

GRAFTON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' MEETING
Administration Building
North Haverhill, NH 03774
February 27, 2024

PRESENT: Commissioners Piper, Ahern, McLeod, County Administrator (CA) Libby, Assistant County Administrator Burbank, and Administrative Assistant Norcross.

OTHERS: Ed Wargo – SNS, DoC Superintendent Lethbridge, John Swan, Andrea Bryant, Joyce Manard, Brian Cooke, Kaela Tavares, Taylor Roy

Commissioner Piper called the meeting to order at 2:00 PM and began with the Pledge of Allegiance led by Commissioner McLeod

Commissioner Ahern participated electronically according to RSA 91-A: 2 with the reason being he was unable to attend the meeting in person. Electronic participation was at his request. It was noted that all votes must be taken by roll call.

Ed Wargo – SNS arrived and gave the following report:

1. E. Wargo reported that he was able to negotiate with the University of New Hampshire and get the County's internet speed increased from 400 to 1000 at no extra cost.
2. SNS has started rolling out multifactor authentication (MFA).
3. E. Wargo reported that an emergency firewall patching needed to be done. A flaw was discovered that was considered a zero-day event, which means people were actively attacking. The County has two (2) firewalls in place, so there was no disruption to operations. He noted that this is why having that backup firewall in place is very important.

Commissioner Piper stated that the MFA was cautiously approved, but a \$20,000 invoice was received that was unavailable through the budget. She understood that the price tag was a surprise, and she thinks the Commissioners need to have a thorough conversation. E. Wargo explained that \$2,500 of that invoice goes to SNS, and the rest goes to Microsoft for the licensing fees. CA Libby stated that they did not know about the price tag until SNS went to roll it out, and it has since been put on hold to go through the budget process. SNS has offered to pay for the first six (6) months as they are anxious to get this in place given the recent events that have taken place. She stated that the licensing monthly fees will be \$1,300 per month, and SNS has agreed to defer the \$2,500 to the next fiscal year.

DoC Superintendent Lethbridge arrived and gave the following report: (*see attached)

MOTION: Commissioner McLeod moved to approve contracting for a traveling nurse as a temporary measure to address the nursing shortage. The initial contract would be for thirteen (13) months. Commissioner Ahern seconded the motion. Commissioner Piper called the roll. Commissioner Ahern "yes," Commissioner McLeod "yes," Commissioner

Piper “yes”. With the vote being three (3) in favor and none in opposition the motion passes.

Agenda Items:

1. Commissioner Piper asked if everyone had a chance to read the minutes from the February 20th meeting.

MOTION: Commissioner McLeod moved to approve the minutes from the February 20th meeting. Commissioner Ahern seconded the motion. Commissioner Piper called the roll. Commissioner Ahern “yes,” Commissioner McLeod “yes,” Commissioner Piper “yes”. With the vote being three (3) in favor and none in opposition the motion passes.

John Swan, Andrea Bryant, Joyce Manard, Brian Cooke – NCS Landfill Discussion

J. Swan stated that they have had concerns about public safety issues in Bethlehem with regard to the situation with the NCS Landfill, which is owned by Casella Waste Systems and has been for over thirty (30) years. He explained that he became involved in this because of the new proposed landfill six (6) miles up the road in Coos County. He noted that the entrance for this new landfill at Douglas Drive is in Grafton County. J. Swan stated that he started paying attention to reports about groundwater monitoring wells last year, and there has been ongoing monitoring of the groundwater monitoring wells at that landfill. In 2017, they started testing for PFOS contaminants. He explained that these files are hard to find on the DES One Stop website. The group reported previous reports of other contaminants in these wells. J. Swan reported that they are seeing upward trends in these chemicals, and one (1) of his main concerns is that it might be a future superfund site. The landfill is supposed to contain these contaminants. In 2021, Casella was required to put in a new set of wells 150 feet closer, and right away, it tested positive for PFOS contaminates. In the reporting they tested the water from the Ammonoosuc, which was already diluted. J. Swan stated that they were testing wells around the proposed Forest Lake site in September and October to establish that their drinking water wells in Dalton, Littleton, and Bethlehem are free of PFOS. He then went into the Ammonoosuc River and took two different water samples, one in September and one in October, from the water cascading off the NCS property. He explained that he took two (2) different water samples, and both tested positive for these compounds. He stated that DES does not feel the landfill is leaking and is blaming the old landfill excavated in 1993 by Casella. The drainage issue has been an issue for many years. DES says they are monitoring the situation, but there is no urgency. The group discussed further details with the Commissioners regarding this issue. J. Swan stated that he thought that because this is a safety issue in Grafton County, the Commissioners might be able to inquire further about this with Bethlehem and DES. He added that he would also like to know what would happen if this became a superfund site because the monies in the landfill closure cost estimate for 2023 have no money for PFOS remediation. Therefore, he wants to know who will be responsible for those costs.

J. Swan added that the other issue is Douglas Drive at Rte. 116, which is in Bethlehem, will be the proposed site entrance Granite State Landfill facility. He reported that there will be an estimated 102 tractor-trailer trips each way each day. This would also be another landfill site

upstream of the Ammonoosuc. There is a DOT driveway permit still being considered by DOT from 2020. He reported that in 2023, Casella resubmitted the wetlands permit application, solid waste permit application, alteration and terrain, and air permit applications for this landfill. He further explained that the driveway to this landfill is in Bethlehem, and the landfill is landlocked on property in the back that Casella wants to buy, but they do not want to buy the front property in Bethlehem because they do not want to enter into legal entanglement with Bethlehem, noting that this project is a violation of the 2011 legal agreement between the Town of Bethlehem and Casella at NCS.

J. Swan stated that this landfill is not needed. He is asking if the Commissioners could contact Bethlehem to inquire about what is happening with NCS, the PFOS contaminants, and Douglas Drive. He asked if the Commissioners could also reach out to DES about the PFOS contamination in the Ammonoosuc River.

Commissioner Piper stated that they had a hard stop at 3:00 pm for a mid-grant public hearing and would continue this conversation after that public hearing.

Grant Administrators Kaela Tavares and Taylor Roy arrived for the Mid-Grant Hearing on the RDC Business TA CDBG Project.

3:00 PM Commissioner Piper opened the Mid-Grant Hearing on RDC Business TA CDBG Project:

Commissioner Piper noted that there are handouts about public hearings available to the public, including a document that was posted on the website before the public hearings.

Commissioner Piper then asked Kaela Tavares to provide the mid-grant update.

Community Development Block Grant funds are available to municipalities through the NH Community Development Finance Authority. Annually, up to \$500,000 is available for economic development projects, up to \$500,000 for public facility projects, up to \$500,000 for housing projects, and up to \$350,000 for emergency activities. Up to \$100,000 is available for planning activities per planning study. All projects must directly benefit low- and moderate-income persons. The public hearings will hear public comments on the following:

A mid-grant hearing on the NH Alliance of Regional Development Corporations Business Technical Assistance grant is underway. As awarded, the grant required a minimum of 9 jobs, and up to 14 jobs be created and filled by persons of low to moderate income. 9 of these jobs will come from the provision of TA directly by the Regional Development Corporations. In contrast, the additional jobs are provided based on the Regional Development Corporation's use of a consultant fund to provide additional TA. To date, 37 businesses have been provided with TA through this grant. The final number of jobs created due to this TA will be reported upon at the end of the grant once documentation has occurred. It will include information about the types of jobs created, whether they include health insurance, and wage levels, based on documentation from the RDCs.

Commissioner Piper thanked Kaela for giving them the information on the benefits and wage levels, as it has been an important issue for her because this is taxpayer money funding this.

Commissioner Piper asked if there were any questions or comments from the Commissioners or the public. There were none.

3:05 PM Commissioner Piper closed the 1st public hearing.

Commissioner Piper asked Kaela Tavares to introduce the amendment request.

3:05 PM Commissioner Piper opened the 2nd Public Hearing for the amendment request for the RDC Business TA CDBG Project.

Community Development Block Grant funds are available to municipalities through the NH Community Development Finance Authority. Annually, up to \$500,000 is available for economic development projects, up to \$500,000 for public facility projects, up to \$500,000 for housing projects, and up to \$350,000 for emergency activities. Up to \$100,000 is available for planning activities per planning study. All projects must directly benefit low- and moderate-income persons. The public hearings will hear public comments on the following:

This amendment public hearing seeks input on an application amendment to the NH Community Development Finance Authority for this existing Community Development Block Grant Economic

Development funding application awarded in 2023. This amendment will request \$267,000 in additional funds for the NH Alliance of Regional Development Corporations on behalf of its member entities for a total project award of \$534,000. The additional funds will be used to support the administration of the grant in the second year. The RDCs will use them to provide technical assistance to businesses that will hire low and moderate-income (LMI) persons or are located in LMI areas, as defined by HUD. In the aggregate, they will document up to 50 jobs created and/or 50 eligible businesses served. Additionally, the project will seek a 12-month extension to allow completion by 06/30/2025.

Commissioner Piper asked if there were any questions or comments from the Commissioners or the public. Commissioner Ahern stated that his concern has been taking taxpayer money into a nonprofit for administration. He asked how many people are doing the administration taking from these funds. Commissioner Piper stated that she wanted to ensure that taxpayer money is not only going to the entrepreneurs but those who are working as well. K. Tavares stated that the administration is a total of \$17,000 which pays a portion of her salary. It is reimbursement based on hours of work she does to keep the funding in line. There are many rules and compliance associated with these grants and these are the funds that are used to ensure that they are handled properly. The vast majority of funding goes to reimbursement for the Regional Development Corporations for their hours. The RDCs who use this money that is awarded to them cover staff time to provide technical assistance to businesses. CA Libby added that every penny the County

pays for the administrators is worth every cent. Commissioner McLeod stated that she appreciates the work to do economic development in their County.

3:25 PM Commissioner Piper closed the second public hearing.

MOTION: Commissioner McLeod moved to approve the submittal of a CDBG amendment request on behalf of the Alliance of Regional Development Corporations. Commissioner Ahern seconded the motion. Commissioner Piper called the roll. Commissioner Ahern “yes,” Commissioner McLeod “yes,” Commissioner Piper “yes”. With the vote being three (3) in favor and none in opposition the motion passes.

MOTION: Commissioner McLeod moved to authorize the Chair of the County Commissioners to submit the amendment application and execute any and all documents necessary to effectuate the potential CDBG amendments. Commissioner Ahern seconded the motion. Commissioner Piper called the roll. Commissioner Ahern “yes,” Commissioner McLeod “yes,” Commissioner Piper “yes”. With the vote being three (3) in favor and none in opposition the motion passes.

John Swan, Andrea Bryant, Joyce Manard, Brian Cooke – NCS Landfill Discussion – cont.

B. Cook spoke specifically to NCS, which borders the Ammonoosuc River. He explained that he is a property owner on the other side of the river, and what he finds disappointing is that NCS has been in town for 30+ years. They started at stage 1, and the town has been fighting the expansions all throughout the years, and he does not think DES has ever taken the side of the town on these issues. His biggest problem with landfills is a private organization with an agreement with the town to move in, and from that point on, the town has no control over what happens. He knows the system has a bill that all future landfills be municipal and not private. He supports that because then the towns have a say and there is accountability. There is none with the private ownership. He reported that last July, DES decided the NCS did not have to lower the height on a section of the landfill to comply with the height requirement, and by August, the NCS raised the height of the rest of the landfill. He does not want to see Dalton go through the same thing. B. Cook stated that he witnessed J. Swan’s sampling that found the contamination in the runoff from the landfill.

J. Swan stated that there is proof of the contamination of the Ammonoosuc River and feels if the County could reach out to DES and federal officials, something may be done about it. No money is set aside for any PFOS contamination mitigation, and he asked who will be left with that bill. The new landfill is being sited in Dalton, but the impacts will be to the downstream communities on the Ammonoosuc River. He noted that wetlands surround the site. Douglas Drive is the access for the new site through Bethlehem. Forest Lake State Park is a tourist destination that will be affected by this new location as well.

The Commissioners further discussed the issue, supported the request, and agreed to act on it.

Agenda Items:

1. Non-Profit Funding – CA Libby reported that regarding the ARPA funding. The County has close to \$3 million left, and up to \$1 million has to be spent out of the designated areas. She stated that they now know the water project has been approved through DES and that it could use \$2.2 million out of the ARPA funding. The Commissioners have also talked about using ARPA money to pay for architectural engineering for the Courthouse. CA Libby noted that Nursing Home Administrator Labore had applied for Congressionally Directed Spending for the Activities area portion of the landscaping project, and it looks like it will not be funded. She stated that she had considered using LATCF funds for that project.

Commissioner McLeod stated that she appreciates the communities asking for help and thinks it is worthwhile to look into. Commissioner Piper stated that she thinks this is why Commissioner McLeod and herself were concerned about slowing down money to be spent on infrastructure that might not have been necessary at the time.

Commissioner Ahern stated that he believes the water project is very important but wants to see how much the County has and how the money can be divided. CA Libby noted that she gave the Commissioners a spreadsheet that outlined all of the funding sources that are currently available but would update that sheet to include potential upcoming projects.

2. CA Libby requested to go into a nonpublic session.

MOTION: * 4:10 PM Commissioner Ahern moved to enter into a non-public session for the purposes of matters which, if discussed in public, would likely affect adversely the reputation of any person, other than a member of the public body itself, unless such person requests an open meeting. This exemption shall extend to any application for assistance or tax abatement or waiver of a fee, fine, or other levy, if based on inability to pay or poverty of the applicant according to RSA 91-A: 3, II (c). Commissioner McLeod seconded the motion. This motion requires a roll call vote. Commissioner Piper called the roll. Commissioner Ahern said “yes,” Commissioner McLeod said “yes,” and Commissioner Piper said “yes,” and Commissioner Piper stated that a majority of the board voted “yes” and would now go into non-public session.

*4:32 PM Commissioner Piper declared the meeting back in public session.

MOTION: Commissioner Ahern moved to permanently seal the minutes from the just completed non-public session because they could affect the reputation of someone other than those of the Board of Commissioners. Commissioner McLeod seconded the motion. Commissioner Piper called the roll. Commissioner Ahern “Yes,” Commissioner McLeod said, “Yes,” Commissioner Piper said, “Yes.” Commissioner Piper stated that a majority of the board voted “yes,” and the motion passes.

CA Libby stated that Interim Farm Manager White and his staff are advocating the County put out a bid solicitation to receive proposals for Custom Cropping services for corn and grass for the 2024 season. It has been determined that this would be a cost-effective option for the County. Much of our equipment is aging and in need of replacement. Hiring out this work would reduce

the need to purchase expensive equipment. The cost for this necessitates that the County solicit bids.

MOTION: Commissioner McLeod moved to support putting out an RFP for Custom Cropping for both corn and grass. Commissioner Ahern seconded the motion. Commissioner Piper called the roll. Commissioner Ahern “yes,” Commissioner McLeod “yes,” Commissioner Piper “yes”. With the vote being three (3) in favor and none in opposition the motion passes.

Commissioners Issues:

1. Commissioner McLeod asked about the NHAC Legislative Conference as she could not attend. Commissioner Piper stated that she thought the NHAC did a great job, and she discussed the five (5) sessions with the Commissioners.
2. CA Libby asked what the Commissioners’ expectations are of her with regard to the Bethlehem issue. Commissioner Piper stated that the Commissioners should ask the members of the public who met with them to draft a letter that addresses their concerns and then give that to the Commissioners for their review. The other Commissioners agreed.

4:44 PM With no further business, the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,



Martha S. McLeod, Clerk

Monthly Department of Corrections Activity Report

January 2024



Major Incidents:

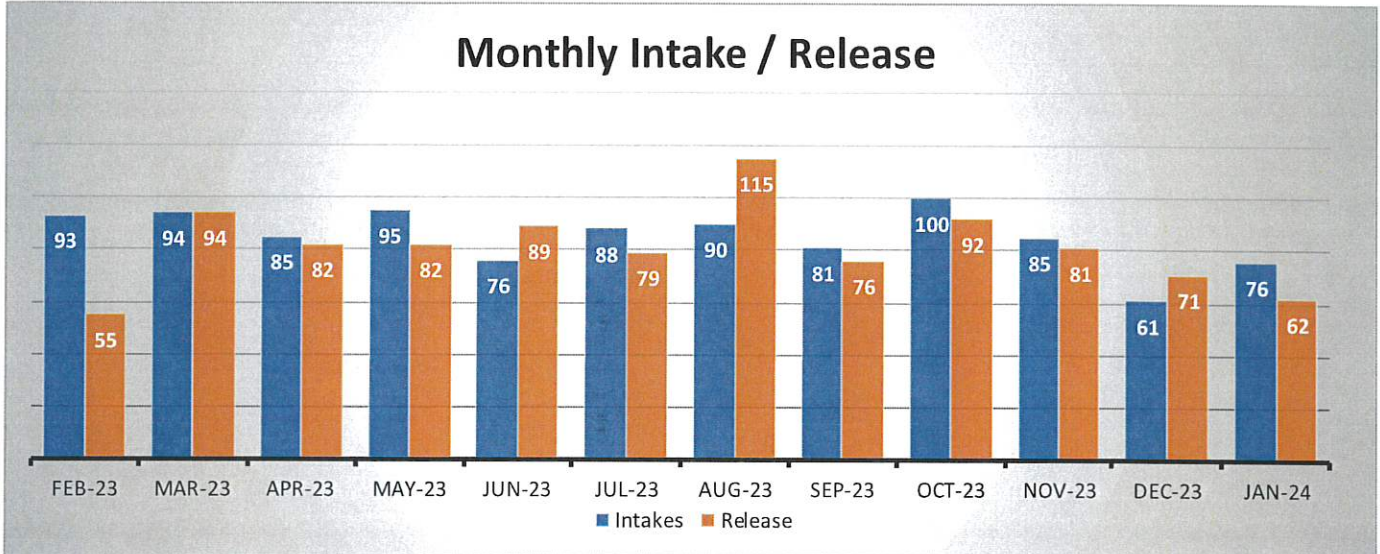
There were no major incidents in the Grafton County Dept of Corrections in January.

Population Data:

Total Intakes for the Month: **76** (Coos County Females:3)

Total Releases for the Month: **62**

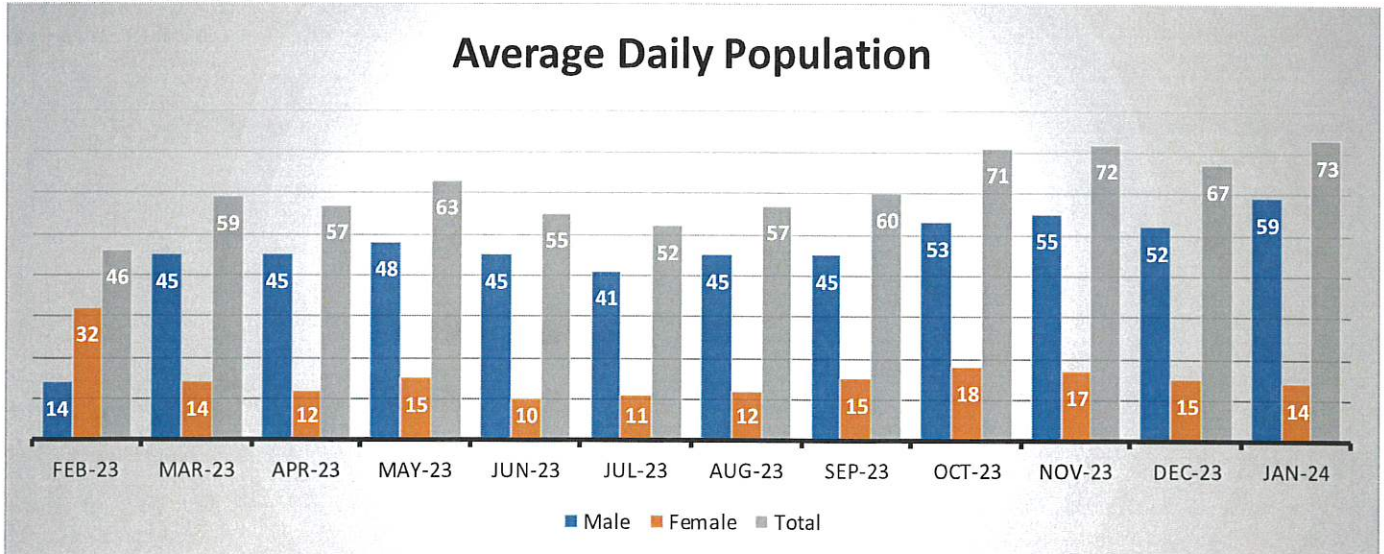
Monthly Intake / Release



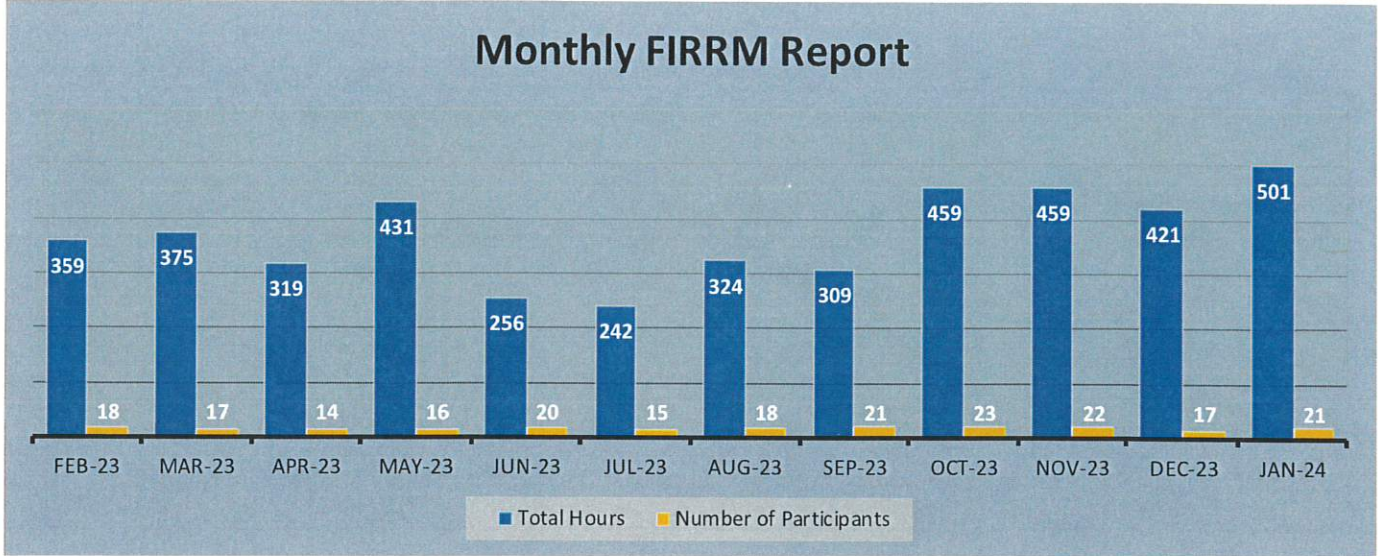
In House Average Daily Population for the Month: **73**

Male: **59** Female: **14**

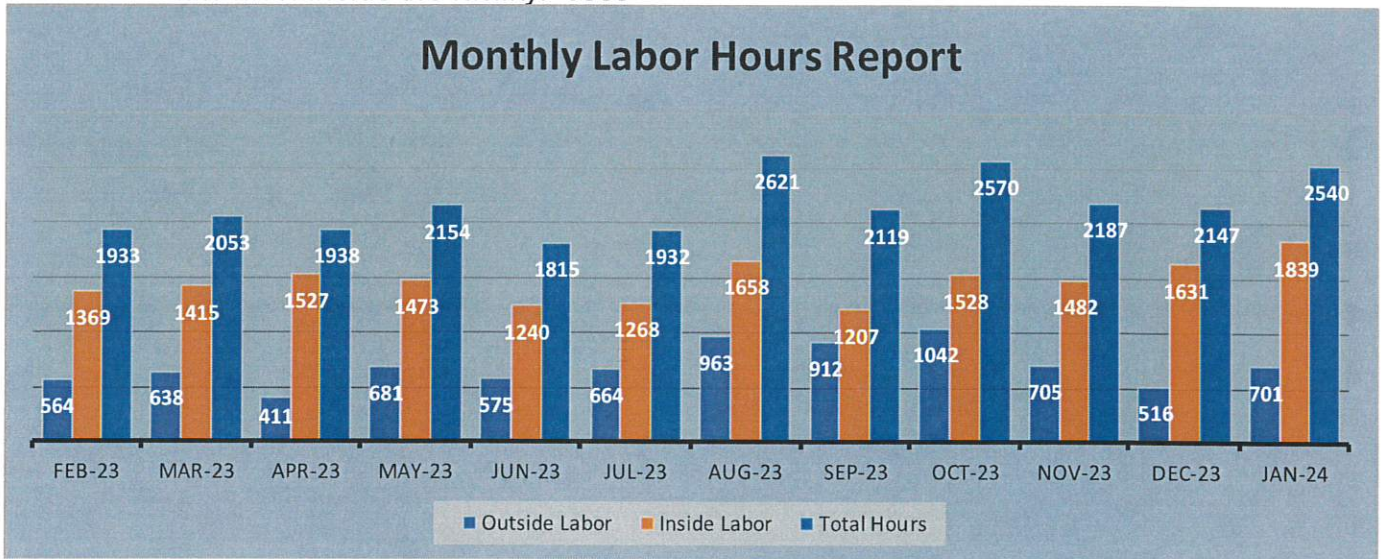
Average Daily Population



Inmates participating in FIRRM program during the month: **21**
 Total Participation Hours: **501**



Hours of inmate labor outside the facility: **701**
 Hours of inmate labor inside the facility: **1839**



Food Service:

Average per meal cost to feed each inmate: \$1.71

The cost per meal was down \$.07 from December. 6,408 inmate meals were served during the month of December, an increase of about 300 meals, for a total food expenditure of \$10,970.

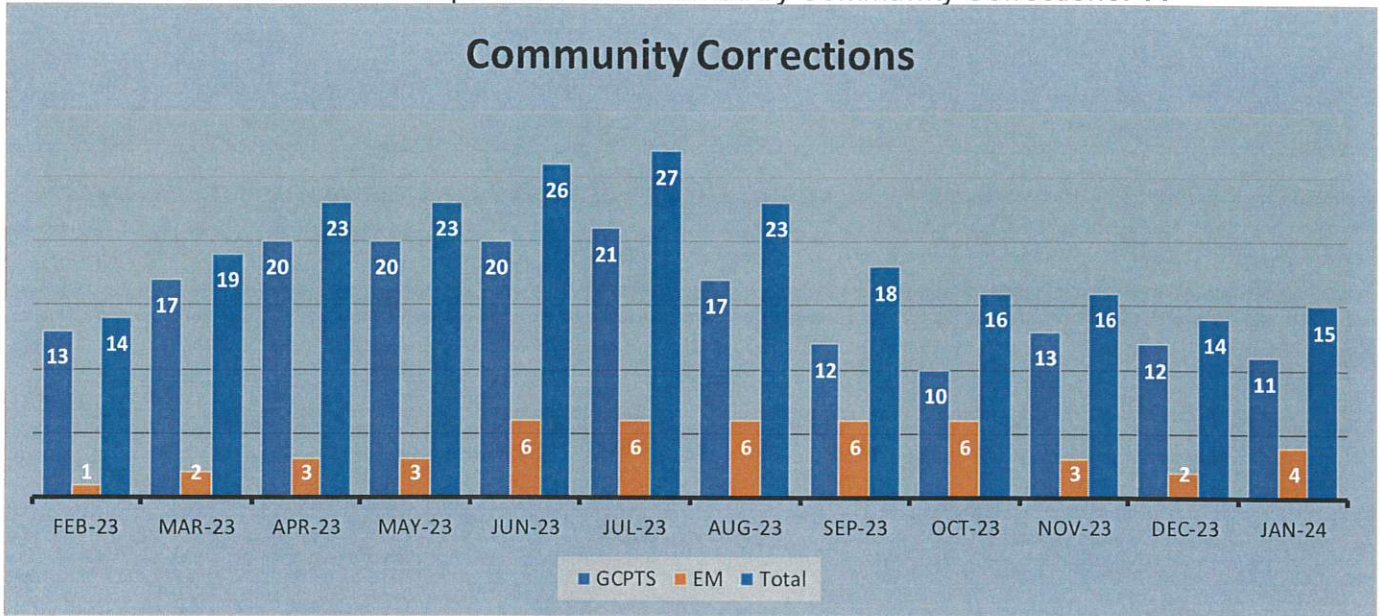
Medical:

Medical has continued aggressively recruiting to fill the existing vacancy as well as the new nursing vacancy that occurred when a second nurse retired in January. DOC worked with Human Resources to revise the job posting and re-advertise the positions, however, no qualified candidates have applied. Due to the two staff shortage positions, DOC is requesting approval to contract for a travel nurse as a temporary solution. There were no major medical incidents in the month of January.

Community Corrections:

Inmates supervised on Electronic Monitoring (including EM Pretrial Services): 4

Inmates on Pre-Trial Services supervised and checked by Community Corrections: 11



Staff:

New officer hires during the month: 1 (+1 converting from part time to full time)

New officer/supervisor vacancies during the month: 0

Total vacant officer positions at the end of the month (including supervisory rank): 5

Promotions during the month: None

Other hiring/vacancies during the month: Two full time nursing positions and one full time chef position were vacant at the end of January.

Significant Developments and Achievements:

The DOC launched a policy review committee in January, which will be responsible for reviewing and revising all DOC Standard Operating Procedures and the Inmate Handbook. This process will take at least a year, and potentially more, and the most urgent SOPs are being targeted for revision at the beginning of the process. The revised SOPs will be brought to the commissioners for approval as they are developed.

Significant Problems:

There were no significant problems in the Dept of Corrections during January.

Overall Assessment of the Dept of Corrections

The Dept of Corrections is continuing to receive quality applications for officer positions and vacancies have been steadily reducing since the commissioners approved the pay raise last summer. Several of the remaining vacancies are in supervisory positions. Most of the line officers are very new to the corrections profession and need more time and experience before they are ready to fill line supervisor roles. Each security squad at the DOC will have a sergeant and corporal assigned as line supervisors. Promotional boards for the other vacant corporal positions and the vacant administrative sergeant position will be staggered over the next year to allow candidates more opportunity to gain experience and job knowledge.

The census at the jail over the past quarter has generally trended upwards. As new intakes have not trended upwards at the same pace, this increase is driven by longer stays in the jail. This trend is not an immediate space issue, as the jail has sufficient bed capacity to accommodate this trend continuing for some time. Maintaining sufficient staff to handle a higher census is of greater concern. Currently, security squads frequently work at minimum staffing. Even if all the vacant positions were filled, squads would only have sufficient staff to allow for one officer to be out sick, on vacation, at the academy or other training, or assigned to a hospital escort at a time. Overtime use has reduced with the increased hiring but is still necessary to keep the jail staffed at a safe level.