



County of Cheshire

33 West Street, Keene, NH 03431

Website: www.co.cheshire.nh.us

April 3, 2014
(late submission for the second half of 2013)

Jail Inspection Reports
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.

At 10:13AM the second semi-annual inspection of the DOC for 2013 began on November 13, 2013 and this information is contained with the approved minutes of that meeting. The minutes of the November 13th meeting were reviewed on November 20th at which time additional discussion/follow-up was held. Due to administrative oversight, this report was submitted to the NH Dept. of Justice on April 3rd. However, a record of these inspections/discussions is contained in the Minutes of the County Commissioners meetings which were approved on November 25th.

Superintendent VanWickler stated that his staffing levels are slightly down as he currently has three employees on military duty. On the plus side he said that he has two (2) officers will graduate the academy this week. He said that three (3) other officers will be submitted for certification based on prior experience and hopefully will not have to attend the academy. When asked about any issues within the staff, VanWickler said that on one (1) officer had been disciplined in the past six (6) months. He also said that a number of high risk, high cost medical cases are currently being handled including a high risk pregnancy but that thus far everything had gone well.

He said that no increase in federal inmates is anticipated over the next few months as the holiday period is usually slow for any court transfers. The overall physical plant is performing well and no major facilities have been experienced. In response to a question by the Commissioners he reported that no litigation is currently being pursued against the County by any of the inmates and that

Area Code 603

♦ **County Commissioners** 352-8215/Fax 355-3026 ♦ **Registry of Deeds** 352-0403/Fax 352-7678 ♦ **Finance Department** 355-0154/Fax 355-3000 - 33 West Street, Keene, NH 03431 ♦ **County Sheriff** 352-4238/Fax 355-3020 ♦ **County Attorney** 352-0056/Fax 355-3012 - 12 Court Street, Keene, NH 03431 ♦ **Alternative Sentencing/Mental Health Court** 355-0160/Fax 355-0159 - 265 Washington St. Keene N.H. ♦ **Department of Corrections** 825 Marlboro Street, Keene, 03431 - 903-1600/Fax 352-4044 ♦ **Maplewood Nursing Home & Assisted Living** 399-4912/Fax 399-7005 - TTY Access 1-800-735-2964 ♦ **Facilities** 399-7300/Fax 399-7357 ♦ **Human Resources** 399-7317/399-7378/Fax 399-4429 - 201 River Rd, Westmoreland, NH 03467

Cheshire County DOC has the lowest litigation rate in the state. VanWickler then provided an Electronic monitoring report and said that two (2) inmates had absconded. One had been recaptured and was now sentenced to six (6) months to one and half (1.5) years at the prison in Concord. A second inmate is still at large. He also reported that two (2) other inmates passed away while on monitoring. Federal transports statistics were then covered. On-site contact visits were discussed and the Superintendent related a particular visit for a couple from the Boston area where a visit was able to be arranged at the last minute for which the family was very grateful.

The Commissioners then inspected the medical wing and interviewed several nurses there regarding the treatment of psychiatric issues and the number of inmates on psych meds. They were told that about 60% of the inmates are on some form of psych medication. They asked about the standard of medical care and how often medical providers were in the facility seeing inmates. They were told that there is medical coverage three days a week and that a physician's assistant comes in one day a week and two physicians come in two more days during each week. The staff discussed the care provided to HIV positive inmates and Hepatitis C inmates. Medications are typically passed at 8am, 4pm and 8pm. Staff said that the medical record system is a shared or common medical record with the Cheshire Medical Center. This allows personnel to access hospital records seamlessly and quickly and improves the continuum of care.

There was extended discussion of a high-risk pregnant inmate and the pre-natal care provided to her two times per week at the hospital and the intensive monitoring provided by medical staff within the jail. This high-risk pregnancy involves a drug addicted diabetic with hypertension. The Commissioners also received a report (without inmate identifying information) regarding a cancer patient at the jail who get regular transportation to the hospital for chemotherapy.

The Commissioners spoke with a LADAC (licensed alcohol and drug counselor) regarding the programs used, such as cognitive self-change and intensive recovery services. There are currently seven groups per week that this LADAC runs.

The Commissioners interviewed four male and two female inmates without correctional staff being present. The inmates, in response to questions, made the following comments and observations: The video visitation system has some problems in D-block. Apparently, this is because other inmates have damaged the equipment during a video visitation. Some stated that the canteen system which relies on computer access and literacy can be impossible to use for some who don't know about computers. So too with the on-line scheduling of video visitation. This can be difficult if you don't have a computer. However, they did say that the video visitation system is good if family is far away.

Some inmates complained that they get charged for certain medications and one inmate said that her prescribed medications have been reduced and she is not getting the profile of medications she used to when she was on the outside. She said she has a disease and that her treatment is improved with these meds that she is no longer receiving. One medication could be estrogen that the doctor has declined to prescribe to her in jail. However, all said that the medical staff provides "wonderful service". One male inmate complained that he is not getting all his heart medication as before but that he does get his essential blood pressure medication.

As for the medical staff, they are "pretty cool" "awesome" and that they "take the time to research my disease." Barnes is good but overworked—"they take care of every one of us", "phenomenal staff".

The male inmates complained that they have to pay for haircuts and that \$12 is too much for the type of cut they receive in jail. Sometimes their only alternative is to have their hair cut by other inmates but that can get them in trouble.

The inmates all said that programming is good and there are a lot of volunteers but that they wish they could access more mental health treatment. Two complained that they were unable to be released to attend the death of a family member and they feel this is not fair.

The high-risk pregnant inmate said she was “sick of being here” having been here two weeks. She only wants to get out to raise her baby herself at home.

The drug programs are good, according to all of the inmates interviewed and the interns (from Antioch) are “awesome”.

Several men said that the food was good but they wish there were more of it (larger servings). In the old jail, there used to be meal substitutions if you did not like what was being offered. That no longer happens in the new jail. Not even peanut butter and jelly are available as an alternate meal. It was always an option in Westmoreland.

The recreation yards are a joke as they are two small—all but one inmate remembers the outdoor recreation yard at the old jail in Westmoreland. Some inmates have jail memories going back decades and recall former farm staff. They miss the opportunity to get out and do things.

Several said that the prison in Concord was much better than the county jail because you could leave your cell-block and move around the campus and there was outdoor areas to recreate.

The inmates said that the CO’s (correctional officers) are “decent” but “like a diaper, they are on your ass”. They felt that the rules are tighter here than in prison. They take your good time here for little things, which is not fair, according to one inmate.

They complained that the commissary “is a joke” and that stuff is overpriced, like ramen noodles for a buck when it should be more like twenty-five cents. Plus, they complained, they charge fees to replenish the inmate’s account. Two inmates said that it costs \$5 bucks to add money to your account. They don’t think that is fair. Plus the commissary sells mac & cheese and the instructions call for butter but butter is not provided so if you keep butter from your meal tray for use later with the mac & cheese, you can get in trouble and the CO’s will take it away.

There are a couple CO’s that are “bullshit CO’s” and don’t always treat the inmates as respectfully as most of the other CO’s. They complained that they have to purchase radios with headphones for \$40 to listen to the TV but that if another inmate leaves, they are not permitted to give them to other inmates to use.

They said that as to overall conditions at the jail “there are lots of good things”, “awesome for the most part”. One was pleased that there is hot water and a microwave in the housing units—not something she has experienced in all the other jails she has visited.

Some complained that when there is an incident, the ‘lock down’ is for too long a period of time. One said, as to staffing levels and the number of CO’s: “I can see them to a point. They need all the extra CO’s for incidents in case in turns into a brawl!”

The topics raised at the initial November 13th inspection were continued discussion at the November 20th meeting of the Commissioners as follows:

At 11:17 on November 20, 2013, an extended review and discussion of the prior week's semi-annual jail report ensued. Discussed with DOC personnel Mullen, Mousseau, and Clark were the comments and complaints made by the inmates. There was a comment concerning not receiving proper medication and nurse Mullins stated that on the street, many people are prescribed more medications than necessary and that when they come to jail, the physicians review all the medications and clinical indications and frequently reduce the number of medications inmates are on. There was a complaint about the phone calling costs for inmates, the cost of commissary items, the cost of service charges to families and friends for depositing funds into inmate canteen accounts and these questions will be addressed by the Superintendent at the next meeting.

The inmates say that \$12 is too much to pay for a haircut. Major Mousseau stated that the facility does have a policy for indigent haircuts that are available approximately every three months. The indigent haircuts are typically military 'buzz' cuts performed by corrections officers. The Inmate Programs Director has had some success getting a local barber to come to the jail to cut hair at a reduced price but that we have been unable to get a barber to cut hair for the inmates for free. There was a complaint that headphones to listen to TV cost \$40 and inmates are not allowed to give their headsets to others. Mousseau said that the reasons for not allowing inmates to gift their headset radios used to watch the day room TV's is because too often these "gifts" are forced on weaker inmates or are used as extortion between inmates, hence the requirement that you hold a receipt that you paid for the headset. Two inmates complained that they are not allowed to save food in their cells from their lunch trays. Mousseau explained that the reason was that if inmates were allowed to store food in their cells, it would attract rodents and insects and because there is no refrigeration, inmates could become ill from eating spoiled food or milk. There was a comment that some corrections officers are not very nice although they are all respectful. There was a discussion of how individual correctional officers deal with infractions and how officers with less experience tend to be more black and white where more seasoned officers tend to have a better "feel" for certain situations. A substantial number of correctional officers have less than 2 years of experience. A pre-trial inmate complained that she was unable to attend the funeral of a relative. Mousseau explained that the County generally is very supportive of funeral leave and has frequently assigned officers (dressed in street clothes) to escort inmates to funerals. However, as to pre-trial inmates, only the judge can allow this to take place, therefore the inmate's attorney must petition the court for this to happen.

There was much discussion around the visitation schedules and procedures that that families are requested to follow when setting up visitation appointments. Mousseau said that visitors are allowed to call in if necessary to arrange video visitation although the preferred route is to schedule visits 1-hour in advance on-line. They do recognize that not all people have computer access. Frequently Mousseau himself will assist in the scheduling process. Finally, there were complaints about the length of 'lock-downs', and Mousseau stated that the lock-downs are for as long as it takes to finalize a medical transfer, calm down a fight and complete the necessary officer reports which must be completed at the time and before the end of shift. He said the most often last for a couple hours or less, depending for the reason behind the lock -down.

It was determined that some of the questions will need to be addressed by Superintendent VanWickler as the staff members present were not able to answer questions concerning costs

associated with the various inmate services that were discussed. A follow-up meeting with the Superintendent will be scheduled in the next few weeks.

We trust that this report will comply with the intent of the statute requiring inspection of correctional facilities by the County Commissioners. Please feel free to contact this office or the Superintendent of the County House of Correction, Richard Van Wickler, if you have any questions regarding this report. As we say in each of these reports, 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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Pratt', with a stylized flourish at the end.

John Pratt, Chairman