



County of Cheshire

12 Court Street, Keene, NH 03431
www.co.cheshire.nh.us

December 15, 2020

Jail Inspection Reports
Second Semi-Annual Report
County of Cheshire
Director of Administration
NH Dept. of Justice
33 Capitol Street
Concord, NH 03301

**RE: Management report pursuant to RSA 30-B: 12,
Cheshire County House of Correction**

Gentlemen:

Pursuant to the above statutory requirement, the County Commissioners for Cheshire County are pleased to submit the following report on their examination into the management, condition and security of the inmates in the county correctional facility. Following is our written report to you of the findings and actions or proposed actions on such findings, as recorded within the Public Meeting Minutes of the Board of Commissioners, recorded at the time of the meetings.

November 18, 2020: 2nd Semi-Annual Inspection

At 11:30 AM Master Agenda Item #821: Semi-Annual Inspection of Department of Corrections as Required by RSA 30-B 12 was then taken-up, and the Commissioners **adjourned to the Department of Corrections at 825 Marlboro Road, Keene, to conduct the second annual Department of Corrections inspection for 2020 and to report the findings to the Attorney General's office of the State of NH as required under RSA 30-B 12.**

The Commissioners reconvened at 11:50 AM at 850 Marlboro Road, Keene, NH, to conduct the second semi-annual Department of Corrections inspection tour.

At 11:55 AM, The Commissioners, County Administrator, Assistant County Administrator, and the Superintendent of the Department of Corrections assembled in the facility's lobby, began the second semi-annual inspection, and entered the Booking Department.

The Booking Department was visited as seven federal inmates were processing into the facility. A protective custody hold was reviewed, and the Superintendent explained the Booking and holding process to the Commissioners.

At 12:06 PM, the Commissioners exited Booking and proceeded to the Medical Department.

The Commissioners spoke at length with the on-duty medical staff and, it was learned that fourteen inmates are currently on the Medicated Assisted Treatment (MAT) program. The

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Commissioners asked about how the MAT program is administered for released inmates, and the Commissioners were told that there is about a 90% compliance with continued treatment for inmates released.

The Commissioners then met with two new employees in the Substance Abuse counseling office and introduced themselves to the new employees.

At 12:17 PM, the Commissioners left the Medical department and entered the R Block holding Pod. The on-duty Correctional Officer reported eight inmates in the Pod, including new incoming inmates and those housed in the segregation area.

A discussion of the use of the segregation units began. The Superintendent reviewed the rules and processes followed for inmates placed in the segregation unit or requested to be housed in the unit. He stated that twenty days is the maximum time that inmates placed in segregation are held there, but inmates who have special needs and request to be housed in the segregation unit can be held longer than the twenty-days with periodic evaluations of health and safety.

At 12:26 PM, the Commissioners entered the common hallway outside of R Block and reviewed inmate issues with the Superintendent. The Superintendent's inmate payment plan to compensate indigent inmates for work details performed in the facility was covered. It was learned that inmates very receptive to the program, and the facility's cost has been minimal.

The assignment of a Correctional Officer to assist with Case Management was reviewed and the Superintendent said that the officer has been beneficial in assisting the Case Manager in clearing up administrative work issues and tasks much more quickly, which results in the Case Manager being able to see more inmates. It was discussed that usually, 15 – 18 inmates are on release under the Electronic Monitoring program.

At 12:36 PM, the Commissioners entered D Block that has 32 inmates assigned to the unit. The Commissioners were informed that the new inmate tablet program is very successful and is very well received by the inmates. The Commissioners asked the ratio of drugs and mental health issues for the unit's population and were told that it is almost 100%. It was also discussed that the overall number of inmates being held for drug and mental health-related crimes is down due to bail reform and alternative diversion programs that are now available.

At 12:47 PM, the Commissioners entered K Block and were informed that 28 inmates were presently held in the Pod. The Superintendent reviewed the Classification System rating program and said that the majority of inmates in K block have already been in State or Federal Prison, although some Federal inmates are pre-trial.

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At 12:58 PM, the Commissioners entered the Correctional Supervisors office and spoke with the shift commander, who arranged for the Commissioners to interview two of the Correctional Officers.

At 1:01 PM, the Commissioners entered the interview room and met with a Correctional Officer (CO) with twelve years of seniority at the facility.

The CO said that the newly appointed Superintendent seems to be doing very well and that he listens and takes input seriously, thereby empowering the staff. He stated that the previous Superintendent did not take the same approach, and it was challenging to provide feedback on necessary changes. He said that he is the seventh most senior CO and that he has seen "hundreds" of employees pass through the facility over the years. Still, the new Superintendent's management style is working very well with the staff, and the turnover rate for employees has dropped substantially in the last few months. He said that he is currently working on the new tablet program and the upgrade of the x-jail software system used at the facility and that he is looking to transfer into the Classification Department soon. He described the on-going training programs for CO's and highlighted the difference between CO's and police officers.

In response to questions from the Commissioners, he said that some of the current senior staff (one in particular) do not operate on a professional level and that it is hurting general morale. He also said that the Union version of incidents is almost always the opposite of the "County" version. Still, overall, there were few problems or issues between union and non-union personnel. He again stated that there had been many changes in working relationships with the new Superintendent and that they have been far better than with the previous Superintendent.

At 1:24 PM, the second Correctional Officer entered the interview room. This CO has been at the facility for approximately nine months and is about to take his certification test. He said that he greatly enjoys his job and that it is a good learning environment that doesn't put you in situations you cannot handle. He stated that he has been on the first shift for about six months and learned directly from the senior staff, which helped him. In response to a question concerning the overall training curriculum, he said that he wished there were courses on practical skills such as handcuffs.

At 1:33 PM, there being no further public business to conduct, the Commissioners voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting.

We trust that this report complies with the intent of the statute requiring inspection of correctional facilities by the County Commissioners. Please feel free to contact this office if you have any questions regarding this report.

As we have said in each of our reports over these many years, we continue to be proud of our facility, its management and the dedicated service of the correctional officers and support staff.

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Sincerely yours,

THE CHESHIRE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Charles F. Weed, Chairman
County of Cheshire, Board of Commissioners

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