

**JUNE 21, 2005
RACELAND, LOUISIANA**

**STATE OF LOUISIANA
PARISH OF LAFOURCHE**

THE LAFOURCHE PARISH DETENTION CENTER IMPROVEMENT SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING WAS SCHEDULED FOR TUESDAY, JUNE 21, 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 6:02 p.m. Proceedings of the meeting were called to order with the following:

PRESENT:	Mr. Ronnie Winston	Judge Bruce Simpson
	Dr. Tommy Lasseigne	Sheriff Craig Webre
	Mr. Brent Callais	Mr. Lindel Toups
	Mr. Stephen Baudoin	Ms. Jennifer Plaisance
	Mr. Ulysse Morvant	

ABSENT:	Mr. Michael Delatte	Mr. Daniel Lorraine (<i>arrived at 6:40 p.m.</i>)
	Mr. Mark Atzenhoffer	

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The first item (1) on the agenda was the approval of the minutes of the May 31, 2005 Detention Center Improvement Subcommittee meeting. A **motion** was offered by Mr. Brent Callais, seconded by Mr. Lindel Toups, to approve the May 31, 2005 minutes, and *carried* by a vote of nine (9) yeas, zero (0) nays, and three (3) absent, that being of Mr. Michael Delatte, Mr. Mark Atzenhoffer, and Mr. Daniel Lorraine.

DISCUSSIONS

The next item (2) on the agenda was Dr. James Austin, President of the JFA Institute, located in Washington, D.C., to meet and discuss the services that he could possibly provide as a consultant to the Lafourche Parish Detention Center Improvement Subcommittee. Dr. Austin gave a brief background on himself, stating that he had been doing consulting work for approximately thirty years, has a Ph.D. in Sociology and Criminology from the University of California. He advised that he had performed population forecasts for various states and counties, for both adult and juvenile facilities. Dr. Austin listed the factors which were used to forecast prison populations. He stated that once this information was reviewed, a prison population for the next twenty years could be given. He then stated that any information that could change that projected prison population would also be given.

Dr. Austin stated that he could provide information regarding the type of facility needed, the staffing needs of the facility, along with possible uses for the old facility. He stated that the process could take three months with the needed data provided or six months if the data was not provided. He said that the costs of the consultation depended on the detail wanted. He then entertained any questions.

Mr. Ronnie Winston asked Dr. Austin if his staff would be able to tell the Committee if the old building could or could not be used, if it could be added to or not, or whether it would be more efficient to demolish it. Dr. Austin replied as “yes”. He advised that the existing structure would be looked at and suggestions of usages would then be given.

Chairman Tommy Lasseigne questioned whether Dr. Austin would need a local architect/engineer to accompany him on the analysis. Dr. Austin advised that would not be needed, but it could possibly help. He further stated that his preference was to be accompanied by a local person with experience, to look at correctional facilities. He then stated that an engineer could be used for a walkthrough, to assist in determining the renovation issues.

Mr. Lindel Toups questioned the need for “single cells” in a facility. Dr. Austin stated that on an average, most facilities were 30% to 35% minimum custody and 35% to 45% medium custody which do not require single cells. Dr. Austin listed several other types of cells that would be needed and the reasons therefore.

He advised that the “Standard Objective Classification System” would be applied to the population for scoring purposes, which would then determine the different type of cells needed.

Sheriff Webre advised that maximum security would be needed for the prisoners who commit a serious crime. He further advised that maximum security beds would then be needed for those prisoners, due to the prosecution process taking one to two years.

Mr. Ulysse Morvant inquired as to the mental health cases. Dr. Austin said that the number of mental health cases, whether or not they could join the general prison population, would have to be determined first. He advised that normally this was not a large group, but that beds would be needed that would separate them from the rest of the population.

Mr. Stephen Baudoin asked Dr. Austin if he had ever worked in Louisiana. Dr. Austin replied that he frequents the area at least two times a month for an ongoing projection. He gave a detailed list of other projects performed in the area and that his firm was also active in approximately 25 states.

Chairman Lasseigne asked if Dr. Austin would be able to assist in providing suggestions for funds to pay for the facility. Dr. Austin’s reply was “no” and that he could refer the Committee to other jurisdictions. He then stated that the real costs were going to be in staffing, personnel, and operational costs. He informed Chairman Lasseigne that construction was only ten percent of the costs. He stated that the other ninety percent was operational cost. Dr. Austin then stated that the information he had looked at so far, showed a large staff, given the number of prisoners.

Mr. Winston stated that it was discussed, that if a new facility was built, that it would lower expenses and costs to the citizens of the Parish. He questioned whether it would be more economical to employ civilian personnel. Dr. Austin stated that what he was asked by Sheriff Webre to look at was a staffing analysis and operation analysis. He said it would be determined if there were functions being performed by uniformed staff that could be done by civilians.

Chairman Lasseigne asked Dr. Austin if he was familiar with situations where a group of investors bought and then leased a facility to a Parish. Dr. Austin stated that he had seen that done before. Chairman Lasseigne stated that without a bond issue, that the new jail would not be able to be built, but that a rent payment could be made instead. Mr. Toups advised that the rent would probably be expensive and a tax would have to be passed regardless.

Judge Bruce Simpson questioned as to what information would be needed from the Courts. Dr. Austin stated that the length of time of disposition of cases would be needed. He advised that money could be saved, if dispositions of cases could be expedited. Dr. Austin also stated that it was his understanding that there were individuals not being sent to the facility that would be sent if a larger facility was built. He advised that further information would be needed. Judge Simpson inquired as to how that information would be gathered, if it would be gathered through personal meetings with judges

or e-mail, etc. Dr. Austin advised that they would have to meet with prosecutors, public defenders, and the judges in order to understand what was the current status of arrests, prosecutions, and dispositions of cases. He said that he would also need to know if the addition of judges, cops, etc. was being contemplated as this would eventually make a higher processing rate, which would put more pressure on the jail.

Mr. Baudoin inquired as to the amount of staff that would be used by Dr. Austin. Dr. Austin stated that he would be doing the data gathering. He further stated that for the projection analysis he and one other person would be used, the staffing analysis and operations assessment would be two people. Mr. Baudoin asked the amount of time needed on the site. Dr. Austin stated that approximately five to seven days. Chairman Lasseigne asked if a previous report or presentation could be provided to the Committee for review. Dr. Austin said that he would furnish two previous reports, which showed the difference between a detailed and less detailed report. He then said that the estimated costs of a staffing analysis would be \$26,000, and the population projection would cost approximately \$30,000 to \$35,000.

Chairman Lasseigne asked if the recommendation could be to build in stages. Dr. Austin replied as “yes”, and that a projection for twenty years was not stable due to the possibility of various unforeseen changes. He stated that a building design that could be added to, at a later time, as an as-needed-basis would be recommended. He stated that a flexible plan that could be modified as demand changed would be the best idea.

Mr. Winston questioned Dr. Austin if, in his experience, he had found drug offenders to be the reason for increase in prison population. Dr. Austin said that usually the correctional population consisted of twenty-five to forty percent drug offenses. He named other groups which made up the average prison population. He stated that the data would show exactly this.

Chairman Lasseigne suggested that once the two example reports were received, reviewed, and discussed, that a recommendation could be made at the next meeting. Dr. Austin then advised that he would send copies of reports, along with references and an itemized estimated cost.

Mr. Baudoin asked Dr. Austin how soon after he was contracted, could he start on the project. Dr. Austin stated that because they were in the area, that they could start right-a-way. He stated that if a decision was made, to contract his firm within the next thirty days, preliminary results could probably be given within three to four months after that, and a final report shortly thereafter.

Mr. Toups questioned President Randolph and Sheriff Webre whether the amount of money being requested could be found. President Randolph replied to Mr. Toups by answering that when the proposal was to be brought to the public, that the public would have numerous questions and that a professional could provide that needed information.

Mr. Lindel Toups *offered* a motion to involve the Parish President, the Administration, and the Sheriff's Department to go forward with the study. Judge Simpson stated that he preferred to see the previous reports first. Dr. Austin advised that he would send the reports to the Sheriff the next day and that the Sheriff could distribute them. Chairman Lasseigne requested that the reports be sent to the Council Clerk for distribution.

Chairman Lasseigne asked if the costs of the staffing analysis and population analysis could be separated. Dr. Austin replied as “yes”. Chairman Lasseigne advised that once the reports were received and reviewed a decision could be made.

Dr. Austin advised that he would send a copy of a master plan (that was done for a county jail in Pennsylvania), a staffing and operations analysis, along with a breakdown of projected costs for the study. He further mentioned that a small discount could be given, if it was decided that both analyses were wanted. After asking if there were any further questions, Dr. Austin thanked the Committee and concluded his presentation.

Judge Simpson stated that he thought it best to see what type of report Dr. Austin would be presenting before making a decision. He further stated that he was surprised at the costs of the analysis. Judge Simpson questioned whether other prices should be obtained or not. Sheriff Webre stated that he could not take a position either way, because he relied strictly on Mr. Stalder's recommendation of Dr. Austin. He offered that a search could be done, if so wished. Chairman Lasseigne suggested that the reports be received first, before looking elsewhere. Judge Simpson stated that he was not questioning the competency of Dr. Austin, but more the costs of the analysis. He stated that he felt Dr. Austin was extremely qualified and stated his reasons for thinking so. Judge Simpson said that his only concern was how the governing authority would feel about the costs. Chairman Lasseigne suggested waiting to review the report. He stated that he was aware of the costs associated with the hiring of someone with a Ph.D. and that the costs did not surprise him. He said that he realized that the costs were not insignificant. He said his reason for asking for separate reports was due to the fact that he thought Sheriff Webre would have a good idea of the population projection.

Ms. Jennifer Plaisance asked Chairman Lasseigne about a state policy, which mandated having a certain number of persons per inmate. Sheriff Webre stated that there was no mandatory formula and that the number was originated by the Fire Marshal, based on construction design. Ms. Plaisance asked why Sheriff Webre would not be able to determine the staffing needs of a new facility. Sheriff Webre stated that he was aware of what was needed to operate the facility, but a professional would be able to offer suggestions that he may have never considered.

Mr. Winston asked President Randolph and Sheriff Webre about the availability of the funds needed for the study. President Randolph replied by saying that it depended on the degree of importance that would be put on the matter. She went on to say that the study would not only help in the building of the jail, but would also help budget-wise in the operation of the jail. President Randolph stated that important projects deserved scrutiny in the budget and that if the community so deemed it necessary, that the money could be found. Mr. Winston voiced that he felt that you get what you pay for. He stated that the spending of the money up front to find out what would be needed was better than getting something not needed. Mr. Winston stated that his thought was that this had to be sold to the public and that the more information that was had, the easier that job would be. He went on to say that without information a decision could not be made and that if a decision was made without information that decision was a bad decision. He said that if the money was available, that Dr. Austin should be hired. Mr. Winston then stated that waiting to review the previous reports that Dr. Austin was to send would give them a better idea if the reports would answer the questions they had.

Judge Simpson stated that they would be waiting thirty days to decide on something that would affect the Parish for the next twenty years. He further stated that it would give the Committee more time to think about what was presented. Judge Simpson said that he would like to see the product that Dr. Austin would produce in order to see if it was what was being looked for in this case. He suggested that a decision not made at the present time and that a decision could be made at the next meeting. Judge Simpson stated that his biggest concern was the costs involved in the project. He stated that he was not aware what the governmental authority would think of the amount of the costs. Judge Simpson said that if Dr. Austin could come in with plans that could reduce the operating costs of the facility for \$20,000, that it would be worth it.

Sheriff Webre stated that he felt that Dr. Austin had opened the door to negotiation. He stated that he had no problem investing into making a good decision and to working with the Parish to reach a mutually agreeable number. Sheriff Webre stated that he would rather put up a small amount of money now, then make a mistake that would cost a hundred times that amount later. He also stated that if one position was eliminated, that the report would be paid for. Sheriff Webre said that he would still be interested in negotiating the price.

Mr. Baudoin asked if it was decided by the Committee, that they wanted Dr. Austin to do a report, would it have to go out for public bid. Several Committee members responded as “no”.

Judge Simpson questioned the Committee regarding an e-mail that had been received, then moved that the Committee wait to receive the report and make a decision at that time.

Chairman Lasseigne inquired as to whether Sheriff Webre should be asked to find other firms to compare prices with. Sheriff Webre stated that would be fine because he would be attending the National Sheriff’s Conference the week of June 27, 2005 and that there were numerous vendors at the conference who did jail construction and jail design. He stated that he could ask for the monetary range of getting this type of study done and if they had any names they would recommend. Sheriff Webre said that he would then report back to the Committee at the next meeting.

Chairman Lasseigne encouraged everyone to read the report before the next meeting, once it was received, so that it could be discussed in length. He stated that this decision was a huge decision that was not going to be a politically popular decision.

Sheriff Webre voiced his hopes for a united front from everyone in this matter. He stated that he hoped that everyone involved, including the criminal justice system, the indigent defenders, the Courts, and the private sector would join in this matter together.

Mr. Baudoin asked if locations should be checked into. Judge Simpson stated that the Committee should wait until the reports were received. Mr. Baudoin said that he agreed with that, but what he was talking about was scouting out locations and not actually making a decision. He stated that St. Charles and Terrebonne Parishes could be used as a footprint size for a general idea to see what was available.

Judge Simpson stated that he thought that would be premature because Dr. Austin stated that he would be able to advise if the old facility could or could not be worked with.

Chairman Lasseigne stated that St. Charles had been looked at, but that Dr. Austin may come back with a better configuration. He stated that Dr. Austin may agree that St. Charles has a great facility, but that he may be able to design a better one.

Sheriff Webre stated that he had no preconceived notions and that he agreed with Chairman Lasseigne. He said that he would welcome Dr. Austin to come in with suggestions.

Mr. Callais said that the process of asking the Administration to get a local contractor, engineer, or architect should be started. Chairman Lasseigne said that could be decided at the next meeting. Mr. Callais asked that recommendations be given at the next meeting. Chairman Lasseigne said that he would contact Dr. Austin and inquire as to what he needed. Sheriff Webre asked if the engineer, architect and/or contractor who assisted Dr. Austin on the study, would be prohibited from submitting a bid on the project. Chairman Lasseigne stated that he did not see why that would preclude someone from the design. A brief discussion was had regarding the preclusion or non preclusion of the assisting contractor, engineer, or architect.

The next item (3) on the agenda was open discussions regarding the Lafourche Parish Detention Center. Chairman Lasseigne began by stating that the July meeting would have to be relocated, due to renovations being done at the Sondra Barrios Building. Various suggestions were made by the Committee. After a brief discussion, it was then decided that the next two meetings would be held at 6:00 p.m. at the Lockport Sheriff’s Office (*Lafourche Parish Sheriff’s Office, Criminal Operations Center, Conference Room, 805 Crescent Avenue, Lockport, Louisiana*). A **motion** was made by Mr. Lindel Touns, seconded by Mr. Brent Callais, and **carried** by a vote of nine (9) yeas, zero (0) nays, and three (3) absent, that being of Mr. Michael Delatte, Mr. Mark Atzenhoffer, and Mr. Daniel Lorraine.

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. Ronnie Winston, seconded by Mr. Stephen Baudoin, and with no further business, the Lafourche Parish Detention Center Improvement Subcommittee meeting of June 21, 2005 **adjourned** at 7:05p.m.

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

**REGINA K. NAQUIN, MINUTE CLERK
LAFOURCHE PARISH COUNCIL**