



# Observer

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ASH DANIEL

## Back in session

### As courts reopen, judges, clerks and lawyers across the state face a daunting task: Managing a backlog of more than 670,000 cases

BY JIM McCONNELL SENIOR WRITER

**O**n a typical Monday morning in Chesterfield County's General District courtrooms, there's rarely an empty seat to be found by the time the judge takes the bench and begins plowing through the 8:30 a.m. traffic docket. Defendants, potential witnesses and family members sit shoulder to shoulder, many clutching yellow summonses, and wait for their cases to be called.

Life at the courthouse hardly has been "typical," however, since the Supreme Court of Virginia issued a judicial emergency March 16 as part of the statewide effort to contain the spread of COVID-19. The declaration, which is set to expire June 7, ordered that all nonessential civil, traffic and criminal cases – including jury trials – be put on hold indefinitely. Chesterfield's courts complex reopened May 18 for nonessential matters – jury trials remain on hold – but the coronavirus' impact continues to reverberate.

As of May 1, more than 670,000 cases had been

Sheriff's deputies screen visitors to the Chesterfield County courthouse last week. On May 18, courtrooms opened to the public for the first time since the COVID-19 outbreak prompted widespread closures in mid-March.

continued to a later date in Virginia's General District, Circuit and Juvenile and Domestic Relations courts. According to Donald Lemons Jr., chief justice of the state's Supreme Court, limiting dockets to only emergency matters has added approximately 97,000 cases weekly to the mounting backlog in Virginia's judicial system.

"Before the pandemic, if somebody asked me to file a lawsuit, I'd tell them it would probably take 8 to 12 months [for their case to be placed on a civil docket]," said Jim Williams, a Chesterfield attorney who mostly specializes in personal injury cases. "I don't know what to tell them now."

All people trying to access the courthouse are now greeted outside the main entrance by sheriff's deputies wearing full personal protective equipment. The deputies ask a series of COVID-19 screening questions and take their temperature. Anyone whose responses indicate elevated risk

See **COURTS** on page 10

## Teachers of the year get surprise visit

BY JIM McCONNELL SENIOR WRITER

**W**ith car horns blaring and headlights flashing, a caravan of Chesterfield County school officials visited three Richmond-area neighborhoods last Tuesday to honor the county's elementary, middle and high school teachers of the year.

Superintendent Merv Daugherty and Deputy Superintendent Thomas Taylor were among the group who braved a steady afternoon rain to surprise this year's winners with balloons, flowers and a large yard sign proclaiming their selection as one of Chesterfield's three top educators for the 2019-20 school year.

"Sometimes you just have to tell people they're doing a great job," Daugherty said. "Rain or shine, it didn't matter to us... a little water never hurt anybody."

Heather Russell, a STEAM teacher at Ecoff Elementary, was chosen as this year's elementary school teacher of the year.

Katie Moore, a sixth-grade social studies teacher at Falling Creek Middle, was selected as Chesterfield's middle school teacher of the year.

And Sarah Jurewicz, who teaches culinary arts at the Career and Technical Center @ Courthouse, was recognized as this year's high school teacher of the year.

Jurewicz also was named Chesterfield's overall teacher of the year. Her nomination has been submitted to the Virginia Department of Education, which will select eight regional teachers of the year from across the state.

"Like previous years, our decision in choosing the best of the best wasn't easy," Daugherty said. "These three teachers of the year are creating some really amazing learning experiences and making a difference in the lives of our students and families in such meaningful ways."

According to Tim Bullis, a spokesman for the school system, the teachers of the year from each of Chesterfield's 65 schools will be honored at a banquet "as soon as we get back to normal."

Jurewicz joined Chesterfield County Public Schools in 2005 as a culinary arts teacher at James River High. She moved to CTC @ Hull when it opened in 2014 and taught baking and pastry arts. In 2017, she relocated to CTC @ Courthouse, where she continues to teach baking and pastry arts.

See **TEACHERS OF THE YEAR** on page 10



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**TEACHERS OF THE YEAR** from page 1

Jurewicz spearheaded a cross-curricular, project-based learning event called "Arts & Eats" that encouraged all students at the technical center to showcase their talents. Photography and art students displayed their work alongside an array of cupcakes created by the baking and pastry arts students and flowers cultivated by students in the landscaping program.

"Ms. Jurewicz's classroom is a place where all students thrive," said Beth Morris, dean of students at Providence Middle. "Within the walls of the bake shop are students with severe learning disabilities alongside students who are taking a full load of AP classes. Everyone is honored for their individuality, and students work collaboratively in a way that breaks down the barriers that normally divide them. In the bake shop, everyone is equal and valuable to the team."

Moore has been with CCPS since 2017.

Previously she was a clinical resident coach in the Richmond Teacher Residency program with Virginia Commonwealth University, and taught for Richmond Public Schools.

She serves as lead teacher and field trip coordinator for Falling Creek Middle's PAWs program, which provides students additional support in reading and math and exposes them to enrichment activities outside the normal school day. Participants in the program have visited the Science Museum of Virginia, Camp Hanover, Last Second Escape rooms, the Math and Science Innovation Center and the National Zoo in Washington.

Moore also is a member of the school's Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports team and teaches gifted students in Falling Creek Middle's Pride Academy.

"Katie has a seemingly endless reach when it comes to benefiting her students and school community," said Vanessa



COURTESY OF CHESTERFIELD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
Superintendent Merv Daugherty surprises Chesterfield's overall teacher of the year, Sarah Jurewicz, at her home last Tuesday.

Bigdeli, a fellow teacher at the Dale District middle school. "Katie is serious about making positive change, and is a reminder to us all that the change we want starts with us."

Russell began her teaching career in

2010 at Beulah Elementary, where she spent one year before taking a position at Ecoff Elementary. This is her third year as the school's STEAM (science, technology, engineering, the arts and mathematics) resource teacher.

She received a \$5,000 grant from the Chesterfield Education Foundation to create the county's first-ever robotics competition for elementary school students. The event was held in March at Clover Hill High and included about 400 second- through fifth-graders representing 26 schools.

Hundreds of students participate in the STEAM club Russell founded at Ecoff. She also created a coding club for female students in fourth and fifth grade to encourage them to pursue high-tech career opportunities.

"Heather has a big vision for kids," said Kristin Tait, principal at Ecoff Elementary. "She sees a need and finds a solution to make it happen." ■

**COURTS** from page 1

of exposure to the coronavirus, or whose temperature is above 100 degrees, is denied entry to the building.

Compliance with social distancing guidelines has placed a premium on seating in the gallery area of each courtroom. White "no sitting" signs are taped to the backs of most seats; courtrooms with a normal capacity of 60 now have 14 available seats, while 80-person courtrooms can accommodate 16.

Another 25 people are staged in the hallway outside each courtroom and monitored by deputies to ensure they maintain 6 feet of distance from each other. Face coverings aren't mandatory, but those not wearing one aren't permitted to sit in the courtroom; they have to wait in the staging area until all other cases have been processed, then they're brought in one by one to face the judge.

It's all part of a modified operational plan developed by the Chesterfield Sheriff's

Office, in consultation with local judges, clerks of court and the commonwealth's attorney, to protect visitors and staff as the gears of the justice system begin grinding again.

"We're exercising a whole new level of due diligence with the courts reopening [for non-emergency matters]," Sheriff Karl Leonard said. "The backlog [in cases] is tremendous and we can't keep putting people off forever. You have to move forward at some point."

According to Leonard, he and his staff have been planning to reopen the courthouse for the last nine weeks. During the week of May 11, they brought in all deputies who work in the courts and went over the plan to make sure everyone was on the same page.

Because there's insufficient space to create social distancing staging areas outside all five General District and Circuit courtrooms, only three on each level are being used to hear cases. The other two have been converted into waiting areas

for attorneys, law enforcement officers and potential witnesses who can't be in the courtroom until they're summoned to testify.

And people currently incarcerated at the Chesterfield County Jail are being kept in a separate holding area when they're brought to court, rather than exposing them to inmates transported from other facilities that could be dealing with COVID-19 outbreaks. There have been no confirmed positive COVID-19 cases at the county jail so far.

"We're keeping our guard up even more now because there are more opportunities for cross-contamination," the sheriff said.

Chesterfield Commonwealth's Attorney Stacey Davenport said several members of her staff have expressed concern about being exposed to the coronavirus as activity ramps up at the courthouse because either they or an immediate family member is immunocompromised.

Davenport adopted a policy requiring all staffers to wear face coverings unless they

are alone in their offices, and she's limiting courtroom time as much as possible for people who have health concerns until the pandemic has lifted.

"My staff already was overworked, but I've had to ask people to step up and do even more than they were doing," she said. "We have some long days and nights ahead of us."

Circuit Court Clerk Wendy Hughes described managing the impact of the health emergency as "challenging and a learning experience for all of us."

Public access to the clerk's office remains limited to a maximum of four people, but Hughes said that hasn't posed a problem to this point; traffic volumes have remained far lower than pre-pandemic levels as customers continue to utilize new online options for payment of certain fees and other transactions.

"I think people appreciate being able to do business with the courts from home," she added. "They don't want to come here unless they absolutely have to." ■

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ASH DANIEL

## Schools: Surge in students to cost \$139M

During next five years, CCPS expecting 6% uptick in enrollment

BY JIM McCONNELL SENIOR WRITER

In a presentation to the School Board last Tuesday, Chesterfield County Public Schools' chief financial officer said the county's share of local school funding needs to increase by \$73 million over the next four fiscal years just to keep up with an anticipated influx of new students.

Robert Meister, who was hired as CFO last year, noted the school system's enrollment is projected to increase by 6% – from the current 62,320 to 66,229 – by fiscal year 2025.

"In order to maintain our basic, current service level, we're anticipating the need for an additional \$30 million to \$40 million per year. That's just to continue operating how we're operating today," he said during the School Board's June 23 virtual work session.

According to Meister's briefing on the school system's five-year financial plan, its annual operating budget jumps from \$703 million to \$842 million between now and fiscal year 2025.

State funding is projected to increase by \$48 million over that period, along with \$17 million in additional revenue from state sales tax collections, but Meister conceded "the bulk of the [funding] increase will land with the county."

He also acknowledged such funding may not be available, given uncertainty over the duration of the pandemic-fueled economic slowdown and the pace of a subsequent recovery.

"We are obviously in a uniquely challenging environment right now," he added. "That will no doubt be part of the ongoing budget discussions next year and going forward. I look for the county to help us understand what will be affordable from their end."

Despite the coronavirus's adverse effects on many sectors of the economy, Deputy County Administrator Matt Harris told the Board of Supervisors last Wednesday that both the

## CALL AND RESPONSE

Black community leaders propose citizen oversight of county police

BY JIM McCONNELL SENIOR WRITER

Two days after they led more than 1,000 people down Iron Bridge Road in early June to protest police brutality, three Black community leaders are pushing for systemic change at the Chesterfield County Police Department.

Amid national outrage and protest following the brutal police killing of George Floyd on May 25, county residents Michael Jackson, Shedrick McCall and Tavorise Marks met on June 5 with County Administrator Joe Casey and the chief of police and submitted a list of six policy proposals that would significantly increase citizen oversight of local police.

Most notably, they requested the establishment of a community police review board to ensure that allegations of police misconduct are investigated "in a manner which is fair, thorough and accurate."

More than a thousand people gathered at the county government complex on June 3 to protest police brutality in the wake of George Floyd's death a week earlier. The protestors then marched down Iron Bridge Road to the county courthouse.

They also asked Chesterfield's police chief, Col. Jeffrey Katz, to engage county residents in reviews of his department's process for investigating allegations of excessive force and its policy governing public release of body-worn camera footage.

They proposed holding three additional meetings with the chief to discuss the proposals in July, August and September, as well as one in October to announce any actions the Chesterfield Police Department has agreed to take and a timeline for implementation.

"Chief Katz and his staff have committed to work with us, and we hope to have policy changes in place by the end of the year," Marks said in a telephone interview with the Observer last Thursday.

See **POLICE OVERSIGHT** on page 4

See **SCHOOL FUNDING** on page 6



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## POLICE OVERSIGHT from page 1

Katz was noncommittal about the group's specific requests when contacted by phone last Friday, but said he's "always open to having a conversation about ways we can do our job better."

Jackson, McCall and Marks all ran unsuccessfully for elected office in Chesterfield in 2019. Jackson, a former planning commissioner, lost his bid for county treasurer. McCall, an associate professor of psychology at Virginia State University, finished a distant second in the race for the Dale District's seat on the School Board. Marks, a high-ranking official in the Chesterfield NAACP, failed to secure the Democratic Party's nomination for the 62nd House District – a seat that ultimately went to the Republican candidate, Carrie Coyner.

Now they've formed a local advocacy organization, the Chesterfield Collaborative for Equal Justice, a racially diverse 25-person group that includes three pastors, two retired law enforcement officers and two youth representatives, in an effort to provide a voice for the county's minority populations on issues of inequality and structural racism.

"In Chesterfield, after political candidates lose, they tend to run away and hide, but I don't want to do that," said McCall in a telephone interview with the Observer last Thursday. "I want to keep having hard conversations and let people hear our stories."

The collaborative for equal justice met formally for the first time last week, amid ongoing civil unrest in neighboring Richmond and a nationwide dialogue about "defunding the police" – a broad rethinking of public safety that includes redirecting funding for law enforcement to social services and other community resources.

That movement has gained no traction in Chesterfield; to the contrary, Katz informed the Board of Supervisors last Wednesday that by July 13 the county's police department will be fully staffed with sworn officers for the first time in 25 years.

"I think that is a tribute to the men and women of this department, the reservoir of trust our folks have built with the community and the fact that everybody wants to be part of a winning team. I stand before you very proud to be the head coach of that team," he said in remarks to the board at its monthly business meeting.

In stark contrast to Richmond, where embattled Mayor Levar Stoney fired one police chief last month and his successor resigned last Friday after just 11 days as interim chief, all five supervisors publicly lauded both Katz's leadership and the work of officers under his command.

"We're very fortunate that we hire and train really good people who provide excellent service to our community," said Matoaca District Supervisor Kevin Carroll, who worked for the Chesterfield Police Department for 32 years before retiring in 2018. "It's the relationship-building we do every day with our rank-and-file, our men and women who are on the ground, meeting people and serving people, that's how you build trust."

The county's message stands in contrast to the national mood following Floyd's death in Minneapolis, Minnesota.



ASH DANIEL

In the wake of several high-profile police killings of unarmed Black citizens, video footage of a Minneapolis police officer kneeling on the neck of Floyd, a 46-year-old Black man, and choking him to death fueled national outrage. Angry citizens have railed against excessive use of force and called for an overhaul of police tactics, techniques and training.

Katz, however, defended the Chesterfield Police Department's policies and practices when he addressed the Board of Supervisors last week.

He said the department hasn't authorized the use of chokeholds to subdue suspects in 30 years and doesn't execute "no-knock warrants" – when officers access a residence by force to serve a search or arrest warrant without first knocking on the door and identifying themselves as police.

Known in police parlance as "dynamic entry," the tactic has become part of the national uproar since Breonna Taylor's fatal shooting by police in Louisville, Kentucky, in March. Taylor's family maintains the police never identified themselves before breaking down the front door of her apartment and shooting her eight times.

"The fact of the matter is, the men and women of our department now and in the past have blazed trails to do the right thing for the right reasons – not because they were mandated, not because they were criticized, but because it was the right thing to do," Katz said at the board meeting.

The chief expounded on his remarks in an interview last Friday, saying excessive use of force remains a non-issue in Chesterfield. According to Katz, the percentage of arrests involving any use of force fell from 1.7% in 2018 – his first year on the job – to 0.9% last year.

"We're very kind in the way we do our

job," he added. Shedrick McCall, with Michael Jackson, left, and Tavorise Marks, speaks to protestors gathered in front of the Chesterfield County Police Department's headquarters on Iron Bridge Road in early June. McCall, Jackson and Marks are leading a call for citizen oversight of the police department.

job," he added.

At the root of the Collaborative for Equal Justice's recent policy proposals, Marks said, is its goal to "make sure every citizen in Chesterfield gets that same experience."

The Chesterfield Police Department's office of professional standards – its internal affairs unit – investigates allegations of misconduct against officers, but Jackson contends the chief has full discretion on whether to publicly disclose the adjudication of such cases.

"If I file a complaint against an officer in Chesterfield, I may never be informed about the outcome [of the investigation]," Jackson said. "We should open this black box and see how interactions with the police are affecting our communities of color."

McCall said some people of color in Chesterfield have a negative opinion of law enforcement because of racial bias that never rises to the level of a formal allegation.

Standing on the steps of the county courthouse June 3 after the 1.2-mile march from police headquarters, Marks recalled being stopped by county police several years ago while driving his Cadillac DeVille on Jefferson Davis Highway. He was handcuffed and placed on the ground as officers conducted a search of the vehicle. After asking several times why he had been pulled over, the officer allegedly told him it was because the tint on his windows was too dark.

McCall noted he was flagged down once in Chesterfield for having an expired vehicle registration and three additional officers responded to a seemingly routine traffic stop.

"A lot of us experience anxiety and fear when we get pulled over. That has to stop," he said.

At last week's board meeting, Clover Hill District Supervisor Chris Winslow

read a prepared statement in which he acknowledged America "has been slow to extend the promise of universal liberty to all of our people equally."

"Our responsibility now is to move our country forward to a place where all citizens enjoy a fair, transparent, and accountable justice system that protects the God-given rights of all people," he said.

On June 17, Winslow joined Dale District Supervisor Jim Holland in meeting with about 50 Chesterfield pastors at Southside Church of the Nazarene to discuss the current uproar over policing. Holland, the lone Black member of the Board of Supervisors, had held a similar gathering two days earlier at First Baptist Church Centralia.

Katz and several senior members of his command staff fielded questions at both sessions, which Holland described as "engaging, honest, frank and very informative."

"My concern is 'Where do we go from here?'" Holland said at last week's board meeting. "As supervisors, we need to stand together with our leadership to ensure that we root out all forms of racism in our community. There is no place for racism in any police force. It's time now that we move past dialogue to specific, tangible actions that can make our community even better."

The leaders of the Collaborative for Equal Justice think the proposal they submitted last month to the police chief is a good place to start.

"Just because [police brutality] may not be a problem in Chesterfield today doesn't mean we couldn't be dealing with the same issue six hours, six days or six weeks from now," Jackson said. "It certainly doesn't mean there's no reason for us to review the police department's policies and practices. Doing it collaboratively with the community develops greater trust when times are good."

"Our goal," Marks added, "is to make sure what happened to George Floyd never happens here." ■

# Observer

CHESTERFIELD

## After reports of inadequate care, sheriff to reduce county's inmate population at Riverside

APRIL 03, 2020

BY JIM MCCONNELL SENIOR WRITER



After receiving multiple complaints of poor treatment of inmates at Riverside Regional Jail, Sheriff Karl Leonard is working to reduce Chesterfield's inmate population there by opening up more space at the county jail, above.

Photo by Ash Daniel

Leslie Johnson was in the hospital in June 2018, hooked up to an IV and receiving chemotherapy treatments, when she got a phone call from Riverside Regional Jail.

Her son, a new inmate at the Prince George County facility, contacted her in tears and said he had vomited in his cell multiple times because the jail's medical staff wouldn't give him the proper amount of insulin to control his diabetes.

Because his pancreas doesn't function properly, Johnson's son uses a computerized device that is attached to a port under his arm and constantly dispenses two types of insulin to regulate his blood sugar levels.

At Riverside, staff allegedly disconnected his insulin pump and gave him one dose of short-acting insulin each morning. It wasn't nearly enough to prevent him from becoming violently ill, Johnson said.

He called her crying again the next two days, saying he feared for his life if he didn't get the proper amount of insulin and nobody at the jail seemed to care either way.

Concerned for her son's health, but unable to leave the hospital during her chemo treatments, Johnson contacted the jail. Staff insisted they couldn't tell her anything, she said, without a signed medical release form because her son was legally an adult.

Johnson reached out to state Sen. Amanda Chase, who texted Gov. Ralph Northam and asked him to look into the matter. Chesterfield Sheriff Karl Leonard got a call from the governor's office on June 17 and arranged for Johnson's son to be transferred from Riverside to the Chesterfield County Jail the next day.

The insulin pump was included among his possessions. According to Leonard, staff at the county jail reconnected the device and it worked as intended for the next 77 days until he was released from custody.

According to Leonard, a Riverside official claimed the insulin pump had been disconnected because it was "broken."

"He was only there for three days, but it felt like a lifetime," Johnson said in a telephone interview last week. "I thought he was going to die."

A spokesperson for Riverside, Lt. Charlene Jones, told the Observer via email that Johnson's son's insulin pump used Bluetooth or web-based services and at that time, the jail could not "provide the required web capabilities."

"The pump was removed by the medical staff, placed in the inmate's property, and the inmate was relocated from general population to the medical unit to be monitored constantly. The inmate's blood sugar was checked regularly and he was given insulin per orders of the physician," she wrote.

Leonard said similar issues are regularly raised by family members of other inmates, claiming their loved ones are receiving inadequate or even negligent care by Riverside's contracted medical staff. Over the past two years, he has received several emails, texts or phone calls each week imploring him not to send a certain inmate there.

Now, he's doing something about it. Leonard began assigning new inmates to a previously vacant pod at the county jail March 18, with the plan to increase the facility's capacity from 300 to 400 and gradually draw down Chesterfield's inmate population at Riverside from 500 to 400.

Leonard also is negotiating with another Richmond-area jail to accept 100 additional inmates from Riverside, but declined to identify the facility because the arrangement has yet to be finalized.

In the meantime, he is requesting local funding for four new deputy positions in fiscal year 2021 and four more in fiscal year 2022 to staff the new pod at the county jail.

The sheriff said his department has lacked the manpower in previous years to open another pod and access additional capacity at the county jail; local officials also were reluctant to reduce Chesterfield's inmate population at a regional jail that was partially funded by county taxpayers.

That calculus has changed, he noted, because Riverside continues not to provide what Chesterfield considers to be an acceptable standard of care for its inmates.

"This isn't my first rodeo - I understand you have to take some [complaints] with a grain of salt - but when you hear this many stories that are consistent over a two-year period, you start giving them more credence," Leonard said. "We don't have

room for all 500 inmates here at Riverside, but I have to bring back as many as I

room for all 500 people we have at Riverside, but I have to bring back as many as I can.”

Jones, Riverside’s spokesperson, declined to comment on Chesterfield’s decision to reduce its inmate population at the regional jail.

Riverside, which is located on more than 150 acres in Prince George County, opened in 1997 to serve the counties of Chesterfield, Prince George, Surry and Charles City and the cities of Petersburg, Hopewell and Colonial Heights.

The jail was built by a regional authority established seven years earlier following a study of severe overcrowding in many of Virginia’s correctional facilities.

It currently is operating under a three-year probationary period from the Virginia Department of Corrections following the suicides of two inmates in 2017.

Another inmate died at the regional jail in late March. Michael Dillon, 29, was being held on charges of misdemeanor assault and vandalism when he reportedly went into medical distress and could not be revived just after midnight March 24.

Dillon was the third inmate to die at Riverside in the past eight months. His death occurred less than a month after another inmate, 53-year-old Fred Lavigne, was found unresponsive in his cell on Feb. 21.

Riverside’s latest superintendent, Carmen DeSadier, quit in February after only nine months on the job. In her resignation letter, she cited a toxic work environment and longstanding dysfunction in the facility’s operations – including unsanitary conditions and lack of hygiene accommodations for inmates.

“Sheriff Leonard has to make very hard decisions every day about who stays here and who goes to Riverside. That’s not fair for anybody. It’s not fair to the family of inmates or the inmates themselves,” County Administrator Joe Casey said at a March 6 press conference on Chesterfield’s fiscal year 2021 budget.

“We’re going to continue to be mindful of the inmates at Riverside and even seek other alternative arrangements if Riverside cannot get its act together,” Casey added.

Based on a per-diem payment of \$46 per inmate, reducing Chesterfield’s inmate population at Riverside by 100 would save the county almost \$1.7 million a year.

Accounting for increased costs for meals, medical services and the four new full-time deputies, the county’s projected savings in fiscal year 2021 exceeds \$1 million.

Even after the hiring of four more deputies in fiscal year 2022, the county still is expected to save nearly \$800,000 annually.

“I think you’re doing the right thing in opening up this other pod because what you’re doing is saving lives, at least based on what I’ve seen down there,” said Clover Hill District Supervisor Chris Winslow at a March 11 work session.

Chesterfield resident Carol Hermsen, whose son is currently an inmate at Riverside, claimed the jail’s staff has regularly failed to provide him the medication he needs to control “mental issues” caused by multiple head injuries.

Hermesen contacted Leonard about her son's care and hopes he'll be transferred soon to serve out the remainder of his sentence at the Chesterfield jail.

"It's really sad what goes on [at Riverside]," she said last week. "I wouldn't have anything to worry about if he was in Chesterfield."

Leonard acknowledged complications associated with increasing the inmate population at the Chesterfield jail in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, but expressed confidence in the protocols he and his staff have put in place to defend the facility against contamination by the novel coronavirus.

"New intakes are a concern because we have to make sure we don't bring [the virus] into the jail," he said. "But I have to weigh the risk of having more people here against keeping them at Riverside. It's not like things are going to be better down there." |

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