

Virginia State Crime Commission

Lawrenceville Correctional Facility

2007

LAWRENCEVILLE CORRECTIONAL CENTER

At the Crime Commission's May 22, 2007, meeting, the Honorable Gene Johnson, Director of the Department of Corrections, and Ms. Kim Lipp, of the Department's Architecture and Engineering Services, presented an update on the Department's master plan and construction projects. It was reported that bed space shortages will rise to unacceptable levels without the construction of major facilities. The legislature has provided funding for 4,472 beds at five facilities as follows:

Facility	Beds	On-Line
Deerfield Expansion	600	December, 2006
Green Rock	1,024	May, 2007
Pocahontas	1,024	September, 2007
St. Brides Phase 2	800	December, 2007
Grayson County	1,024	June, 2010

It has been estimated, however, that there will be a bed space shortage of 3,300 by June 30, 2012, without the construction of another prison. In 2007, the legislature provided \$1.2 million to begin working towards a site in Charlotte County.

Director Johnson also provided the Commission with a report on the Lawrenceville Correctional Center, the Commonwealth's only privately-operated prison. The Lawrenceville Correctional Center is operated by The GEO Group, Inc. It is a medium security prison with a contractual capacity of 1,425. At the time of the May 22 meeting, concerns had been expressed over reports of a high amount of contraband, particularly drugs and cellular phones, discovered at the center as compared with that discovered at the state-run prisons. Director Johnson reported to the Commission that the Department had hired an outside consultant, MGT of America, Inc. ("MGT"), to conduct an independent review of the security operations of the center.

The Commission traveled to the Lawrenceville Correctional Center for its September 11, 2007, meeting to tour the facility and receive a report on the independent review. It was reported that MGT had reviewed the security operations systems at the center with specific emphasis on the security systems designed to eliminate, detect, and control contraband, and had issued recommended corrective measures. It was found that until December of 2006, drug testing at the center had been specifically targeting those inmates who were suspected of using drugs, and placed less emphasis on random testing as compared to the state-run prisons. This led to a higher number of inmates who tested positive for drugs as compared with the other institutions, precluding a proper comparison.

MGT issued 50 recommendations, ranging from the establishment of procedures designed to ensure the random selection of inmates to be tested for drugs, to the filling of staff vacancies and the use of drug dogs. The report indicated that both the leadership of the Department and the administrators of the center recognized the problems and have taken aggressive action to implement corrective measures. In fact, the report of the independent consultant revealed that many of the reported problems were previously identified by the Department of Corrections and the Lawrenceville Correctional Center and corrective action had already been taken.