

Hunterdon Freeholders Approve Jail Shared Service Agreement With Warren County

The Hunterdon County Freeholders, Tuesday evening, approved a shared services jail consolidation agreement with Warren County. The Agreement was recommended by Sheriff, Fred W. Brown for housing County inmates at Warren County's Correctional Center in Belvidere and projects a cost savings of \$250,000.

Hunterdon County inmates have been housed with Somerset County since 2015.

Freeholder Board Director Shaun C. Van Doren said, "Hunterdon County is most appreciative of the partnership we have had with the Somerset County Sheriff, Corrections unit, and Freeholders for the length of the previous Agreement.

We, as Freeholders, however, have a responsibility to the taxpayers of Hunterdon County to find the most efficient, effective, and cost saving shared service opportunity possible, which has led us to the Agreement with Warren County."

The Agreement calls for Hunterdon County to pay \$90 per day for each inmate housed at the Warren County facility, the same rate as presently being paid to Somerset County.

Sheriff Brown noted, "However, unlike our past agreement, which required the County to pay for a minimum of at least 50 inmates per day regardless of the number of Hunterdon inmates in the facility, the new contract has no such minimum and will allow Hunterdon County to only pay for the number of inmates we have on any given day and nothing more.

We are presently housing an average of 35 inmates daily. Last year the average was 43 inmates daily and as such, we anticipate a substantial savings with the new Agreement."

The Sheriff also pointed out, "The Agreement with Warren County stipulates that their Correctional Unit will provide on-site medical and

psychiatry services which will allow inmates to be properly evaluated on site, as opposed to being transferred to a medical facility for evaluation when it might not be medically necessary.

Unnecessary transfers to outside medical facilities, and their corresponding security details, provide a security risk to the public and have been a major extra cost driver in the past. We believe by having on-site medical services, it should cut down on those security costs and allow, where medically appropriate, inmates to remain in the secured Warren County facility where they will receive necessary care and supervision.”

The Agreement between the counties is for three years with the option to renew for two additional years. Daily inmate payments will increase by 2% each year. Video conferencing for inmate court appearances where appropriate will remain available.

The Sheriff indicated the transition to Warren County’s facility will occur in the near future and will likely be complete by February 1, 2020.