



MINUTES

State Prison System Planning Study Committee

September 19, 2007

First Meeting

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Senator Gene Fraise, Co-chairperson
Senator Jeff Angelo
Senator Thomas G. Courtney
Senator Tom Hancock

Representative Todd Taylor, Co-chairperson
Representative Wayne Ford
Representative Steven Lukan
Representative Dave Tjepkes
Representative Beth Wessel-Kroeschell

MEETING IN BRIEF

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- I. Procedural Business.
- II. Opening Comments.
- III. Department of Corrections and Durrant Group, Inc.
- IV. American Federation of State and County Municipal Employees.
- V. Tour of Facilities.
- VI. Materials Filed With the Legislative Services Agency.



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I. Procedural Business.

Call to Order. Temporary Co-chairperson Fraise called the initial meeting of the State Prison System Planning Study Committee to order at 10:04 a.m. on September 19, 2007, at the Iowa State Penitentiary in Fort Madison. Temporary Co-chairperson Fraise declared a quorum was present.

Co-chairpersons. Senator Courtney moved for election of temporary Co-chairpersons Fraise and Taylor as permanent co-chairpersons of the Committee. The motion was seconded by Representative Ford. The motion passed by a voice vote.

Adoption of Rules. Co-chairperson Fraise asked for a motion to adopt the proposed Committee rules that had been provided to the Committee prior to the meeting. Senator Courtney so moved and the motion was seconded by Representative Wessel-Kroeschell. The rules were adopted by voice vote.

Adjournment. The meeting adjourned at 2:53 p.m. However, after adjournment the Committee visited farm #1 to view the proposed building site for the new Iowa State Penitentiary.

Next Meeting. The next meeting of the Committee is scheduled for October 10, 2007, at 10:00 a.m. at the Iowa Correctional Institution for Women in Mitchellville.

II. Opening Comments.

Iowa State Penitentiary Warden John Ault. Warden Ault welcomed the legislators and visitors, advising the group about the tour and schedule of the day.

Committee Member Comments. Co-chairperson Taylor thanked everyone for attending the meeting and discussed with the Committee the official charge of the Committee and the thorough study being done by the Durrant Group. He stated that a tour is important so that the Committee members could see firsthand the facilities' conditions and speak to the persons working at the penitentiary.

Co-chairperson Fraise also thanked everyone for attending the meeting and stated that he hoped the Committee would propose a new facility in Fort Madison at the end of the Committee meetings. He said the Committee needs to make an educated decision about the needs of the prison system. Co-chairperson Fraise recognized Representative Wise, who was present at the meeting. Representative Wise in turn introduced several local officials to the Committee and stressed the importance of the Committee's visit to the penitentiary.

Representative Ford declared this Committee to be the most important Committee being held in the legislative interim. He noted that one in three inmates goes back to prison and we need to reduce recidivism. He also stated that public safety is the most important issue before the General Assembly.

Senator Courtney echoed Representative Ford's comments about reducing recidivism.



Representative Tjepkes stated infrastructure could be the theme for the next legislative session. He noted the General Assembly is not only reviewing prison infrastructure needs but is also reviewing the infrastructure needs of local governments.

Senator Hancock stated that public safety is important and that infrastructure is vital as well. He said it is good to be at the penitentiary to listen and learn.

Representative Wessel-Kroeschell thanked the prison employees for hosting the Committee and thanked the Durrant Group for its work. She stated funding for prison programming was her biggest concern.

III. Department of Corrections and Durrant Group, Inc.

Department of Corrections. Mr. John Baldwin, Director, Department of Corrections (DOC), announced that on Monday, September 17, 2007, the Board of Corrections approved recommendation of the Durrant Group's Option #1 for the penitentiary. Option #1 includes closing parts of the current penitentiary inside the walls and constructing a new maximum security facility at the farm #1 site in Fort Madison. In Option #1 the Critical Care Unit (CCU) and the John Bennett Unit would continue to operate at existing locations. He stated this option means a new 800-bed unit at farm #1, but the number of beds could actually be less than 800. The board also recommended expanding the Iowa Correctional Institution for Women at Mitchellville and expanding community-based correctional facilities in the 1st, 3rd, 5th, and 8th Judicial District Departments of Correctional Services. Mr. Baldwin noted that the board also approved roof improvements and electrical and kitchen updates throughout the prison system. He stated DOC is focusing on infrastructure improvements, inmate classification, and inmate treatment. He emphasized that inmate treatment is vital to reduce recidivism.

Mr. Baldwin stated a proven methodology exists to fund prison infrastructure needs. He noted the General Assembly created the Iowa Prison Infrastructure Fund to fund projects similar to the projects approved by the board. He further stated most of the moneys in the Iowa Prison Infrastructure Fund are obligated through 2012. However, after 2012, he noted, the amount of obligated moneys in the fund drops dramatically through 2016. Mr. Baldwin cautioned that the estimates to build a new Iowa State Penitentiary are in fiscal year 2008-2009 dollars. He also reminded the Committee that building or renovating a prison takes an enormous amount of planning, and the earliest groundbreaking could not take place until 2010. He stated DOC will begin a new classification system for inmates in October. He noted the new system will provide DOC with a better understanding of the inmates entering the system and the types of beds needed in the future.

Discussion. Representative Ford asked Mr. Baldwin to comment about the overrepresentation of African-Americans in the Iowa Prison System. Mr. Baldwin stated that about six years ago it was determined that African-Americans were serving longer sentences than others who have committed the same offenses. He further replied that the General Assembly funded a study to examine the causes of this disparity. He stated as a result of the study everybody serves the same amount of prison time for the same offense. He also emphasized that expanding early



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childhood education and increasing the use of community-based corrections are essential strategies to reduce Iowa's incarceration rate of African-Americans.

Mr. Baldwin told the Committee that he and his staff are committed to providing all the information needed to help with this study.

Senator Hancock asked if a centralized substance abuse treatment program was being considered by DOC. Mr. Baldwin replied that DOC had looked at such a program in Illinois, which created a complete central system targeting substance abuse. However, he stated that DOC is considering front-end programs rather than Illinois' version, but he noted Iowa will review what works in Illinois and adapt portions into our system.

Senator Courtney asked about the effects on the prison system of incarcerating more sex offenders. Mr. Baldwin stated that each year the General Assembly has funded the costs of incarcerating more sex offenders. He noted by fiscal year 2010-2011, the number of male sex offenders will exceed the beds available at the Mount Pleasant facility. This is one reason the board is proposing to move the women at Mount Pleasant back to Mitchellville, he said.

Durrant Group, Inc. Mr. Mike Lewis, Durrant Group, spoke briefly to the Committee, referring members to the handouts and the report provided. He stated that the report focused on various issues related to offenders, including substance abuse and mental illness, and determining the infrastructure that is needed to support the operational intent.

IV. American Federation of State and County Municipal Employees.

AFSCME Local #2989. Mr. John Kemper, President of AFSCME Local #2989, welcomed the Committee and thanked the members for visiting. He stated he has been at Fort Madison for 25 years and president of the union for 14 years. He offered to do anything he could to assist the Committee.

AFSCME Iowa Council 61. Mr. Dan Homan, President of AFSCME Iowa Council 61, stated staffing levels need to be increased at the Iowa State Penitentiary to prevent future escapes. He noted the escape at the Iowa State Penitentiary two years ago was not due to poor infrastructure; it was due to understaffing. He further stated AFSCME is opposed to the board's recommending Durrant Group's Option #1. He emphasized it is shortsighted to close the current cell houses within the walls of the Iowa State Penitentiary because the Iowa State Penitentiary is currently being operated at 130 percent of capacity.

Discussion. Representative Ford commented that he was unaware of the staffing issue. Mr. Homan replied a joint staffing study was conducted by management and the union, but the recommendations have not been presented to the General Assembly. Representative Lukan questioned if it is helpful to use dogs in a prison. Mr. Homan responded that dogs have a purpose in prison and he is not opposed to using dogs. However, he emphasized dogs are incapable of finding shanks or other improvised weapons and probably cannot be used at the Iowa Correctional Institution for Women. Co-chairperson Fraise commented that dogs have a place in a prison setting, especially when it comes to controlling a group of inmates or if an inmate has a weapon. Senator Hancock also commented that a guard using a dog during a recent incident at the



Anamosa State Penitentiary was satisfied with the authority to use such a dog. Representative Lukan also asked if it was a good idea to hire a security director at DOC. Mr. Homan replied that a security director would make security procedures more consistent throughout DOC. Representative Tjepkes asked if constructing a new prison in Fort Madison was an efficient use of taxpayer dollars. Mr. Homan replied that we have institutions spread throughout the state and we cannot place everything in the Des Moines area. He emphasized that the city of Fort Madison has strongly supported the Iowa State Penitentiary throughout the history of the institution.

V. Tour of Facilities.

Iowa State Penitentiary and Farm #1. The persons attending the meeting were split into four tour groups. The tour consisted of a visit to and discussions about CCU, the Industries Building, the kitchen, and the cell houses within the walls of the prison. The Industries Building, the kitchen and the cell houses are all slated for closure under option #1 adopted by the board. The tour concluded with a visit to farm #1 to view the proposed construction site of the new Iowa State Penitentiary.

Mr. Fred Scaletta, Liaison, DOC, clarified for the Committee the recent actions of the board relating to recommending Durrant Group's Option #1. He stated under this option the facilities inside the walls of the penitentiary will close; however, the John Bennet Unit and CCU would continue to operate at existing locations. He emphasized that the decision of the board is not final, but a decision needed to be made because of budgetary deadlines and reports due to the Governor. He suggested that if the Committee has concerns about the recommendations of the board, the Committee could modify the recommendations. Mr. Brad Hier, Public Service Executive Director, DOC, presented an aerial view of the proposed new Iowa State Penitentiary building site on farm #1. He stated the proposed site consists of approximately 40 acres and currently has electricity, sewer, and water hookups, and will have access to the highway.

VI. Materials Filed With the Legislative Services Agency.

The following materials listed were distributed at or in connection with the meeting and are filed with the Legislative Services Agency. The materials may be accessed from the <Additional Information> link on the Committee's internet page:

1. Background Information by the Legislative Services Agency.
2. Legislative Services Agency Summary of Durrant Options — Iowa State Penitentiary.
3. Legislative Services Agency Summary of Durrant Options — Iowa Correctional Institution for Women.
4. Aerial Photograph of Iowa State Penitentiary.
5. Aerial Photograph of Farm #1.
6. Designed Capacity vs. Inmate Population (July 1, 2007) — Prepared by the Legislative Services Agency.
7. National Conference of State Legislatures State Prison Construction and Renovation FY 2003-2004.



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8. National Conference of State Legislatures State Prison Construction and Renovation FY 2005-2006.

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