

JAIL ISSUE: FOLLOW-UP ON "NEXT STEPS" MEMO TO MEMBERS OF THE GREENE LEGISLATURE
JUNE 5, 2018

TO: MEMBERS OF THE GREENE COUNTY LEGISLATURE
FR: ROBERT JANISZEWSKI, CHAIR
MOUNTAIN TOP PROGRESSIVES JAIL PROJECT COMMITTEE
RE: CURRENT STATUS OF YOUR JAIL "WORKSHOP" SERIES
DT: JUNE 12, 2018

First, I commend this body – and particularly the Finance Committee of the Legislature – for taking the steps necessary to re-visit the plan to replace the defunct Catskill Jail. That action and your "workshop" efforts can provide the opportunity for a more carefully considered analysis of Greene County's correctional needs going forward. I have communicated with you at length on this topic in the past. What follows are comments that I ask be considered during the course of your current deliberations.

I took note of the references to Herkimer County during your last "workshop" meeting and their plan to build a larger facility than the Coxsackie plan envisions AND at a much lower cost. Should a shared-facility not be possible at the end of the road, a solution/option may be the Herkimer alternative as cited by Mr. Bulich.

I should note, however, that the threshold issue is size - the number of detainee beds that will be required. The current Coxsackie design is substantially over-sized. The plan did not take into account the current trend in inmate population here in Greene County, in other counties, in NY State and in the federal jails as well. Each has been shrinking in population over the past decade and the trend is continuing downward. Sheriff Seeley recently pegged the Greene County count at 57. The Coxsackie facility plan calls for 98. This is especially shocking when all of the future indicators - removal of juveniles from adult lock-ups already adopted and scheduled for implementation on January 1st, 2019, bi-partisan bail reform efforts presently moving through the legislature with the support of the Governor, and the trend toward liberalization of marijuana to name a few - will further reduce the numbers, not double them. Taken together with the county's own ATI report, these realities should result in a modification of the current plan to reduce the number of overnight beds required to satisfy Greene County's needs for the foreseeable future. Once those downward revisions are in place, a reasoned comparison of alternatives would be in order.

The current Greene/Coxsackie plan for 98 inmates is at a capital cost of \$52 million or \$530,600 per cell - without interest over 30 years. The Herkimer County jail plan costed out at \$32 million for a concrete structure with a 131 detainee beds or \$244,300 per bed - less than 1/2 the cost per-bed that the Greene County plan anticipates. If the Herkimer plan cost-per-bed - already approved by NY State - were applied to the Coxsackie facility plan at 98 inmates, the cost would be some \$23,900,000 - A \$30 MILLION SAVING. And, the Herkimer plan includes costs for site acquisition that are not anticipated in the Greene County plan!

Aside from comparing these two plans - an exercise that should raise significant investigative interest - Herkimer County did not explore the alternative of sharing a facility with a neighboring county. That may be because the county seat and location of the courts is not within close range for transportation purposes. In the case of Greene County, the Coxsackie site is 1.5 miles further away from the Catskill Courthouse than the shared-facility in Hudson would be, making compared transportation costs a wash.

My point is that re-visiting the size and bed needs of our jail drives the rest of the cost basis of a replacement facility, whether done on our own or shared with a willing partner. The Herkimer example should be explored, the ATI Committee Report reviewed, and the National Institute for Corrections brought in as a cost-free professional consultant to guide the legislature to a conclusion that satisfies our correctional needs and is sensitive to the costs involved and the impact on our taxpayers.

Thank you again for your response and for demonstrating responsible consideration to the needs of Greene County and our taxpayers.

ROBERT JANISZEWSKI
TANNERSVILLE, NY