



VILLAGE OF FORT EDWARD

118 Broadway, P.O. Box 345, Fort Edward, N.Y. 12828
Phone (518) 747-4023 Fax (518) 684-2242
www.villageoffortedward.com

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BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE VILLAGE OF FORT EDWARD COUNTY OF WASHINGTON, STATE OF NEW YORK

Resolution 9 of 2023-2024

Closure of Great Meadow Correctional Facility in Comstock, NY

Motion by Trustee

Seconded by Trustee

Date August 5, 2024

WHEREAS, the Governor of New York has announced the closure of the Great Meadow Correctional Facility in the Town of Fort Ann, and

WHEREAS, the closure of the facility is currently slated for November 6, 2024, and

WHEREAS, the Great Meadow Correctional Facility is currently the top employer in Washington County with an estimate of 560 in its employ who are responsible for the operation of a correctional facility with a capacity of 1,595 inmates, and

WHEREAS, the economic impact of such a closure is not merely to the Town of Fort Ann and Washington County, but to the other local municipalities, surrounding region, local school districts and local businesses that currently support the facility and staff, including the Village of Fort Edward, and

WHEREAS, the facility when abandoned will cause an additional blight on the local region due to the State's lack of planning on any future use of the facility, which will sit abandoned, unmaintained, and deteriorating as have other facilities previously operated by the State, and

WHEREAS, Great Meadow has one of the only full mental health facilities as well as an intermediate level care facility and the effect of eliminating the availability of these mental health resources will be harmful to and dangerous for not only those individuals who must now be distributed to facilities without this level of support but as well as those entering the system who would be transferred to Great Meadow to assist with their personal needs, and

WHEREAS, Great Meadow's Behavioral Health Unit (BHU) is a state of the art, self-contained unit with all housing, treatment classrooms, and recreational facilities and including 40 BHU beds, 102 Intermediate Care Program beds, 6 residential Care Treatment Program beds capable of 1:1 suicide watch, and 8 overflow dorm-style beds, and

WHEREAS, there is currently a statewide shortage of both BHU and ICP beds for incarcerated individuals in need, closure of Great Meadow will leave no facilities for care for individuals in crisis, and

WHEREAS, abandoning this BHU capability demonstrates a callous disregard for the mental health needs of incarcerated individuals and greatly diminishes their chances of returning to a safe, productive life after incarceration, and

WHEREAS, in the past five (5) years nearly \$200 million in capital improvements to Great Meadow have been undertaken including a new facility powerhouse with a new boiler totaling \$14 million, the rehabilitation of infrastructure plumbing and individual cell plumbing in 1,168 cells in A,B,C, and D Blocks, a new elevator in the Behavioral Health Unit, upgrades to the education building (Building 9) including new windows and HVAC totaling \$15 million, a perimeter wall upgrade and repair for \$11 million, a facility wide fire alarm upgrade totaling \$13 million, facility-wide CCTV system installation including over 2300 cameras and related infrastructure, and an upgrade to the wastewater treatment plant totaling over \$3.1 million, and

WHEREAS, Washington Correctional and H Block (State Police Forensic Lab) is dependent on Great Meadow for their power supply, heating system, and sewer infrastructure, and

WHEREAS, the decision to close the facility is due to the inaction of the State to respond to long-known staffing and operational concerns presented over the past several years, and

WHEREAS, the estimated savings of the closure is projected at \$77 million in year 1 with an additional \$128 million annual thereafter, while at the same time adding \$165.5 million for refugee and migrant programs that not only have no economic return but are projected to cost localities an additional \$16.5 million in services, and

WHEREAS, many municipalities in the County, including the Village, face significant budget issues which will be exacerbated by the loss of income to residents who work at the Great Meadow Correctional Facility, and businesses that are supported by employees of Great Meadow Correctional Facility will also suffer significant losses in business; and

WHEREAS, the loss of these jobs will undoubtedly result in impacts to housing, school, and other businesses in the County and surround areas; now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Board of Trustees of the Village of Fort Edward hereby states its opposition to the closure of the Great Meadow Correctional Facility; and be it further

RESOLVED, the closure of the Great Meadow Correctional Facility be reconsidered and in lieu of reconsideration be stayed until such time as a proper economic impact be prepared and reviewed and those impacted by the closure have proper and suitable time to review and consider any and all options that they may avail themselves to in order to plan for the safety, security and future prosperity of themselves and families; and be it further

RESOLVED, that a copy of this resolution be forwarded to Governor Hochul, Senators Stec and Ashby, Assemblypersons Simpson, Woerner and Bendett along with the members of the NYS Commission of Corrections; Allen Riley; Yolanda Canty; and Elizabeth Gaynes.

All ayes. Motion carried

