

## DEKALB COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' MEETING

April 13, 2021

Commissioners Present: President William L. Hartman  
Vice President Michael Watson  
Vice President Todd Sanderson

Others Present: Auditor Jan Bauman

Absent: Attorney James P McCanna

### MATTER OF JAIL COMMITTEE

Tony Vie from Elevatus presented two Architectural Site Plans on the projector screen and explained how the Community Corrections facility could be converted into a new Sheriff's administration and jail facility.

With both plans, the current delivery path issue for semis is corrected. Also, a space for adding another block for more beds is intentionally planned for future needs.

There are 4 main spaces in every jail: administration, intake, general housing, and inmate services (kitchen, laundry). The path an inmate takes from the time he or she is first brought to the jail is vital so that the most efficient plan is created.

Next Mr. Vie showed a spreadsheet comparing the associated costs with Option A (prototype jail with minimum security wing and keeping Community Corrections building separate) and Option B (renovating the DCCC building into the new jail). The Option A cost is estimated to be \$28,292,240. Option B is estimated to cost \$25,056,060. The estimated savings by converting the Community Corrections building is \$3,236,180. These are rough estimates and subject to change.

President Hartman distributed a sheet outlining the 20 year legacy cost for the Community Corrections building. It listed \$628,460 for insurance, \$1,440,000 for utilities, \$912,026 for maintenance, and \$2,060,130 for depreciation for a Total Legacy of \$5,040,616. President Hartman said when you add this to the \$3,236,180 savings in the project cost, it is a total savings of \$8,276,796 over 20 years by not maintaining two separate buildings.

President Hartman added that there would most likely be additional savings if Option B is chosen because things such as site prep, the road extension, landscaping, parking areas, and exterior lighting would be either much less or unnecessary. He didn't have a way to put a dollar amount on these. \$500,000? \$1,000,000? The total projected savings of the project by going with Option B would be between \$8,000,000 and \$9,000,000.

President Hartman opened the meeting up to comments. He requested that they be limited to 5 minutes, and each speaker should bring something new rather than repeating the same things.

Bill VanWye (Councilman) said he has a citizen concern. He wanted clarification for the cost of relocating Community Corrections since only a "?" was entered for that cost on the cost comparison sheet. Is the building that cost millions of dollars that was passed a couple years ago going to be redesigned? He said there will still be costs for Community Corrections that are not being reflected in the Legacy Costs. President Hartman said he would show him how he derived the numbers.

Suzanne Drerup Davis spoke next and said the proposed plan would reduce work release beds from 52 to 12, probably 6 for males and 6 for females. Are 12 beds enough for the County for the next 20 years?

Kellie Knauer, Executive Director of DeKalb County Community Corrections, wanted to remind everyone why Community Corrections was built the way it was. They bring valuable programs to the citizens of DeKalb County to help reduce recidivism. We all want people to do better and to go to jail less. We want people to address their mental health and substance abuse issues. That's what Community Corrections does. This plan jeopardizes those programs in addition to the \$1.1 million in grants from the Department of Corrections to help support staff and programs in the community. There are 31 staff members with 3 unfilled positions. A lot of work has gone into building Community Corrections. It hasn't had a chance to fully become what it can be. That's a lot of money that is being given up for staffing. It's a lot of families and personnel who are going to be affected by it. The Department of Corrections is so supportive of what they do now, but when Community Corrections changes, will they be so willing to support Community Corrections, or will they at all? Probation funding is also in jeopardy.

Michael Lapham, Chief Probation Office of DeKalb County, said that his department receives \$70,000 from the Department of Corrections in addition to the \$1.1 million Community Corrections receives. It is for more than just work release; it is also for electronic monitoring, the Change Academy, and Mr. Lapham's mental health officer. The IDOC awards these dollars because DeKalb County has been dedicated to evidence based practices. DeKalb County has held firm to these long range plans. Every grant application and all the meetings they've had have entailed what they intended to do over a 10-year period of time. Each step that was completed built a relationship with the Indiana Department of Corrections—a relationship built on trust. When grant applications are filed, they know DeKalb County is going to do what they said they will do. He is concerned that the IDOC will feel it was taken tantamount to a bait and switch because the money was taken but then the plan was changed so soon after Community Corrections facility was built. He is concerned that the IDOC will not have faith that Community Corrections and Probation will maintain evidence based practices for the County. That would disrupt a significant revenue stream: \$1.2 million for Community Corrections, \$70,000 for Probation, and the jeopardy of all the programs, the 30 employees she has, and the 1 mental health officer in Probation. Mr. Lapham understands the need for the jail and is thankful the Commissioners take the need seriously and have begun to take action. He asks that the Commissioners remember what the County can lose in funding in just the time it takes to build the jail and if the IDOC decides not to produce any more funding for DeKalb County. A million dollars over 20 years is a lot of money. But a value can't be put on what the loss of programming to DeKalb County citizens would be.

ClaraMary Winebrenner, Prosecutor and Community Corrections Advisory Board member presented what she said are 3 costs to the program. First, the Commissioners forgot to include the cost of rebuilding a facility for Community Corrections. It's vague. Are the 31 employees going to be kept? Will there be 34 office spaces created? Will new furniture be purchased? Community Corrections paid for the furniture they have now. Adding on to the Annex Building to create space for Community Corrections is going to cost a lot of money. The insurance, utilities, maintenance, and furnishings for the new structure are going to have to be deducted from the projected savings. Second is the cost of the efficacy of Community Corrections; it won't be as effective if it is not right there managing the work release program. And it would be cutting down what is being provided to DeKalb County. Community Corrections functions differently than the Jail. It requires trained case workers who are working with people trying to change their thinking. It requires rooms for training opportunities and offices so they can meet one-on-one with people. If the Commissioners want to help rehabilitate people which is the way of law enforcement in this country, then another facility will have to be built. Third is the \$20,000,000 gamble the Commissioners would be taking. Conservatively, \$678,507 was received in 2020 specifically for the work release program that would not be available to the Sheriff for confinement officers. That

multiplied by 30 years is over \$20 million. It makes the \$8-9 million estimated savings an incredible loss. What a gamble. Although some people wonder if the IDOC will stop awarding grants for Community Corrections, what is to say they may not increase the grant awards? For the last 10 years, Community Corrections has not had a problem getting things paid for. Other counties who have had Community Corrections for 25 years haven't had a problem. Perhaps in 15 years, the grant awards could dry up, and the Commissioners at that time will figure out what to do about it.

President Hartman responded by saying there is a plan in place that would not involve building a new facility. A final figure is not available yet, but he believes for \$200,000-\$300,000 it will put Community Corrections into a good space with plenty of room.

Commissioner Sanderson asked if the County is going to lose all of the funding, how did the County get the funding before the facility was built? Prosecutor Winebrenner said they started with getting funding for home detention, and then when the facility was built, the IDOC paid for expenses since they don't pay for buildings. The IDOC won't pay for jailers because that is not rehabilitative services, but they will pay for those who are rehabilitating. Commissioner Sanderson then asked if Community Corrections would still receive money for the Change Academy and ankle bracelets and case workers. Prosecutor Winebrenner said that is the argument that she made, but that is not the argument Mr. Lapham made. Part of the reason why DeKalb County is so successful in receiving grant money is because Director Knauer is very good at writing the grants, but also because of her ability to sell that DeKalb County is on board with providing rehabilitative services in collaboration with law enforcement. The County is stable. There won't be any surprises here. We're reliable. The chance of getting the same amount of money next year because of this issue is in jeopardy. Now you're attacking the other \$1.1 million for nonwork-release expenses. There is no guarantee that the money the County had been receiving for Community Corrections prior to the facility being built will continue to be awarded. President Hartman said we also don't know how long the grants are going to last. It depends on what the administration in Indianapolis decides, which is subject to change. Whether the IDOC pays all or nothing is all conjecture. He said there is not a lot of fact in what she is saying, and she replied that there is 10 years' worth of fact.

Randy Deetz, former Commissioner, started by saying there is a good thing about having new commissioners. They look at things differently and outside the box. One negative thing is they missed the history. He was part of the discussions when it was decided that work release would fit better with Community Corrections than with the Sheriff. The Commissioners at the time had received a letter from the Sheriff that he was going to be ending work release at the end of the month because he didn't have the proper room to run it. And he learned from this that the Commissioners have no control over what the Sheriff decides to do regarding work release. It can change at least every 8 years depending on the vision and passions of each Sheriff, and there is nothing the Commissioners can do about it. It is best practice to keep the program with Community Corrections because of the leverage it can give the Sheriff. There was a certain County where a Sheriff had told his County Council that if he didn't get 12 new employees, he would end work release. It is very important to keep that control. He thinks the Commissioners have an obligation to improve all programs. He has never seen Commissioners vote to intentionally to disrupt or destroy a program. He believes that could happen with the direction they are going. He thanked Ms. Knauer for starting the work release program amidst COVID-19. Finally, he disputed the \$5,040,616 in savings that had been calculated.

Rick Ring, Council President, said he wanted to focus on the Sheriff's Department since a lot had been already said about Community Corrections. He asked about the square footage of the administrative area in Plan A vs. Plan B. There is a 200 square foot difference. Mr. Ring explained that the administrative wing in plan A has been proven as successful in other counties, but Plan B's has not yet been proven. He is concerned about how Plan B's administrative wing has been "cobbled together" by redesigning the Community Corrections facility. One of the big deficiencies at the current jail is the administrative area.

He wants to see the new building have what works best for the detectives, road officers, and all of the other administrative functions that they have. He prefers the administrative area of Option A over Option B. We don't want to cobble something together today and find out in 2-3 years that it just isn't working and have to remodel it. Let's do it right the first time.

Kevin Wallace, retired Superior Court 1 Judge and former Community Corrections Advisory Board Chairman, spoke next. He stated that Tony Vie had begun by saying "We were given direction to repurpose Community Corrections." Nobody who uses that program is asking for a change in the day-to-day operation or supervision of the program. The people who use it are happy—the residential work facility, Community Corrections as a whole. The boost for change is not coming within the Criminal Justice administration of DeKalb County. He added that DeKalb County was very fortunate to get Kellie Knauer as Director. She has been the Executive Director from the beginning and has run a top-notch program. The Department of Corrections believes that, and the citizens have benefitted greatly from it.

Jeff Bickel, maintenance officer of the County Jail, started by saying the Commissioners have been given expert advice, and they have toured jails in other counties that are proven. The Jail Committee was shown plans of proven jails and asked to tell the Commissioners what the needs of a new jail would be. This has been done. But, for some reason those expert opinions and testimonials of other jail commanders and Sheriffs are being ignored for a potential savings. He hasn't heard anyone complain about the cost of Option A. His department doesn't want to try to make another building work. If his department can build the jail they need or want, it could house inmates from other counties. The DOC would pay the County \$55/day to house them. If the County housed 20 inmates, over 20 years that would be about \$8 million. That could increase. If the County housed 40 inmates, that would bring in about \$16 million. Add that to what Community Corrections would continue to bring in makes the Commissioners' savings very small in comparison. He asked the Commissioners to give them a building that will work, not one that is cobbled together that is not proven.

Renee Harpster, private citizen and former County employee disagreed with the Commissioners' decision to put \$200,000-\$300,000 into a building that has problems to make room for Community Corrections. Why? Other buildings need repairs. How is the County paying for this? What is going to happen to taxes? A new Highway is being put in at over \$1 million. It's going to cost the taxpayers.

Bob Krafft, Councilman and member of the Indiana State Regional Mental Health Board, reiterated what Sheriff Cserep had said at the Council meeting: a lot of our crime deals with mental health issues. Community Corrections deals with mental health. If anything, he is for expanding Community Corrections and letting it grow to its fullest capacity. We have people who have drug problems that commit crimes, and they have drug problems because they have mental health problems. He asked the Commissioners to please consider Community Corrections and the value it has in changing people's lives.

Sheriff Cserep thanked the everyone for the time and effort they have put into solving this problem. The Commissioners have a difficult job. He reassured the Commissioners that he will work with detainees and people of the County wherever the Commissioners put the building. He doesn't know if they are on that tough of a timeline, and perhaps the plans should slow down so the best possible answer can be found. He appreciates Kellie Knauer. He said he's a taxpayer too. He will give his best suggestions and those of other Sheriffs so the best possible choice can be made.

Commissioner Sanderson explained that 65% of the Correctional Facility Local Income Tax is being used for Community Corrections. The only way to fund the jail is by maxing out that tax, and either adding on to property taxes or increase the Public Safety Local Income Tax higher than necessary because whatever is raised from the Public Safety LIT has to be shared with the cities and towns. He said this is not set in stone, and the Commissioners had asked Tony Vie to explore the option. Perhaps this plan will not work.

But, DeKalb County is going to be one of the counties with the highest taxes in the State if the LITED taxes have to be increased as well as property taxes. The Commissioners are not getting rid of Community Corrections either way. He thought everyone made good points and was thankful to hear the thoughtful discussion.

Commissioner Watson added that this is a really tough decision. There are a lot of moving parts and things to consider. He needs to be convinced it won't cost more on the back side. Part of the problem is none of the folks making the decisions have law enforcement experience or will be responsible for the day-to-day operations of the jail. The Commissioners must give credence to those who do. It is a lot of information to absorb and sort through. He doesn't believe property taxes will be involved at all. Both local income taxes may have to be raised though. There is the potential to mitigate the public safety portion of the local income tax by cities and towns agreeing to forego some or all of their portion of the tax. The Commissioners are far from being at the point of making a final decision. He thanked everyone for their interest in the discussion and invited anyone to reach out to him for more discussion.

President Hartman gave his closing thoughts by saying that the efficiency of a jail is centered around a jail's cell blocks and intake. That is where you either gain efficiency or lose efficiency. Whether Plan A or B is chosen, there really is no difference in the cell blocks and intake. The administration is not a big part of the equation. The Commissioners are reluctant to raise taxes and what it would take to have and maintain both facilities. No decisions have been made.

He thanked everyone for participating, and with no additional comments, the meeting was adjourned.

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William L. Hartman – President

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Michael Watson – Vice President

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Todd Sanderson – Vice President

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Jan Bauman, Auditor