



County of Cheshire

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

June 29, 2021

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.

June 09, 2021: 1st Semi-Annual Inspection

Master Agenda Item #891: Department of Corrections – Semi-Annual Report
Action Expected: To conduct the Department of Corrections first Semi-Annual 2021 inspections as required by RSA 30-B 12.

At 10:05 AM, the Commissioners began an inspection tour of the facility. Recently appointed Superintendent Iosue accompanied the Commissioners and staff for the tour.

At 10:07 AM, the Commissioner's entered the maintenance facility to inspect the geothermal system and to meet with the Maintenance Director Bogar. Bogar described some of the concerns with the existing configuration of the geothermal system and stated that he is seeing the premature failure of the compressors on the heat exchangers because of high temperatures returned from the wellfield. After an in-depth study by several engineers, he said that a recently proposed solution should permanently fix the problem. An added positive result should be a greatly diminished use of propane used to heat and cool the 90,000 sq. ft. building.

He went on to say that the proposed conversion of the lighting from the current fluorescent tubes to LED fixtures should dramatically lower the overall electrical costs.

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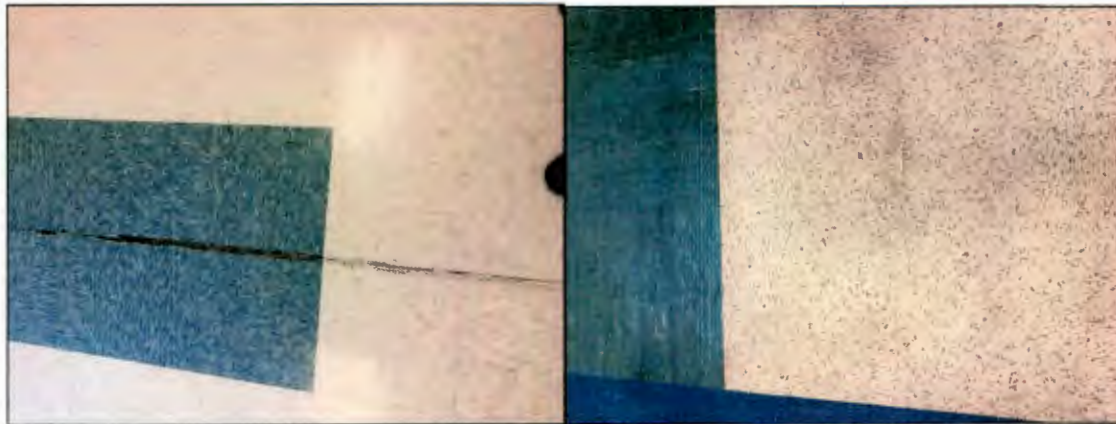
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Bogar answered some follow-up questions, and at 10:17 AM, the Commissioner left the maintenance area and re-assembled in the main hallway to discuss the Moral Reconciliation Therapy (MRT) Program that is underway in one of the meeting rooms adjacent to the hallway.

It was discussed that MRT is a unique cognitive-behavioral treatment approach designed for criminal offender populations. The program is designed to alter how offenders think and how they make decisions about right and wrong. Iosue stated that the program runs for a total of sixteen weeks. The classroom portion runs for two hours, and typically four hours of homework is assigned to each participant. In addition, each person also meets with mental health counselor during the course of the class.

He said that although most of the participants attend voluntarily, some are mandated to attend by the Courts as part of their sentence, and early release can be predicated on successful completion of the program.

At 10:23 AM, the Commissioners visited the D and K block area remarked on the deteriorating condition of some of the Pod floorings throughout the building.



A further review of some maintenance issues with carpeting, paving bricks at the entry, storm drains, and other exterior spaces that need to be added as capital items to the upcoming budget items was discussed.

One of the items covered during the visit to the Pods was the introduction of the new inmate electronic pads that can be used for entertainment, emails, and communication with family and friends. It was discussed that almost all of the inmates use the device, and the cost is \$5.00 per month, which is withdrawn from each person's canteen account.

At 10:30 AM, The Commissioners moved to examine the Control Room. Iosue said that the Control Room is usually staffed by one to two Correctional Officers, and they function as the

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eyes and ears for maintaining security in the facility. A review of the camera's use and technical capabilities and functions throughout the building and the issue that many cameras need to be upgraded was reviewed in some detail. It was learned that over thirty-two cameras are constantly monitored, and some of the monitors also need to be replaced or upgraded.

At 10:36 AM, The Commissioner's entered the Medical area to meet the staff and review the area. A discussion of inmate processing and screening began, and it was learned that the Physician's Assistant was available if needed and a follow-up assessment could be done if required due to health issues. Medication and mental health treatment medications were discussed. The medical staff said that about 80% of the inmates enter the facility with drug dependencies, including smoking, and more smoking cessation programs would be helpful to the inmate population.

The new case manager's role and progress were covered, and the programs for inmate follow-up post-release were discussed.

At 10:44 AM, the Commissioners proceeded to F Block to examine the physical condition of the block and to interact with the Correctional Officers and inmates. No notable exceptions or other items of interest were noted.

At 10:49 AM, the Commissioners went to meeting room RO-2 to meet and interview inmates and Correctional Officers.

Correctional Officer "R" then entered the room to meet with the Commissioners. He said that he has been working at the facility for three years. He said that he really likes his job compared to his previous manual labor jobs and said that working at the facility allows for floating working environments.

The CO outlined the way they work with new inmates and tries to make them feel comfortable and to also establish a good working relationship with both inmates and colleagues.

Commissioner Wozmak outlined the reason that the Commissioners are conducting the tour, and he asked if the environment is good to work in. "R" said that it was and that the job allows them time to be able to interact with his family and kids, which couldn't happen in their previous jobs.

"R" stated that more training in some areas such as defensive tactics would be welcome because, without practice, it is hard to do correctly without hurting yourself or the person being restrained. They thought that some Jujutsu training would be helpful in that regard. "R" said that some of the cell extraction gear is very old, poorly fitting, and unsuitable for today's environment.

At 11:08 AM, Commissioner Wozmak and Administrator Coates left the facility for a previous appointment.

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At 11:09 AM, Officer "U" entered the room to meet with Commissioners Englund and Clark and Assistant County Administrator Bouchard. "U" stated that they had four years on the job and had a split job function as Correctional Officer and as a part-time facilities maintenance staff. They said that they have been working since they were 21 and worked in security at local manufacturers in a security position before coming to the department of corrections and that their family has a strong background in law enforcement.

They said that the training materials need to be updated and the classes need to offer much more hands-on training.

In response to the Commissioners' question concerning their understanding and support for the medicated assisted treatment (MAT) program, they said they support the program but have some reservations due to some participants abusing participation in the program. Another issue raised by "U" is that more training in de-escalation techniques is needed as it is unique to this facility based on talking with other CO's and inmates from other facilities.

They said that overall the food is excellent and today is burger day which is the best.

"U" said that the facility runs very smoothly, but the physical environment is overall too humid on sweltering days, but they know that the problem is actively being addressed.

"U" said that they are vaccinated and past the two-week post-period tomorrow and did it despite not having any family support to safeguard the inmates and other staff.

The Commissioners asked "U" if there was anything that could or should be considered to be changed. "U" responded that nothing, in particular, came to mind, and the environment is constantly changing for the better. A short discussion about the transition from the old management to new management approaches was had.

"U" ended their interview by saying that they see this job as a career and that they like all the time spent in all the different areas in the facility.

At 11:30 AM – Inmate "B" entered the room to meet with the Commissioners and began by saying that they have been incarcerated for two months this time around. "B" said that there are not enough programs available but thought that much of the reason was due to COVID-19 restrictions. "B" then stated that they were arrested for drug use and sale and have been in jail four times before, the last time for a year. In response to a question concerning the coordination of inmate release programs, they said that the previous Case Manager (now the Superintendent) had helped them set up housing before the last release. They discussed participating in the MAT program and stated that the motivation to stop using drugs was the ultimate goal. "B," said that they had been out for three years but had gotten into a bad relationship and slipped up. "B," said they would like to see Narcotics Anonymous (NA) or Alcoholics Anonymous back in the facility

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running sessions. They said that they thought the food was okay but that it is high in carbs with lots of pasta being served. When asked about changes they would like to see, "B" said that they use the exercise room would like to see more equipment made available for the inmates.

At 11:41 AM, the Commissioners thanked "B" for their input, and they were escorted back to their housing Pod.

At 11:44 AM, Inmate "L" entered the room to meet with the Commissioner and said in response to a question that they had in jail this time for three months due to a probationary violation and had been in a prior time about twenty months ago and are now waiting for a release date in July. "L" said that this is one of the best facilities that they have been in and rate it an A+, saying that the general hygiene and cleanliness is top drawer compared to the other jails that they have been in.

They said that the programs are okay and that overall, the environment here is very good as you are treated as a human being and shown respect, unlike the other jails they have been in.

"L" said that their goal, when they are released, is to go to barber school. "L" stated that they are 36 years old and only have Grandparents left who live in Battleboro. "L" then said that their substance abuse issues have generated all the charges that have landed them in jail and were exacerbated by being in bad relationships. "L" said that they were previously in the MRT program but that the current program is being manipulated by the presenters and everyone is not being held to the same standards. They also said that some rules are made up on the fly and that there isn't a way to bring up issues without being penalized.

"L" thought that the MRT program was more effective than AA/NA because it was more interactive and said that the program was very helpful in helping recognize their shortcomings and deal with issues.

Lastly, "L" said that the current canteen vendor is "garbage" and that they greatly preferred the previous vendor's products and better pricing, liking the current vendor's products to Dollar store items at 3-4 times the cost.

At 12:05 PM, there being no further public business to conduct, Commissioner Englund moved to adjourn the meeting and was seconded by Commissioner Clark. Upon roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously.

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.

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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.

Sincerely yours,

THE CHESHIRE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

John "Jack" G. Wozmak, J. D., Chairman
County of Cheshire, Board of Commissioners

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