



County of Cheshire

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

November 21, 2022

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 of the inmates' management, condition, and security in the county correctional facility for 2022. Following is our written report to you of the findings and actions or proposed actions on such results, as recorded within the Public Meeting Minutes of the Board of Commissioners, recorded at the time of the meetings.

June 06, 2022: 1st Semi-Annual Inspection

Master Agenda Item #991: Department of Corrections – Semi-Annual Report
Action Expected: To conduct the Department of Corrections' first Semi-Annual 2022 inspections as required by RSA 30-B 12.

At 8:33 AM, the Commissioners began their statutory inspection of the county jail. They inspected the F-Block housing unit. More specifically, the floors were a point of attention, noting that the now nearly 13-year-old flooring is showing its wear and tear. The flooring in all housing units is slated for replacement within the next ten months. The housing unit and individual cells were clean and in good repair. Inmates receive sheets and multiple blankets (depending upon temperature seasonally). Inmates have open fee-based telephone access and mail access.

The R&D (Receiving and Diagnostic) housing unit was inspected wearing masks. The inmate classification process during the 10-day stay in this unit was reviewed along with COVID practices.

The maintenance/boiler room was inspected, and the geothermal system was extensively reviewed. This section is in excellent condition, having recently had renovations and revisions to the geothermal system.

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D-Block (minimum security) housing unit was inspected, and the general comments regarding cleanliness and condition noted in F-Block are also valid for this housing unit. The Commissioners reviewed the Tablets that are available for inmates to use to allow them access to excellent reading materials. The tablets have generally (but not completely) replaced physical library books.

D-Block inmates also have the opportunity to utilize video visitation (for a fee). They can schedule visits from either the video visitation rooms within the facility or from a person's home.

K-Block was inspected. K is the maximum-security housing unit. Again, clean and in good repair. It was orderly and quiet.

The Laundry section was inspected. The inmate laundry area was spotless and orderly, using inmate labor. Inmates receive two full sets of clothing changes each week, with some exceptions for more changes depending upon the circumstances.

The kitchen was inspected, and the Commissioners met with the Food Service Director. There was a general discussion about food supply delays, food shortages, and the on-site vegetable and herb garden that produces several types of vegetables to have economic fresh vegetables for the facility. On average, between 500-600 meals each day are made for inmates, staff, and visitors. The kitchen was spotless and orderly.

The Commissioners conducted two private interviews with inmates (one male, one female) to determine how they viewed the conditions and treatment at the facility. Both inmates have histories of addiction from initial exposure to opioids due to established medical care. They were complimentary regarding their treatment and the conditions at the jail. The interviews went on for a significant length of time.

The Commissioners conducted two private interviews with two select employees (one male and one female) regarding their work environment, culture, and conditions. The interviews were uniformly positive.

November 09, 2022: 2nd Semi-Annual Inspection

At 10:00 AM, the Commissioners, via unanimous roll call vote, recessed the public portion of the meeting to take up Master Agenda Item #1039: Semi-Annual Department of Corrections Facility Inspection. **To conduct the second 2022 semi-annual physical property inspection and engage inmates and staff in reviewing the Department of Corrections operations as required pursuant to NH RSA 30-B:12.**

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AT 10:03 AM, the second semi-annual tour for 2022 of the County of Cheshire Department of Corrections (DOC) began, escorted by the DOC Director of Programs, Major Michael Thompson.

The Commissioners and staff entered the R-block, and the Correctional Officers (COs) on duty discussed the ongoing COVID precautions and care taken for the intake process at the facility. The use of the segregation blocks part of the R-block was discussed, and the exercise was examined. It was discussed that the long-awaited replacement of the damaged floor tiles in the holding blocks is about to begin shortly.

At 10:09 AM, the Commissioners exited the R-block.

At 10:10 AM, The Commissioners were introduced to the new facility Case Manager, who started in the position in June of this year. She explained her job to help transition inmates from jail to the community. She said that before returning to New Hampshire, she worked in Florida in a methadone clinic. She said she had heard of the job opening in Florida because she had been an intern at the facility while completing her Master's degree in the field. She saw an opportunity to return home to a job that she liked and was trained to do.

At 10:13 AM, the Commissioners left the Case Manager's office and entered the F-block at 10:14 AM.

The Commissioners learned that there are currently fifteen inmates in the female block, including eight from the federal court system. The Commissioners learned that, unlike the much larger male population, inmate intake, diagnostics, and segregation, all activities for female inmates happen within the confines of the F-block facilities.

The Exercise area was then examined, and the Commissioners had several questions concerning how much the space was used and what activities were provided for the inmates.

The Commissioners entered an unassigned cell and examined the cleanliness of the space. The condition of the bunks, mattresses, and toilet facilities, noting that overall, the area is tidy and well kept, but the mattresses need to be replaced. They were told that new mattresses were on order and would be distributed upon arrival at the facility.

At 10:21 AM, the Commissioners exited the F-block.

At 10:22 AM, the Commissioners reviewed the two video arrangement rooms. Thompson discussed how helpful it is to make video arrangements instead of physically moving inmates to the downtown courtrooms and back to the facility.

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He then reviewed the inmate clothing and storage room area and explained its use and the reasons for having everything in a separate, clean, secure space.

At 10:26 AM, the Commissioners left the storage room.

At 10:27 AM, the Commissioners then entered the Booking area and noted that the floors in that area of the building appeared to be in very good shape. They asked a few questions about procedures for intakes and then left the space as an inmate was being searched and prepared to be released into the general population.

At 10:28 AM, the Commissioners entered the medical area and were shown the reception areas and offices for the counselors that provide drug and alcohol counseling for the inmates. The department was very busy with inmates being examined and treated, and the group left the medical area at 10:31 AM.

At 10:32 AM, a short meeting was held in the main hallway outside the maintenance department to review and discuss the recent Heating, Ventilating, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) and lighting upgrade work that was just recently completed.

At 10:34 AM, the Commissioners and staff entered D-Block and spoke with the on-duty CO and Thompson about the security of the living space and the types of inmates held in the unit. It was learned that there are currently 43 individuals assigned to the block, with 17 of them from the federal holds system.

A discussion of the use of the various areas of the block began and how attorneys for the inmates could meet with their clients in private.

At 10:41 AM, the Commissioners exited D-block and crossed the hall to the high-security K-block. Two COs are assigned to the K-block instead of one, as is the norm in the other blocks. At 10:44 AM, the Commissioners ended the physical tour and went to a staff meeting room to conduct confidential interviews with inmates and staff.

At 10:46 AM, CO #1 entered the room and was informed that they could speak freely and openly and that nothing said to them would leave the room nor be attributed to any individual.

The CO said they are now on the third shift but have worked both first and second shifts in the past. They said that they volunteered to remain over from the third shift to the first shift that day to fill an opening from another CO. They discussed sleep issues due to shift work and said that the job is very different from what they expected but that it suits them very well and they enjoy what they do.

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They said that they enjoy the strong comradery and varied job responsibilities. In response to a question, they said they interface with inmates a lot and relate to them as peers and not inmates under the control of the "law." They noted that the approach works well with most inmates they deal with.

In response to a question asking what could be better, they said that the training in dealing with bad situations, especially for new employees who may not have ever been exposed to those situations, could be improved.

The CO exited the interview at 11:01 AM.

At 11:02 AM, the second CO entered the interview room and, in response to questions from the Commissioners, said that they had been working at the facility for about 3.5 years and were in the military police before joining the County. They said they were assigned to the first shift and liked it after being on both the second and third shifts.

They stated that many current inmates had cycled over and over through the years, usually for crimes related to drug addiction.

When asked about the effectiveness of the Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) program, the CO said that they did believe that it was very effective as the graduates of the program are the ones that appear to have the highest rate of recidivism.

The CO said that even though they started out to be a police officer, they like what they are doing and are looking for growth within the organization.

They then said they had just resigned from the transport team because transporting inmates alone didn't feel safe. This, coupled with family pressure to keep safe, prompted the decision to resign from the transport team. They said that doing transports alone also opens the COs to possible false allegations. They also stated that the transport team's extra \$3.00 per hour isn't sufficient for the potential problems due to the risks involved. It was discussed that wearing a body cam would be a good idea to help alleviate this problem.

At 11:19 AM, the CO exited the interview room.

At 11:22 AM, A CO entered the interview room and said that the CO pay scales were too low based on the required duties. They also said that they believe that the hiring standards are too low and that they fear that some of the people hired are already problems or potential problems waiting to happen.

They said a group of volunteer COs should be allowed to meet with the Commissioners to discuss pay issues. A short discussion began, and the Administrator stated that several pay

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enhancements and job improvement programs for the COs had just been initiated. He went on to explain some of the details of the increases and how pay adjustments are made within the department in consultation with the bargaining unit that represents the bulk of the COs.

At 11:34 AM, the CO departed the interview room.

At 11:36 AM, the first inmate to be interviewed entered the room and, after introductions, was asked if they had any issues or questions they would like to discuss.

They said they thought more staff was needed so the inmates wouldn't need to be locked in their cells early in the evenings.

Responding to a question about programs for inmates, they said it appears that the programs are starting to come back slowly and cited the recent restart of the Recovery Group, Narcotics Anonymous, and the recent addition of a wildlife specialist program.

They said that the food was okay but heavy in carbohydrates.

At 11:41 AM, the first inmate left the interview room.

At 11:43 AM, the second inmate entered the interview room and was introduced to the Commissioners and staff.

The inmate said there wasn't a barber to cut hair and said that was a real problem. They stated the same thing three or four times, explaining why it was a problem for them.

They then said that there were murderers in their cell block and that they had gotten into an altercation with one of them and had been hit with a food tray in the face causing cuts and scrapes. They repeated four or five times that they didn't belong in the cell block with murderers and didn't want a repeat of being assaulted again.

They also said that the showers were dirty two or three times but didn't elaborate. They said there is much arguing between the inmates in the cell blocks and that some do not take showers regularly.

They stated, without prompting, that they were in the current lawsuit involving the New Hampshire Youth Development Center (YDC) and that they were arrested for assault and trespassing due to a drinking problem but were scheduled to be released in February to a halfway house for further treatment.

The inmate then left the interview room at 11:52 AM.

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The Commissioners then concluded the second semi-annual inspection of the Department of Corrections for 2022.

We trust that this report complies with the statute's intent requiring the 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 many times 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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County of Chester



2022 NOV 22 PM 2:38

For a complete list of the names of the persons who have been elected to the office of Justice of the Peace for the year 2022, please refer to the list of names on page 1 of this report.

The names of the persons who have been elected to the office of Justice of the Peace for the year 2022 are as follows: [illegible text]

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NH DEPT OF JUSTICE
NOV 22 '22 PM 2:38

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