



State of Vermont  
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## Windham County Operations and Support Center (Concept)

### **Overview**

The Windham County Sheriff's Office (WCSO) to purchase, renovate and repurpose the "Liberty Mill" in Bellows Falls to be utilized as the Windham County Sheriff's Operation and Support Center.

### **Concept**

The WCSO will purchase, renovate and operate a 57,000+ square foot building located in Bellows Falls. The facility will be utilized by the WCSO to provide dispatch services, general and emergency operations support, regional training for law enforcement, with housing and support services for state and federal detainees. The facility will also provide up to 40 transitional units for incarcerated offenders who are eligible for release. The facility will enhance the capabilities of the WCSO Electronic Monitoring Program.

The building will offer on site office space for support services entities such as the Department of Veterans Affairs, Department of Mental Health, Windham County Youth Services and Community College of Vermont.

This facility will be utilized as a CJIS compliant data center capable of supporting law enforcement communications for the purposes of email communications, internet and intranet hosting, file storage, encryption and hosting of management information systems. The datacenter will be made available to all law enforcement entities throughout the state of Vermont and regional law enforcement partners requiring such services.

The facility will also support the community by offering access to and support for job training and education programs.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this project is to enhance the capabilities of the WCSO, improve public safety in the Windsor and Windham region, increase services and programs available for utilization by the criminal justice system and reducing State of Vermont costs while providing job opportunities in Rockingham/Bellows Falls and Windham County.

The WCSO will utilize the space for a regional dispatch center providing public safety dispatch services for police, fire and rescue agencies operating in southern Vermont. The WCSO will also provide designated space to be utilized for law enforcement training.

## **Background**

Sheriff's are elected as provided for in Vermont's Constitution. One of the traditional roles of a sheriff is to provide pre-trial detention and post-adjudication incarceration for offenders that have committed misdemeanors or sentenced to serve less than one year.

Prior to 1969 Vermont Sheriff's operated county based jails. The individual county sheriff was responsible for the traditional jailor role including pre-trial detention. Effective April 1, 1969, the Vermont Department of Corrections became responsible for jail operations through the regional correctional facility system.

In the intervening years, Vermont has seen a 50% increase in general population, a steady increase in criminal activity, increased costs for corrections, decrease in available bed space, and a need to utilize contracted prisons to meet the need of the state. The increased costs, limited bed space options, and the need to keep communities safe via non-traditional corrections methods prompts the advocating of this proposal.

Vermont is currently utilizing contracted prison bed space in Kentucky and Arizona due to lack of adequate number of prison and jail beds with Vermont's correctional system. Until such time as the State of Vermont finds solutions for criminal activity and decreasing the need for prison and jail bed space, there will be a need for alternatives to building new prisons to meet the increasing needs of society. Vermont is currently paying \$71.00 per day/per bed for prison space out of state. The state houses out of state, on a daily basis, approximately 400 prisoners at any given time.

The tax money spent to house prisoners out of state does not improve the economic viability of local communities and or provide long term employment for Vermonters.

## **Proposed Site**

The WCSO will purchase and renovate the former "Liberty Mill" building located at the southern end of the Village of Bellows Falls. The building is a three level, reinforced concrete structure. It is located on the banks of the Connecticut River, yet is not in the flood plain. The building is connected to municipal water and waste water systems. The site is easily accessed from exits 5 and 6 of Interstate 91.

## **Programs**

- Regional Dispatch Center
- Transitional Housing Units

- Job-training/Education Program
- Supervised Visitation
- Electronic Monitoring Center
- Regional Law Enforcement Training
- Detainee Operations
- CJIS compliant data center

### **Expected Benefits**

The WCSO Operation Center will reduce costs to the State of Vermont while providing or improving to support the criminal justice system. The WCSO estimates 60-80 new jobs will be created by and through the Operations Center. This includes sworn deputies, cooks, nurses, dispatchers, maintenance, and administration support. The jobs will support the economy of Bellows Falls, Town of Rockingham and Windham County.

The following are additional expected benefits:

- a. Improved public safety
- b. Decreased need for out-of-state prison beds
- c. Decreased amount of time needed for case resolution
- d. Improved communications between detainees and defense counsel
- e. Reduction in recidivism
- f. Increase in court efficiency
- g. Decrease in detainee transport costs
- h. Increased access to healthcare, mental health treatment and substance abuse therapy by pre and post trial detainees
- i. Support of DOC current Probation and Parole EM program
- j. Regional training
- k. Case management for families

### **Anticipated Partners**

Town of Rockingham  
 Village of Bellows Falls  
 Agency of Human Services  
 -Department of Corrections  
 -Department of Mental Health  
 U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Department of Public Safety  
Regional Police, Fire and Rescue Departments  
Windsor County Sheriff's Office  
U.S. Marshals Service  
Health Care and Rehabilitative Services  
E-911 System

**Projected Income:**

Estimated/projected annual income and reimbursement from all sources for provided services is in excess of \$3.1 million annually.

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