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News

## Dutchess will study jail options

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By PATRICIA DOXSEY  
Freeman staff

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POUGHKEEPSIE — After years of discussion, debate, disagreement and legal wrangling, the Dutchess County Legislature will look in earnest the Dutchess County Jail's overcrowding problem and what can be done to alleviate it.

Members of the county Legislature on Monday adopted a resolution creating a Jail Study Advisory Committee to "examine all aspects of the criminal justice system within Dutchess County as it relates to the jail population."

The committee will be led police officer and Legislator Kenneth Roman, R-town of Poughkeepsie, and will comprise legislators, jail officials and representatives of the county's Department of Public Works and Probation Department. It will present its findings to the Legislature no later than Dec. 1.

The lone opponent to forming the committee was Northern Dutchess Legislator Joel Tyner, who said the resolution moved the county closer to expanding the county jail rather than looking at ways to divert people from entering the criminal justice system.

"I'm just afraid ... we're hurtling down the hill at a rapid pace toward expansion," said Tyner, D-Clinton.

"I'm afraid that, as the media has reported, this committee is not going to be deciding whether or not to expand the county jail. I'm afraid this committee is going to be deciding, as has been reported in the media, how much of a jail expansion," Tyner said.

"This is certainly not in haste," said Legislature Majority Whip Angela Flesland.

Fresland, R-town of Poughkeepsie, agreed with the need for more programs but said the county first must deal with jail overcrowding.

"All of the programs under the sun won't help because we don't have the capability of reaching them," she said. "We do need to look at the fact, not of doing an expansion, but of how many beds. We need to get our inmates in Dutchess County. We need to stop paying off the bond of every other county that's building jails, and we need to deal with our own problem."

The Dutchess County Jail has been overcrowded since the day it opened in 1994. Until recently, the facility operated under a series of state waivers that allowed the county to house inmates at the facility in excess of the jail's capacity. But a number of years ago, the state Commission on Correction, frustrated by the county's failure to develop a plan to expand the jail, yanked the county's variances, forcing the county to house inmates in jails in other counties.

Jail Administrator George Krom said that in July 2011, the county spent \$456,000 to house overflow inmates at jails in other

counties. The county boarded out an average of 183 inmates per day in July and reached a high of 200, he said.

In July 2010, the county spent about \$220,000 and boarded out an average of 120 inmates per day, Krom said.

"We're going to hit \$5 million (in boarding-out costs) this year," he said.

Since 1994, the county has spent about \$23 million to board inmates in other counties' jails.

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