

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
LEON COUNTY, FLORIDA  
WORKSHOP  
Leon County Detention Facility Population Management  
March 22, 2022**

The Leon County Board of County Commissioners met for a Workshop on Leon County Detention Facility Population Management on Tuesday, March 22, 2022, at 10:45 a.m., with Chairman Bill Proctor presiding. Present were Vice-Chair Nick Maddox and Commissioners Brian Welch, Kristin Dozier, Carolyn Cummings, Rick Minor, and Jimbo Jackson. Also present were County Administrator Vincent Long, County Attorney Chasity O'Steen, and Clerk to the Board Beryl H. Wood.

Facilitator(s): Alan Rosenzweig, Deputy County Administrator  
Wanda Hunter, Assistant County Administrator  
Teresa Broxton, Director, Office of Intervention and Detention Alternatives  
Andy Johnson, Assistant to the County Administrator

County Administrator Long gave the introduction for the workshop. He stated that at the October 12, 2021, regular meeting, the Board requested a workshop to provide an overview of the inmate population at the Leon County Detention Facility. The item provides a detailed discussion of historical trends and factors that affect the inmate population, an extensive review of the strategies utilized by Leon County and its partners to continuously review and manage the inmate population, and options for Board consideration to identify additional jail population management strategies as well as to plan proactively for additional space needs that may be necessary in the future. He introduced Sheriff Walt McNeil, Assistant Sheriff Steve Harrelson, Chief Judge Sjostrom, State Attorney Jack Campbell, Public Defender Jessica Yearly, Wanda Hunter, Teresa Broxton, Andy Johnson, and Alan Rosenzweig.

Ms. Hunter spoke about jail population trends, the factors that have impacted the population, alternatives to keep people out of detention facilities, and recommendations. She stated the jail capacity is approximately 1,219 inmates, not considering classifications. Even though they have had a few ups and downs for the last 20 years, the population has stayed steady. She demonstrated the Inmate Population by Charge Level graph and stated that the current population is 1,127. She noted that during the height of COVID, jury trials were suspended for about 10 months, and they had to utilize other resources. The Detention Facility limited visitation to essential personnel.

Factors Impacting the Inmate Population:

- COVID-19
- Increase in Felony Offenders
- Length of Stay
- 92% Increase since 2019
- Case Clearance Rate

She shared Alternatives to Incarceration:

Proactive Intervention Strategies

- Crisis Intervention Team Training

- Mental Health Mobile Response Units
- Homeless Outreach Street Teams
- Council on the Status of Men and Boys

#### Pre- & Post-Arrest Diversion Tools

- Juvenile & Adult Diversion Programs
- Release on Recognizance
- Supervised Pretrial Release
- Bond
- Detention Review
- Specialty Courts

#### Post-Sentence Alternatives

- County Probation
- State Probation

#### Re-entry Services

- Employability & Life Skills Training (In Leon County Detention Facility)
- Technology Training (In Leon County Detention Facility)
- RISE Center
- Refire Culinary
- Big Bend Re-Entry Coalition

Chairman Proctor thanked Chief Judge Sjostrom for his attendance. He expressed his concern on the average stay in jail from 137 days in 2019 to 263 days in 2022. He asked the Chief Judge for his comments.

Chief Judge Sjostrom stated he couldn't tell exactly why the lengths of stay are greater in jail. However, he feels it has to do with the pandemic and that individuals have extraordinarily serious accusations that remain pending and unresolved. He stated that those who stay the longest are those for whom the stakes are the highest. He noted judges are neutral and must make individual decisions based on the different cases. He noted nothing resolves cases like having fair trials. He stated that 7,508 citizens have answered the call for jurors. He hoped with that they are putting the backlog to rest. He stated they have seated at least 200 juries. He stated they are giving the people the opportunity to resolve the cases. He stated they are open for business and ready to resolve cases.

Chairman Proctor inquired about the 16-hour court.

Chief Judge Sjostrom responded the courts are opposed to it.

Ms. Hunter went over programs that they have in place now that provide alternatives to incarceration. She stated that they are constantly looking for other programs that give support to managing the jail population. She discussed the Public Safety Commission Council.

Ms. Broxton explained that the Office of Intervention and Detention Alternatives consists of the supervised pre-trial release probation and drug and alcohol testing divisions, which provide pre-trial and post-sentence alternatives to incarceration through community supervision. She stated that Chief Judge Sjostrom issued two administrative orders in 2019 governing the pre-trial

release program and the first appearance process. Those orders were designed to ensure that each defendant receives an individualized assessment of their ability to be released from the detention facility without monetary bond, and to make sure that any conditions of release enhance public safety. She stated the criminal justice system was affected by COVID, and they had to alter operations for public safety, suspend court operations, and implement virtual alternatives. When courts began to re-open and cases were being disposed, they had more cases that were sentenced to county probation which resulted in a 23% increase in both pretrial and probation cases. They now have more than 1,600 people in community supervision that are not in the detention facility.

Chairman Proctor questioned electronic monitoring.

Ms. Broxton stated that Leon County offers electronic monitoring by GPS, which is location tracking, as well as Secure Continuous Remote Alcohol Monitoring (CRAM), which is for alcohol detection. They routinely have an average of 200 individuals who are being supervised by electronic monitoring.

Mr. Johnson discussed the recommendations of Options 3 and 4. He stated the County has a long history of effectively managing the jail population. The second item that will be included in the scope of work will be to analyze trends in the inmate population. Due to spacing needs some must have separate quarters.

Chairman Proctor asked if there were reasons why they should be concerned with the Leon County Detention Center and how do they rank compared to other facilities.

County Administrator Long spoke in support of the Sheriff and how they run the jail. He stated they are working proactively together the best they can and continue to manage it as effectively as they can.

Sheriff McNeil expressed his gratitude and appreciation for all staff. He shared his belief that the detention facility is one of the best in the state. He acknowledged they are an accredited facility, are inspected on a regular basis, and continue to remain in that place or better.

Vice-Chair Maddox inquired about Option 3.

County Administrator Long stated that the recommendation suggests looking beyond and evaluating other facilities. He believed this recommendation is important to anticipate future needs. Vice-Chair Maddox asked how long the consultant's report will be relevant after it is done.

County Administrator Long replied he did not know. They want to get maximum use for a long period of time.

Vice-Chair Maddox asked Sheriff McNeil about not requesting a new detention facility.

Sheriff McNeil commented on the initial review and concluded that additional programming was needed and that has been done already. Secondly, he stated they need to be proactive. If trends continue in the community the way they are, it is anticipated that at some point they will be overcrowded. He stated the County is growing and crime is growing as well.

Vice-Chair Maddox inquired if there is any standard on maximum jail population.

Mr. Harrelson explained that the Florida Model Jail Standard (FMJS) dictates how much space must be given to each inmate. They are evaluated every year and pass the assessment every

time. He shared that FMJS sets the standards. The space is limited to 1,219 inmates and they must follow that as far as jail space. FMJS recommends that when they reach 80% or more of the capacity, they need to start planning for additional space. They have been at 80% since 1997.

Vice-Chair Maddox expressed his concern about creating a perception that they are building a new jail to lock up more people. He stated the message should be sent that they are doing everything they can to lower the jail population. He asked how they can get below 80% without building on.

Sheriff McNeil replied to the complexity of this issue. He stated most inmates were incarcerated for a shorter period based on misdemeanor-level crimes; however, now the stay is longer. He shared his concern about facing the reality and having an overcrowded facility.

Vice-Chair Maddox stated that he doesn't desire to make detention centers into prisons.

Chairman Proctor paused to welcome Judge Frank Allman and recognized PSCC members for their presence.

Commissioner Welch stated they need to accept that Leon County is growing, as well as the jail population with more violent crimes. He asked if guards, deputies, and the community would get a better experience if the population was lower or if there is more vacancy. He stated he supports the 4 options and that they need to accept they are going to have to build additional space in the future. He shared that he recognizes the reality that the Sheriff's Office is currently dealing with. He commends all detention facility staff and deputies.

Commissioner Cummings recognized the complexity of the criminal justice system and felt everyone did a tremendous job. She shared they are here looking at the jail population, and more roundtables are clearly necessary. She recalled a prior meeting with the City and consideration of community based trusted entities. She asked if they have ever utilized or considered entities or groups that can be effective in reducing jail population.

Sheriff McNeil stated they are hoping the Commission on the Status of Men and Boys will help to build a more robust front-end set of questions and that the intake will seek more information about the inmate coming in, such as family issues, family history, and what is really going on. He stated they do some of that today with the Chaplin Program, but COVID-19 shut it all down and they are starting to get back into it.

Commissioner Cummings asked Sheriff McNeil if there is a trusted entity that could help him.

Sheriff McNeil stated yes, they hope to build a platform which allows providers to connect with inmates with a particular set of issues through the intake process of the Commission on the Status of Men and Boys.

Mr. Campbell stated the judge sets the bond. They are looking at the same model at pre-trial with the idea that if they have someone needing services for mental health or substance abuse, and there is an organization that can care for that person, then they can create a care plan to provide the needed services. However, that will require a judge to modify the conditions or convert them to pretrial to make sure they follow the directions of the Good Samaritan that wants to take them under their wing.

Chairman Proctor asked Ms. Broxton if they had a similar model through the PSCC.

Ms. Broxton stated yes; to some extent they provide wrap-around services. Some were released with pretrial conditions, and some were released on bond to go to reentry.

Commissioner Cummings stated she supports the recommendations. She asked about Option 4, if an individual doesn't have the bond or waived speedy trial, are there other instances that they will be in jail.

Mr. Campbell stated they are almost all felonies. He shared that he and Ms. Yeary spent time trying to get funding for their people. He stated there were more motions at the State to send prisoners back to the county detention than to take their people. He stated he and the Sheriff are being playing defense in trying to have jails handle state prisoners; he believes is a good movement and still working on that.

Commissioner Cummings asked if there is a limit that is placed on the amount of time a person can be detained in jail.

Ms. Jessica Yeary, Public Defender', stated that most people sitting in jail have the presumption of innocence and are waiting for trial. She believes it is not an accurate representation that just because a person is accused of a felony the person is not entitled to release. People in jail have only been charged, not convicted.

Jack Campbell, State Attorney, stated the purpose of bonds is to protect the public. Some people have violated their pretrial conditions, or their crimes are so serious that they are not entitled to bond. He stated he would like to get them to trial as fast as possible, so that they can either be freed or sent to a state facility.

Commissioner Cummings thanked everyone for all they have done.

Commissioner Dozier thanked everyone for their presence. She asked if there are limitations on the length of time that someone can be in the detention facility. She inquired if they could be moved somewhere else before their trial date or would that harm their ability to work with their lawyer or public defender.

Ms. Yeary stated it would be difficult for people to be held in a state correctional facility pending resolution of their case. Sentencing people to prison before they are convicted is incredibly problematic, specifically to a person's condition, mental health, and well-being.

Mr. Campbell stated they are not transporting as much from a state facility back to the Detention Center for the day in court. He stated they need to speed things up and would like to see cases resolved within 180 days.

Chairman Proctor commented on the cost savings of virtual first appearance versus having to bring people before the court physically.

Sheriff McNeil stated yes, they saw so many benefits from that environment.

Commissioner Dozier asked Mr. Johnson that if Option 4 passed, would the legislative policy proposals be brought back to the Board before June or September.

Mr. Johnson stated yes.

Commissioner Dozier stated she will not support Option 4. She would if they brought back a full report about the time limits on keeping people at the detention center.

Mr. Campbell discussed that holding persons that were sentenced to prison for 18 months or a year and a day is a possibility, and that's why planning on additional space is beneficial.

Commissioner Dozier discussed the different populations in jail and the need to reflect on in the future not just the population growth of the community but what offenses they are committing. She asked if there are any strategies and would be interested in other options to help mitigate any other issues. She stated this is a collaborative approach and if the consultant looks more broadly or finds other examples in other communities, she hopes they will have more discussion about that.

Commissioner Minor thanked everyone for being in attendance. In reference to the consultant services item, he asked if this is the right time for them to have a consultant look and try to make future projections.

County Administrator Long stated they will consider all that has been discussed.

Commissioner Minor commented on the amount of the consultant services. He asked Sheriff McNeal if the yearly FMJS assessment focuses strictly on the condition of the existing structure.

Sheriff McNeil replied that most prisons are not direct contact and theirs is a direct contact facility. Even if they don't do the study, he will be talking to staff on how to reconfigure the facility. The building was built as a detention facility and staffing needs are greater with this facility. He stated they are housing more mental health persons than they ever anticipated, and they should be looking at how to ensure that the State takes those persons that should be in state mental institutions as opposed to the local detention facility.

Chairman Minor stated he would support Option 3 as well as Options 1, 2, and 4.

Chairman Proctor recognized Grant Slayden, Court Administrator, and thanked him for attending the meeting.

Chairman Proctor agreed with Sheriff McNeil that they need a mental health facility. The County detention center serves as a homeless shelter and a mental health treatment facility. He stated he is in support of Options 1, 2, and 4, not including option 3. He commented on the average stay in jail from 137 days in 2019 to 263 days in 2022 and requested an evaluation of jail clogging and a look at case management. He asked what the percentage of the jail funding is.

County Administrator Long stated 40%.

Chairman Proctor stated if they do a report on Option 3, he will not vote to build a new jail off the consultant's report. He commented on the Sheriff's training sessions with the officers. He believes it will be important for a consultant to look at the cost of renting space from neighboring counties (Wakulla, Jefferson, etc.) versus the cost of building in Leon County.

Mr. Harrelson stated the problem with other counties is that they don't have the amount of space that Leon County has, so it will be cheaper to do it in Leon County. He commented on Ohio giving up on gun control and not requiring a permit anymore. He requested to have the consultant evaluate jail overcrowding and the average stay in jail from 137 days in 2019 to 263 days in 2022.

County Administrator Long stated they could include that.

Commissioner Minor acknowledged and congratulated Monica Casey of WCTV and wished her well as she leaves the area.

*Vice-Chair Maddox moved, seconded by Commissioner Welch, to approve Options 1-4, with the caveat that they need to explore every single option before considering building on to the jail:*

*Option # 1: Accept the status report of the Leon County Detention Facility;*

*Option # 2: Approve the Resolution and Budget Amendment to hire two additional Pretrial Officer positions to address the increased workload in FY 2022;*

*Option # 3: Direct staff to include funding in the FY 2023 budget process for consultant services to identify additional strategies to further mitigate the need for additional infrastructure, and to evaluate future space needs that may be necessary for the Leon County Detention Facility; and*

*Option # 4: Direct staff to work with the Florida Association of Counties, to develop a state legislative policy proposal that would place a limit on the amount of time that a person charged with a felony offense and awaiting sentencing can be detained in a county jail.*

The motion carried 7-0.

Chairman Proctor thanked everyone.

**Adjourn:**

There being no further business to come before the Board, the workshop was adjourned at 12:31 p.m.

**LEON COUNTY, FLORIDA**

ATTEST:



*Bill Proctor*

BY: \_\_\_\_\_  
Bill Proctor, Chairman  
Board of County Commissioners

*Gwendolyn Marshall*

BY: \_\_\_\_\_  
Gwendolyn Marshall, Clerk of Court  
& Comptroller, Leon County, Florida