

Bipartisan Support for Comprehensive Analysis of Criminal Justice System

Poughkeepsie, NY... “Thanks to the bipartisan support of the Dutchess County Legislature, we can finally move forward in addressing the costly issue of housing-out inmates,” said Dutchess County Executive Marcus J. Molinaro following the Dutchess County Legislature’s 19 to 6 vote to authorize a \$1.2 million bond to begin the Project Definition phase for the potential development of a new transition facility in Dutchess County. Minority Leader Barbara Jeter-Jackson and Legislator Steve White, both who represent the City of Poughkeepsie, joined Republican legislators in support of the resolution. With an average daily inmate population of nearly 500 individuals and current jail capacity for just over 250, Dutchess County “houses out” as many as 200 or more inmates in other facilities across the state each day, at a cost to taxpayers that is currently over \$8 million per year and continues to increase.

“This will perhaps be the most comprehensive analysis of the criminal justice system that has been undertaken,” said County Executive Molinaro. “It will be a thorough and deliberate process to determine the best interests of the criminal justice system, County government, taxpayers and the inmates who need a continuum of care that will prevent future recidivism.”

Chairman of the Dutchess County Legislature Robert Rolison said, “Our legislative body has been engaged throughout this process. I know all too well that this has been a contentious issue for some time but we have come together because we feel very strongly on this issue. More importantly, this step moves us forward in the right direction to provide programs and services to our inmate population while offering savings to taxpayers.”

The Legislature’s authorization will enable the County to pursue temporary housing during the Project Definition phase at the current jail facility on

North Hamilton Street in the City of Poughkeepsie. The temporary housing, known as PODS, will allow inmates to be housed in the County, providing savings of more than \$2 million a year. Temporary housing will also provide inmates with the opportunity to participate in various Alternatives to Incarceration programs that they are currently unable to access in out-of-county facilities.

“The \$2 million plus dollars in savings using the temporary PODS will allow us to provide direct services to inmates that they would be unable to receive in other counties facilities. It will also provide us the opportunity to demonstrate how these programs can positively impact our population numbers,” noted County Executive Molinaro.

The bond authorization for the Project Definition follows the Dutchess County Criminal Justice Council’s recommendation for the construction of a new, larger jail facility to address the long-term issue of housing out inmates and expansion of its nationally-recognized Alternative to Incarceration programs. A new facility is envisioned as a transitional center and would enable the County to provide various co-located services to support a strong continuum of services that embrace the County’s philosophy of least restrictive, evidence-based criminal justice practices that help drive down the recidivism rate. Using new design concepts, the County could also improve its current 1 to 1.3 staff to inmate ratio, which is one of the highest in New York State, to potentially a 1 to 3 ratio, which has been achieved in other facilities throughout the state. The CJC’s analysis and recommendations were reviewed and validated this spring by criminal justice industry expert RicciGreene Associates.

The Project Definition phase will include a comprehensive assessment of Dutchess County’s criminal justice system needs including the necessary number of beds, types of housing units needed for various special populations, recommendations for specific evidence based programs and services needed in the transition center to address behavioral and criminogenic issues. Additionally the assessment will include a detailed

analysis, to be done in conjunction with the New York State Commission on Corrections, to determine a final staff to inmate ratio that can be achieved in a modern design facility.

“We need to move ahead to have a modern correctional facility in Dutchess County,” said Dutchess County Sheriff Adrian “Butch” Anderson. “For too long, we have sent our taxpayers’ money to other counties, enabling them to build their jails. We have put our correctional officers at risk transporting inmates across the state. Today we finally have a common sense approach that will save taxpayers millions of dollars and keep inmates here in Dutchess County where we can provide them programs and services designed to help them turn their lives around.”

The Project Definition phase will provide county leaders with detailed technical and design studies providing information on schedule, phasing, environmental and cost issues for two proposed site options. Those options are building a new facility on the current jail site at North Hamilton Street in the City of Poughkeepsie or new construction on the Hudson River Psychiatric Center property off of Rt. 9G in the Town of Poughkeepsie.

It is expected the Project Definition phase will take twelve to eighteen months. During this phase, there will be significant community outreach to gather public input and keeping the public apprised of the status of the project. At the conclusion of the phase, the public will be presented with a final, recommended option for potential facility construction, including the mix of secure jail facility and transitional housing, a staff to inmate ratio authorized by the NYS Commission on Corrections and the programs and services that will be available at the facility to best transition inmates back into the community and decrease potential recidivism.

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