

At last! HPD to be Out of the Jail Business by March 2018 as well as Experience a County-Run 'Open Booking' Operation

By TOM KENNEDY

By March 2018, the Houston Police Department will be out of the jail business, turning over the job of processing and detaining an average of 120,000 prisoners every year exclusively to the Harris County Sheriff's Office.

This complicated administrative move culminates detailed plans that have been in the works for the better part of two decades.

A Better Tomorrow

The new facility will amount to "one-stop shopping" for officers and prisoners. Prisoners are now "double booked," first in an HPD jail and later in the Harris County Jail. This inefficiency and waste of valuable resources has been a major topic amongst officers from their academy days until their retirement.

Today, Patrol officers with female prisoners often take a number of hours to travel to the Southeast Jail at 8300 Mykawa Road.



This rendering depicts the view of the front of the Joint Processing Center (JPC) located on San Jacinto and Baker Street in the Harris County Courthouse complex.

Tomorrow (2018), officers will go to a more centrally located facility at 700 North San Jacinto in the downtown detention zone, with convenient access to the freeway system.

What a difference it will be, not just for convenience but for safety's sake. Frequently, at the HPD Central Jail officers must escort prisoners across an outside parking lot. Some prisoners have attempted to escape while being escorted into the building.

The Joint Processing Center (JPC), with a tightly secured sally port built to accommodate 50 patrol cars, officers no longer will have to worry about escorting a prisoner who might run for it. That's only one cause for relief.

There are plenty of others, such as a safer open booking concept, modern technology and proper space to assist officers in completing their law enforcement mission, as well as more conveniently located social services for many non-violent inmates.

Staffing requirements will diminish at HPD and intensify at the HCSO. The JPC will free up 100 HPD officers to get back on the streets or in investigative jobs more directly related to law enforcement. Another 200 civilian employees at the Central and Southeast jails will be given the opportunity to be hired by the county sheriff and trained to perform similar duties at the new JPC.

The open booking concept was developed after what amounted to a nationwide study of modernized inmate processing centers now in operation.

The two prime movers in this far-reaching project are HPD Lt. Patrick Dougherty and HCSO Capt. Greg Summerlin. Both are long-time experts in the detention process, Dougherty in the city and Summerlin in the county.



This rendering depicts the open booking receiving area on the second floor of the Joint Processing Center.

They have worked together since 2001 to ensure that the new operation will facilitate every move taken by officers and deputies in the booking process, with the goal of improving efficiency and limiting the arresting officer's stay at intake to no more than 20 minutes.

In an interview with the Badge & Gun, Dougherty and Summerlin virtually echoed explanations of the JPC's construction, operation and updated convenience for law enforcement officers.

"The city, the county, and all stakeholders are winning in this project," Dougherty explained. "In Texas, the sheriff is responsible for the jail and he does an excellent job. It takes up a lot of the sheriff's personnel and budget. HPD's core mission is to provide law enforcement, crime prevention, and preserve the peace in the community. Running a jail diverts resources from our mission."

Under an agreement approved by both City Council and Commissioners Court, HPD will pay a share of the JPC annual operating cost. The city also will pay \$30 million of the total \$100 million construction cost of the JPC. Mayor Annise Parker said the change should enable the city to save \$4 million annually.

An End to Many Headaches

Instead of the multiple headaches regularly experienced by HPD officers in the current redundant process, the new facility takes away many of those pains. Both Dougherty and Summerlin are familiar with each one of those pains and have "taken pains" to plan an open booking facility that will put Houston/Harris County booking practices into the 21st Century.

How?

To begin with, instead of booking a prisoner once at HPD and again at Harris County - where three buildings are involved in the process - an officer will go to just one location to use the "open booking" prisoner intake and receiving areas that actually resemble airport terminal seating. These areas have no maze of walls and locked cells like current booking areas.

The two areas are the intake waiting area on the first floor and the receiving waiting area on the second. Dougherty said HPD officers will officially transfer their prisoners to the county on the first floor.

Continues on Page 45

Continues from Page 44

There, the sheriff's staff takes over the inmate processing that continues on the second floor. On the third floor, the JPC will be equipped with eight direct-supervision cell blocks containing 552 beds which will be used primarily for short-term housing.

HPD officers shouldn't have much business on the second floor unless it's to go to a municipal court which includes a specially designed witness box on the non-secure side. This design enables officers to keep their duty weapon while testifying.

"The open booking concept allows inmates to be under constant supervision by HCSO officers," Summerlin said as he described open booking. "This will be a very structured environment. Inmates will not be placed in a holding cell unless they are uncooperative or combative."

This open concept will enable officers to proactively prevent altercations from occurring, reduce the number of use-of-force incidents, and provide a safer environment for officers and inmates. It will provide a more normative environment to facilitate processing functions."

Dougherty added. "The open concept seems to work much better. We have seen it work effectively in numerous jails across the country."

"A lot of it depends on the staff," said Summerlin, a stickler for training over the years. "You need a well trained staff."

As you might expect, the more violent or uncooperative prisoners will be put in nearby holding cells available on both the first and second floors.

Once securely inside the Joint Processing Center, an inmate need never have to go outside - while in custody. The jail tunnel system will be his passage to the other jail facilities or the Criminal Justice Center to visit a court.

On the first floor, HPD will also have DWI processing areas, investigative interview rooms, evidence room, narcotics control center, line-up rooms and administrative areas. In addition, the first floor contains the intake area for all law enforcement agencies. Officers will have privacy to write and update their offense reports.

The center also goes the extra mile for prisoners, who both Dougherty and Summerlin believe will get through the process much more quickly and efficiently.

Convenient Social Services

For one thing, the public won't be required to go to two different locations to post a bond for city offenses and another for the more serious county offenses. Both bonding offices are adjacent to each other in the same first floor area.

Today, another frequent issue centers on whether certain prisoners need to be referred to the proper social agency rather than incarcerated. Tomorrow's JPC will include enhanced areas for medical and mental health screening and other stations available for matching inmates with alternative services to help reduce recidivism.

The new building will have support services like chaplain services, re-entry and education programs, a mechanism for identifying veterans, and many others. This plan is aimed at providing the services that might keep potential repeat offenders, or "frequent flyers," from returning to be booked again and again.

There is a court component to the JPC, too.

Today, a prisoner might have to appear in two different courts at two different locations. He could face misdemeanor charges in

Continues on Page 47

Side Story HPD Lt. Dougherty, HCSO Capt. Summerlin Dusted Off and Revised an Old Plan Destined to Streamline the way we Incarcerate Prisoners

By TOM KENNEDY

For decades, the City of Houston and Harris County have made any number of futile attempts to eliminate redundancy and save thousands of man hours by creating a one-stop-shop for the prisoner booking process in a jail run by the sheriff.

Over those many years police and sheriff agendas clashed and it was relatively easy to fall back on the fact that neither the Houston Police Department nor the Harris County Sheriff's Office had the necessary budget to consolidate jail operations.

The two law enforcement agencies and their respective budgeteers - the county fathers and city fathers and mothers - finally put it all together. The record shows some good chemistry had a lot to do with the success story.

Procedural Conflicts

"Harris County and HPD didn't talk to each other back in the 80s," HPD Lt. Patrick L. Dougherty pointed out. "We were always on the same page but we weren't talking to each other."



They work together well - HCSO Capt. Greg Summerlin and HPD Lt. Pat Dougherty.

"A lot of it was procedural. Who's running the place? Who's going to run this meeting?"

No one from the department knows this history better than Dougherty. A graduate of HPD Academy Class No. 99, he's been with the department since 1981. Since 1992, his primary job has been to keep the city jail operating as best practice in policy, procedure, training, and the development of a centrally located joint inmate processing center with the sheriff's office.

Count them. That's 23 years of frustration and patience but, most importantly, determination.

Police Chief Charles "Chuck" McClelland, Jr. singled out Dougherty for his work when he spoke at the Oct. 27 ground breaking of the Joint Processing Center at 700 North San Jacinto in the downtown detention zone.

The chief credited the lieutenant with the development of the idea and its innovative "open booking" approach to processing prisoners into what Dougherty calls "the state-of-the-art

Continues on Page 47

Continues from Page 46

Richards quoted author Richardson's plan to write a book about Smash and his girls. She said Richards, who writes under the name Artemis Greenleaf, wants to write a non-fiction book for younger readers and believes the story of a deaf police horse "will be

Continues from Page 45

a municipal court at either Central or Southeast as well as more serious charges in the county court system.

Tomorrow, an inmate can go to the second floor of the JPC to one of the two county probable cause/Justice of the Peace courts or to the one municipal court.

The second floor also will contain two line-up rooms, public video visitation kiosks, pretrial services, AFIS, secure holding cells, a full-service intake clinic, pre-release staging, dress-in and clothing storage and ICE. The intake clinic will be able to provide an enhanced level of care, which will reduce the frequency of a prisoner being rejected at intake and requiring the arresting officer to transport the prisoner to a local hospital.

Continues from Page 45 "Side Story"

processing center of tomorrow" that replaces the time-consuming redundant process of today.

If all goes according to plan, for HPD that tomorrow begins in March 2018. By that approximate date, the building will be finished with the county expected to have it broken-in after processing its own prisoners during an initial period of adjustment and transition.

After many stops and starts since 2001, Dougherty said the slow but careful steps that led to this joint agreement started to take hold most recently in 2011. A lot of it had to do with the good chemistry and friendships.

Consider, for instance, that Dougherty got to know current HCSO Major Steve Marino when Marino was an HPD patrol sergeant and later as a lieutenant assigned to the Central Jail in the early 1990s. Dougherty wound up succeeding Marino as Administrative Lieutenant in the jail. Both men have always had the strong desire to streamline the way the department processes inmates.

Marino is now with the Harris County Sheriff's Office and serves as a major in charge of the Justice Management Bureau that oversees the county jail intake operation.

Then along came veteran HCSO Capt. Greg Summerlin, who as a lieutenant worked with Dougherty starting in 2001 and now reports to Assistant Chief Todd Montefusco.

It can truly be said that the two law enforcement officers, albeit from different agencies, work together like long time partners on a police beat. Their "beat" is detention. They have studied the best and worst of inmate processing centers all across the nation. They incorporated the best into the new JPC and ensured the errors made by others were avoided.

"As part of a team that included expert consultants and highly skilled architects, Pat and I played a major role in the design of the new building," Summerlin said, emphasizing they did it with the best interests of law enforcement officers in mind. Summerlin praised the hard work and dedication of his Capital Improvement team which consists of Sergeant Sisto DeLeon, Deputy Felicia Hood and Deputy Jessica Smith.

Neither is trying to be boastful when discussing their work. They do emphasize the fact they believe the new facility will fit the precise needs of officers and deputies who want fast, efficient processing where they can return to duty as soon as possible.

Such has not been the case in the recent history of HPD and HCSO due to antiquated facilities and operational redundancy. Lt. Dougherty stated "The truth is both agencies would have had to

uplifting and inspirational."

Richards said Richardson already has the department's go-ahead and plans both an E book and print editions. It should be out next spring.

The two veteran law enforcement officials traveled all over the nation to visit the open booking concept. Particularly enlightening and inspirational for the Houston/Harris County model were the following:

Hillsborough County (Tampa, Florida)
Salt Lake County (Salt Lake City, Utah)
Orange County (Orlando, Florida)
Tarrant County (Fort Worth)
Clark County (Las Vegas, Nevada)
Cobb County (Marietta, Georgia)
Travis County (Austin)
Collin County (McKinney)
Bell County (Belton)

replace their facilities. Instead, we are only building one joint facility. The taxpayers win."

Renewed Spirit and Cooperation

Many in each agency have wanted to build one jail as early as the 1980s and early 1990s.

Dougherty has worked with two mayors – Bill White and then Annise Parker – and three police chiefs – Clarence Bradford, Harold Hurtt, and McClelland on this project. He credits each of them with being very supportive, especially Parker.

"On the HPD side, I was the lead with several captains involved over the years," Dougherty recalled. "These captains were R. Montgomery (retired), Mark Holloway, Paul Follis, and Collin Weatherly. I can say all of us really worked well with our Harris County counterparts."

Both he and Summerlin referred to their effort as a "team" that included not just commissioned officers and deputies, but key civilians as well.

"Kevin Seat, a deputy director at the Harris County Budget Office, was also a team member from the beginning and I came to know him very well. He and HPD Chief Financial Officer Joe Fenninger worked out the financial documents and had a very good relationship," the lieutenant explained.

"This project would not have been possible without a mutually acceptable financial agreement and the support of Sheriff Ron Hickman and Harris County Commissioners Court," Summerlin said. "The financial details were very difficult. The bean counters were in a lot of meetings together."

The city passed a bond election to pay its share of the costs. The county was not successful in its first attempt to pass a bond for the project. Its first effort failed in November 2007, but the second bond attempt – for millions of dollars less – gained voter approval in November 2013.

Andy Icken, the city's chief development officer under Mayor Parker, and Bill Jackson, the executive director of the Harris County Budget Office, were very supportive and helped to turn the corner and led to a fruitful joint venture between the city and the county.

Capt. Summerlin also cited some names of predecessors and mentors. He named Major Mike Smith, a member of the command staff under Sheriff Tommy Thomas, Sheriff Adrian Garcia, and now Sheriff Ron Hickman. "He was a driving force and envisioned a one-

Continues on Page 50

Continues from Page 50 "Side Story"

stop shop for prisoner processing," the captain said. Besides Mike Smith, Summerlin credited Assistant Chief Todd Montefusco, who was involved in the project since 2003, as another strong advocate in the years-long effort to accomplish this project.

The more the cast of characters grew the more the two coordinators thought about the list. "The executive assistant chiefs were supportive and followed the project as the executive in charge," Dougherty explained. They were Dennis Storemski, Martha Montalvo, Tim Oettmeier and George Buenik and Assistant Chiefs John Chen and Mark Curran and retired Assistant Chief Milton Simmons.

Parker's Jail Legacy

All told, these devotees of law and order and the detention process that forms the bedrock of today's criminal justice system can finally say they weathered the storm fraught with competing agendas and conflicts among city and county governments and achieved a worthy purpose.

Who knows if Mayor Parker ever figured her legacy after a total of 18 years' service in elective city offices would include an achievement none of her predecessors for the last 40 years

ever achieved.

In this context, she was eloquent at the ground-breaking ceremony for the Joint Processing Center that will finally get HPD out of the jail business.

She said:

"We have been laboring in an old and outmoded system, with old and outmoded jails, for a number of years.

"The plans for this have been dusted off five or six times. For whatever reason, we don't finish the conversation to get to a resolution and a contract agreement.

"Well, we finally made it to the finish line."

Ultimately Dougherty and Summerlin dusted off a plan, polished it up, and helped bring to fruition a project that seemed unattainable for years. And they became great friends in the process, both living on the county's northeast side. "We even play poker together," one said.

It can be said they both won this hand.



We all know Someone. La Hacienda Treatment Center

"Dedicated to serving the needs of alcohol and chemically dependant professionals and their family members."

- Insurance accepted
- 4 Full-time Physicians (patients seen DAILY)
- Full-time Psychiatrist
- Supporting Safe Call Now & First Responders nationwide



SAFE CALL NOW®

"Saving the lives of those who protect us"

crisis line 206.459.3020

www.safecallnow.org

La Hacienda Treatment Center 800.749.6160 www.lahacienda.com