



**ADVISORY COMMITTEE
TO STUDY THE FUTURE
OF THE NEW JERSEY TRAINING SCHOOL FOR BOYS
IN MONROE TOWNSHIP**

**REPORT
TO THE
JUVENILE JUSTICE COMMISSION**

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**The Honorable Peter Inverso
Senator, District 14
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DECEMBER 1997

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Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Background..... | 1 |
| Juvenile Justice Commission..... | 2 |
| New Jersey Training School for Boys..... | 3 |
| Public Hearing..... | 4 |
| Admission Projections..... | 6 |
| Physical Plant..... | 8 |
| Current Land Value..... | 9 |
| Juvenile Justice Trends in Other States..... | 10 |
| Master Plan..... | 12 |
| Potential Alternative Locations for New Facility..... | 13 |
| Options..... | 14 |
| Recommendations..... | 16 |

Background

The Advisory Committee to Study the Future of the New Jersey Training School for Boys in Monroe Township (the "Committee") was established by Governor Whitman's Executive Order No. 75 on September 29, 1997. The Committee was created to provide input to the Juvenile Justice Commission (the "JJC") in connection with the JJC's study of the feasibility of closing the New Jersey Training School for Boys in Monroe Township (the "Training School"). The JJC's feasibility study must be completed and presented to the Legislature by December 31, 1997 pursuant to the Fiscal Year 1997-98 Appropriations Act, P.L.1997, c.131. This Report is submitted to provide the JJC with the Committee's input as directed by the Executive Order.

The Committee is specifically directed by Executive Order No. 75 to provide input to the JJC with respect to the following issues:

- ▶ public safety as it relates to security at the Training School for Boys;
- ▶ whether the current physical facility meets the needs of the JJC in the context of its responsibility for the custody and care of juveniles;
- ▶ the impact that closure of the facility would have upon the JJC in the context of its responsibility for the custody and care of juveniles;
- ▶ the cost effectiveness of closure, including a fiscal analysis of whether the current facility should be renovated and/or whether the State should undertake new construction elsewhere; and
- ▶ if new construction is recommended, possible alternative locations.

In performing its duties, the Committee held three executive meetings. The Committee also toured the Training School on November 12 and, on the same date, conducted a public hearing in Monroe Township to obtain the positions and viewpoints of the community surrounding the Training School. This Report takes into account the public testimony presented at that hearing and the discussions that took place at the meetings.

Juvenile Justice Commission

The JJC was created when Governor Whitman, recognizing the increasing severity of criminal acts committed by juveniles and the threat to public safety, signed a series of bills reforming New Jersey's juvenile justice system in December 1995 (P.L.1995, c.280 through c.284). The reform initiative resulted from recommendations made in December 1994 by the Governor's Advisory Council on Juvenile Justice. In its recommendations, the Governor's Advisory Council recognized the need to consolidate all aspects of the juvenile justice system, various parts of which then existed under the jurisdiction of the Department of Corrections, the Department of Human Services, and the Department of Law and Public Safety. Based on the Advisory Council's recommendations, the JJC was created as the single State agency responsible for the provision of services for juvenile offenders. The JJC was charged with developing programs, services and sanctions for juvenile offenders which stress accountability, training, education, treatment and, when necessary, confinement in order to protect the public.

In fulfilling its statutory duty to lead and implement reform of the juvenile justice system, the JJC promotes public safety and serves youth through a continuum of services. These services include prevention, intervention, incarceration, education and aftercare. This is accomplished in collaboration with families, communities and government agencies. The JJC is committed to operating clean, safe and secure programs and facilities. The JJC serves as an advocate for youth, victims and citizens of the State by emphasizing personal accountability and affording opportunities for juvenile offenders to become independent, productive and law-abiding citizens.

New Jersey Training School for Boys

The Training School has been in existence for more than 130 years. In 1866, a 500-acre tract of land was purchased in Monroe Township, with its location officially considered to be of "easy access from different parts of the State." In 1867, the main building was constructed and was available to accept boys. When its official opening took place on October 29, 1867, there were already 70 boys registered in what was then known as the "State Reform School."

In 1900, the name of the facility was changed to the "State Home for Boys." In 1918, its name was changed to the "Training School for Boys, Jamesburg," and in 1987, it became the "New Jersey Training School for Boys." Although its name has changed several times, its core program objective of rehabilitation remains the same. The official program objective of the New Jersey Training School for Boys is "to provide care, treatment and custody for juveniles committed by the courts throughout the State of New Jersey. To create programs that will habilitate, remediate and divert young offenders from a life of dysfunctional and maladaptive behavior which can lead to institutional careers; to continuously update and modernize juvenile correction methods through cooperative ventures between State Departments, local, county, and private concerns; to use these resources to develop initiatives that will explore new habilitation, treatment and aftercare programs."

Yet, while the program objective of the Training School has remained the same, the nature of juvenile crime has become often more serious and violent since the Training School opened its doors in 1867. In 1996, the JJC erected a fence around the perimeter of the Training School and began operating the Training School as a "closed" facility to enhance the safety of the community surrounding the Training School.

Public Hearing

Pursuant to the Executive Order, the Committee held a public hearing on Wednesday, November 12, 1997, at the Holiday Inn Center Point in Jamesburg, New Jersey. The purpose of the public hearing was to obtain the positions and viewpoints of the members of the community surrounding the Training School. The hearing began with introductory remarks from the chair and vice chair and a presentation of background information by JJC staff and the Department of Corrections.

Twenty-eight members of the public presented testimony to the Committee, eleven urging the closure of the Training School, eleven supporting the continued operation of the Training School and six offering caution and concern for the difficult issues before the Committee. Written comments were received from several individuals and public officials after the hearing, in addition to a packet of letters and petitions from 1994 and 1995 calling for the closure of the Training School.

Of the 28 speakers, 19 represented themselves as members of the surrounding community, including five Monroe Township elected officials and three residents who were also Training School staff. In addition, five speakers identified themselves as past or present members of the Training School staff and four speakers represented advocacy organizations or county agencies (transcript attached).

Issues variously offered by speakers urging closure included:

- ▶ The original purpose of the facility is no longer valid.
- ▶ The facility is safer due to the new fence, but is now a medium security prison.
- ▶ The community lives in fear of the residents at the facility.
- ▶ The facility is overcrowded, and needs extensive and costly repair.
- ▶ The facility is not appropriate for the community which has developed around it.
- ▶ The facility utilizes municipal resources.
- ▶ The state has committed financial resources to build a new 144-bed facility elsewhere.
- ▶ Monroe Township should be compensated in some fashion whether or not the facility is closed.

Several speakers expressed anger and/or suspicion at the intent of the hearing and at the testimony of other speakers.

Issues variously offered by speakers supporting continued operation included:

- ▶ The facility continues to provide a valuable and effective service.
- ▶ The facility presents no significant danger or fear to the surrounding community.
- ▶ The facility continues to be a good use of the property; closure would result in further commercial development or open space. Both options could result in situations worse than that presented by the Training School.
- ▶ The facility is in need of repair and additional staff in order to be more effective.
- ▶ The fence has made the facility secure within the community with no escapes in the last 14 months, but juvenile crime is still occurring in the community.
- ▶ The school was there first and the community developed around it.
- ▶ There are no viable alternatives to the Training School.
- ▶ Central location provides comparatively easy access for family visitation.

Several speakers commended the JJC's staff for their continuing efforts at the Training School.

Several individuals, at the hearing and in subsequent correspondence, cautioned that any decision on the Monroe facility should be made within the context of a sound and balanced public policy on juvenile justice.

Admission Projections

On December 10, 1997, the New Jersey Supreme Court decided County of Hudson v. Department of Corrections. The Court's decision pertains to all juvenile offenders committed by the Court to the JJC, and who have been in county detention facilities for three days or more following the final disposition of their cases. The decision requires the JJC to move these juvenile offenders from county detention to JJC facilities within three days of receipt of an order of commitment and a predisposition order. The Court ordered full compliance within 60 days, absent any decision regarding a change of the regulation. At the time the case was decided, there were 84 juvenile offenders who met this standard in county detention centers throughout the State.

With the assistance of Dr. James Austin of the National Council on Crime and Delinquency in Washington, DC, it was determined that youth committed to the custody of the JJC will increase between 1998 and 2007 as follows:

| Year | Admissions |
|------|---------------------|
| 1995 | 1,955 * |
| 1996 | 2,242 * |
| 1997 | 2,093 **/ 2,400 *** |
| 1998 | 2,502 *** |
| 1999 | 2,525 *** |
| 2000 | 2,547 *** |
| 2001 | 2,570 *** |
| 2002 | 2,593 *** |
| 2003 | 2,617 *** |
| 2004 | 2,640 *** |
| 2005 | 2,664 *** |
| 2006 | 2,688 *** |
| 2007 | 2,712 *** |

- * Actual
- ** Actual (January - October 1997)
- *** Projected

Dr. Austin's Assumptions:

- ▶ Projections contained in this document are based on the assumption that future lengths of stay for all JJC admissions (commitments, probation, and parole violators) will be the same as those estimated in 1997 (6.8 months).
- ▶ JJC admissions are projected to continue a long term moderate pattern of growth. This is based on the projected growth in the youthful population age 15-19. However, it should be noted that there are a number of positive socio-economic trends which may contribute to a lower juvenile crime and arrest rate regardless of increases in the youth population. Additionally, sentencing trends in several counties, which appear to be different from the trend in the rest of the State, continue to effect admissions.
- ▶ Juvenile court sentencing practices will remain stable. That is, youth will continue to be committed to JJC and probation status using the same criteria.
- ▶ Releases to parole will continue at the same rate.
- ▶ If current policies change, population projections would have to be revised accordingly.

Physical Plant

Mr. Andrew Couples of the Vitetta Group, a facilities consulting company, along with representatives of the State Division of Building and Construction, spoke to the Committee at a meeting on November 21, 1997, as to the state of the physical condition of the Training School. Based on these presentations, the Committee made the following findings:

- ▶ Most existing buildings at the Training School date back to 1930.
- ▶ The original design capacity was 370 beds, and was recently increased to 404 beds. Currently, there are 500 beds at the Training School -- all of which are occupied.
- ▶ Major improvement of the electrical supply and distribution system is necessary.
- ▶ Over 30% of the buildings in the facility were rated as being in poor condition and requiring substantial renovations.
- ▶ Significant life-safety and code deficiencies were identified.
- ▶ Several of the buildings have structural problems.

Current Land Value

The New Jersey Department of the Treasury presented the Committee with information concerning the estimated current value of the real estate on which the Training School is located in order to enable the Committee to assess the costs and benefits of closing the Training School.

The Treasury Department reported that, of the 664 total acres surrounding the Training School, a significant portion of the real estate cannot be improved:

| Acres | Development Impediments |
|-------|--|
| 92.4 | Wetlands (Unusable) - separate from main tract |
| 200 | Wetlands (Unusable) - part of main tract |
| 140 | Farmland Preservation (Use Questionable/Limited) |

Source: NJ Dept. of the Treasury

Thus, of the 664 acres that make up the Training School, the Committee found that only 372 acres hold value for real estate developers. Based on the highest and best use of the real estate and on comparable sales, the Treasury Department estimated the value of the real estate as follows:

| Acres | Zoned | Estimated Per Acre Value | Total |
|----------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|
| 232 | Residential - (3 Acre) | \$10,000 | \$2,320,000 |
| 140 | Farmland Preservation | 3,000 | 420,000 |
| Sub-Total | | | \$2,740,000 |
| Minus Demolition Costs | | | 3,200,000 |
| Total (Profit/Loss) | | | (\$460,000) |

Source: NJ Dept. of the Treasury

The Treasury Department's presentation showed that closing the Training School would result in a significant net loss to the State.

Juvenile Justice Trends In Other States

Mr. Michael McMillian, Juvenile Justice Planning Consultant with the Chinn Planning Partnership, presented the Committee with information concerning juvenile justice trends in other jurisdictions. Based on Mr. McMillian's presentation, the Committee made the following findings:

The factors affecting the recent trends in the design and development of juvenile correctional facilities include:

- ▶ Increases in numbers of the offender population served.
- ▶ Increase in the perception that juvenile arrests are increasingly for more serious delinquent behaviors and offenses.
- ▶ Growth in the number of cases prosecuted more aggressively and handled formally by the courts.
- ▶ Increased community focus on "getting tough."
- ▶ Mandated transfer of juveniles to the adult court.
- ▶ Demands for lengthier dispositions.
- ▶ Demands by the public, the courts and program operators for enhanced physical security.

Mr. McMillian urged the Committee to consider the following factors in assessing the type of facilities to recommend to the JJC:

- ▶ Physically restrictive construction approaches which promote internal and external security, operational safety, and ease of maintenance/repair.
- ▶ National trend away from dormitory facilities to individual cells. Larger facilities for operational economies, appropriate staffing levels and program capabilities.
- ▶ Extensive educational and recreational programs as a means to effective behavior management.
- ▶ Special programming for larger segments of the juvenile population with specific needs.

- ▶ The need for improved classification and housing assignment capabilities.
- ▶ Small housing unit design (10 to 20 residents) within larger facilities as a means to improved classification, special programming, behavior management, and enhanced contact between staff and residents within the context of the direct supervision model.
- ▶ Higher staffing levels compared with adult correctional programs.
- ▶ Dormitory accommodations are considered inappropriate in the higher security settings.
- ▶ Housing areas should provide space for both living and on-unit activities which permit extension of programming activities through the evening hours.

Master Plan

The JJC's enabling legislation requires it to prepare an annual master plan.¹ Presently, the JJC is taking a two-part approach to this initiative. One part of the master plan will solely address the physical plant requirements and needs of the JJC. The other part will deal with operational and programmatic aspects of the juvenile justice system.

The JJC's Facilities and Support Services Unit has started to assess the JJC's physical plant requirements for the master plan. At the same time, the JJC's Policy and Service Development Unit is working to develop the operational and programmatic part of the master plan which will comprehensively address the needs of the JJC's projected populations. Assuming adequate funding is appropriated, the master plan will be completed by the JJC during the next fiscal year.

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N.J.S.A. 52:17B-170(10) specifically requires the JJC "[t]o prepare an annual State Juvenile Justice Master Plan which identifies facilities, sanctions and services available for juveniles adjudicated or charged as delinquent and juvenile delinquency prevention programs and which identifies additional needs based upon the extent and nature of juvenile delinquency and the adequacy and effectiveness of available facilities, services, sanctions and programs."

Potential Alternative Locations for New Facility

The final selection of a location for a new juvenile secure-care facility must be determined by the consideration of several factors, including the programmatic and facility needs of the JJC as set forth in its master plan and the alterations and improvements to a site in order to accommodate facility construction. The size and design of any new juvenile facility will be among the critical factors for consideration in determining an appropriate location.

The State may opt to acquire real estate in a suitable location or examine its own inventory of State-owned land. There are several parcels of State-owned land -- located in Burlington, Hunterdon, Mercer, Monmouth, and Somerset Counties -- which may be of sufficient size to accommodate a new secure-care facility.

Recommendations

Based on the Committee's careful consideration of findings related to public safety, public sentiment, the current conditions of the Training School, and the responsibilities of the JJC, the Committee members unanimously voted at their final meeting to support the following recommendations and to provide these recommendations to the JJC for the JJC's consideration in the preparation of its feasibility study on the closing of the Training School:

- ▶ A new juvenile correctional facility should be constructed, outside of Monroe Township, to service the secure-care needs of the JJC.
- ▶ Upon the completion of a new juvenile correctional facility, the use of the Training School for the JJC's most serious offenders should be curtailed, but the Training School should remain open for the custody and care of other offenders committed to the JJC.
- ▶ The impact upon the community surrounding the New Jersey Training School for Boys should be recognized by providing that community with benefits or incentives compatible with the continued use of the Training School.
- ▶ The JJC should be directed to assess thoroughly its mission, philosophies, current and projected populations and corresponding physical and programmatic needs by completing a comprehensive master plan.

The cost to implement the Committee's recommendations, and the size and nature of any new facility or facilities to be constructed, should be determined after the JJC completes its master plan -- which is anticipated to be completed by the JJC during the next fiscal year.

Finally, in light of the Committee's findings contained in this Report, the recommendations, as set forth above, should be expeditiously implemented by the JJC.

Options

In its final meeting, the Committee discussed a variety of options for recommendation to the JJC relating to the future of the Training School. These options ranged from the feasibility of immediately closing the Training School to building a new secure facility on the ground of the Training School. The options discussed by the Committee are as follows:

▶ Immediate Closing of Training School.

Not feasible based on current and projected populations and the lack of a viable alternative.

Estimated Cost: Cannot be determined at this time.

▶ Stabilization of the Training School's complex.

Minimum improvements regarding egregious health and safety issues in order to maintain the facility for a period of 1 to 5 years. Does not provide for any expansion of the Training School.

Estimated cost: \$7.1 million.

▶ Renovation of the existing complex.

Renovation of buildings that are salvageable, demolition and rebuilding of some buildings, and necessary infrastructure and security upgrades.

Estimated cost: \$33 million.

▶ Construction of a new facility in the same location.

Phased replacement of the entire facility to continue the operation of the program in its current form. A new 550 bed facility would be constructed on site.

Estimated cost: \$62 million.

▶ Construction of a new facility adjacent to the existing facility.

New 550 bed facility on property adjacent to the existing building. This would not require phase construction.

Estimated cost: \$60 million.

- ▶ Construction of a new facility in a new location.

Construct a new 550 bed facility on a new site. ...
Estimated cost: \$63 million (exclusive of land).