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## New Standards for City's Jails Are Debated

By [ALAN FEUER](#)

Dozens of correction officials and experts converged yesterday on the first and only public hearing to debate a plan to revise the standards that govern New York City's jails.

The president of the City Bar Association and the city commissioner of correction were among those who attended the hearing in Lower Manhattan to discuss what are known as the Minimum Standards for Correctional Facilities, last changed in 1978.

The hearing was the latest step in revising the standards, a process that began last fall when the nine-member New York City Board of Correction, which oversees the city's jails, voted to approve a draft plan. More than 25 speakers spoke yesterday on the plan, expected to receive a formal vote in June.

Of the proposed revisions, perhaps the most important is a suggested decrease in the average square footage allotted to inmates in the city's jails. Currently, each inmate is given an average of 60 square feet, but that would drop to 50 under the proposal.

The decrease would be important because, for now, one correction officer is responsible for overseeing 100 inmates in each dormitory at Rikers Island, the city's largest jail complex. Reducing the square footage could mean that as many as 120 inmates would be under each officer.

Martin F. Horn, the correction commissioner, said the plan would bring New York City's jails and detention centers into line with state standards. He said he supported decreasing the square footage allotted for each inmate largely as cost-cutting measure, adding that the board should also approve a proposal to allow the city the power to record inmates' phone calls as a security precaution, a power state and federal prisons authorities already have.

But Norman Seabrook, president of the New York City Correction Officers' Benevolent Association, the main union for the city's jail guards, said he would not support the plan to decrease the square footage for inmates since it would place more inmates into each dormitory at Rikers Island jails.

Barry Kamins, president of the Bar Association, criticized the nearly two-year process by which the city's Board of Correction had created its draft of the plan. Mr. Kamins said the board had sought suggestions only from the Department of Correction in devising the plan.

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