



U.S. Department of Justice

United States Marshals Service

Western District of North Carolina

Asheville, NC 28801

Transylvania County Sheriff's Office
153 Public Safety Way
Brevard, North Carolina 28712

Date: August 12, 2015

Attn: Captain Eddie Lance

On July 24, 2015, I met with members of the Transylvania County Sheriff's Office (TCSO) to discuss security concerns at the Transylvania County Courthouse. I was briefed on current security measures in place and took a tour of the Courthouse and adjacent Administrative Building.

It was evident from the meeting that the Sheriff's Office is committed to the protection of the judicial process and it is a high priority. The Sheriff's Office plays a critical role in the judicial process. The Sheriff must ensure that judicial proceedings are conducted in a safe and secure manner. The Sheriff is responsible for the protection of judicial officials including jurors; custody and transport of prisoners; bailiff duties; staffing the security check point; and general security in and around the Courthouse facility. This mission is accomplished by anticipating and deterring threats to the judicial process and by the development and employment of innovative protective measures.

The most glaring deficiency I observed was the absence of a base of operations or a place to call home for the Sheriff's Office within the Courthouse. In the federal courts the US Marshals are considered to be part of the court family and therefore have adequate space in which to operate and fulfill their mission. The TCSO has zero space within the Courthouse and must rely on the use of the jury room, law library, public hallways, etc. in order to accomplish their vital role in the judicial process.

My recommendation to solve this issue would be to relocate the law library to the lower level multi-purpose room that is presently empty. The law library, with its close proximity to the courtroom, could be converted into a base of operations for the Sheriff's Office. This room already has a bathroom and could contain multiple holding cells and a small space for attorneys to meet with their clients. Additionally, an outside stairwell could be installed to gain access to this area from the parking lot. Obviously this would require converting a window to a door in order to gain outside access. A secure parking area could be created in the loading/unloading area and prisoners could be transported in and out of the courthouse in a much more secure manner.

I would further recommend securing the entire floor where the law library (Sheriff's space), jury room, and judicial chambers are located. This could easily be accomplished by building a wall with a secure door in front of the current Sheriff's Desk in the middle of the open hallway. By securing this area it would allow the Sheriff to conduct a majority of their operations outside public view.

Another recommendation is to investigate the possibility of conducting court appearances for in-custody prisoners via video conferencing. All video court proceedings could be conducted in a manner that protects the due process rights of each defendant. Video court proceedings would enhance the safety of courtroom personnel, the general public, and Sheriff's Office employees. This greatly reduces the potential for escape and disruptive behavior from the defendant. Transportation costs would be reduced as well as conserving Sheriff's Office manpower and resources.

Maintaining the integrity and security of the judicial process is a core mission of the Sheriff's Office, however, everyone involved in the judicial process shares responsibility for this mission. Perhaps a court security committee of department heads could be established to discuss security related issues and practical solutions.

In closing, it was a pleasure to meet with you to discuss security measures at the courthouse and I hope our meeting and this letter will spur some new ideas to enhance security.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Mark A. Chapman".

Mark A. Chapman
Supervisory Deputy US Marshal
W/NC - Asheville