



Richland County Council
Detention Center Ad Hoc Committee
MINUTES
September 26, 2023 – 3:00 PM
Council Chambers
2020 Hampton Street, Columbia, SC 29204

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT: Derrek Pugh, Chair, Overture Walker, and Cheryl English

OTHERS PRESENT: Allison Terracio, Gretchen Barron, Don Weaver, Anette Kirylo, Michelle Onley, Leonardo Brown, Crayman Harvey, Kyle Holsclaw, Angela Weathersby, Ashiya Myers, Chelsea Bennett, Lori Thomas, Patrick Wright, Thomas Gilbert, Aric Jensen, Susan O’Cain, Brittney Hoyle Terry, Bill Peters, Fielding Pringle, and Stacey Hamm

1. **CALL TO ORDER** – Councilman Derrek Pugh called the meeting to order at approximately 3:00 PM.

2. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

a. March 21, 2023 – Mr. Walker moved to approve the minutes as distributed, seconded by Ms. English.

In Favor: Pugh, Walker, and English

The vote in favor was unanimous.

3. **ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA** – Mr. Walker moved to adopt the agenda as published, seconded by Ms. English.

In Favor: Pugh, Walker, and English

The vote in favor was unanimous.

4. **DISCUSSION ITEMS**

a. ASGDC Progress Updates – The County Administrator, Leonardo Brown, stated the County submitted a plan of action to the Department of Corrections. Since the submittal, we have been working on the plan as submitted.

1. *Compliance Director* – Mr. Brown noted Mr. James Lipscomb was hired as the Detention Center’s Compliance Director. Mr. Lipscomb is a military veteran who has worked in corrections for over 25 years. He most recently worked at the South Carolina Department of Corrections.

Mr. Pugh inquired about Mr. Lipscomb’s responsibilities at the Detention Center, whom he will report to, and how this hire will help us move forward with creating a better environment.

Mr. Brown responded that Mr. Lipscomb would report directly to the County Administrator. With the hiring of Mr. Lipscomb, there will be an individual in the facility who has detention experience but can look at the existing issues and provide recommendations for addressing them. In addition, he will look at any compliance matters we are responsible for and report them to the County Administrator. While he will work with the facility, the idea is there is independence so that he does not have to be concerned about whether he reported something that someone may not want to share. He will solely focus on ensuring that any issues we are supposed to comply with are addressed, which will help us create a better environment.

Mr. Pugh inquired as to where we are as it pertains to the Department of Corrections inquiry on Alvin S. Glenn.

Mr. Brown noted that one of the things we discussed in our plan with the Department of Corrections was maintaining a level of communication. He has been speaking with Blake Taylor in their Compliance Division to build a relationship. As a part of one of their conversations, Mr. Taylor indicated it was fortuitous Mr. Brown reached out to him. Mr. Taylor intended to call the County to inform us there was an opportunity to receive technical assistance, allowing us to potentially prioritize areas we had identified and are already working on. He stated he accepted the offer. Since then, we have received information about additional things the County could do, and the Department of Corrections requested a response to their information. He indicated the County plans to respond within the timeline provided, even though the participation was voluntary.

Mr. Pugh requested Mr. Brown to expound on what technical assistance entails.

Mr. Brown replied his understanding of technical assistance would be that someone would look at an existing process or system and then provide opportunities for you to use a best practice or standard that exists by providing you with a resource to connect you. He indicated we received some observations related to some areas of the facilities.

Mr. Pugh inquired if the County researched other detention centers in the surrounding areas that have received technical assistance from the Department of Corrections.

Mr. Brown stated it is his understanding this is something new and not consistent with other organizations.

Mr. Wright expressed that even though it has been termed a deadline, the only oversight the Department of Corrections has is the annual inspection of the facility. Mr. Brown stated he would respond to the request, but it is not legally mandated. The County has been requesting recommendations from the Department of Corrections and other entities on addressing the situations at the detention center. Everyone basically said no, so when the Department of Corrections reached out and offered their technical assistance, Mr. Brown accepted the help.

Mr. Pugh inquired if there was anything in writing that detailed what the technical assistance would entail.

Mr. Brown responded there was a phone conversation about prioritizing areas identified in the plan that needed to be addressed. He had internal discussions regarding the offer. Within 48 hours, he called back and sent an email accepting the assistance because we want to make the detention center as good as possible.

Mr. Pugh inquired about what we will be outlining in our response.

Mr. Brown indicated we will provide information on how we have addressed the security issues they pointed out. He noted the Department of Corrections has acknowledged they understand because of the nature of the work and the environment in which the work has to be done, these are not short-term fixes. We feel confident the pathway we are on shows we are taking positive steps.

Mr. Pugh stated, for clarification, that there are no sanctions from the Department of Corrections. This is merely the County responding to the technical assistance to help us move in the right direction.

Mr. Brown responded in the affirmative.

Mr. Walker inquired if Mr. Lipscomb's experience in corrections was with the SC Department of Corrections.

Mr. Brown responded his experience is in various states.

Mr. Walker stated he understands this is the County's first Compliance Director for the Detention Center.

Mr. Brown responded in the affirmative. He created this position as a part of the County's efforts to bolster our attention at the facility.

Mr. Walker inquired what prompted Administration to go in the direction of a Compliance Director.

Mr. Brown declared we wanted to be able to show our specific focus and attention to being compliant with all local, state, and federal laws related to the Detention Center. We thought it would be important to ensure that no one in the facility could not report something because their supervisor told them to keep it quiet.

Mr. Walker asserted because of what has been reported in various news outlets it could give one the impression that the County is a bad actor when it comes to our detention

facility, and it has been necessary for the State to intervene to compel us to do the right thing. When, in fact, what he is hearing is this has been a collaborative effort.

Mr. Brown stated he answered the news outlets directly and was open and transparent about the offer the County received from the Department of Corrections. He is aware that is not what was reported. Just know he shared that with multiple outlets, and they chose to do something different with the information.

Mr. Walker stated, for clarification, the Department of Corrections has requested the County to provide an update by a specific date, but it is not a hard deadline as reported in various media outlets.

Mr. Brown stated the information was not discussed at the beginning of the process. He addressed the question with the Department of Corrections about where the deadline was coming from. Technical assistance typically does not have a deadline. Based on what they shared, the Department of Corrections thought it would be important to receive a response.

Mr. Wright maintained the only authority the Department of Corrections has over Richland County is pursuant to the annual inspection, which this was not. Therefore, they do not have the power to enforce a deadline on any voluntary technical assistance. He asserted there is no legal consequence because it is not something the Department of Corrections can legally do. Since we discussed things in the media, he noticed a piece regarding the Department of Corrections where they talked about some of the officers being arrested for various reasons. The Department of Corrections Director was praised for rooting things out and fixing things, but when it comes to the Detention Center, it is always deemed "troubled" even though they are dealing with the same issues. He noted the Detention Center and the Department of Corrections have the same issues as other local detention centers. The ratio of detainees and officers is disproportionate now due to bond reform. Once detainees enter the Detention Center, they do not become model citizens. Many are affiliated with gangs who fight on the outside, so there is no reason to think they will change on the inside. He indicated some of the reporting has been misleading and some downright untrue. In addition, the County has to wait for investigations to be completed before we make a statement. The attorneys for the detainees are free to say whatever they want, regardless if it has a basis in fact, and it will be printed. He acknowledged many things have been done to bring about positive changes at the Detention Center. He feels it is disingenuous when you have certain law firms that come to line their pockets with taxpayer funds and will say anything to do it. For some reason, there seems to be a concerted effort by certain individuals to try to ensure that Alvin S. Glenn fails.

Mr. Pugh stated the County is thankful for the technical assistance from the Department of Corrections.

2. *Infrastructure* – Mr. Brown indicated the installation of the new locking system began in August. In addition, they are painting, updating the plumbing, working on the exterior's appearance, etc. They are currently working in the Special Housing Unit. They anticipate moving to the Yankee Unit next. He noted they would provide pictures of the improvements but welcomed committee members to see the progress in person.

Mr. Pugh inquired if the before and after video of the kitchen renovations was still available online. In addition, is there anywhere on the County's website they would be able to view these images?

Mr. Brown responded the video is still available but not currently on the County's website.

Mr. Pugh stated if we could make "our story" easily accessible to the community, it would be a great help.

Mr. Weaver about what percentage of the door locks have been installed.

Mr. Brown replied they are currently working on the doors in the Special Housing Unit. He cannot give a specific number of locks replaced because it is the locking mechanism, running the wiring and the conduit, and then the outer lock with the light display. We can provide a report at the next committee meeting.

Mr. Weaver inquired about the timeline for when the replacement of the locks will be completed.

Mr. Brown stated the project is expected to be completed in the latter part of 2024.

Mr. Weaver inquired if staff had noted any improvements with the new locking system.

Mr. Brown indicated the housing unit they are working on has been taken offline and is vacant. They are renovating one unit at a time. Once one unit is completed, they can

transfer the detainees into the newly renovated unit and begin work on the next unit.

Mr. Weaver inquired if there has been any progress on placing cameras on the outside of the facility.

Mr. Wright indicated he is concerned about discussing specific security issues in public session.

Mr. Brown stated funding was appropriated that could be used to increase camera coverage throughout the facility.

- b. 2023 SCJAA Conference, October 1-4 – Mr. Brown noted that the Detention Center Director and himself would attend the 2023 SC Jail Administrator’s Association Conference. There is an itinerary included in the agenda packet that shows the topics they will be covering.
- c. Fifth and Eleventh Judicial Circuits – SC Courts Mental Health Initiative
- In 2019, 61.2M Americans had a Mental Illness and/or Substance Use Disorder
 - Serious mental illness is four to six times higher in jail than in the general population

Mr. Brown indicated officers are being trained to ensure people are safe and secure but cannot identify someone acting out due to a mental illness or disorder. When we are hiring detention center officers, we are asking these officers to be “clinicians,” “psychiatrists,” or “psychologists” and be able to perceive when individuals are having some kind of mental challenge or breakdown. In some instances, the officers are not equipped to do this. Not because they are not good detention officers but because that is more than someone who has been trained for years in sociology or the like. The court system recognizes a pattern that needs to be addressed, and they are trying to figure out how to deal with it on their end because these people all trickle down from the court system to the detention centers.

Mr. Pugh asked if we know our jails are housing mental health patients; what are we doing to prepare the staff to recognize when someone is dealing with a mental health issue so we can get the detainees the help they need immediately?

Mr. Brown stated this is a part of the process. Instead of the Detention Center being the voice of “we have mental health patients we are dealing with,” we have outside entities who recognize that mental health patients are flowing through the Detention Center. He indicated there needs to be a collaboration where entities like Alvin S. Glenn and other agencies work to address this by taking an active step in the process and being a part of the solution. It is his understanding the detention officer’s 40 hours of training includes mental health awareness.

Ms. English stated sometimes we have to understand even though we are dealing with mental illness, there is a level of criminal activity that comes with that, and we have to be prepared on both levels. Safety is always going to be the first issue. The second issue is once the detainees are detained, them being able to deal with the mental illness and the things that come along with it. The public has to understand it is a detention center or facility housing those who have committed criminal activities. She noted that mental illness is real and hard to deal with. We need to understand more about what is going on with the illness.

Mr. Wright expressed Alvin S. Glenn Detention Center is supposed to be a short-term detention facility. As such, no one is supposed to be housed there for more than a year, and we have individuals who have been there as long as five years. We are having to be a long-term corrections facility, which is not what Alvin S. Glenn was designed to be. He maintained we are attempting to deal with mental illness and substance abuse issues.

- d. Statewide Mental Health Summit, October 30 – Mr. Brown stated included in the agenda packet is information that the National Center for State Courts put together, which represents the judicial’s review of how they could impact the issues the courts have. This ultimately

affects the detention facility. He noted there is a Statewide Mental Health Summit scheduled for October 30th. Each time the court system has met to discuss met, we have been present. He indicated we want to understand how we can be a part of the solution and show that Alvin S. Glenn Detention and Administration, sees this as a serious concern and wants to be at the table when we talk about how we can help address individuals who may be in the detention facility.

5. **ADJOURNMENT** – Mr. Walker moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Ms. English.

In Favor: Pugh, Walker, and English

The vote in favor was unanimous.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 3:48 PM.