programs per se, but on the individual within the program. Petersilia points out that is not enough to say that a job program works. Rather, we must determine what was accomplished under the name of "employment". Most experts agree that to get a person to the point of using resources, such as job training or even some SAMI services, it is necessary to try to cognitively restructure the "distorted or erroneous cognition of the individual." Second efforts are then made to assist the person to learn new adaptive cognition skills. Once this is accomplished the person is much better prepared to make use of resources while incarcerated.

Crystal Faulkner

July 18, 2006

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In summary, I believe a consolidated, one site facility could result in an array of interventions that could take the safety of the community into account, and at the same time could implement best practice behavioral and educational interventions for carefully selected inmates, in which we would have the goal of breaking the cycle of criminal behavior. I do want to stress once again that not all inmates can benefit from using resources. Indeed, many can only be kept out of society for a period of time and then monitored at various levels once released. However, through careful up-front assessments by qualified forensic examiners we can identify those inmates who can return to the community better equipped to succeed. We can do this by determining which incarcerated persons can benefit from opportunities for self improvement. People typically change behavior because of rewards such as reducing jail time by learning to read at a higher level. Maintaining those changes then comes from the rewards realized by the new information or the new behavior such as qualifying for a better job.

Finally, improving methods of assessing inmates would facilitate our ability to use electronic monitoring for work release. This would enable inmates who qualify for work release to be confined at home at night and to work during the day. These inmates could pay the costs of this system.

I appreciate your consulting me about this issue and look forward to finding ways to improve the jail system for Hamilton County.

Sincerely,

WALTER S. SMITSON, Ph.D.
President and CEO

WSS/wlm