

**Safety & Justice Roundtable**  
**Make-up tour: Greene County Justice Center (Jail)**  
**April 16, 2008, 8:00 a.m.**

Members present:

Jill Elsey-Stoner

Stephanie Montgomery

Brad Stokes

Others present:

Sheriff Jack Merritt

Dirk VanderHart, News-Leader

Steve JP Liang, News-Leader

Jenny Fillmer Edwards, Greene County PIO

The group assembled in the Jail lobby, then entered Jail Administration area, where their belongings were left behind. Sheriff Merritt introduced the group to CE Wells, Jail Director.

Sheriff led the group into the jail. They looked at the laundry and kitchen areas, where jail trustees were working. Sheriff explained that taking meals on carts to individual pods saves money and is more safe than moving them to a cafeteria area. He explained that trustee labor also saves money, and utilizing trustee labor helped him cut the average cost of each meal from \$1.76 to \$1.20. He explained that more than 1,800 meals are served every day by the jail, including inmates, officers, juvenile detention. He explained that they serve vegetarian and Muslim meals, though it's not always equitable (like cereal instead of eggs and bacon.) In the hallway he pointed out the X-ray machine, where mail is examined.

Entering the secure area through the double interior gate, Sheriff pointed out that all areas are under video surveillance, viewed by Master Control.

In the booking area, Sheriff pointed out the video arraignment room, where inmates may converse in real-time with a judge for arraignment, without leaving the jail. This saves money on guard escorts. About 22,000 inmates are booked every year. Sheriff pointed out "The Pits" – waiting areas for inmates in booking, and holding cells for violent inmates in booking. He said every door in the jail is controlled by Master Control. He pointed out the digital fingerprinting system, which transmits all prints to Mo. Highway Patrol. Booking, he said, is the most difficult area to staff.

Brad Stokes asked how long booking takes. Sheriff said minutes if they're cooperative, hours if they're not, especially if they refuse to give a real identity. Brad asked if male and female inmates are separated in booking. Sheriff said yes, they'd learned to keep them separated. There are many more female inmates now than when the jail was built.

Sheriff described some past allegations from inmates in A Pod (isolation/discipline pod) that had cost the county thousands every year in court costs. Now, \$30,000 worth of camera equipment documents all areas and this clears up frivolous suits and save the county money.

Sheriff described the book-and-release program (Pre-Trial Release) and how it was a Kalmanoff recommendation. It keeps many potential inmates out of the mail, but still supervised. Even so, the jail population his 599 recently. DWI and other offenders have a minimum hold.

Sheriff said it costs \$42-45/day to house each inmate. State reimburses \$21.25- \$1.25 less than it paid in 2002. Senator Nodler has recommended a 25-cent increase. Brad asked what the city reimburses the jail. Sheriff said the pay nothing per prisoner, and this was the agreement set out in the 1997 Law Enforcement Sales Tax, which funded the jail's construction. The funding formula is based on population, which was 70 city/30 county in 1997, now is 60/40. Pharmaceuticals are a huge cost for the jail, which the Sheriff called the largest mental health facility in the state. Stephanie asked about any reimbursements collected from prisoners. Sheriff said there's a \$20 booking fee, doctor visit co-pays. The medical charges keep numbers of frivolous medical calls down. Jail also makes money off of commissary and through collect call telephone charges (\$15,000/month.)

Dirk asked about the number of federal prisoners. Sheriff said 2003 was a terrible year, budget-wise, for the jail. All employees took a voluntary 3-percent pay cut, rather than lay off 20 employees. This alone wasn't enough to solve budget shortfall, so Sheriff instituted the booking fee, medial co-pays and took on more federal prisoners from the US Marshals Services, which reimburses the county \$52/day. Original contract said Greene Co would keep a minimum of 35 federal prisoners. Sheriff boosted that number to up to 100. This helps pay the bills.

The group toured the property room and uniform storage area. Jill commented on the striped uniforms for the road crews. Sheriff said the road crews are difficult to staff any more, because participation makes inmates ineligible for early release. Many potential road worker-inmates are now part of the pre-trial release program, so not enough inmates are available to the road crew.

The group moved on to the shower/de-lousing area and looked at the restraining bed, where violent inmates seeking to harm themselves are strapped down. Stephanie asked how often the bed is used. Sheriff said less than once a week.

Sheriff said the Forest Institute has been a tremendous help to the jail, with classes in anger management, parenting skills, marriage enrichment. Also, faith-based programs are very popular, and more than 1,000 had been baptized. Stephanie asked about the cost of Forest Institute partnership. Sheriff said the contract is for \$30,000/year, which also provides programs for officers and spouses, because divorce rates are very high in corrections. He said officers work 12-house shift, never more than 3 days in a row.

The group went upstairs and looked in on Master Control, where all cameras, doors and gates are controlled. The group also looked at the visitation area- inmates may visit with loved ones only through glass windows.

The group entered D Pod, where 114 inmates were housed in a space designed for 96. Most are housed three to a cell, with one sleeping in a “boat” on the floor. Sheriff said they have to be careful about keeping inmates with personal history separated in the pods. Sheriff demonstrated the wrist-bracelet scanning system, which tracks inmates’ whereabouts. Sheriff said TV in the pods is limited to History and Discovery channels, to keep them quiet. He said he once played the Disney channel for a week to punish inmates. The group exited D Pod.

The group entered the commissary, where food, toiletries, clothing and stationary is sold. The biggest seller is Ramen Noodles. The group also toured the chapel, library and classroom areas. Jody Luntsford talked about the “Broken to Beautiful” doll art project for female inmates.

The group toured A Pod where inmates in segregation/disciplinary/protective custody are housed. Trustees are also housed here, and given more freedom than average inmates.

Sheriff said an average length of stay in the jail is 16 days but that includes both book-and-release and long-timers.

The group toured the medical clinic, where Joe Meystrik, RN, described the services offered there. Most common issues are mental health and substance abuse, he said. Diabetic, HIV+/AIDS patients and some wheelchair-bound inmates are also in the clinic often. They also treat dental complaints, which are frequent due to “meth mouth.” Prescriptions cost \$20-30,000 a month. There are RNs on duty 24 hours and visiting physicians. Stephanie asked about how staff deals with inmates’ substance abuse withdrawal. Joe said Librium protocol treats alcohol withdrawal, which can be life-threatening untreated. Clonidine protocol reduces symptoms for narcotics withdrawal, which is not usually life-threatening. Co-pays are \$5 for a doctor or dentist visit.

The group also visited T-1 and T-2, which are female inmate pods. T-1 is a common dormitory area, inmates are free to walk around and interact. T-2 is more traditional 2-per-cell arrangement. Both are in the “tower” the oldest part of the jail, which used to be the entire old jail.

Sheriff said the jail has 500 beds, but you can’t use them all, because of the various classification of prisoners (for example- males can’t be housed in female pods.)

The tour concluded at about 9:45 a.m.