OPINION: “Sheriff Hodgson’s commitment to New Bedford’s Ash Street Jail is why he gets my vote”

The following is an opinion sent to New Bedford Guide. It does not reflect the opinion of New Bedford Guide, nor is it an OP-ED. In fairness and objectivity, we share opinions from our readers whether we agree or disagree with their opinion.

“To the Editor:

It being an election year, it’s no surprise that a big issue I’ve seen in the media with regard to the Sheriff’s race is the Ash Street Jail and Regional Lock-Up in New Bedford.

The jail opened in 1888. It’s more than a century old. It used to house pirates, infamous ax murderer Lizzie Borden and all manor of troublemakers in the old whaling days of New Bedford and Bristol County. The last public hanging in Massachusetts took place right there in the visiting area, or at least that’s how the urban legend goes.

I’ve read and heard the calls from Sheriff Hodgson’s political opponents to close the jail. It’s too old, they say. It’s too expensive, they say. It has a laundry list of problems, they say.

They’re wrong. You know how I know they’re wrong? I ran the place for several years.

In 2014, I was given and accepted the opportunity to lead the team at the Ash Street facility as Assistant Deputy

Superintendent of Security. Over the next five years, I witnessed the work and compassion shown by each and every staff member there. The Ash Street team took and continues to take enormous pride in the facility and its stellar reputation in law enforcement circles.

The facility is clean, quiet and safe. It passes annual inspections/audits from several different organizations, from the state Department of Corrections to the city Fire Department and Health Department. These successes are squarely the reflection of the hard work and dedication of the staff.

Every day while at Ash Street, I saw inmates in classes and programs, taking advantage of the educational, substance abuse and other opportunities offered by the Sheriff's Office to help them get back on the road to success. Every day I saw it.

Aside from the jail, law enforcement agencies from across the county use the regional lock-up to house their arrestees so they don't have to hold them at the police stations. If someone is arrested in Dartmouth, Rehoboth, Berkley or any other community in Bristol County, they can be brought to Ash Street before their court appearance, which frees up police resources in the communities which would otherwise be tasked with watching an arrestee.

The BCSO Civil Process division is also based at Ash Street, and provides a valuable and necessary service to the community.

The Ash Street Jail is not the dilapidated money pit that political activists and candidates say it is. It is a vital county asset, manned by capable, diligent and outstanding officers.

I take great pride in the facility, and Sheriff Hodgson's commitment to this facility and the corrections professionals who work there are just another reason why he has my vote in November.

Have a story, opinion, or talent you want to share? Email us at info@newbedfordguide.com.

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Dartmouth.”