



County of Cheshire

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

December 08, 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 inmates' management, condition, and security in the county correctional facility. 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.

December 08, 2021: 2nd Semi-Annual Inspection

Master Agenda Item #939: Department of Corrections – 2nd Semi-Annual Report
Action Expected: To conduct the Department of Corrections first Second-Annual 2021 inspections as required by RSA 30-B 12.

At 10:27 AM, The Commissioners recessed to conduct the Department of Corrections second Semi-Annual 2021 inspections required by RSA 30-B 12. Superintendent Iosue accompanied the Commissioners and staff for the tour.

The Commissioners adjourned to a meeting room in the facility and met with two female inmates. One is a federal inmate, and the other is a local county inmate.

The federal inmate responded to a question from the Commissioners asking how she liked the facility. She responded by saying that it was the best facility she had been to anywhere. She said that it is neat and clean and that the Correctional Officers (CO's) are polite and treat you with respect. She also stated that she found the other inmates to be much less petty than the prior institutions where she has been held. She went on to say that CO's in other facilities have a power-trip problem, but it is not a problem here.

She noted that there were no fights over the use of equipment, phones, tablets, microwaves, etc.

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The use of tablets and the cost of video visitation costs were discussed. She said that she thought the phone calls and tablets for the inmates were very expensive and remarked that a surcharge of \$1 is applied to their accounts for the simple transfer of funds into the accounts.

The cost of headphones was covered, and the lowest price available is \$7.00 per unit, and the next unit is priced at \$35.00. The lack of hairbrushes on the canteen was discussed, and the lack of the ability to have family send "care packages" was noted as a problem for inmates without sufficient funds. Also reviewed is the cost of denied letters for inmates.

The county incarcerated inmate then said that she was in for a habitual offender for driving. When asked if she had local support and a place to live when she was released, she said that she had had a boyfriend for 13 years who works at a local manufacturer and plans to move to North Carolina next June to be closer to family.

The Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) program was discussed, and other programs were covered. Still, it was stated by both inmates that there are not enough programs in general because volunteers are reluctant to come into the facility during the pandemic.

The ability to get COVID vaccinations was discussed and both inmates agreed that the food is good, but there are a lot of carbohydrates, and the same vegetables can be served three days in a row at times.

Both inmates agreed that allocating inmates to cells in Block F and inmates doubling up in rooms is standard on the first floor, with only three inmates on the second tier. They weren't sure why that was the case.

The MAT program was again discussed, and the federal inmate said that there is not much enthusiasm for the program by inmates except to use the drugs in the program to get high.

The County inmate said that over-the-counter drugs are provided at .50 per pill, and the nonfederal inmates pay \$10 per month for all meds. The federal inmates also paid .50 for Over-the-counter medicines and said it costs \$5.00 to see the Physician's Assistant.

They both are assigned to work in the laundry and said that getting to deliver the meals and see other people is fun for them and a good break from staying the cell block all day.

Signing up for work was discussed the use of sentenced vs. pre-trial inmates was covered.

The federal inmate said that the mattresses are great and that CO's profanity is infrequent, and their interaction is beneficial.

Both inmates said that the interaction between inmates and CO's is respectful.

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At 11:00 AM, The Commissioners recessed the meeting to address Master Agenda Item #941: To conduct a graduation ceremony for Correctional Officers moving from training recruits to certified Correctional Officer status

At 11:46 AM, the Commissioners resumed the facility's inspection. They met with two CO's, a male with eight years of experience and a female who has approximately five months as returning employee who left for a new job some months ago and decided to return as a CO.

The female said that she worked at the DOC and left and then returned after several months because she liked the people she worked with here and wasn't happy with the job that took when she was at the job she took when she left. She said she liked her work very much and wasn't planning on leaving again.

The male officer has been employed here for eight years and now works in the booking department. He stated that he found the job through a former employee who recommended the job to him.

A discussion began of the classification system, and the distribution of inmates in the pods and the different levels of interaction with hardened inmates vs. local or first-time inmates was covered.

He said that the use of respect with the federal inmates, in particular, works well and that the local inmates are the cause of most of the incidents, with the federal causing the most dangerous incidents.

The Commissioners asked about how ready the new graduates who just received their certifications could fit in, and the male CO said that they wouldn't have graduated if they didn't fit in and weren't doing a good job.

The officers were asked what keeps them coming back every day. The male said that a change in some management personnel has made the environment much better in the past year.

The past management environment was discussed, and it was said that the prior toxic environment because of one individual was a considerable morale killer to many of the CO's, but that has been rectified. Things are much better now that the individual is no longer employed at the facility.

The opportunity to advance was covered, and the male stated that he was interviewed for a management position that someone else was awarded. Still, he will apply again if there is an opening.

The stressors of being a CO were addressed, and the female spoke to the flexibility of the management team when family issues have occurred for her in the past.

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How shift assignments are allocated by seniority was covered. The elimination of the swing shift has helped stabilize the lives of the CO's and is greatly appreciated.

The shift from group II to group I retirement plans were discussed, and its institution's reasons were discussed.

At 12:22 PM, the interviews ended, and the Commissioners conducted a facility tour.

At 12:23 PM, the Commissioners entered K Block with the Superintendent and CO Thompson to inspect the space. Thompson explained how the dayroom operates and the procedures for cleaning and maintaining the cell and common space was covered.

He said that currently, there are 24 inmates in K Block and 42 inmates in D Block, which houses lower classification inmates.

Cell K-104 was then inspected, and Thompson gave an overview of inmate housing and how inmates with different classifications are assigned to various cell blocks.

Also covered was how inmate mail is handled and the difference between family mail and legal mail procedures.

At 12:55 PM, the Commissioners return to the executive conference to complete the business of the weekly commissioners meeting.

We trust that this report complies with the statute's intent requiring 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 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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