

TO: Residents of Burlington  
From: Chief Fran Hart  
RE: Proposed Immigration and Custom Enforcement Processing Center  
Date: November 2, 2007

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I have become aware of concerns among some of our residents regarding the plans of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) branch of the United States Department of Homeland Security to locate a processing center here in Burlington. While on its surface, this might be a daunting thought, it is my considered opinion that there is very minimal risk associated with this plan.

The most important fact to state is that no detainees will be lodged overnight. The building will serve mainly as a processing center, comprised mostly of office space. While there will be three secure holding areas, there will be no bed space. These holding areas are designed to house detainees for a very short time – 1-2 hours - while they await transportation to secure facilities.

The transportation of detainees will be accomplished through contractual arrangements ICE has with the various county sheriff's departments. There will be no drain on the resources of the Burlington Police Department specifically, or the town generally.

The people brought to this center will generally be charged with being illegal aliens. The vast majority of these detainees are otherwise hard-working, decent people with no criminal records. In cases where they do have criminal records, ICE is usually processing them post-incarceration, meaning that they are transported directly from prison to the processing center. If ICE did not process these people after serving their time, they would simply assimilate into society, posing the potential risk of engaging in criminal behavior again. Through the efforts of ICE, these people end up deported rather than finding their way back to local communities.

The building will be nondescript with no telltale signs of being "jail-like." It is located in the New England Executive Park and will appear to most observers as just another office building. The area where prisoners will be delivered to, or transported from, looks like a typical side entrance, which is secured by a fence.

The building has state-of-the-art security features including video capture throughout the building. Two people staff a control room, which is used to control and observe the secure area. These control personnel are in addition to the processing staff. All doors are controlled by the control room operators. As an added security feature, no entrance can be gained to the control room from the secured areas. Key-card access is required for the entry door, while subsequent access requires that personnel be "buzzed-in" after visual confirmation of who is seeking entrance.

While evaluating the level of risk this operation might pose, I reluctantly submit that our current police station operates with more negative features than this building will impose. Please consider the table below:

Feature	Police Station	Processing Center
Neighborhood	Residential	Commercial
Houses Detainees Overnight	Yes	No
Dedicated Control Personnel for Secure Area	No	Yes
Video Capture Throughout Building	No	Yes
Operates 24 Hours Per Day	Yes	No

I recently met with representatives of ICE, along with Town Administrator Robert Mercier and Selectman Gary Gianino and Walter Zenkin. During our conversation, I was satisfied with the answers I heard concerning the operation and the security measures that would be put in place. While there is risk in everything, I believe that ICE has sufficient resources, staffing and training to appropriately manage the minimal risk involved. As Police Chief, if I had any doubts, I would voice my opposition. I do not have those doubts. To the contrary, ICE will be elevating our level of protection by deporting criminals who are here illegally, reducing potential threats to our neighborhoods.