

Medford Correctional Facility
White River Junction Campus

Final Mediation Report

January 2011

Including Documents from:
Civilian Staff Representative
Guard Representative
Inmate Representative
Warden
State-Appointed Mediator

Initial Mediation Documents

January 2011

Including Documents from:

Guard Representative

Inmate Representative

Warden

State-Appointed Mediator

Letter To Mediator,

In order to restore order at the Medford Correctional Facility it is important for the Warden to evaluate what information is most important and act accordingly. The major issue at hand is the lack of safety for the guards and the civilian workers at the Correctional Facility. The prisoners have shown that they are organized and are willing to rebel if they don't see changes made. However, the prisoners should have to earn said changes through good behavior and more education. Further educating the inmates would benefit everyone in the long run and history shows that the inmates need this as 70% of the inmates have already been incarcerated previously. Inmates who don't cooperate will be forced to be held in the segregated cells (building17) for 23 hours per day.

The Warden also needs to increase security in case of a riot. The lives of the guards and civilian workers are at stake and the blood would be on the wardens hands if something were to happen. If the Warden cannot get more money from the state then we could cut down facility maintenance costs by having inmates on good behavior work some of the maintenance jobs. This would create another way for the inmates to "earn" their demands. If the safety for the guards is not addressed then the guards are willing to go on strike.

[REDACTED]

Prison Guard

January 28, 2011

Dear Warden,

I am writing, on behalf of all inmates at Medford Correctional Facility, to present our concerns in regard to how we are treated. Even though each of us has committed crimes against society, a majority of us are working hard to reform our ways with the hope we can build a better life for ourselves when our sentence is complete. We are simply asking that the resources the State of Vermont provides for our care be used as effectively as possible, in helping us to pay our debt to society.

Our strike last week came to a head when efforts over the last year to make changes through the existing system failed. We were then forced to take drastic measure to bring our concerns to your attention and that of the people of Vermont. We want to help you make Medford a model for correctional facilities across the country by helping implement cutting edge programs. These programs will be volunteer run, but will require the buy-in of prison leadership, guards, instructors and inmates alike.

James Jiler, author of *Doing Time in the Garden* and Founder of the Rikers Greenhouse Project, and Stanley Teeter, President of the Vermont Horticulture Society are very interested in establishing a Green House and Horticultural project at Medford. A similar program at Rikers involves inmates in the production of their own food, cut the cost of feeding inmates by fifteen percent during the six months growing season and educated hundreds of inmates in the marketable skills of farming, gardening and landscaping. Mr. Jiler and Mr. Teeter are anxious to meet you and to share the success of their program at Rikers Island Correctional Facility. They are familiar with Medford and believe the facilities used for a similar program here in the 1940's would take less than \$5,000 in facility upgrades, seeds, hand-tools and other equipment to get started

Mark Goldsmith, Founder and Executive Director of Getting Out and Staying Out, www.gosonyc.org is interested in establishing a branch at Medford. This would be a program beyond the successful GED program you established several years ago. It would be run by volunteers from his organization, which provides mentorship for 18 – 24 year old inmates early in their sentence. The process

is to introduce them to successful people from the outside who mentor, guide, and ultimately encourage the inmates desire to build a successful life. The program's goal is to significantly cut the recidivism rate of those leaving the prison system.

Mr. Jiler and Mr. Goldsmith are anxious to meet you, share the success of their programs at Rikers Island and other prisons in New York State. Several of your lieutenants have introduced these programs to us and are anxious to implement them. Unfortunately, they have been blocked from presenting them to you by Lieutenant William Smith, who they dare not cross. He controls everything in the prison, has the twenty-five Door Unit guards in his camp and none of the others guards are willing to go against this group. Any inmate who has been vocal about instituting such rehabilitative programs has been placed in Keeplock or segregated sells away from the other prisoners. You will be told that these prisoners are "behavior problems." To the contrary, they are the most educated and aware of the inmates, and are anxious to be a part of making Medford a true center of rehabilitation. It is this same small group of guards who mistreats inmates for no reason, causes general discourse within the population, and left us with no option except to stand for what we believe in.

Most lieutenants, sergeants, and guards server tirelessly and selflessly to help us rebuild who we are, so we might better serve society. Unfortunately, there are a few who's only concern is for themselves, their pay-check, and watching television in their guard stand. These are the same guards who mistreat inmates and block such rehabilitative programs from being implemented.

Please look carefully at the merits of these programs and those who are trying to block them. We believe you will see in this as an avenue to make Medford a model for rehabilitative corrections facilities. Once you sort out which officers are blocking these measures you will find those who shrink the productivity of your staff and stir discourse among the inmates.

Thank you for your willingness to listen,

Inmates at the Medford Correctional Facility

Medford Correctional Facility



1 Atlantic Ave. • Medford, VT 05405 • Phone: 802- [REDACTED] • Fax: 555- [REDACTED]
E-Mail: [REDACTED]@ [REDACTED] Web: www.MCFvermont.org

Dear Prospective Mediator,

My name is [REDACTED] and I am the active Warden at the Medford Correctional Facility in Vermont. As I am sure you are aware of the current situation at the institution, I desire to impose new regulations that will hopefully alleviate the tension between prisoner/staff relations and improve the functionality of the prison at the least costly burden to the state. I accept responsibility for letting the situation progress, but I am confident that the proposals discussed in this letter will curb the immediate issues, and prevent any future conflicts.

First and foremost, I believe it is absolutely necessary to maintain the institution's correctional mission. I certainly understand to an extent many of the inmates' demands, but at the same time, it is pivotal that any potential reform be constructed around the constraints of imprisonment. Simply stated, the inmates at MCF are still criminals, and their individual freedoms are to remain limited. With that being said, I have reviewed both the correctional staffs' and the prisoners' general demands, and propose innovative solutions under the restraints of our budget.

The inmate's distaste towards living conditions is to be considered carefully, yet respectfully. The following alterations will provide the needed satisfaction amongst inmates:

1. An additional 30 minutes of recreation time will be allotted each day following dinner, from 6:30 pm to 7:00 pm.
2. Inmates will be allowed **2** showers per week, opposed to one.
3. Inmates will be allowed 1 visit to the in-house store **once a week**.

In addition, I will be introducing the "*Inmate Initiative*" program, which allows prisoners the opportunity to earn a \$5 dollar/month bonus or a specialty meal as a reward to good behavior with regards to:

1. Obedience/Respect/Attitude
2. Help towards other inmates/faculty
3. Superior academic/work performance.

I believe this program will motivate prisoners' toward proper behavior.

In order to satisfy the staff's unease towards the safety equipment and protection, the budget must be restructured and expenditures reorganized. With our \$8 million annual budget, 62% is allocated toward salaries. It is practical to cut this figure 2%, for only a year, and increase facility maintenance spending by 2%. I understand that this move may be met with resistance, but I insist that this is a credible solution. A 2% salary cut for one year will free up approximately \$160,000 while incurring, on average, only a \$430 annual income loss amongst the institution's 375 correctional employees. This money will be used to modernize equipment (i.e. surveillance systems, weaponry, locking system, ect.) Of course another option is a state infused budget influx, but from what I'm aware that is unlikely.

I believe that these proposals are for the betterment of every party and the facility as a whole. Temporary budget restructuring will prove rewarding in future years in providing safe, pleasant working conditions for all employees. I am confident that inmates will also approve of these condition reforms and benefit from good behavior and excellence opportunities.

Sincerely,

A solid black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of the sender.

Warden

Medford Correctional facility

25 Jan 2010

Medford Correctional Facility Mediation

Mediator's First Report

Cc: The Governor, Warden, Correctional Officers' representative, Civilian Employees' Prisoners' representative.

I would like to thank all parties for coming to the table willing to cooperate to reach a common solution. I feel that the session was productive, and a tentative agreement had been reached, though some of the specifics of which I remain skeptical.

All parties agreed that all employees of the Medford Correctional Facility – the warden, correctional officers, and civilian employees, would take a 2% cut in salary over the next twelve months. The revenue created by this would be used to increase security in the prison (i.e. surveillance cameras), and cover the startup costs of the greenhouse project.

I am unconvinced that the salary cut would generate enough revenue to fund all of these projects. From the warden, I request an estimate to how much money the pay cuts would create. From the prisoners' representative, I request an estimate for the startup costs of the greenhouse project. I would also like from the prisoners' representative a detailed proposal for the mentor program.

Furthermore, all parties agreed to warden's proposal as follows:

1. Additional 30 minutes of recreation time for well-behaved inmates
2. Inmates will have 2 showers per week, instead of 1
3. Inmates will be allowed 1 visit to the store per week, instead of biweekly

An agreement was reached between all parties that once the above three changes are made, and the 2% pay cut is implemented, the prisoners will end their strike – with the expectation that the greenhouse project and mentor program will be created later. I would like a timetable for the creation of both of these programs from the warden and correctional officers' representative, as a measure of good faith toward the prisoners.

I am confident that a mutually beneficial agreement can be made between all parties at the next mediation session.

██████████

Mediator – MCF Dispute

Final Mediation Documents

January 2011

Including Documents from:

Civilian Staff Representative

Guard Representative

Inmate Representative

Warden

State-Appointed Mediator

January 26, 2011

Dear [REDACTED],

The correctional facility has two types of employees, prison guards and civilian personnel. Everyone is aware of the responsibility of the prison guards; to maintain order in the facility and serve as a reminder to the prisoners where their past decisions have put them. Less people are aware of the responsibilities of the civilian staff. As the teachers, medical personnel, prison job supervisors, correction counselors, parole officers and chaplains of the prison, it is our job to teach, care for, and provide counsel for the prisoners while they are here and help them create a new future for themselves when they leave. We are essential to keeping the correctional facility running and we work hard to do so. Our overall goal in this mediation is to help you come to a conclusion that both benefits the lives of the residents of this facility and makes our working environment better and safer.

For this reason, we support the majority of your initial report. It is great that money will go into increasing the security at the facilities, and everyone who works or lives there will be safer for it. The mentoring program would be a great way to help the prisoners build skills and explore opportunities for when they leave the prison. The warden's idea of rewarding good behavior is also a good one, although the warden should think about the extra cost associated with it. We would love to see a prisoner-run greenhouse, but we think it should be the bottom priority and I wonder if there will be enough money left after the necessary improvements to the facility have been made.

There is one component of your report that we are not as supportive of. I am talking of course about the 2% pay cut for all facility staff. If we as civilian employees must lose a part of our wages, then we insist the warden make updating our facilities and giving us a larger budget for supplies one of his top priorities. How can the teachers be expected to do their jobs properly if they don't have enough supplies to teach their students? As one of the two doctors on the facility, I find it difficult to do my job when there is only one other doctor assisting me and we have 2000 prisoners to take care of. If cutting everyone's pay by 2% doesn't provide enough money to meet our requests as well as everyone else's, then I suggest further cutting the wages of the corrections officers. There is one of us for every three of them and yet they receive more than 75% of the budget allocated to salary. Another suggestion would be for the warden to keep a closer eye on his correction officers and terminate some of the more corrupt ones. I see many of the injuries that are incurred in this place and not all of them are from prisoners, nor are they deserved.

I will restate what I have said before. We as civilian employees are essential to keeping the correctional facility running, and we work hard to do so. We would love to see a safer prison and we think that some of the prisoners requests are fair and should be met. However, we have fair requests as well, and we should not be hurt by the conclusion of this mediation, especially when meeting our requests would benefit the prisoners as well as ourselves. Mr. Despart, you have some difficult decisions to make. Please make them wisely.

Sincerely

[REDACTED]

January 26, 2011

██████████, Prison Guard

In response to mediator,

The prison guards are content with the mediator's decision and are pleased the money will be going toward greater security. However, the guards are concerned this pay cut will turn out to be permanent and would like to in writing that the pay cut will only last for a maximum of 12 months. There needs to be a long term plan set up to ensure these new prisoner programs won't continue to cost more money but instead will make the prison more efficient. If you can show that this pay cut will expire after the 12 month period and the original pay will return the guards will accept the mediator's decision.

January 24, 2011

Medford Correctional Facility Mediation - Prisoners Response to Mediators First Report – Draft #2

Cc: The Governor, Warden, Correctional Officers' representative, Civilian Employees' Prisoners' representative.

Thanks to all involved for hearing our concerns. The Green House and Horticultural Project and Getting Out and Staying Out are tried and true programs. Stanley Teeter, President of the Vermont Horticulture Society is completely committed to building the Green House program and has a successful mentor in James Jiler, author of Doing Time in the Garden and Founder of the Rikers Greenhouse Project. Mark Goldsmith, Executive Director of Getting Out & Staying out, a 501c3 non-profit organization has his program set up and is ready to implement it at Medford.

The Green House and Horticultural Project, like its big-brother on Rikers Island, is described on page one of the Corrections History Web Site as “ a vocational programs that provide inmates with opportunities to learn practical employment skills and afford instruction in: agriculture, soil preparation, landscaping and harvesting techniques.” It will begin with a quarter acre garden plot on our existing farm facility and a twenty-foot by sixty-foot greenhouse which will need some renovation. It is a vocational program that provides inmates with opportunities to learn practical employment skills and get instruction in agriculture. You can see more details on the, Doing Time in the Garden web-site:

<http://www.correctionhistory.org/html/chronicl/rikersfarm/doingtimeingarden.html>

The cost for the start up of this program is estimated at \$5,000, which will include: seeds, hand-tools, fertilizer, repair and a new air-exchanging heater for the existing greenhouse. As the program grows we could expand into producing flowers and starting landscaping plants that could generate enough resources to fund additional equipment such as a rototiller and ultimately a tractor.

The mentorship program we are recommending would be a partnership with Getting Out and Staying out. Mark Goldsmith, its founder is a former executive with Revlon and Shiseido. It currently serves 150 inmates at Rikers Island Correctional Facility and more at fourteen other prisons in Upstate New York. It is a program for first time offenders ages 18 – 24, designed to give these inmates the mentorship and guidance in prison, to help them believe in themselves enough, that they develop the person fortitude to work to build a successful life after prison. The program is detailed to explain in this document. I have attached a links to the GOASO website and to the New York Times article about the program to give you more details

Getting Out & Staying out - www.gosonyc.org

New York Times -

http://www.gosonyc.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=27&Itemid=1036

Do not be scared off by the road-map document for starting such a program. Mr. Goldsmith assures me this is for programs not under the umbrella of his organization. The start-up costs of this program will be paid for by GOASO. Mentoring sessions could be conducted before and after the traditional school time at Medford. This would require the cooperation of the teachers at the school and the guards who would be needed to supervise inmate transfer and participation time.

The inmate group is asking the Warden of Medford Correctional Facility review our complaints and correct problems with Lieutenant William Smith and the Door Unit Guards that has been blocking these programs and begin implementation as a pre-condition to ending the strike. The incentives laid out by the Warden as rewards for good resident behavior are a wonderful gesture to show his desire to work with us. Please take the time to read about these programs. I believe all parties will benefit from the rehabilitation they will provide.

Date: January 26, 2011

From: [REDACTED], Warden MCF

To: Mediator and relevant parties

Subject: Budget structuring

I have composed a provisional proposal for the budget reformations we discussed last meeting. To reiterate, a 2 % transient salary cut will go in effect immediately. This will apply to **all** employees, including myself. This response will remain in effect for a period of one year, or until the various demands discussed are met in full.

Potential budget structuring from a 2 PERCENT salary cut:

	Before (\$)	After (\$)
Salary	4,960,000	4,800,000
Food	560,000	Same
Inmate Wages	400,000	Same
Education/Guidance	240,000	Same
Medical Care	240,000	Same
Clothing	160,000	Same
Facility Maintenance	1,440,000	Variable
New Programs	-	Variable
TOTAL:	8,000,000	7,840,000

A 2% salary cut will free up approximately \$160,000 to be used for facility maintenance and newly proposed programs. Depending on the suggested startup costs for the new programs, the allocation of these funds is variable. I estimate tentatively that of this \$160,000, facility maintenance will require around 93%, equivalent to \$148,800, which will be put towards new security equipment and alarms/locking systems. That leaves \$11,200 for the new programs, which may be more than enough. Again, this percentage is subject to scrutiny amongst disputing parties, depending on the suggested costs of starting the discussed programs.

With the budget solidified and renovations underway, I think it is best to take immediate action towards the necessary facilitation of the programs. From the inmates account, I see the programs incurring little startup cost and the prospect of becoming self-sufficient in the future.

28 Jan 2010

Medford Correctional Facility Mediation

Mediator's Final Report

Cc: The Governor, Warden, Correctional Officers' representative, Civilian Employees' Prisoners' representative.

I would again like to thank all parties for their cooperation in resolving this dispute. I feel that an agreement has been reached that is beneficial to all parties, and the people of the state of Vermont.

A pay cut of two percent for all employees at Medford (warden, correctional officers, civilian employees) will be effective 1 February 2011, lasting until 31 January 2012 – a total period of twelve months.

The warden estimates that this pay cut will generate \$160,000 in revenue over the next year. \$148,000 will be used to increase the security of the prison – surveillance cameras, new alarms and locking systems.

Of the remaining \$12,000, \$5,000 will go directly to the Greenhouse Project, to be used for greenhouse repairs, gardening tools, seed and soil. \$5,000 will be allocated to improve education and medical programs at Medford. The final \$2,000 will be used to fund miscellaneous and unforeseen costs, such as minor repairs and cost overruns.

The warden will open an official inquiry into correctional officer misconduct, which he will investigate at his discretion. Specifically, he is to review the cases of prisoners in keeplock, to determine their legitimacy of the accusations levied against them by correctional officers.

The following will be implemented immediately:

1. Additional 30 minutes of recreation time for well-behaved inmates
2. Inmates will have 2 showers per week, instead of 1
3. Inmates will be allowed 1 visit to the store per week, instead of biweekly

After the aforementioned three changes are made, and the two percent pay cut is implemented, it is expected that the prisoners will end their hunger strike immediately.

The Greenhouse Project is to begin as soon as possible, with the expectation that the prisoners will be able to start planting on 1 May 2011. The mentor program will also be operational by this date.

This resolution is beneficial to the state of Vermont because it does not place an additional burden on taxpayers. The peaceful dissipation of this conflict will reflect favorably on the Governor's Office and the state of the Vermont penal system, which had become a contentious issue in the most recent gubernatorial election.

I believe that the most mutually beneficial agreement was reached in this mediation.

[REDACTED]

Mediator – MCF Dispute