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April 30, 1984

MEMORANDUM

To: Edward I. Koch
Stan Brezenoff

From: Monte Kurs *HK*

Subject: Contract Food Service in the Jails

This memo is in response to the Mayor's request for a complete report on contracting out food service in the Department of Correction. A detailed exposition of the proposal and the reasons for and against contract food service follows a brief chronology tracing the development of this proposal. First, a brief statement on the current status. DOC has selected a vendor and is awaiting permission to enter negotiation. OMB, Operations, OMLR, Joe DeVincenzo and Rosemary Ginty have all reviewed the proposal and their views are incorporated below. In short, there is agreement on the need to improve food service, and that a private vendor could accomplish the improvements better and more quickly than DOC. There is however, a need to balance the benefits of contracting out against the labor, budgetary and political problems involved. There is no clear understanding of how much real improvement DOC can accomplish by itself. Consequently, under Stan's direction, we are examining opportunities to improve purchasing procedures and civilian staff recruitment and retention. The Fiscal 1985 Executive Budget carries \$3.5 million to improve food service (that number represents OMB's estimate last year of the cost of contracting out).

ELL 0503-1012

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CHRONOLOGY1981

March-

At the Mayor's direction, Bob Keating commissioned a study of correctional food service and methods of to improve it. The report, done jointly by Cornell University and International Hospitality Advisors, was superficial but framed the issues in a way that suggested the City could benefit from a consultant with experience in managing mass feeding operations.

June -
December-

The Szabo Food Service Company, a major institutional food service provider, with experience in jails (including Chicago) studied DOC's operation and recommended methods to improve delivery of service. Advised that use of contracted, civilian-staffed program with single Rikers Island kitchen would provide optimal efficiency and cost-effectiveness. Estimated Consent Decree compliance within 12-18 months and projected it would take 3-5 years for DOC to accomplish equivalent result with in-house operation.

1982

April-

OMB and Operations jointly endorse DOC's proposal to contract out food service; OMB puts \$3.3 million in FY '83 budget to accomodate the cost of contracting out.

May-

Concerned about implications for collective bargaining, Bruce McIver suggests delaying the proposal; Nat agrees.

August-

The Mayor suggests to Ben Ward that he hire a cracker-jack food service manager to implement improvements in the short-term.

August-
September-

DOC identifies and offers jobs to two different food service managers. One declines the job after reading the Szabo report, the other accepts and then quits during his second week. Both cited problems with the civilian employees and purchasing procedures.

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1983

- May- The DOC renews its request to contract out and Nat gives preliminary approval to draft an RFP and directs that the proposal include requirements to provide alternate employment for inmate and civilian staff employed in food service.
- August- DOC completes draft RFP and circulates it to OMB and Operations for review. RFP is then distributed to nine vendors and three vendors submit bids.

1984

- March- After establishing selection criteria and an in-house panel to review the proposals, DOC informs OMB and Operations that they have selected Szabo as the preferred vendor.

THE PROPOSAL

DOC serves over 13 million meals per year, from 16 facility kitchens, with a combination of 157 civilians and 550 inmates employed in food service. The Department places a very high priority on food service improvement because food in the jail setting is a security issue. In addition, the operation is subject to a variety of legal mandates and consent decrees. The Department is in compliance with just 17% of the consent decree items regarding food service, one element of a contempt motion pending before Judge Lasker. The specific problems with the current operation include:

1. Procurement of raw food and sanitation supplies: partial shipments, substitutions, inadequate quantities, long delays in receipt, resulting in non-compliance with balanced menu requirements and poor sanitation.
2. Staffing: high turnover and absence rates, resulting in inadequate coverage for meals and high overtime among existing staff; poor performance by this staff (77 disciplinary charges and 16 fired out of a total of 87 cooks/senior cooks last year); recruitment problem due to jail setting and inaccessibility of Kikers Island, resulting in poor candidate pool.
3. Inmate help: inmates poorly motivated and traffic in contraband, a difficult-to-control problem given their easy access to foodstuffs.