

**Public Safety Committee Meeting
May 15, 2003
4 p.m.
Tompkins County Public Safety Building**

Present: B. Blanchard, L. McBean, M. Robertson
Excused: G. Totman, K. Herrera
Staff: S. Whicher, P. Meskill, R. Bunce, D. Neimi, A. LeMaro
Guests: O. Mack, OAR; Jeff Buck, Scott Herlitsza, Ed Powell, Jacobs Facilities

Called to Order

Ms. Blanchard called the meeting to order at 2:08 p.m.

Introductions took place at this time.

Mr. Buck stated it is vital that Jacobs' representatives understand what is important so that as we work towards physical and operational solutions at the (PSB) Public Safety Building those issues can be addressed properly. He said he believes Jacobs Facilities, Inc. and the Public Safety Committee are now in agreement on the Scope of Work. That Scope is to review existing conditions and produce a new master plan design concept by the end of 2003. This is a project that will build upon the work that was done in the Labella Study in terms of existing conditions, projections, and what the needs are. Mr. Buck said this will produce a new scheme; however, it will not be beginning from scratch. He said they are working towards a phased implementation solution.

There was brief discussion relating to the establishment of a timeframe for this project. It was agreed that September would be a target date for completion. If it is decided later if that will not be possible, the date will be moved to November so that it does not interfere with the County's budget process during the month of October. Mr. Whicher said it would be very helpful to have preliminary budget estimates for this project prior to the start of the budget process.

Mr. Buck said Jacobs will have its engineers spending time at the PSB and will be compiling a list of physical systems issues. The Scope does not include performing an analysis of population projections or alternatives programs; however, Mr. Powell will be working on providing an updated snapshot of the how the target capacity (145 to 196) sorts out by classification. In August Jacobs may need to meet with the Committee twice in one week for the purpose of illustrating different design options that are seriously being explored. At that time the Committee can decide what options it would like to see and then decide which option makes the most sense.

Ms. Blanchard said there are non-Public Safety Committee members who should also be part of the Charrette exercise. Mr. Buck said they believe the more open a process is, the easier it is to build consensus at the end.

Mr. Buck noted the Scope of Work does not include: an evaluation of alternative-to-incarceration programs, revisiting all of the assumptions on the proposed inmate population projection - it is only to understand what that system is and how it will work; it is not to redo the Labella study. Because of the focussed effort this year, Jacobs will rely on a lot of existing data which they will update when appropriate.

Ms. Blanchard said she would like to discuss the planning capacity issue because the previous Committee could never reach consensus on the 196 figure. She said she and Ms. McBean served on the

Committee that developed the RFP for this project and she believes the figured being looked at was 135. She asked Mr. Buck to elaborate on what he meant by his earlier comment - "living without variances" and what that would mean in terms of having discussions with the Commission on Corrections.

Mr. Buck spoke of planning capacity and said if significant amounts of money are spent to extend the useful life of the facility, the Committee should be looking at least twenty years to the future. He doesn't want to see Tompkins County lock itself out of what it may need to do on this site in the future. Mr. Buck said from an architects point of view, the long-term planning target the County needs to establish is one that will be acceptable to the Commission on Corrections and not require any variances.

Mr. Buck said Tompkins County needs to have an incremental plan with a target capacity of somewhere between the total that exists today and a higher number aimed at being adequate twenty years in the future. He said when he refers to a target capacity of 135 to 196 it doesn't mean the County has to build a facility that has that capacity, but there should be a plan of where it would go in the future if necessary. The County wouldn't want to build a facility that would not allow expansion beyond 135.

These numbers were produced by the Labella study:

Sheriff:	5,589 sq. ft.	present
	18,329 sq. ft.	target
Jail	6,919 sq. ft.	present
	43,925 sq. ft.	target
Total	22,508 sq. ft.	present
	61,624 sq. ft.	target

Mr. Powell is a Criminal Justice Analyst and Planner. His job on this project is to review the current snapshot of the population of the Jail to affirm the planning target that has already been established.

Mr. Buck said the Jail has temporary variances for 30 beds. He said it is important to determine the amount of space that is needed to maintain classification separations. If the variances go away, the total number of beds that exist now will go down by those 30 that were approved under temporary variances. If the County cannot accommodate all inmates, it produces an expensive situation of boarding prisoners to other facilities. In many cases it costs \$75/day in addition to costs for transportation and security. Mr. Buck said one of the issues he thinks Tompkins County needs to address is the leverage the Commission on Corrections has on the County. A plan needs to developed that the County can implement to get out from under the variances.

The current facility has 72 beds plus one holding cell. Ms. Blanchard noted that because of the classification system it is almost impossible to fill all 72 beds at one time. At the present time the County is operating under four classifications. If the County did not maintain the Probation Department and an alternative-to-incarceration program, and stay within substantial compliance of security, capacity, or staff regulations of the Commission on Corrections, the County would then need to maintain 12 different classifications. Mr. Buck stated the County is operating with 30 beds as a "variance"; he believes the County should explore ways to operate so that if those variances were taken away it would not hurt the County. He stated this is the minimum project size the County should be looking at in order to remove the leverage the Commission on Correction has over Tompkins County. Mr. Buck said that Sheriff has very little control over the population of the Jail. Security, staffing, and total capacity are defined in Corrections Law that the Sheriff must follow.

Mr. Buck said the big concerns now are in the road patrol, administration, bookkeeping, food service, laundry, program space, and warehouse or storage space. For the next meeting, Jacobs will be

asking key staff people to look at these items that were identified in the Labella Study and comment on whether there have been significant changes since that time.

Ms. McBean clarified that the formula approach she is hearing in regard to the Jail capacity is to start from a place of 72 so that if the variance is taken away the County can function without a variance. Mr. Buck stated this is the minimal approach the County should consider. Ms. Blanchard said if the County lost its variances the County's capacity would no longer be 72, it would be the amount the facility was originally built for (approximately 55). Mr. Herlitzka said if there was a divided area that was intended to house 12 inmates and one female inmate was in that area, unless other inmates were of the exact same classification there would be 11 beds that are not usable.

Ms. Robertson said she is not sure that assuming the maximum number of cells the Jail may need is something she would support. If the County were to have to board out a few inmates as opposed to building additional beds that may be a more acceptable alternative to her. She said she needs to be convinced on the functional needs that are not being met for the existing size of the Jail. Ms. Blanchard said when the Committee discusses the operational costs of the building these concerns will be addressed.

In discussing the capacity of the Jail, Mr. Powell said the current facility does not have an adequate number of holding cells or segregated cells. Examples of uses of segregated cells include protective custody, administration, and punitive purposes. He said segregated cells are not included in the capacity total because when an inmate is segregated they still don't give up their bed in the general population. Sheriff Meskill said the Tompkins County Jail currently does not have any segregated cells. Ms. McBean asked Sheriff Meskill if consideration has been given to the need for segregated cells in Tompkins County. He responded a need exists for segregated cells on a daily basis. Mr. Powell said he has spent the last twelve years working with county and regional jails. The standards he has seen for determining the number of segregated cells needed is ten percent of the general population.

Mr. Buck said for the next meeting Jacobs will come back with a presentation on what the effect of operational capacity is today and what it needs to be in the future. He said it is important to document where the County is today with respect to population so that the minimum project can be defined.

Ms. Robertson said last year she was informed that the Jail was making money by boarding State inmates and asked for clarification. Mr. Meskill said he has no control over State readies or parolees. He said if one of those inmates is in the Jail for longer than ten days he is able to collect \$34 for each additional day from the State.

A tour of the Jail took place from 3:08 p.m. to 3:55 p.m.

Discussion of Goals

Mr. Buck said the Labella study contained a mission statement; however, he thinks the current mission statement needs to be different and should define the most cost effective solution for both capital construction and operation. The Committee needs to deal with existing building conditions and what it will cost to renovate the existing space for reuse. He said one of the goals should include having an incremental expansion plan.

In response to Mr. Herlitzka's question with regard to funding for this project, Ms. Blanchard stated funding is not in place and is very unlikely to be in place to build an entirely new facility. She stated an incremental approach to whatever is done is probably the only concept the County could talk about handling. Ms. McBean said she believes it is also necessary as options are proposed, to have all of the options, including what it would look like to build an entirely new facility in terms of costs, including increments. Ms. Robertson said any option would need to include costs that will result while space is being replaced on a temporary basis during construction.

During discussion of a master plan, the Committee felt any plan should include options for incremental expansion as needs change over the next twenty years. Mr. Buck explained twenty years is generally the useful life span of a building without major renovations. The Tompkins County Public Safety Building is now 17 years old.

Ms. Blanchard said she is interested in the long-term operational and staffing issues related to whatever decision is made. Mr. Herlitzka said they will take advantage of opportunities to take areas that are inefficient from an operational standpoint and create a new operational and functional configuration that would be more effective and efficient. It was noted that in 24-7 operations, each employee is the equivalent of 5.3 FTE's.

Ms. Robertson said she serves on the Space Needs and Location Committee which is currently evaluating the needs of the Health Department and opportunities for other buildings in the downtown core. One of the questions that has been raised is how to obtain the number of square footage for need. Ms. Blanchard said the figures used are typically architectural standards. Ms. Robertson said it is important for members of this Committee to understand how those estimates are obtained. Mr. Buck noted that Jacobs will come back to the Committee and demonstrate that the figures they present are consistent with other projects meeting New York State Commission on Corrections standards.

Ms. Blanchard stated the current facility does not clearly identify where individuals are supposed to go inside the facility. This was listed as a goal under clarity of facility. Because the Jail is located in a viable business area, it was suggested that Jacobs be sensitive concerning the exterior design and security. Ms. McBean said she would like the humanity factor considered in any design. Sheriff Meskill said the areas of most importance to him are safety, security, and supervision.

Mr. Buck said he would convert the ideas expressed into options to pick from to provide the most cost effective solution to the Public Safety Building. This led into a discussion of "Rocks in the Road".

"Rocks in the Road"

At this time there was discussion of challenges that lie ahead. It was agreed that the Committee needs to be sensitive to the term "expansion" and how this Committee's work is perceived by the public.

Ms. McBean said she believes the public is primarily concerned with the Jail side of the Public Safety Building. She said when something new is being built, the public cares about the side that affects lives which is the Jail side of the building and believes this will be the major rock in the road. Mr. Meskill disagreed and said the general public is less concerned about the Jail side of the building if they are not influenced by it. He said the public cares about what comes out of the Administrative side of the facility and how it serves them.

Mr. Buck said most of the community knows very little about the Public Safety Building. He believes the general public is very aware of what comes out of the Administration side of the building (e.g. road patrol). He thinks the general public knows about the facility although many are not directly impacted by it.

Mr. Mack said he does not think the public fully understands the challenges the Sheriff's Department deals with. They hear a lot of money, treatment, and housing issues about the Jail, but he doesn't think people understand all of the administrative issues the Sheriff and County face. Ms. McBean feels the public fully understands the issues, including the variances; however, she feels the fight is against an unbalanced justice system.

Ms. Blanchard said there is a feeling among some people on both the local and national level that too many people are being incarcerated. She said Mr. Mack made a good point that there is a lack of

understanding of the variances the County is faced with. She agrees many people do not understand the implications of the variances.

Mr. Buck said there are issues with how the law is applied in this country. However, in the zone of influence the County can have, he said the County needs to create a facility that doesn't house anyone it doesn't need to, and those it houses are housed in appropriate conditions, and provides safe and secure working conditions for staff. He said the project should not cost any more than the County can afford to spend.

Ms. Robertson said there are many things the County needs to do but cannot afford to do. She said part of problem is explaining things to the public and finding terminology that doesn't raise red flags. It was noted that the Committee may wish to use the term renovation/reuse, which may or may not include expansion. It was agreed better public education is needed.

Ms. Blanchard said this situation is different than maintenance of roads because there is an outside influence that is telling the County if the problems are not addressed the County will face consequences. Mr. Buck explained that the County can be forced to maintain appropriate conditions of confinement by the Commission on Correction and they will do so without any consideration of the County's ability to pay.

Ms. Robertson said one alternative to expanding cells would be to explore the question of boarding prisoners to other facilities. Mr. Meskill said this is only an alternative to housing inmates because it does not address any facility issues that exist. He said there are problems with the heating, ventilation, and plumbing in the building that need to be addressed. Ms. Robertson said she believes people understand there are deficits in the building.

Mr. Herlitska asked if it were going to be a "rock in the road" if the County did anything to the facility, or is it a rock only if the County adds beds. The Committee responded that the rock will exist if there is any type of expansion, but that in this economic climate any expenditure will be scrutinized carefully.

Ms. Blanchard referred to matrix charts that were used in a previous presentation that showed over a period of time the operational costs of the facility and said this type of information would be extremely valuable. Mr. Buck said in order for Jacobs to meet its mission they will explore different options and present those and agree on things such as operational issues, construction costs, and phasing capabilities.

Mr. Whicher said this is a long-term plan that is a very important part of the capital program. He said he likes to hear about incremental and 20-year approaches because it allows him to provide a better layout for the capital program. Mr. Whicher noted the Board is already facing a substantial increase in the property tax levy and believes the only solution would be an incremental one.

Chief Neimi said she supports the comments made by the Sheriff and would be willing to answer any questions the Committee may have. The Committee requested the presence of Chief Neimi and Sgt. Bunce at future meetings and encouraged them to provide input.

Over the course of the discussion, the following list of issues, people involved, activities components, and goals that will address the Jail and Administration space separately was developed:

