

Contract allows priority use of juvenile detention rooms in Trego Co.

By ROBERT PIERCE

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In November 2008, Seward County commissioners received a proposal to enter into a contract with Trego County regarding the use of their youth detention facility.

“I have spoken with Jon Kennis, director of Southwest Kansas Regional Detention Facility, regarding the need for this contract and also discuss the current contract we have with them,” said Gena Burnett, director of the 26th Judicial District of Kansas Juvenile Corrections and Prevention Services.

Burnett told the commission Monday the contract, basically, allows Seward County to have priority over other counties for bed availability.

“Currently, we utilize the detention center in Garden City as priority of placement for our youth, but on occasion, there is an overflow, and we need to place our youth in other detention facilities,” she said.

In fiscal year 2008, Seward County utilized 47 units in Trego County, according to Burnett.

“Their current rate of service is \$170 per day,” she said. “Due to the fact that we have a current contract with Garden City, when we utilize Trego County, we are reimbursed \$120 for each unit used at any other detention facility, and Seward County is responsible for the remainder amount.”

Burnett said the contract with Trego County would mean two things locally.

“First, if Garden City is full, then we will have priority placement for our juveniles at Trego County rather than other counties who do not have a contract with Trego,” she said. “Second, every 20 units used, the price of the daily rate with Trego is reduced in \$5 increments.”

In conclusion, Burnett said she does not feel entering into a contract with Trego County would do any harm locally.

“It does give us priority over counties that do not have this contract,” she said. “It doesn’t conflict with our contract with the Garden City Detention Center at all. It will not cost the county additional money and will be more accessible if there should be an overflow at Garden City.”

Kennis said officials from his facility are working with Burnett extensively to try to do some things in the community to reduce the need for use of other detention facilities.

“We’re doing some things proactively to help reduce that,” he said.

In his discussions with Burnett, Kennis said the JCAPS director has brought some creative ideas in regards to community-based programming.

“If you have those programmings in place, I just encourage you to continue to try to do the prevention side of it rather than the reactive side,” he said.

Information obtained for Burnett indicates as of Dec. 9, 2008, the number of days allocated to Seward County as part of the contract with Trego County is 1,439 for FY 2008. As of that date, the county had used 1,094 more days than the contracted amount for a total of

2,533 days.

“When the contract days are up, we are charged a reduced rate of \$120 per day,” Burnett said. “As of Dec. 9, 2008, Seward County has spent \$131,280 over budget. The total amount spent on detention costs this year to date is \$411,936.”

The commission voted unanimously to authorize and direct chairman Joyce Hibler to sign the contract.