

The Beaufort county Jail Committee met on Wednesday, August 25, 2021, at 3:00 PM, in the Commissioners Board Room located at 136 West 2nd Street in Washington, NC with the following present:

Committee Members Present:

Chairman John Rebholz
Commissioner Jerry Langley
Commissioner Frankie Waters
Bill Davis

Staff Present:

Brian Alligood, County Manager
Christina Smith, Public Works Director
David Francisco, County Attorney
Angie Pitts, Administrative Assistant

Chairman Rebholz called the meeting to order.

Motion: Commissioner Langley motioned to approve the agenda. Commissioner Waters seconded. The vote was unanimous.

Motion: Commissioner Waters motioned to approve the May 2021 minutes. Commissioner Langley seconded. The vote was unanimous.

Update on Request for Evaluation by Department of Justice, Bureau of Prisons

Chairman Rebholz said item four is an update on the request for evaluation by the Department of Justice Bureau of Prisons. He said last week, at the beginning of the week I had sent a note to the Department of Prisons, actually the Bureau of Jails requesting an update on a letter that had been sent to them by the Sheriff asking them to come in and conduct a second review. He said as a result of that I got a call Wednesday indicating that his boss was in the Outer Banks and wanted to meet with the Sheriff about this by the end of last weekend. He said they did, they met Friday. He said I think we are waiting a note from the Sheriff on what he thought came out of that. He said we did get a note from Steven Amos, Chief Jails Division, who met with Sheriff Coleman and without reading all the way through it, it implies anyway, that they are going to work through the Sheriff's Office to and conduct this review. He said this office will become, the Sheriff's Office will become the contact for everyone involved in the process to obtain information and provide input. He said so now we're just waiting for a timetable on that.

Mr. Alligood said just to bring the Committee up to speed, I received an email from Chief Deputy Rose at 2:40 PM, about 20 minutes ago that says I have an email that I need to forward to the entire jail committee, can you let me know the who the members are. He said I have sent him the distribution list and I asked him to send it to me so that I could read it to you all. He said I assume it is related to that conversation, but I haven't received anything from him.

Chairman Rebholz said to go further on that and bring you up to speed, I sent an email to Sheriff Coleman this morning at about 7:00 AM asking if he had any comments on that meeting that I could share with the Committee so that's what we're waiting for, and I guess we'll just go back to that if it comes in.

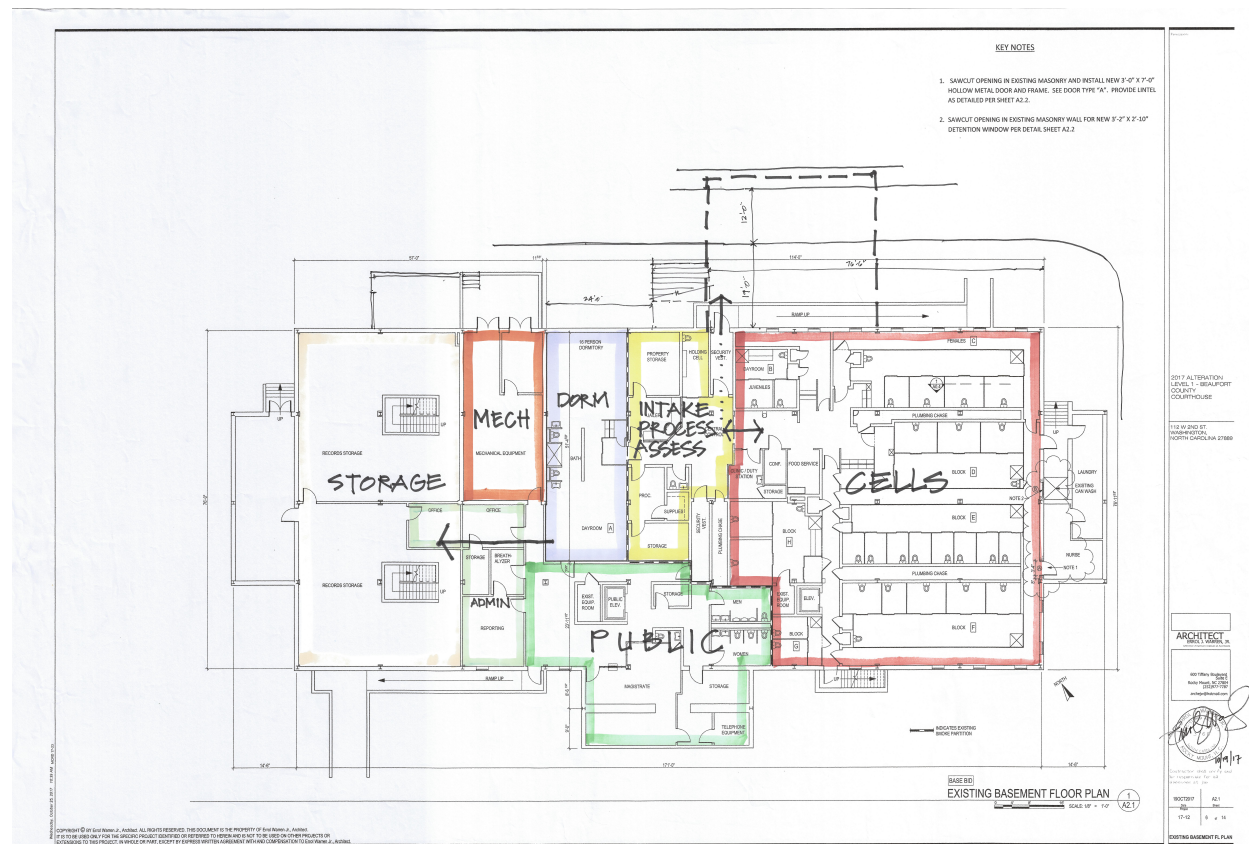
Updated Report from Errol Warren on the Expansion of the Jail for Purposes of Improving Social Distancing and Isolation Areas

Chairman Rebholz said asked Mr. Warren to come up. He said do it here because this is being recorded and streamed.

Mr. Warren said I was, I'm sure that, I guess this is all prompted by the CARES Act and the federal funding, what we're looking at this a particular point.

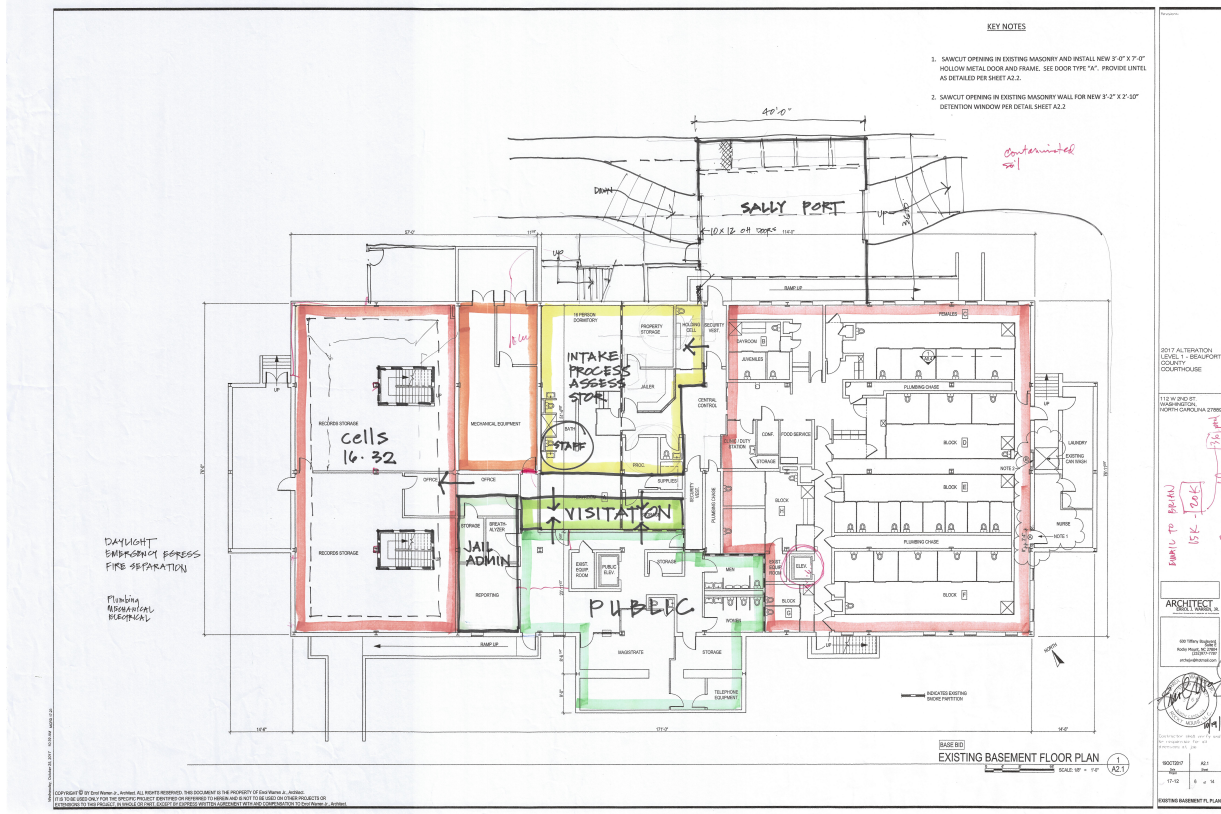
Chairman Rebholz said correct.

Mr. Warren said as you recall from the last time I was here, what I had done was kind of doing a colored bubble diagram of existing conditions which indicated the storage areas and the large mechanical rooms, the various portions of the jail. He said what I've gleaned since Mr. Alligood contacted me last week was to comply with the funding what we would be endeavoring to do is promote the safety and security of employees and visitors first, with guidance from OSHA, which might include renovation to the visiting area and inmate booking, HVAC and then creating a space for mental health and drug rehab, which might be a counseling facility. He said if you recall, last time we had the record storage that we were looking at trying to maybe expanding. He said what has been determined as being effective with Covid and social distancing is to take an area like this and maybe break it up into two pods. He said direct supervision is better than what you have on the other side of the jail where a jailer kind of circulates around so direct supervision with pods could provide the social distancing that they're looking for. He said I'm sure everybody's familiar with it but this is the existing:



Mr. Warren said the green is designated the public area, you've got your cells, the intake processing and assessment, the dorm and then mechanical, storage and administration over here on my right. He said so that's the existing conditions.

Suggested Rendering:



Mr. Warren said taking those existing conditions, not really doing anything here but coming here and reconfiguring some of this space, I think there's some real deficiencies in Intake Processing and Assessment and providing for the staff so we might reconfigure this. He said then using this end of the courthouse for two sets of pods. He said a pod here and a pod there. He said we were looking then at increasing the cells to maybe a maximum of 32. He said it probably would be somewhere between that because the linear cell approach gave you the most number of cells but if we're going to work to try and satisfy the Covid requirements, the pods, which is a more contemporary way to deal with inmates anyway, is direct supervision or pods. He said that's kind of where I'm at. He said dealing with taking public, now they're coming in here, visitation would come to here, creating a circulation spine through here that would provide access from processing to these cells and so it's really, I'm not going to say it isn't going to be costly but it's a pretty rational response to the existing space to not only increase the number of cells but to give you some safety with the pod system. He said I think both of these are empty spaces now.

Commissioner Waters said is that area the Register of Deeds or the Clerk of Court.

Mr. Alligood said both.

Chairman Rebholz said are you moving the magistrates out.

Mr. Warren said no, they'll stay right there in this green area. He said this is the handicap access so no, I don't really want to touch that area but I do want to propose creating a sallyport and having access directly from the sallyport into a secure area. He said so that prompts what happens when you get to the main floor and it could create some interesting things. He said you could put a raised terrace on top of that sallyport. He said anyway, that could be a very nice entrance to the back of the courthouse above that sallyport. He said so I think that's important, getting into the intake from the sallyport, creating a pod system down here, rearranging visitation and having more access from this side for the public and then having jail administration kind of right in the middle of it.

Chairman Rebholz said do you have a feel for how we would go about validating that is good under the CARES, that configuration.

Mr. Warren said we know that based on what I've researched the pod system works to enforce social distancing. He said this really, at this particular point in time, who knows, it always seems to be evolving, but direct supervision is not only good for social distancing but in this case it also helps the Sheriff maintain order in his jail. He said to answer your question, from what I have read, unless the Bureau of prisons is going to say yes or no, which I don't think they will, I think all of this could be justified under the federal programs.

Mr. Allgood said our impression would be the same in that you are creating more space to allow for social distancing. He said it's not that you're building a new jail, that was a question that was asked, but you can retrofit what you have based on medical, social, those kinds of things related to social distancing.

Mr. Warren said we can change the ventilation for all of this, we can filter that are so if we get into another quarantine period this would be up to today's standards, this end of the jail.

Commissioner Langley said when you change the ventilation would that just be the new area or would that be for the entire jail.

Mr. Warren said well, we could talk about that. He said I probably would advocate for the entire jail but right now what we have is a free air return that really takes the air from here back to the units. He said it would be an involved process but it could be done and probably should be done. He said I think that would be the biggest ticket item, redoing that heating and air system, in this particular instance.

Chairman Rebholz asked if anyone had any questions.

Commissioner Waters said if you were to do what you're suggesting, where the records are kept, based on our population right now we would just have that much more access so I'm assuming that we would maximize and use that area and reduce the footprint somewhere in the existing jail.

Mr. Warren said no, we'd be taking every bit of it except the mechanical equipment room.

Commissioner Waters said you wouldn't reduce the footprint of the other.

Mr. Warren said no.

Commissioner Waters said what's involved when you increase the size, does that have to go back through the state for approval.

Mr. Warren said right but they're certainly familiar with this jail. He said it's not a bad plan and so we can fine tune it. He said we don't have the Sheriff's input on this plan at all and so I guess, just like you're

reading in your email, he has the best idea of how this jail should operate, or the Chief Deputy or whoever. He said but these things just make common sense and so we would hope he would buy into them to. He said we're providing better staff areas for his people, where there's really not any staff areas at the present. He said intake and processing and assessment, it will move, you'll just provide for the Sheriff to do a better job of placing his inmates where they need to be.

Mr. Alligood said the one comment the Chief Deputy made, and I think you've addressed that is having open access from one end of the detention center to the other end of the detention area so you wouldn't have to go out of a secured area to get to another secured area.

Chairman Rebholz said so right now you've created sort of a shell that says we can do this and now we would probably need additional input from everybody to decide exactly how that would work.

Mr. Warren said that's right. He said I think we've, you're exactly right, get input from the Sheriff or whoever he designates, input from anybody you want from the County's standpoint and then maybe refine it and get the state's blessing and move forward.

Chairman Rebholz said is there isolation cells we would be able to create in there in case somebody comes down with Covid or something that's contagious.

Mr. Warren said an isolation cell is only going to be in this yellow area because you want to keep them separated from the general public. He said so they're going to be in this area. He said as soon as it's been determined they'd be put in a special cell.

Chairman Rebholz said I guess we need to decide how we would get this in front of the Sheriff. He said expose him to that. He said is this recorded, okay, so he will see it.

Mr. Warren said considering this is in flux, this is a bubble diagram, essentially, and he may say well, I would rather do this or rather do that, I'm all ears.

Mr. Bill Davis said you mentioned, I believe, that Chief Deputy Rose had looked at it and said he liked the flow through from one end to the other.

Mr. Alligood said no, that was a conversation that Chief Deputy Rose and I had about how you may do this. He said he hadn't seen Mr. Warren's plan but we anticipated what it would be and that was the concern Chief Deputy Rose had was I just don't want to, he said I don't think the state would approve a jailer going from a confined area and having to go outside to a public area and then into another confined area. He said I think what Mr. Warren has said is that would not be the case, it would be a continuous flow.

Mr. Davis said so it's safe to assume from this conversation that these diagrams have not been seen by the Sheriff.

Mr. Warren said this is the first time anyone has seen them.

Chairman Rebholz said I think our intent was to be sure that if we used those two areas that we could accomplish the goal, and it sounds like we can.

Mr. Davis said what does that do for the general population of the jail with the reworking.

Mr. Warren said conceivably you could probably increase the census by 24, maybe 25.

Mr. Davis said does that also for the issue of women and men, make sure they have the proper mix.

Mr. Warren said sure, oh yeah. He said actually, in these schemes I'm not even touching the women's area at this point.

Chairman Rebholz said I think that before we could go very far at all we probably need to get this in front of the Sheriff and also meet with the Register of Deeds and Clerk of Court.

Mr. Alligood said I would guess that your next step would be to pull some additional folks together to look at to give Mr. Warren some input as he would look to refine that because ultimately you've got to get something put together here that you think ultimately would work. He said DHHS has got to bless it or you can't do anything. He said you have to have a decent plan going forward with them because they'll certainly tell you if it's not.

Chairman Rebholz said are you in a position somewhere down the road when we refine this some more to be able to throw a price tag on it.

Mr. Warren said sure, yeah.

Mr. Alligood said I guess also from our side, and to be fair to Mr. Warren, whether we need to go at the next Commissioners meeting, to do a letter of engagement with Mr. Warren because obviously he's been here a couple of times to have some conversations with you. He said I don't know where he is on his pro bono work but I would assume that once he gets into some detailed drawings there would need to be some kind of engagement for him to be compensated for his services so don't know where we go with that.

Chairman Rebholz said that makes sense.

Mr. Warren said thank you. He said I was wondering about that myself.

Chairman Rebholz said I'm sure we'll have other questions come up and we'll try to move forward and get this in front of other people. He said I guess we just talked about #6 which is to get this in front of other parties and engage with the Register of Deeds and Clerk of Court. He said any other comments, questions or thoughts about what we need to do next.

Future Meeting Dates and Times

Chairman Rebholz said I would suggest that we wait on establishing that until we get this in front of those people and then we can go from there, if that's okay with everybody. He said any other comments from anybody.

Mr. Alligood said just one item is we talked about with Mr. Warren is if it would be acceptable with the group if we could have some conversations with him about maybe a retainer or something, some amount that we could engage with him on and we could take that to the Board at the next Board of Commissioners meeting. He said it's my understanding that you can use ARPA money to do planning as well for these things so you could use those funds. He said it wouldn't necessarily have to be general fund money. He said Mr. Warren and I could have a conversation about what would be reasonable to do some preliminary work and try to get that in front of the Board for formal action.

Wednesday, August 25, 2021
Jail Committee Meeting

Chairman Rebholz said that's great, yeah. He said we'll make a formal report to the Commissioners at the next meeting on what we've done so far.

Motion: Commissioner Waters motioned to adjourn. Commissioner Langley seconded. The vote was unanimous.

Meeting adjourned at 3:27 PM

Respectfully submitted to you by:

Katie Mosher,
Clerk to the Board.