

MINUTES OF MEETING - WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE - NEVADA STATE LEGISLATURE
1968 SPECIAL SESSION - FEBRUARY 23, 1968

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Glaser at 3 PM in the Ways and Means Room.

Present: Glaser, Mello, Bowler, Ashworth, Webb, Tyson, Young
Jacobsen, Howard

Absent: None

A. B. 24: Provides for psychiatric treatment at Nevada state prison

Mr. Robert McAllister, Administrator of Nevada State Hospital, testified as to the need for this at the prison. There are some prisoners in dire need of psychiatric care who cannot all be housed at the Nevada State Hospital. There is a professional and community concern to give these people the help they need. There is a core of 6 - 8 who need intensive psychiatric care along with at least 10% of the inmates who also need treatment. The prison needs a full time psychiatrist and nursing staff to provide the kind of attention seriously ill patients need. With a staff of this kind, the prison could set up a separate unit to house these people. The \$50,000 is really not adequate but will do. Mr. McAllister went on to explain that A. B. 20 would exempt the psychiatrist from the statutory limit of \$20,000 for classified service. The Senate just passed a bill setting a \$23,000 limit for the psychiatrist who is not board certificated or board eligible (2 years training, experience) and \$25,000 for the competently trained psychiatrist certificated by the American Board of Psychiatrists. The final provision of the bill set the superintendent's salary at \$26,000. One half of the \$50,000 would go toward the salary of the psychiatrist and the other half for the additional personnel. They could work this out to provide a 24 hour system of care. Mr. McAllister spoke of the psychiatrist as the key man to the operation of the hospital. With the turn over in psychiatrists, the effect has been felt throughout all the personnel. And, the key to this turn over is the inadequate salary provided for him.

Mr. Glaser asked if there was an area at the prison which could be set aside for this purpose. Mr. McAllister said, through discussions with Warden Hocker, the infirmary in maximum security could be utilized. This has access to outside which is necessary for allowing these prisoners the opportunity to get out into the yard. Keeping them locked in solitary is no solution, but it has been the only choice.

Mr. Glaser asked if out of the 3 filled positions of the 8 available, one would be transferred to the prison? Mr. McAllister said they would like to keep the 8 positions open. With \$160,000 they can hire 6 psychiatrists at \$25,000 and perhaps at a later session of the Legislature the other 2 positions could be funded. They would really be in bad shape if they had to send 1 of their 3 men to the prison.

Mr. Glaser asked about the salvagability of these mentally ill prisoners through rehabilitation. Mr. McAllister said only a few end back in prison after release. If the ill prisoner is not treated he is in for life. If he were treated, however, he would receive a determination of his sentence. The rate of rehabilitation is the same as for other prisoners. The majority of mentally ill prisoners can be cured; those who can't remain in custody.

Miss Dungan pointed out the case of sex offenders who serve out their term untreated and then released back into society as ill as before. She also pointed out the basic need of all the prisoners for psychiatric help since crime itself is many times a result of the border line mentally ill who is not defined as such but needs the psychiatric help.

Mr. Torvinen said in essence what the bill really does is add a psychiatrist position. He explained how the bill came about.

Mr. McAllister explained that presently there is one patient at the state hospital accused of murder but unable to stand trial. Because of the charge of crime a Petition was made to the court for a hearing to send her to the prison. In cases where patients are considered to be dangerous this is the usual procedure. However, approval of the Prison Board is required and Warden Hocker of the Board said he did not have the facilities at the prison to care for this type of patient. There are 4 who by the above procedure were sent to the prison and 1 or 2 from past years. Dr. Brown visits the prison once a week at the present time.

Mr. Mello asked about the facilities at the women's prison for the mentally ill. Mr. McAllister said he does not know about the situation there. He hadn't given much thought about splitting the positions he is asking for between the men's and women's facilities. However, he felt that not too much nursing care would be required at the women's prison. And, a full time psychiatrist could provide adequate care for both. Possibly, trustees could be used to extend the nursing care - as attendants.

Mr. Jacobsen asked the age bracket. Mr. McAllister - 19 to about 40.

Mr. Glaser asked about average caseloads for psychiatrists. Mr. McAllister replied the case load would be less than at the hospital now. We are depending there upon social workers and psychologists. One psychiatrist could keep extremely busy with the 6 needing intensive care and the estimated 10% or 60 prisoners also needing help. The ideal situation would be around 30 patients. The 10% figure is just an extension of the national statistics of 10% of a given population would be in need of psychiatric help. However, the prison population percentage would most likely be higher.

Mr. Jacobsen asked how a psychiatrist applies himself. ... Mr. McAllister explained the various functions and methods. The key is the establishment of a trusting and helpful relationship between 2 human beings. He gives the patient attention and understanding both individually and through group therapy which is most helpful in learning more about yourself.

Mr. Getto asked for a comparison of our prison to other states as to a full time psychiatrist for its size. Mr. McAllister: didn't know. The contract service with California for a minimum of \$6 per day only touched very few in need. It was a very selective program on who they would accept for treatment.

Mr. Mello asked the salary of the nurses and if male nurses would be used.

Mr. McAllister said the starting salary is \$6,000 per year which is competitive with other places. However, to attract nurses to the state hospital, the salary should be a little higher. Male nurses, commanding the same salary, are used.

Discussion on the extra cost. Since there would be a savings in the already budgeted funds because all 8 positions are not filled, this prison psychiatrist cost would not exceed the budget. Discussion on the reversion of funds if not used. This is done at the end of the biennium.

Mr. Webb asked if this could be done without another bill, but through the hospital administration with authorization. Mr. McAllister pointed out the \$36,000 lost already from his budget with the allocation of \$250,000 from the general fund of collected receivables rather than \$286,000. Then the next year the budget called for \$300,000 and only \$250,000 will be allocated. So, we have a squeeze which is acceptable only because of salary savings. However, if we have to use these in other positions we will be short. We are now using them for other services which is the procedure. After the budget comes out a work program is outlined and funds can be transferred for this within limits.

Mr. McAllister was excused at 3:40 PM.

The point was made that there has been a decrease of 100 patients at the hospital. Perhaps they could afford to use some of their staff at the prison. Mr. Webb was concerned over turning down \$50,000 to child welfare and then giving \$50,000 to a program affecting only about 60 people.

Mr. Torvinen pointed out that AB 20 provides that the criminally insane at the prison still be in custody of the superintendent and he is still required to treat him. Without AB 24 it would be an administrative decision as to how much time was spent at the prison. AB 24 would make it the law that a psychiatrist would be at the prison.

Mr. Howard felt the hospital budget should show a balance of at least \$75,000 of unexpended monies. Discussion on money used for other services. Discussion on nursing position unable to be filled as well as psychiatrists' positions. Discussion on reversionary funds and problem of counting on them and then not being actually there when they are needed.

Mr. Barrett pointed out that when the hospital budget was prepared it was known there would be a certain amount of salary savings. So, the full amount was never appropriated to begin with. Then he mentioned the cutting out of the \$36,000, etc. So, you cannot count on too much in salary savings.

Mr. McAllister attributed the drop of 100 patients from the hospital to improved programs and the national decrease average.

Mr. Bob Bruce went over the budgeted funds and savings, etc. and said there would probably be about \$30,000 to \$40,000 this year in savings.

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Discussion over the effects of A. B. 24 not being flexible enough to allow the movement of the psychiatrist between the hospital and prison as needed or as **an** emergency arises.

Mr. Russ McDonald was asked if the language in A. B. 24 means that a psychiatrist must be at the prison regardless if he must be taken from the hospital to do this. Answer, yes. He said this could be amended to allow flexibility by inserting language saying the man should be stationed at the prison but utilized wherever necessary. There is no conflict between the 2 agencies as to the jurisdiction of this psychiatrist. It is clearly under the superintendent of the state hospital. You could also do this with an amendment saying "if avail.

Discussion on intent of Mr. McAllister. He would be putting a psychiatrist at the prison right now if he could. However, with the low salary he cannot fill enough positions to do this.

Mr. White said it was not the committee's intention to take a man from the hospital for the prison.

Mr. Ashworth said the administrator was hired to take care of this. We should allow him the flexibility to do it. We are trying to do his job.

Mr. White pointed out the real need for a psychiatrist at the prison. They wanted this spelled out and not left up to an administrative decision.

Mr. Webb voiced his opinion that this thing has political implications and is overlooking the majority of the society for a small **portion**.

Mr. McAllister suggested that perhaps this \$50,000 could be put in the budget of the prison for the services of a psychiatrist under the supervision of the superintendent.

Action on this matter was deferred until February 24, 1968, at 8 A.M.

Meeting adjourned at 4:45 PM.