

MONROE COUNTY
COMMUNITY JUSTICE RESPONSE COMMITTEE

Meeting Notes
Monday, February 6, 2023, 4:30pm
Nat U. Hill Meeting Room, 3rd Floor Courthouse

These notes are not intended to be verbatim. For this purpose, a permanent recording of this meeting can be found [here](#).

Members Present (In Person):

April Wilson
Catherine Stafford
Jennifer Crossley
Julie Thomas
Kara Krothe
Karen Wrenbeck
Kate Wiltz
Penny Githens
Peter Iversen

Members Present (Virtual):

Lee Jones

Members Absent:

Sheriff/ Sheriff's office

Meeting called to order at 4:32 pm.

Judge Stafford commented on what she views as the common ground of this committee.

- The current jail is not acceptable in terms of constitutional level of care for inmates.
 - Inmates are members of our society.
 - CJRC should focus on rehabilitation rather than punishment.
 - The current jail cannot be renovated in a way that would meet the level of care that the CJRC plans to offer.
 - CJRC members want a jail that is humane, focuses on rehabilitation, and is as close to downtown services as is possible.
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Statement of Guiding Principles

Recognizing our commitment to public safety, we will work collaboratively and transparently to:

- 1. Prioritize treatment over incarceration, when appropriate.*
 - 2. Build a justice facility that meets constitutional standards and treats inmates with dignity.*
 - 3. Address inequities in race, economic status, disability, national origin, sexual orientation, and gender.*
 - 4. Reduce the number of people entering the criminal justice system and reduce recidivism for those who are/ were in the system.*
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Public Comment

Public comment was moved to the beginning of this meeting and will be at the beginning of meetings going forward.

Beka Schwartz and Abby Akrong, Care not Cages and Maurer School of Law

They are not in support of building a new jail.

Shared a legal memo they wrote providing information regarding the process of federal intervention in county jails considering the CJRC's concerns about federal intervention in the Monroe County jail.

[Copy of Legal Memo](#)

Key Findings:

- The court is still overseeing the settlement because a permanent solution has not been determined.
 - This does not have to be building a new jail.
- The federal government cannot force a county to build a new jail. Although, it is common to settle and agree to build a new jail.

Lynn Coin, Monroe County Resident

- Commented on the January 9th and January 23rd CJRC meetings, stating he was stunned by the political bickering done by the committee (excluding the jail presentation by the Sheriff's office).
 - If the CJRC continues this way, they will likely end up in litigation, which will increase the cost to the county, and make the input of this committee, the city, and the county irrelevant.
- The city is committed to justice reform, and that should not waiver even without membership on the CJRC. If the city believes the jail should be located within city limits, they should share possible sites and how they would plan to rezone them to make them available.

Donald Griffin Jr., former Deputy Mayor

- A new jail is several years away, so we cannot wait to address the issues that are in our current jail.
- Applauded Sheriff Marté's actions to address the physical jail conditions.
 - His actions should be complemented by city and county cooperation in addressing mental health and substance use disorders for those incarcerated and those we want to help avoid incarceration.
- Intervention to keep people from entering/ re-entering the jail supports community justice.
 - No one should be stuck in a cycle of incarceration.
 - Numbers matter
 - By addressing the issues that put people in jail, we can address the number of people that are in jail.
- All this needs to happen now, and long before a new jail is built.

Carol Wilson, Monroe County Resident

- Referenced a column on Rikers Island by George Will from the Saturday edition of the Washington Post.
 - "What aspects of today's behavior will cause posterity to look down on us when they look back at us?"
 - After incarceration, most inmates will return to their communities. The communities may have been improved, but the ex- prisoners will not have been improved by incarceration.
- Ensuring humane conditions in the jail should be the baseline for further action.
- Shared part of the statement given by the Commissioners in December 2022 and hopes that they, as well as the County Council will continue to implement it.
 - "It is important to note that while renovation of the current facility has been deemed cost prohibitive, inefficient, irresponsible to inmate, staff, and visitor, Monroe County officials have taken and will continue to take the reasonable and necessary steps to remediate identified deficiencies that can be addressed at this time."

Kaisa Goodman, Public Engagement Director for City of Bloomington

- The focus needs to be on public health now and in the future.
- It is critical for the jail to be close to downtown
 - Visibility and integration in the community
 - Access to transportation and resources
 - Economic impact
- The CJRC should not wait for a new jail location before they begin working with community partners and stakeholders, social service providers, the city, and others.
- Thanked committee members that have spoken out with their concerns about this process.
 - Who is involved?
 - What are the priorities?
 - Is the focus on holistic community justice reform?
- Invited the committee and public to attend the State of Public Safety presentation on 2/9/23 at 12:30 p.m. in the City Council Chambers at City Hall.

Debbie Fish, Hope for Prisoners Task Force and Care not Cages

- Asked for the status of the contracts with the Center for Collaborative Systems Change.

*The contracts have been approved by the Commissioners and the Presiding Judge and waiting on signature from the Sheriff. *Note from the chair: There was a misstatement in the response to Ms. Fish. It has been determined that the Presiding Judge is not required to add a signature to this contract.*

- Asked for a study on the cost to renovate the current jail, rather than guesses.

Renee Miller, Monroe County Resident, virtual attendee

- Incarceration can cause depression, anxiety, and PTSD.
- As the Community **Justice** Response Committee, the committee should focus on justice.
 - Justice is defined as peace and genuine respect of people
- Voiced skepticism that the Commissioners had seen the jail but were not aware of the bad condition.
- Echoed the comments given by Don Griffin Jr.

Survey Updates from the Health Department

Melanie Vehslage, Kathy Hewett, and Lori Kelley gave a presentation on the survey done by the health department.

A copy of this presentation is available [here](#).

A copy of all survey questions and responses are available [here](#).

The survey is framed around intercepts, falling primarily within intercepts 0, 1, and 4.

Survey Topics

- Community services
- Law enforcement services
- Exit planning
- Re- entry care
- Additional comments

Key recommendations

- More connections, collaboration, and communication
 - Communication between providers and jail staff is vital both before people enter the jail, and for re- entry
- Enhance and increase diversion opportunities
 - 988
 - STRIDE
- Address policy/ systems
 - Find ways to fund additional treatments needed while in jail
 - Insurance cannot be used while someone is in jail.
 - Providers rely mainly on grants.
- Many findings were reflective of the 2021 Criminal Justice Assessment and Gaps Analysis
 - Jail should not be relied on as a mental health treatment provider, but things like mental health beds, treatment and programming should still be available for all inmates.
 - Transition/ re- entry planning should begin the same time as treatment planning.

Committee discussion on presentation

- There seemed to be a theme among responses about location and collaboration.
 - How can the CJRC collaborate with these groups and organizations?
 - Health department's suggestions for where to start:
 - Behavioral health coordinator/ social workers
 - Someone to start the connection process
 - Assessments of inmates for mental and physical health issues when they enter the jail
 - Case management
 - Create a plan for when an inmate is released from jail
 - Set up with medical appointments, insurance providers, etc.
 - Keep track of inmates while in jail to ensure they are receiving the appropriate services
 - Communication barriers are apparent between the jail staff and inmates, as well as between service providers and jail staff.
 - Can the health department direct the committee to a point person, or create a list of service providers?
 - Could a dashboard be created?
 - Is there an opportunity for the use of tablets/ telehealth?
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Committee Comments

- How much square footage is being used for offices in the current jail?
- What is the cost estimate for the transportation of inmates between the courts and the jail if they are not co-located (right away)?
 - This can help determine if we need to build all at once
- Several committee members are willing to meet more than once every two weeks.

Future Agenda Ideas and Suggestions

- Round table discussion by those who have visited other facilities
- Discussion with Ken Falk (ACLU) regarding the current facility
- Discussion with design group
- Commissioners' discussion on their roadmap of tasks/ goals
- Subgroups/ subcommittees
 - Facility
 - Judicial process
 - Treatment

Meeting is adjourned 6:04pm.