

APRIL 19, 2005
RACELAND, LOUISIANA

STATE OF LOUISIANA
PARISH OF LAFOURCHE

THE LAFOURCHE PARISH DETENTION CENTER IMPROVEMENT SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING WAS SCHEDULED FOR TUESDAY, APRIL 19, 2005, AT 6:00 P.M. IN THE COUNCIL MEETING ROOM AT THE LAFOURCHE PARISH COUNCIL BARRIOS CENTER, 1612 HWY. 182, SUITE 100, RACELAND, LOUISIANA.

Chairman Lasseigne stated that the Detention Center Improvement Subcommittee was ready for the transaction of business at 6:00 p.m. Proceedings of the meeting were called to order with the following:

PRESENT:	Mr. Ronnie Winston	Mr. Daniel Lorraine
	Dr. Tommy Lasseigne	Sheriff Craig Webre
	Mr. Michael Delatte	Mr. Lindel Toups
	Mr. Stephen Baudoin	Mr. Brent Callais
ABSENT:	Mr. Mark Atzenhoffer	Mr. Ulysse Morvant
	Ms. Jennifer Plaisance	Judge Bruce Simpson (<i>entered at 6:02 p.m.</i>)

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The first item (1) on the agenda was the approval of the minutes of the March 15, 2005 Detention Center Improvement Subcommittee meeting. A **motion** was offered by Mr. Lindel Toups, seconded by Mr. Daniel Lorraine, to approve the March 15, 2005 minutes, and **carried** by a vote of eight (8) yeas, zero (0) nays, and four (4) absent, that being of Mr. Mark Atzenhoffer, Ms. Jennifer Plaisance, Judge Bruce Simpson, and Mr. Ulysse Morvant.

DISCUSSIONS

The next item (2) on the agenda was discussions concerning the tour, which the Subcommittee attended on April 18, 2005, of the St. Charles Parish Detention Center. Chairman Lasseigne opened the floor to open discussions. Mr. Lindel Toups said that the tour had proved to him that a new jail was needed in Lafourche Parish. He said that the tour was great and that the jail was completely different than Lafourche Parish's. Mr. Toups said that the Committee owed it to the Parish to get a new jail and do what was necessary to do so.

Chairman Lasseigne said that he thought the St. Charles Parish Detention Center was very impressive. He then said that the biggest task for a new jail in Lafourche Parish would be to "sell it" economically and financially to the Public.

The Subcommittee members discussed various possibilities regarding a new jail and what to do with the old one if a new would be built.

Mr. Stephen Baudoin gave thanks and credit to the Sheriff, the Warden, and their staff for setting up the tours and of the excellent slide presentation of the current jail.

Discussions continued with a background of how the St. Charles facility was built. Sheriff Craig Webre then gave a detailed history on the evolution of how some local jails were built in the past. He explained the prior 70/30 funding distributions for construction of new jails provided by the State. Sheriff Webre said that the Department of Corrections then began to give contracts for DOC inmates to the Sheriff, Police Chief, or the parish governing authorities. He further explained that the contract provided for 40% occupancy of DOC inmates and that they would then take the contract to the Bond Commission showing the guarantee from the State which provided DOC per diem revenue.

Mr. Toups mentioned the video visitations at the St. Charles Parish Detention Center and that he did not agree with it. He said that the inmates should be rewarded a contact visitation with good behavior. Sheriff Webre said that he agreed, he was not in favor of the video visitations, and that he supported privileges. He said that privileges were needed for positive motivation because you have to have something to be taken away for the rehabilitation efforts to work.

Mr. Ronnie Winston asked if there was enough land surrounding the present facility to build a new facility. Sheriff Webre said that he was not an engineer, but it appeared to him that there may be enough land, based on the design. He said that site selection was critical, that the Parish may own all or most of the surrounding land, which would save in land acquisitions or costs. Sheriff Webre also said that it would be close enough to accomplish savings in transporting inmates.

Mr. Brent Callais recommended that the Subcommittee come to a consensus in that it would be more beneficial to build a new jail and move forward with plans to do so, instead of just discussing it and getting nowhere. Mr. Winston suggested getting a cost estimate of remodeling the old jail or updating to a new facility.

Judge Bruce Simpson asked if was possible to use any part of the existing jail for any type of correctional purposes. Sheriff Webre said that he would have to defer that question to an engineer or architect to evaluate and determine if the old jail could be retrofitted economically, as part of an expansion project versus a new facility. He said that the actual shell of the building was good and solid, but was poor in the design. Sheriff Webre echoed Mr. Callais' earlier comments and suggested that they seek advice from an engineer, architect, or consultant, if the Subcommittee members were indeed in consensus to moving forward. Judge Simpson said from his perspective as a Judge that there was no question that more capacity was needed and that it has been an ongoing problem. He said that the Sheriff has been doing an excellent job of making the existing jail work by taking areas that were not designed for housing prisoners and making the necessary changes. Judge Simpson said that the Parish could not have a really effective criminal justice system with the current capacity of the facility because the population was over 95,000 people. He explained how bails had to be set low, people were released, and sentences were done with the capacity in mind. Judge Simpson then said that the facility needed an expansion and was looking for the most cost effective method of doing so. He strongly urged the Subcommittee to consider expanding the jail capacity.

A detailed discussion then ensued on an estimated capacity. Judge Simpson explained the struggles of the present capacity of 156 beds, said that the Sheriff's Office had done an excellent job of bringing in an additional 56 more beds, but it was filled just as fast as it was brought in. He said that he did not mean to be vicious, but if it was built with a thousand beds, that it could be filled. Judge Simpson said all that he could really say was that more beds were needed, but could not give a good number.

Mr. Winston made several suggestions to continue utilizing the old facility, one was that the old facility be turned into a female facility. Judge Simpson asked about the cell blocks that can currently hold up to 30 people and if they could be used differently. Warden Rodrigue explained why he thought that would not be a good idea. He said that it would not be cost effective because it would

use the same amount of staff. Sheriff Webre commented that it may be a good idea to house the support staff in the old facility, or retrofit it into a classroom, for processing, or for medical. He suggested that an architect or engineer look at it to see if it would be more beneficial/cheaper to cut it out into office spaces versus anything else.

Mr. Lorraine asked if a new jail would be the concerns of the whole parish because it consisted of three municipalities (Thibodaux, Lockport, and Golden Meadow) or would it be the unincorporated areas. Chairman Lasseigne then asked how the City of Thibodaux contributes to the jail. The Subcommittee discussed if it was done so by the alimony tax. Mr. Lorraine said that the point he was trying to make was that it should be the whole parish and that he was sure that something could be done where all parties involved could agree. He said that once the Subcommittee goes the Council that they may then want to put something on the ballot. Mr. Lorraine mentioned that the Legislature had also given the Sheriffs in Louisiana an opportunity to put items on the ballot without going to the Council. He mentioned that how much property was actually owned by the Parish and the sales tax figures would need to be researched. Mr. Lorraine explained that it may come down to a tax or millage, but the people should be able to decide by it going to the ballot.

Mr. Callais asked the Subcommittee if they thought it would be a good idea to look at getting an engineer, architect, or a consultant. Chairman Lasseigne explained why he thought it would be a good idea to engage a professional. Mr. Baudoin said that he thought that the Subcommittee members should first decide what was the current or potential needs. A brief discussion ensued regarding possible or reasonable calculations. Mr. Toups suggested setting goals to figure what particular amounts would cost and then gave examples of cutting back on millages. Judge Simpson said that he thought the financials should be decided by the Council and not the Subcommittee. Mr. Lorraine asked Judge Simpson if he thought that the Subcommittee should request money from the Council to possibly hire someone to put together a general idea of what would be needed. Discussions continued of what the needs would and should be.

Sheriff Webre explained that it may be possible for the Department of Corrections to be utilized for their expertise in capacity and cost relations. He said that federal agencies could also be of some type of assistance. Sheriff Webre mentioned that the Subcommittee could be their own consultants because there were 63 other parishes that could be looked at and used for comparisons in their population, capacity, and needs. He explained that increasing the capacity would also increase the cost because there would be more meals, transportation, uniforms, beds, and bigger electric bills. Sheriff Webre spoke of the current levels of contributions and of the economy of scale. He said that it would be important to factor in the increased cost to each of the entities and to develop a stream of revenue to help cover the increased cost. Chairman Lasseigne stated that he was trying to get the financial data so the process could begin. He said that he knew that it would not be a trivial task and explained some changes in the cost by increasing the amounts of capacity.

Discussions continued regarding the figures. Sheriff Webre stated that Warden Rodrigue had the information and would provide the Subcommittee with the breakdown of percentages based on medium, minimum, and maximum security. He said that after reviewing the concept and cost with various people who works in the prison system and that had done capacity studies that 500 to 600 would seem to be a break even economy number of inmates. Sheriff Webre continued by saying that Terrebonne Parish's population was slightly larger than Lafourche Parish's and that the Terrebonne Parish facility really had 700 beds because they had kept their old jail (on top the court house). He then said that St. Charles Parish may be half the population of Lafourche Parish and their facility was at 600 beds. Sheriff Webre stated that an average of 5,000 people were booked per year and gave an estimate of 500, if ten percent would stay in jail. Warden Rodrigue gave a yearly breakdown of the

present population: minimum security was 3,843; medium security was 1,117, and maximum security was 23. He then gave booking numbers of 4,535 in 2002, 5,797 in 2003, and 5,441 in 2004. Warden Rodrigue also gave packages to the members with the information.

The members again discussed the existing building and the feasibility of salvaging any part of it. Warden Rodrigue explained that there still would be a cost to maintain the old building while building a new one because it would take three to four years to build.

Mr. Brent Callais left the meeting at 6:58 p.m.

Discussions continued with the costs to maintain the current facility and what could be done to be cost efficient while doing so.

A **motion** was offered by Chairman Lasseigne, seconded by Mr. Ronnie Winston, for the Subcommittee to approach the Council for a budget to hire an architect to assist the panel in preliminary assessments. A brief discussion and explanations ensued regarding the motion. The motion **carried** by a vote of eight (8) yeas, zero (0) nays, and four (4) absent, that being of Mr. Mark Atzenhoffer, Ms. Jennifer Plaisance, Mr. Ulysse Morvant, and Mr. Brent Callais.

Discussions continued regarding the number of beds for each security level and what to ask of an architect in the assessment.

Mr. Lindel Toups asked if there would be any grant money available for a new jail. The Subcommittee agreed that the possibilities of grants should be looked into.

OTHER BUSINESS

The next item on the agenda was any other business. Hearing none, Chairman Lasseigne moved to the next item on the agenda.

ADJOURNMENT

On **motion** by Mr. Lindel Toups, seconded by Chairman Lasseigne, and with no further business, the Lafourche Parish Detention Center Improvement Subcommittee meeting of April 19, 2005 **adjourned** at 7:05 p.m.

**TOMMY LASSEIGNE, CHAIRMAN
OF THE DETENTION CENTER
IMPROVEMENT SUBCOMMITTEE**

**ELLA DUPRE, ASSISTANT COUNCIL CLERK
LAFOURCHE PARISH COUNCIL**