

**WESTCHESTER COUNTY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION  
MINUTES  
October 26, 2011**

Members in Attendance: Richard Wishnie, Herman Geist, Raymond Belair, Jeff Binder, Alfred Gatta, Julie Killian, Derickson Lawrence, John Mattis, Anne McAndrews, Florence McCue, Paul Meissner, David Menken, , Jane Morgenstern, Guy Parisi, , Vincenza Restiano, Matthew Thomas, Bertrand Sellier, Ronald Volino, Paul Windels, Gary Zuckerman

Absent Members: Steve Mayo, Anita Delgado, Matthew Thomas, Sam Zerka

County Staff in Attendance: Bill Mooney, Jim Castro-Blanco, Katy Delgado, Kevin Cheverko, Justin Pruyne, Stacey Dolgin-Kmetz, Chris Crane, David Cabibbo, Melanie Montalto

**MINUTES**

With a quorum present, Chairman Wishnie called the meeting to order at 7:09 PM.

A discussion ensued regarding changes to the minutes. The Commission discussed the previous discussion regarding looking for outside sponsors to help fund the group. Jim Castro-Blanco of the Law Department explained that outside funders could be seen as influencing the Commission to make certain decisions to benefit their businesses, and can be seen as a conflict of interest if they also do business with the county. Mr. Castro-Blanco also discussed the open meetings law rules. He stated that the sub-committees are not subject to the open meetings law.

With a motion by Paul Windels and seconded by Guy Parisi the minutes of September 27, 2011 were approved as amended with a vote of 17-0.

Kevin Cheverko, Commissioner, and Justin Pruyne, of the Department of Corrections gave a presentation on the Department. The Commissioner has been at the county jail for 27 years, starting as a corrections officer. Mr. Pruyne has been with the county for 9 years, with 7 years in the law department and 2 years in Corrections.

Mr. Cheverko stated that the County Jail is the third largest jail in the state and they have the second largest department and budget of all of the County Departments. He said the county jail has an average of 1448 prisoners per day, up from 1370 from last year, with a capacity to handle 1800. He said the jail is 900,090 square feet.

The Commissioner explained the difference between a county and state prison by stating that the county is for sentences up to 1 year in jail, and a state jail is for sentences over 1 year.

Commissioner Cheverko stated that there are 3 divisions -jail division, penitentiary division, with a separate female unit, and a 14 bed secure ward at westchester medical center. He said he has almost 900 employees, with 839 of them in uniform, and 54 civilians; the salaries comprise of over 75% of the budget. He said he has two deputy commissioners and 6 assistant wardens.

The Commissioner told the Commission that the Department has been accredited by the American Correctional Association since 2009 showing that we comply with the highest standards in the country. He said we are the only jail in New York State with this rating. Chairman Wishnie asked if there are any benefits to having the higher rating. Commissioner Cheverko stated that it has changed the culture with improved air quality and sanitation and it helps when litigating because we are representing the nations highest standards.

Mr. Binder asked if there are any capital projects in the department. Commissioner Cheverko stated that there are several at the moment, with \$25 million in capital improvements for security cameras, window replacements, and electrical and plumbing upgrades.

The Commissioner discussed the Department's proactive programs which impressed the auditors, including the drug treatment program, resolve to stop the violence program, and the youthful offenders program all for inmates. He also explained the video conferencing system for court appearances which reduces the costs of transporting prisoners from the jail to various courts. A discussion ensued regarding legislation to mandate the video conferencing but many legislators and attorney's have concerns about the inmates rights to chose to go to the court house. It was explained to the Commission that over the past few years it has become a legislative priority with New York State to pass this cost saving law to mandate the inmates to use the video conference for court appearances such as arraignments.

A discussion ensued regarding the staff structure of the jail and the relationship the Department has with the community and municipalities. The Commissioner stated that aside from working with the municipal police departments to remand prisoners they hold some conferences with them and work closely with the State Department of Corrections as well as the State Sheriffs Association.

The Commissioner stated that they hold approximately 60 parole violators each day, even though in 2009 the state ceased reimbursements for parole violators; however, we receive \$160 per day per parole violator for federal violators and we are currently holding approximately 200 federal parole violators.

The Commission discussed possibly escapees and the process of recapture with Commissioner Cheverko.

A discussion ensued regarding staffing and injured staff members. The Commissioner stated that they currently have 30 staff members out on long term injuries.

The Commission discussed the process of filing a grievance against the jail for inmates with the Commissioner. Commissioner Cheverko explained how grievances are handled internally.

Mr. Sellier asked how staffing levels are determined. Commissioner Cheverko explained that the census determines the staff levels and then by analysis provided by the state. A discussion ensued.

Ms. Killian asked about the recent outsourcing of medical care for the inmates. Commissioner Cheverko explained that they still use the Medical Center for tertiary care and Mount Vernon Hospital for more routine care. The inhouse care is now provided by Correct Care, based n Nashville Tennessee.

The Commissioner explained that the contracts for both thte corrections officers and superior officers have expired and are currently in negotiations. A discussion ensued regarding the bargaining process.

Commissioner Cheverko stated that the Departments budget is \$108 million tax levy, \$900,000 for the state alienation program, and reimbursment from federal reimbursments for the parole violators with a total estimated budget of \$116 million.

The Commission asked Commissioner Cheverko what his biggest worry is. He stated that currently the union contracts are his biggest concern as they have a strong presence in the department.

Chairman Wishnie emphasized that the Commission will tour the facility so the members can see for themselves how it operates.

Chairman Wishnie went over the focus group chairs and members and gave the members time to get to know each other. The chairs of the focus groups gave an overview of their groups and stated the dates of the first group meetings. The Commission discussed the budget process beginning for the county, what it entails, and how difficult it is going to be this year.

The Commission discussed the need for a stipend for the Commission staff.

The Commission staff will circulate dates to determine the next meeting because of the Thanksgiving holiday.

Moved by Gary Zuckerman and seconded by AnneMcAndrews the Charter Revision Commission adjourned at 8:24 pm.