

**Department for Children and Families**  
**Judy Rex**  
**Policy and Planning Director**

Update on Woodside Replacement Facility

Studio Nexus' work on the design of the six-bed secure facility is completed to DCF, BGS and Becket's satisfaction. A construction manager (HP Cummings) has been hired to cost out renovations and Studio Nexus is working on the application to the Newbury Development Review Board (DRB) for permit.

There is one issue that has arisen that we hope to resolve shortly. There is a wetland on the property near the vicinity where the outdoor recreational yard will be which is currently a paved parking lot. We have to wait for the wetland vegetation to grow in before a Wetland Specialist from the State can do a site visit and take measurements to ensure a 50-foot buffer from wetland. DCF opted to resolve this issue first before submitting application to DRB.

Three public forums were held where DCF and Becket explained the project and allowed community members to ask questions and voice their concerns.

Neighbors voiced concern/fear of having justice-involved youth in their neighborhood. Concerns included:

- Security at the facility
- Potential for runaways
- Personal safety
- Law enforcement coverage and response times
- Increased traffic
- Impact of facility on property values

Other community members have voiced different opinions: some are opposed, some support the need for such a facility, and others who do not want to speak out publicly in deference to the neighbors.

In response to the concerns expressed by the community, DCF has made the following agreements with the community:

- The program will not expand beyond a six-bed secure facility;
- It will not expand to include non-secure beds and programming for youth in transition;
- Property taxes will be paid per the lease agreement;
- Youth will remain in secure areas of the facility at all times including an outdoor fenced in recreational area attached to the building;
- Youth will be transported by sheriffs per the AHS transportation contract;
- DCF has offered to expand law enforcement coverage through a contract with VSP, Orange County Sheriffs or Bradford PD;
- DCF has offered to explore residential security systems for neighbors;
- The facility will have an emergency notification system for community members to opt-in which would provide immediate text, email, or phone notification of runaways and other emergency incidents involving police including updates for incident resolution (similar to DOC);
- DCF will collaborate with the Newbury Select Board, fire, police and EMS in the development of all emergency response protocols for the facility;
- St. Johnsbury VSP will respond to runaways with the same immediate and high priority response as with DOC;
- DCF conducted a traffic study for community impacts; and
- Becket has committed to have the facility's Executive Director attend Newbury Select Board meetings to hear community feedback.

DCF, BGS and Becket are still working on language for the lease agreement. There will be two additional contracts, one for construction and one for the operations of the program.

Because of the wetland issue the project timeline has been extended and it is now anticipated that project completion (pending approval by DRB) will be spring of 2022.