



Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice

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August 23, 2019

Marisa Lago, Chair
City Planning Commission
120 Broadway
New York, NY 10271

RE: Follow up information on recommendation to move women to Lincoln facility

Dear Chair Lago:

Thank you for inviting the applicant team¹ for the proposed New York City Borough-Based Jails System to testify at the City Planning Commission's public hearing on July 10, 2019. We are writing to respond to inquiries posed by Commissioners during the post-hearing follow up review sessions on July 29 and August 12 with respect to the housing of women in the borough-based jail system.

Benefits of a Centralized Facility

In the proposed plans for the borough-based jails system, women will be housed in a centralized facility within the proposed Queens facility. This decision was made after listening to feedback and concerns from numerous focus groups and meetings with formerly incarcerated women, currently incarcerated women, women's service providers, and Department of Correction (DOC) staff.

The proposal to centralize the relatively few number of women projected to be in custody (200) in one facility would permit access to both programming and visiting space for longer periods of time than if the spaces were shared, through split schedules with the men in custody. Having dedicated intake, programming and visiting spaces would, in turn, open up the opportunities for both deeper and richer activities and the kind of visiting experience that enhances relationships between those in custody and their loved ones. This same principle of dedicated spaces yielding better delivery of services is also applicable to providing better gender-responsive medical services, including mental health, substance use, medical needs, and reproductive health services.

We understand that a centralized facility, despite all the advantages including the strong support of those who will be served by this program, also presents some challenges. The primary concern of the people participated in focus groups and meetings is the transportation challenges for visitors from other boroughs. This challenge—ensuring proximity to loved ones—is one of the reasons

¹ The applicant team includes the Department of Correction (DOC); Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice (MOCJ); Department of Housing, Preservation and Development (HPD); Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS).



that motivated the move to a borough-based jail system. The City is committed to engaging in strategies to increase access to the Queens facility. It will accomplish that through the Justice Implementation Task Force, the Women's Subcommittee of the Re-entry and Diversion Council, defender organizations, and other advocates by developing a plan to improve access to the women's facility within a year following the approval of ULURP.

The Lincoln Facility

Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer, in her recommendation on the ULURP application, proposes using the Lincoln Correctional Facility ("Lincoln Facility") in northern Manhattan to house women in the borough-based jail system. As we have discussed previously with the Commission, several obstacles stand in the way of converting Lincoln to a women's facility with capacity to house 200 women in the timeframe necessary to achieve the overall goal of closing Rikers by 2026.

The Lincoln Correctional Facility is a minimum security New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) facility, currently used for work release, day reporting, and community service work programs. For the facility to be available for the City's use, as Borough President Brewer proposes, we would need the State's agreement.

While the City has not had the opportunity to tour the facility and assess its viability with respect to its condition or configuration, we have some initial concerns that it may not afford enough space. The Lincoln Facility, located at 31-33 West 110th Street in Manhattan, was originally built in 1914. With a square footage area of 69,600, it houses approximately 275 people in detention. Our current projected population's needs and program are different and would require more space.

While we are still refining the exact program, the proposed women's facility is likely to be at least 250,000 square feet, approximately 1,000 square feet per person in custody.² The existing Lincoln Facility would provide about a quarter of that space or roughly 250 SF per person.

Thank you for your attention to this application. We look forward to discussing this during the post-hearing follow up review session on August 26, 2019.

Sincerely,

Liz Glazer, Director
Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice

Cynthia Brann, Commissioner
NYC Department of Correction

² In the proposed jails, this average square foot per female is higher than that for the male population due to the program requirements of serving a smaller population.