

# Office of the Sheriff



**Beaufort County**  
210 N Market St.  
Washington, N.C. 27889

**Ernie Coleman**  
**SHERIFF**

Office: 252-946-7111  
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March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2019

To: County Commissioners, County Manager

From: Chief Deputy Charlie Rose

Ref: Response to email from Hood Richardson 03/24/19

Sheriff Ernie Coleman, County Manager Brian Alligood and I received an email on the afternoon of 03

When and who did the Sheriff's Department (sic) call to make repairs to the cells that have been shut down?

The Sheriff's Office has been aggressively working to keep the doors in the jail operational for years. There have been shifts back-and-forth from the Sheriff and the County in who has taken the lead on maintenance issues. The Sheriff's Office engaged with Georgia Detention Services in 2015 to fix several issues with our door system and in the same year we put before the Board a budget amendment to begin a maintenance agreement that would cover routine, scheduled and emergency maintenance. On the initial visits from Georgia Detention Services we received information that our door system was archaic, obsolete, and needed to be replaced as soon as possible to avoid catastrophic failures. Replacement of the doors with food passes/ lock system were introduced in the Sheriff's Office budget material in 2018, 2019, and will be included in the 2020 budget.

In September of 2018 we had issues with locks several blocks simultaneously (C,D,E,F). Calls and emails were sent to Georgia Detention Services and County Maintenance. Georgia Detention Services responded and found several problems, they fixed what they could on-site and ordered parts that needed to be fabricated to complete some of the repairs.

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Technicians from Georgia Detention Services also informed us that we needed some electrical work completed and that the computer system that operates the doors was going to fail, it was just a matter of when.

The Sheriff's Office made contact with County Maintenance about the issues that were reported. The Sheriff's Office scheduled for Georgia Detention to work in the Jail while it was closed because of total evacuation before, during, and following Hurricane Florence. County Maintenance took a look at the electrical panel, but no changes, alterations, or repairs occurred even though we were experiencing electrical shorts in the panel that was causing problems with the doors, cameras, and computer systems running both. Georgia Detention Services were able to get the doors working temporarily, at times the doors would fail within hours of the technicians leaving our facility. I notified the County Manager and several County Commissioners of what was going on in the jail as we spoke about hurricane preparation and other things. I spoke about having to move inmates and close cell blocks during meetings run by Emergency Management Officials, some of these meetings were attended by County Commissioners.

On 01/09/19 the computer that runs our door system in the jail crashed. This problem caused every system within our jail to fail. It took hours to get our systems back up and running again. Our Systems Administrator, with assistance from EIS, found the cause of this failure and spent hours rebuilding the computer hard drive on another archaic/ obsolete computer that had the appropriate operating system. Throughout this incident, like every other incident that occurs in the jail, Lt. Bryan notified all appropriate vendors and resources and worked towards a solution.

On 01/10/19 Lt. Bryan copied me on an email to Georgia Detention Services that states, "In speaking with Gary I understand that the door 50 Slider is not able to be secured at this time and we are not able to repair it this trip. Gary told me that at some time in the past, before our contract with you, someone attempted to repair the door and cut off a part of it. As such, we will need a quote for a complete replacement for the slider mechanism.

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As I will have to shut this housing unit down, can you please send a quote as soon as possible?" This email is just an example of the countless interactions that the Sheriff's Office has had with vendors and other resources in an attempt to keep the facility intact.

On 01/13/19 Lt. Bryan sent the Sheriff and I an email summarizing the condition in the jail as it pertains to the door system. The following is from the email, detailing the issues:

1. We have closed E and F Blocks due to door failures.
2. D Block only has one operable access door, no sally port.
3. The electrical panel in the Control Room which has been unreliable for several years, is now sparking when certain rocker switches are thrown.
4. The door computer is not able to be repaired again should it lose power.

To address these issues, we've taken the following steps:

1. We've ordered door parts that had to be custom-made from another vendor. However, due to the electrical situation, the new parts blew out the fuses and now must be re-manufactured. Other doors have had parts cut off of them in the past and those parts will have to be made also. Doors that were repaired last week are inoperable again. This is due to years of neglect (prior to this administration), water and dampness from flooding, etc. Georgia Detention is now in the process of formulating a large-scale plan to replace doors/sliders/locks, etc. However, we've submitted this project in the budget the last several years with no success. They will also have to work with County Maintenance/Electrician as well as hire out their own electrician to develop this plan. In the meanwhile, no more doors can be repaired.
2. County Maintenance has advised us that, "at least the sparking is on the low-voltage side of the panel," and they will be trying to get quotes for a new panel to submit in this year's budget. This leaves our door computer system in a dangerous situation.

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-3-

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3. There is a plan to request new door controls in this year's budget and we are working on getting some vendors on-site over the next few months to spec this project out. Having done a similar project in a previous facility, I know that from inception to completion, this can take a very long time.

On 01/14/19 I met with the County Manager and briefed him on the condition of the jail. In that meeting we discussed the options available for repairs/ replacement of the door management system and whether we needed to address our issues in the 2020 budget or before. We decided that I would present information to the Board at the 2020 Budget retreat on 01/30/19 and could follow-up with information at the 02/04/19 Commissioners meeting. A presentation on the jail door issues was a small part of the one hour and twenty minute discussion during the budget retreat on 01/30/19. Some of the statements made by Commissioner Richardson during the Budget Retreat was that we did not have a good grasp on VMware and questioned the capabilities of the people that we had working on the computer side of the jail door problem. During the week of 01/30/19 and before the Commissioners meeting on 02/04/19 I had a conversation with Joe Knox, our Systems Administrator. I asked for him to summarize what occurred on 01/09/19 so I could answer questions from the Board on 02/04/19. I also asked for him to provide me with a list of all vendors that were going to come to our facility and the dates and times for those visits. The following is an excerpt from the email that I received from Knox on 02/04/19:

The vendors that we have been working with so far are listed below. There is one other vendor that LT. Bryan has received a quote from in the past she will have to advise on who that is.

Cornerstone/Norment Security Group

Mike Suriano (has been onsite, working on quote, rough estimate \$800,000 - \$1.2)  
919-325-4332

ESITECH/ASI Security

- 4 -

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Glen Rudolph (coming onsite week of Feb 11th)  
704-727-3535

OSSI  
888-488-2623 (waiting for regional sales rep to make contact)

Just a note on VMware.

We currently use VMware for all of our servers to include sheriffs office, 911, and Spillman. Within this use we use VMware for our mapping, file share, EMD/EFD, 911 mapping, Linx, and penlink. VMware allows me to monitor all of these servers and virtual machines remotely. Within this monitoring I can see the health of all of our machines, whether they are online, and countless tools that allow me to troubleshoot when an issue arises.

The current software solution in the detention center was put into place in the early 2000s. The hardware is 50 years old as you are aware. This computer is running windows XP which is no longer serviced by microsoft as of April 2014. This computer runs on a local network with the door system which means it does not have access to the internet. This causes an issue when trying to run VMware on it. The other issue that we run into when trying to run this software on VMware is that a few years ago Jordan tried to move the system to a newer computer and we discovered that the software is not compatible with a computer newer than windows XP. The machine was a custom built computer that was over 15 years old. The man who created and wrote the software is deceased and his company is no longer organized. When the motherboard in the computer failed a few weeks ago we were lucky that the tax office had an old windows XP computer that was waiting surplus that we could use. Once we got this computer it took EIS and myself over four hours to figure out how to get the software on the "new" computer. Placing this computer on our VM would not fix the issue as the network wiring that is currently running through the jail is over 20 years old. During the time that the computer system was down not all of the door locks would open with the manual key override as the locks are outdated dated and parts are no longer manufactured for these types of locks.

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One of the vendors that I have contacted throughout the process of this project actually used to come onsite to service our doors. However, they stopped coming onsite in the early 2000s as they stated that the wiring and locks had gotten to the point that they could no longer effectively be serviced and recommended complete replacement. This was 20 years ago. The battle that we fight on a weekly basis is that since the system is obsolete we cannot locate anyone who can provide us with a long term fix outside of full replacement. As I said before some of the vendors I have contacted are not even willing to discuss doing anything in our facility other than complete replacement due to outdated software and hardware that we have.

On 02/05/19 I sent out an invitation to all of the Commissioners to tour the jail. On 02/07/19 I met with Commissioners Richardson and Deatherage at 1100 hours and I met with Commissioners Waters and Evans at 1300 hours. Each respective pairing toured the jail facility. Richardson and Deatherage also toured the Sheriff's Office (Oakland Building).

On 03/03/19 Commissioner Richardson wrote the following as a part of the, "I'd Rather Be Right" series on his website, the Beaufort Observer: "Proponents of the new jail believe the trick to getting a new jail is the same one the schools used. That is to run the costs thru the ceiling and to harp about the care given to prisoners. Running the costs thru the ceiling started during January of 2018 when the prisoner count of those housed in Beaufort County was almost halved by shipping inmates to surrounding counties and paying for their custody. This means we are paying for about 30 to 40 prisoners each day to be housed out of county. That is about \$1,500 per day. There are additional costs to transport prisoners to and from jails outside the county and to court.

What happened? Jail cell block(s) were shut down because the Sheriff decided the electronically operated locks could not be relied upon. That is, he claims locks were not always locked when the control panel said they were locked.

Those of us with normal intelligence would have called a repair man. The Sheriff did not, nor

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-6-

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did he report this to the County Manager or Board of Commissioners. He simply contracted with other counties, and left the taxpayer to pick up the bill.

A presentation was made at the so called "budget retreat" on January 30 and 31 that there were problems with the locks and prisoners were sent out of county. Statements were also made that there was no company or person to make these repairs. That was it, we were presented with a problem that could not be solved. Now, I have been a commissioner for 23 years and no one has ever presented this problem to the board before. The additional cost of \$1,500 per day and the fact that the repairman had not been called were not presented to the Board.

An email was sent to all commissioners a few days after the budget presentation. We were invited to tour of the jail at our convenience. Commissioner Stan Deatherage and I took the tour together. We found a jail that was half vacant, operating with a full staff. We visited the vacant cells and had staff operate some of the cell doors. We did not see any operational problems. Otherwise we found the jail to be in good condition and to be very clean."

The Sheriff's Office facilitated and hosted meetings between vendors and commissioners to discuss possible options for the jail door project. The meetings took place on 02/26/19, 03/04/19, 03/05/19, and 03/07/19. Commissioner Richardson attended each meeting. Chairman Evans attended all but the first meeting. Commissioners Waters and Brinn attended the meeting on 03/07/19 along with Chairman Evans and Commissioner Richardson. Each commissioner that attended was able speak directly to representatives from the vendors. Commissioner Richardson was involved with each meeting and acknowledged issues that we have in the jail.

On 03/11/19 I attended the Commissioners meeting and there was a discussion about the jail door/ locking system issues. At the meeting Commissioner Richardson spoke quite a bit about the how the project should look and what he felt needed to be done. Commissioner Richardson stated that he knew that there were problems that needed to be fixed and he felt

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that the Commissioners were up to speed with what was going on. Minute 49:30-51:14 of the video of the meeting is Commissioner Richardson's response to a question/ comment from Commissioner Brinn which seems to contradict what Commissioner Richardson wrote in the aforementioned article.

The Sheriff and I understand that in NCGS 153A-218, "a county may establish, acquire, erect, repair, maintain, and operate local confinement facilities and may for these purposes appropriate funds not otherwise limited as to use by law." As you all are aware, the Sheriff and the Board are jointly responsible for the county jail. The Board pays for construction and operation of the jail (153A-218) and NCGS 162-22 states, "The Sheriff shall have the care and custody of the jail in his/her county." The Sheriff sets the county's policy with regard to the jail. I thank all of the Commissioners for their assistance in all matters. I humbly ask for your consideration on this matter specifically. The Sheriff and I need your assistance. We need the building that the Commissioners have provided as the Beaufort County Jail to be repaired.

*OTHER NO CALL FIX CELLS.*

*-8-*

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