



**FRANKLIN COUNTY
JAIL SUBCOMMITTEE
MEETING SUMMARY
July 20, 2017
6:00 P.M.**

Members Present: Paul Crawford
Wayne Ellard
Mayor Harris Little
Colonel Don Pinkard
Bob Ragsdale
Jeff Sosby
Sheriff Stevie Thomas
Chief Deputy Jimmy LeCroy
Captain Greg Sisk
BOC Chairman Thomas Bridges
Commissioner Robert Franklin

Members Absent: Judge Thomas Hodges
Linda Gunter

Staff: County Clerk Elaine Evans

GMRC Facilitator: Adam Hazell

Media: Shane Scoggins, Franklin County Citizen
Charles Robertson, WLHR

Guests: Tom Wright
Captain Gary Smith

Adam Hazell of GMRC welcomed everyone to the Carnesville Community Center for the second of three Jail Subcommittee meetings. He expressed his appreciation to the members for giving their time to this important issue. Mr. Hazell asked the members to remember that these meetings are for the members to come up with a recommendation for the Commissioners on behalf of the jail. The first meeting focused on the conditions at the jail and that it is agreed by everyone that the existing facility is insufficient in terms of capacity, functional deficiencies and is structurally deficient due to age and usage.

After last week's discussion it was determined that the County lacks the immediate funding resources to do a lot of the major work that is involved. Mr. Hazell said that anything that is done will require creative thinking and some investment from the community. Additional operational costs will also need to be addressed when



making a decision. Mr. Hazell said the plan for the jail needs to be proactive in setting aside a financial plan for the future. Everyone is in agreement that a functional jail is needed without unduly burdening the taxpayers.

Based on the discussion from last week the choices came down to replacement of the existing jail, jail expansion, renovation of the existing jail or a combination of renovation and expansion. Mr. Hazell said that it is safe to say that the option of doing nothing is being thrown out along with the prospect of a regional jail. He said that the members need to determine what is best for Franklin County. The determination should also include that the plan meets the needs of the Sheriff and the citizens of the County. Mr. Hazell started the discussion by talking about a possible replacement.

Wayne Ellard questioned where the County would get a piece of land big enough to put a new jail on. He said that the existing jail could not be torn down and the inmates housed out while construction was going on. Mr. Ellard said that land costs have gone up and it would probably take 20 acres to build a jail twice the size of the current one.

Tom Wright said that one of the major concerns before construction is sewage. He said that the County needs to be able to tie into a major system. Mr. Wright said that the Sheriff has mentioned looking into buying additional acreage next to the existing facility. He said that from looking at the survey about 50% of the existing land is in a flood plain. There are ways to be able to put a jail on this site with the addition of property. Mr. Wright said that this can be built and or replaced in phases for financing purposes.

Captain Gary Smith said that core samples have been done on the existing land where the jail is located and also on the land where the addition has been talked about. He said that this is solid ground. Mr. Wright said that this site is the best for several reasons. Mr. Ellard said that it is his understanding that the County is working on developing sewage and water. Chairman Bridges said that according to the County Engineer John Phillips bids will be received for the new sewage project which will cost around 6.5 million and this will take care of the sewage situation. He questioned Sheriff Thomas on what the cost will be for the additional property and how much is needed. Sheriff Thomas said that he is to meet with the property owner this week and will have information after that. Mr. Wright said that the needed acreage should be two acres. He said that this would be enough to take care of the additional beds.

Chairman Bridges asked what the acreage is now where the jail is located. Mr. Wright said that it is around nine to ten acres. Chairman Bridges then asked if this would be less than 20 acres. Mr. Wright said that with additional acreage it would be a little over 11. Chairman Bridges said that the possibility of building a new facility did not need to be thrown out with the coming of the sewer project. Mr. Wright said that what he was proposing was an expansion and not a new site. He said if a new site was built it would have to start with at least 200 beds. Chairman Bridges said could a tower be built on an expansion so that the inmates could be seen. Mr. Wright said that was the plan to make the tower so that the pods could be seen from a central tower.



Sheriff Thomas questioned how many detention officers would it take to handle this. Mr. Wright said not many more officers than is employed now. He said that there would be two in the tower and two on the floor. Captain Smith said that if the facility was moved to another site the resources would be taken away. The building is in place along with power to draw from and the camera cables along with a functional kitchen that can service what is proposed to be built. He said that if this was moved to another location it would take more man power. Mr. Wright said based on costs it would probably cost 15 to 18 million to break ground on a new facility.

Mayor Harris Little asked how small this could go before it would get too expensive on a per cell basis. Mr. Wright said that 20 beds in the pods is the usual thing but to add four more beds would be pennies. Captain Smith said that the design also needed to be taken into consideration whether it is an open pod or individual cells. Mayor Little said that the open pod would be less expensive. Mr. Ellard asked would there be a certain amount of need for individual cells for classification and segregation. Colonel Pinkard said that it is a must because a classification system has to be set up to provide maximum security on disciplinary inmates, special needs, and protection. Captain Smith said that the plan is for the less violent inmates and females to be out in the new facility and have individual cells for more violent inmates. Mr. Wright said that the plan was to build in phases with the first phase having some individual cells and be self-contained with about 100 inmates and support staff. The second phase would be hard beds. Mayor Little said it is foolish to do away with the existing jail although it is 20 plus years old and has some issues. He said that the main structure is in pretty decent shape although some renovation is needed. There is also adjacent land and the sewage will be taken care of with the new plant being built.

Mr. Hazell posed the scenario if the jail became a 500 capacity jail would it cause more problems. Mayor Little said that if growth happened there would be more of everything. He said that if the County ever got this big that there would probably be an additional facility built. Jeff Sosby said that if there was a new facility that Franklin County could house other counties prisoners to offset the costs. Mayor Little asked if it was a higher cost to transport a higher classification of inmate. Colonel Pinkard said that the only time it would cost more would be if the inmate was so high risk that two officers instead of one had to go with them. Mayor Little asked if once an inmate reaches the outsourced facility if it matters what classification they are for the cost. Colonel Pinkard said pretty much there is no difference in cost.

Paul Crawford asked if a facility for less violent inmates had been looked at, maybe a center to bring them back in at night. Sheriff Thomas said that this was the first thing that he asked for back in 2005 to do this for probation and child support offenders. The plan was for them to pay one hour wage to stay in the center at night and to work during the day. Sheriff Thomas said that this would be only for people with probation and child support and they had to have a job. He said the group of Commissioners in office at that time said no. If a work release center was available some of the inmates that are in jail would be able to do this now. Sheriff Thomas said that this would also keep trustees and work release folks from going back into the



general jail population and would keep contraband from coming into the jail.

Mr. Hazell asked what would be the sign that the current facility is outgrown. Sheriff Thomas said it is already there. Mayor Little said that maybe it would be time to look at going to a bigger facility when the administrative area was outgrown. Mr. Ellard said somewhere down the road Carnesville, Georgia will be impacted by some kind of growth. When planning where to build a jail it would need to be considered that people may not want to live next to it. Mr. Wright said Clarke County built a work release center in front of their county jail. Mayor Little said in a work release center that no meals or laundry services were provided. Mr. Wright said there are vending machines in the work release center or they eat out. They also take their laundry with them or they use coin operated machines in the facility.

Sheriff Thomas said he toured Walton County and that is the way they run theirs. Colonel Pinkard said there is a work release program in Gwinnett County and it is away from the jail. It is managed but it is nowhere near as secure as the jail because all of the security concerns for a jail are not needed in a work release center. A work release center is a whole lot cheaper than building a jail. Mr. Wright said that the ones in Cobb are more like a college dorm. The work release people know if they don't behave they will be back in the jail. Captain Smith said at this time Franklin County is probably five to 10 years behind in planning for the future. He said what is being worked on now is to try to get the County out of a hole. Future planning is needed but this needs to be corrected now. Mr. Hazell said the future planning is needed because of the potential for growth with the new sewer project.

Paul Crawford said he wanted to keep an open mind and all options need to be explored to be cost effective. Mr. Hazell asked Captain Sisk what needed to be done to the existing facility other than increasing beds. Captain Sisk gave handouts of the current needs at the jail along with the associated costs. He said additional cameras and hardware are needed for inmate and officer safety. Tinting of the glass in the pods is needed for classification and protection of the female population from being viewed by the male population. Captain Sisk said that the outside awnings need repairing to keep water from blowing in during heavy rains. Some maintenance has already been done on the door locks at the jail at a cost of \$3,239.67 but more work is needed and a quote will be given by DESI Detention Equipment Sales. Captain Sisk said the existing control panels are working but not at 100%. A touch screen system will cost in the range of \$45,000 to \$60,000. The biggest expense and need is to upsize the kitchen at a cost of \$83,231.12. Captain Sisk said at first glance of upgrades the total is \$175,010.

Mayor Little asked if this included the ventilation issues. Captain Sisk said he did not get that far. Mayor Little asked if the jail still had any sheetrock. Sheriff Thomas said that has been fixed with steel which should have been there to start with. Mayor Little asked if there were other things that are needed. Captain Sisk yes, this was just the first glance. Mr. Ellard said that the jail now has a renovation issue that should have been a maintenance issue. This is stuff that should have been done over the past 25 years and now the renovation issue is a forced issue. He said Captain Sisk did a good job of showing what is needed at the jail. The funding for this is what has to be



figured out now. Mr. Ellard said that from what was said at last week's meeting SPLOST V has money set aside for this. Sheriff Thomas said it is \$100,000. Chairman Bridges said that Mrs. Thomas presented this last week and that information was included also about the hospital.

Mr. Ellard said that several of the members talked after last week's meeting. He said that they do not think that they can go to the citizens of the County and ask for a bond issue for the jail. Mr. Ellard said that he lives in Lavonia and he is not sure that he is thrilled with the last bond situation. He said it would be good if a new one percent sales tax could go toward the jail. Sheriff Thomas said that they can't wait that long. Mr. Ellard was in agreement with this. He said that he didn't know what but something needs to be done. Mr. Sosby said that he thought the land owners were hit hard and there should be a flat tax so everyone has to pay something including the people who end up in the jail.

Mayor Little asked Mr. Wright what the dollar cost would be for the first phase of an expansion for 48 beds. Mr. Wright said to finish half of the building would be in the range of 60% to 70% of the total cost. He said if the project total was 3 million the first phase would be close to 2 million. Mr. Wright said the classifications would still be a problem. Mayor Little said no matter what there will always be problems. Mr. Wright said for future planning it would be necessary to think of potential doubling space in 20 years and there is no easy to expand the jail. Mayor Little asked if the 48 beds were added could the jail areas of administration, laundry, kitchen, etc. handle it. Captain Smith said that another avenue that can be explored is that the laundry could be outsourced to the hospital. He also said for the kitchen expansion to explore purchasing dented items for less cost. Captain Smith said there are good employees in the County such as Lyndon Burgess who will help find cost effective equipment and the employees are a good resource and should be used.

Mr. Hazell asked if the design is feasible to do in phases, do 48 beds now and more beds five to six years later after having the opportunity to try to get a portion of SPLOST to pay for the second phase. Mayor Little said the next opportunity for SPLOST is 2023. Mr. Wright said that from a design standpoint it can be done but the costs will continue to increase and it will be like starting over for each phase. Included in the current plans are additional space for medical, isolation cells and a multi-purpose room that could also double as a place to hold court for first appearances and probation and things of that nature. Colonel Pinkard said that he does not think that 48 beds provides for an adequate classification system with the ability to separate inmates based on various reasons. Sheriff Thomas said that the jail in Stephens County was projected to cost seven million dollars but the cost ended up at 11 million dollars because it was built in phases.

Bob Ragsdale said that over and over the issue of 98 beds has come to the forefront. He said in 2014 it was settled on by the Commission and the Sheriff for 98 beds at a cost of 2.4 million dollars. Mr. Ragsdale said that he did not know why anything other than 98 beds would be talked about. In May 2014 the Commission refused the SPLOST idea by two votes for and three votes against. In November 2014



the Commissioners agreed to a jail expansion with a limit of 1.5 million dollars. Mr. Ragsdale said that this amount was probably not adequate even at that time. Proposals were asked to be turned in by December 23, 2014. He said that almost three years has passed and he does not have a clue of what happened to the proposals or why the Commission didn't move forward. There is an immediate need for 98 beds and there is also an immediate need for the Commissioners to take the responsibility to do their job and allow this to move forward. Mr. Ragsdale said that there is no way that this can go before the voters in November. The earliest that it could go would be March or May of next year. He said that he would be willing to go to the various cities to take a recommendation of what comes from this Subcommittee. And the Commissioners have got to step up although one of the Commissioners has said that they do not have to take the recommendation of the Subcommittee. He said that if this is not dealt with a federal judge will come and then the 3 million may become 50 million for a new jail. Also, the maintenance and operation items should already have been dealt with and they should not even have to be talked about by the Subcommittee.

***Mr. Ellard** said that the problem is that the funding is not sitting there. Mr. Ragsdale asked Mr. Wright what the estimate for the 98 beds is now since it was 2.4 million dollars in 2014. Mr. Wright said that it is 3 million but in January there is a new energy code that is going into effect. If the building is not permitted prior to January 1 an additional 20% will be added to the cost at around \$500,000. Mr. Ragsdale said let's move forward. Captain Smith said that there is some money in the bank so the whole amount will not have to be borrowed. Sheriff Thomas said when Sheriff Roach was in office there was a million dollars set aside in the SPLOST for the jail to help take care of expenses. Then in the next SPLOST a decimal was moved so that the amount for the jail was \$100,000. Sheriff Thomas said that although he was upset the deal was done and there was nothing that could be done to change it. He said that the amount in SPLOST has dwindled down because the roof and the boiler were paid out of it. Mr. Ragsdale said that it went to good use. Sheriff Thomas said it did. Captain Smith said that the problem has been that the amount set aside for construction has had to be used for maintenance because there was no money set aside for maintenance in the County. Mr. Ragsdale confirmed with Chief Deputy LeCroy that the operational costs for an addition would be around \$800,000 per year. In addition to the cost to expand this additional \$800,000 has to be taken into consideration.*

***Chairman Bridges** said that he agreed with going with 98 beds but it needs to be done correctly in case the jail needs to be added to again. Colonel Pinkard said that some of the operational costs will be offset by the housing costs in renting the empty beds out until the jail is full. Mr. Ragsdale said that with all due respect he didn't care about the motel concept; he wants to do what is best for the taxpayers to be able to get the County by for a reasonable time span. Mr. Hazell said that the mistakes from the past do not need to be repeated such as the accounting piece in the prior SPLOST. He said that the jail needs its own line item for capital expenditures to be able to track expenses and to plan for the future.*

***Captain Sisk** said that he worked for Madison County prior to coming to Franklin County. Madison County had SPLOST but they waited six or seven years*



before adding onto the jail. Their plan was to add two pods with 24 inmates each. Captain Sisk said that two pods with 16 inmates each were eventually added. The tower was already in place along with existing walls, all plumbing and part of the concrete was poured. The cost for this addition was 3.5 million dollars for 32 beds. Captain Sisk told Mr. Wright that he meant no disrespect but how could 98 beds be built for the same cost that Madison County paid for 32 beds. Sheriff Thomas said that the existing jail cost 5 million and more beds will be added for 3 million. Captain Smith said that the existing jail has hard beds and stainless steel and was value engineered. Mr. Wright said that the difference is that the 24 man dorm is all open units. The cells are where the cost is. The security for this building is 1.5 million dollars which includes all the cells, the bathrooms, the tower equipment and a system which can be added or can be put into place with the existing equipment if compatible. Captain Smith said that these cells will be complete when they are delivered as they are already manufactured. Mr. Wright said that this is a pre-engineered structure.

Mr. Wright said that the cost for a two man cell is approximately \$25,000. Captain Sisk said that is what Madison County paid for a four man steel cell. Mr. Wright said that this is the number that is used for installation of doors and security and everything else \$20,000 to \$25,000. He said about \$25,000 each will be the cost for three of the bays that will sleep 24. The difference is in the type of housing and that is why it is less. Mr. Ellard said that the fixtures for jails are expensive because of the security. Mr. Hazell asked Captain Sisk if he had seen the plans. Captain Sisk said that he had. Mr. Hazell asked if he had evaluated them from a functional standpoint and for questions. Captain Sisk said that it is a great concept but his concern is cutting corners and possibly building a less secure jail as this is offensive. He said that he did not want to have to send two officers into 24 inmates to separate them. Sheriff Thomas said that there will still be a jail with cells to lock inmates in; the addition is for less violent offenders. Captain Smith said that this is for the child support, probation and females. Captain Sisk said that he understood all of that but that no one can say that these are 24 of the nicest people crammed into one room and it can't go bad. He said that he was looking at the protection of the officers. Mr. Ragsdale said that if the Chief Deputy's figures hold true 12 employees would be added. Captain Sisk said yes and 98 more inmates.

Mr. Ragsdale questioned with all due respect to Mr. Wright how the County would know that his price and plan is the best. He said that if this could not be taken to the voters until May how could the County be sure that the price will hold up. Mr. Wright said that his is an estimate on the price because he is the architect. He said that the firm price will come from the bids. He uses consultants to help with the design and the designs presented are basically four projects. If these projects are done individually they will cost approximately five million dollars a project. Mr. Wright said that this addition is the first step and as soon as it is finished the County needs to start planning for the next step no matter how long it takes. Mr. Hazell said that it is important to remember that the County Commissioners will officially approve what is presented to them from the Subcommittee. At that time the needs will be addressed and the public will be made aware that funding is being secured for the jail expansion. Mr. Ragsdale said that the upgrade to the existing jail cannot be ignored and that it needs



to be included in this funding. Mr. Ellard said that today's meeting is covering a bid and spec project. He said that Mr. Wright is probably one of the finest architects when it comes to prison design. Mr. Ragsdale said that he did not dispute that but he just wants to do what is best for the community. Mr. Ellard said that he has seen a lot of Mr. Wright's work over the years and he plans secure jails.

Mayor Little clarified the going to the voters that Mr. Ragsdale referenced. He asked if this would be a bond referendum. Mr. Ragsdale said that he would prefer it to be SPLOST. Mayor Little said that SPLOST cannot be voted on for at least five years because the new collections have just started. Mr. Ragsdale said that he does not think that the voters will accept anything else. He said that with a tax increase a mill would create about \$500,000. Mayor Little said that in Franklin County one mill would be \$500,000 to \$600,000. Chairman Bridges said that is \$550,000. Mr. Ragsdale asked Chairman Bridges if he is ready to raise the millage to pay for the jail. Chairman Bridges said that the committee needs to look into the possibility of raising the millage. He said that he is in favor of doing this if it is needed. The SPLOST for the hospital passed because it was well publicized so he does not know why this can't be done. Mr. Sosby said that a flat tax would do away with property tax and it would get everybody. He said this would get the people who travel the Interstate who don't live here and it would also get the inmates who don't pay property taxes. Mr. Sosby said that he and the other taxpayers are footing the bill to keep the inmates happy and it is time to keep the taxpayers happy. Mayor Little said that he does not believe that the voters will reject a bond question out of hand if it is something that they want. He said that every Grand Jury has recommended something for the jail. This is taking a chance to go before the voters because if it is rejected it will be some time before it can go back on the ballot.

Mr. Sosby said that as a property owner if it was said that property taxes would need to go up to build the jail, he would say raise my taxes. He said he would not like it but what he dislikes more is the people who are not paying property taxes who get the same benefits as he does. Mr. Sosby said that a flat tax should be visited later down the road. He said now to get the show started on building the jail. Mr. Crawford said since SPLOST cannot be done for five years what choice does this leave. Sheriff Thomas said the only choices are bonds or to raise the millage. Mr. Ellard said that you go to the taxpayers or you go to the bank. Mr. Crawford said with the hospital sitting up there in Lavonia that you can forget about going to the voters for a bond. Mayor Little said that he totally 100% disagrees. If it is explained right and you approach people right they will understand the need. Mr. Wright said maybe to go with a 15 year bond and do parts with SPLOST on the next go round. Mayor Little said that if this was done that the debt could be retired with the next SPLOST. There would be a few years where the debt would have to be paid by the County. Mr. Wright said that some of the debt would be paid with what the County is paying to house out. Mayor Little said that strictly speaking it is cheaper to house out at \$35 a day. Sheriff Thomas said that there are other costs that were not considered. Mayor Little said that is true, there are transportation costs and some other costs but even then it seems to be cheaper to house out. Captain Smith said that every time this is talked about it is put on the agenda for the Commissioners meeting and nothing is done. He said that 34



Grand Juries have said to build a jail. Mr. Ellard said that there are five people elected to handle the business of the County and most people don't care enough to go see if they are doing their jobs. Chairman Bridges said that a lot of people don't come to the meetings because they have already talked to the Commissioners.

***Chairman Bridges** said that it seems that the way this is leaning is toward renovation and expansion. He said that thousands of dollars have already been spent on upgrading the jail since Captain Sisk has come to work to make a lot of corrections. He said that the Commissioners need to be given a solution. Mr. Hazell questioned if everyone is in agreement for renovation and expansion. Everyone affirmed that they were. Mr. Hazell said that part of the recommendation is for the existing facility to be upgraded along with an expansion. He said that from here on out the discussion is how to package this for the Commissioners and the public.*

Before adjourning the meeting Mr. Hazell said that the ultimate recommendation is for the County Commission to follow through on a set of expansion and renovation plans with the specs as presented to them by the Sheriff. He asked the members to make sure that they added everything that needed to be in the recommendation. Mr. Hazell said that he would work on getting the financing information for the next meeting that was previously presented. The next meeting date was tentatively scheduled for August 3 with Mr. Hazell stating that he would get the confirmation sent to the members. After no further comments or concerns the meeting was adjourned by Mr. Hazell at 7:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Elaine H. Evans
County Clerk*