

# RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the Town of Bedford and the New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) works closely in partnership with matters of mutual interest; and

WHEREAS, DOCCS operates the Bedford Hills Correctional Facility for Women and Taconic Correctional Facility (collectively, the "Prisons") located in Bedford Hills, New York; and

WHEREAS, DOCCS strives to seek the views and advice from the community in which the Prisons are located; and

WHEREAS, residents of the Town of Bedford and support groups work closely with the management of the Prisons and with inmates at the Prisons with a view to their rehabilitation and hopeful release as "returned citizens" following their release; and

WHEREAS, the residents and support groups have requested that the Town Board consider establishing a Prison Relations Advisory Committee; and

WHEREAS, the national background regarding incarceration in the United States is as follows:

## National Background

With over two million people imprisoned, the United States is the world leader of incarceration. The US accounts for only five percent of the world's total population; yet is home to twenty-five percent of the world's prison population, which is heavily skewed towards people of color and people from poverty. They are housed in about 2,000 state and federal prisons scattered throughout the country.

Two trends of note are the increasing population of aging inmates, and the increasing rate of incarceration of women. Imprisonment is expensive, costing about \$60,000 per year per inmate in New York State. The national criminal justice budget is about 80 billion dollars per annum, which includes spending on federal, state and local prisons. The national recidivism rate hovers around fifty percent. Yet Taconic Correctional Facility, for example, working with outside organizations servicing women upon their release, has a recidivism rate of five to seven percent.

WHEREAS, the background with regard to incarceration locally is as follows:

## Local Background

New York State has just over fifty correctional facilities, three of which are for women. Two of those three facilities are located in the Town of Bedford. Bedford Hills Correctional Facility is New York's only women's maximum security prison and houses approximately 800 women. Taconic Correctional Facility is a medium security prison with about 200 women. With a population of roughly 17,500 in the Town of Bedford, the prison population accounts for approximately 5.71 percent of the town's population. The US Government recognizes these 1,000 women as residents of the Town of Bedford, and they will be counted in the 2020 census.

WHEREAS, as a matter of General Reflection

A local prison is often considered a liability by its neighbors. It occupies valuable land, is unsightly, and may be fear-inducing. However, a local prison is actually an asset to the community. In addition to opportunities for employment and sharing of resources, it provides the potential for cooperative efforts on rehabilitation and addressing the root causes of crimes, such as poverty, sub-standard education, housing and health care, and both broken communities and families.

Historically, our nation's approach to criminal justice issues swings about every fifty years between a punitive stance and a restorative stance, one in which we are willing to address the root causes of crime.

Our nation is long overdue for such a correction. After the start of mass incarceration following the drug wars of the 1970's and 1980's, and the subsequent prison building boom, the number of New York State prisons ballooned from fifteen to seventy between 1970 and 2000.

Today's political climate increasingly favors criminal justice reform, as witnessed in the recent Federal Prison Reform Act. And importantly, in New York State, recent progress has been made limiting the use of cash bail, expanding discovery and enhancing the right to a speedy trial, decriminalizing small amounts of marijuana, and passing the Domestic Violence Survivors Justice Act.

WHEREAS, the Town Board now wishes to establish a Prison Relations Advisory Committee;

NOW, THEREFORE, be it resolved that the Town Board of the Town of Bedford hereby resolves as follows:

1. The Prison Relations Advisory Committee is hereby established.
2. The Mission of the Prison Relations Advisory Committee is as follows: In a spirit of recognizing the inherent dignity of all human beings and their potential for change, we will engage in constructive outreach to both the community and the prison complex, including both the administration and the incarcerated population in our local correctional facilities. The goal is for the community and the prison to come together, and work together, to assist in the quality of life, such as education and rehabilitation, of the women while in prison and in a successful return to society of those leaving prison as law-abiding citizens. What we hope to create with this committee is a model that could be applied, subject to appropriate cultural and other differences, on the national scale. This Mission Statement reflects the original intentions of the "New York State Reformatory for Women" of the early 1900's. This Reformatory later became the current Bedford Hills and Taconic Correctional Facilities.

### RESOLUTION

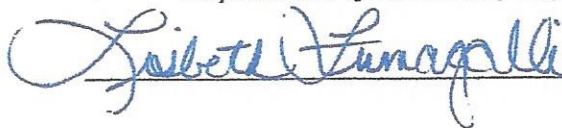
3. The Prison Relations Advisory Committee shall be comprised of the following
  - a. A member of the faith community
  - b. A returned citizen
  - c. A member of the educational community
  - d. A member of a volunteer organization serving in a prison setting
  - e. A member of the town board
  - f. A county legislator or his or her representative
  - g. An ad hoc committee member
  - h. A local businessperson
4. Meetings and Reports to Town Board:
  - a. The Prison Relations Advisory Committee should endeavor to set the initial meeting to occur on or before November 30, 2019. Thereafter, meetings are to be scheduled as called by the Chair.
  - b. The Town Board may from time to time ask the Prison Relations Advisory Committee to make recommendations and/or report on other matters germane to its mission.

STATE OF NEW YORK }  
COUNTY OF WESTCHESTER } ss.  
TOWN OF BEDFORD }

*I hereby certify that I have compared the foregoing Resolution with the original on file in my office and that the same is a correct transcript therefrom and the whole of the said original Resolution, which was duly adopted by the Town Board of the Town of Bedford on November 7, 2019.*

*IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed the Corporate Seal of said Town of Bedford.*

Dated: November 8, 2019

  
Town Clerk,  
Town of Bedford