

Rehearing Asked on Jail Reform

City officials today requested a rehearing of a case in which the city has been ordered to carry out immediately 54 reforms at Parish Prison.

U.S. District Court Judge Herbert W. Christenberry set a hearing to consider the petition for a rehearing for 10 a.m. Dec. 6.

The sweeping order, issued by Judge Christenberry Nov. 17, directs the city to enforce recommendations of Tulane University law professor Robert Force, who was appointed by the court as a special master to study conditions at the prison.

In its request for a rehearing, the city maintains that the court findings are contrary to the facts and the law and that the order is "harsh and oppressive and will cause undue hardship upon the citizens of New Orleans."

The city also charges that some conclusions by Force are "erroneous."

"Were the city to expend monies on Parish Prison projects, not absolutely necessary to the basic problems faced at the prison, the city could be forced to curtail necessary public services for its citizens in the field of police, fire and health protection," city attorneys stated in their application for a rehearing.

The attorneys said that the city intends to "do its very best to satisfy its obligations,"

but that the schedule ordered by the court is unreasonable.

One of the order's provisions is that the prison not be used after March 1, 1975, except for processing prisoners.

In response, the city contends it may be impossible to abandon the prison by that date, although a new prison is expected to be in operation then. The new prison will accommodate 480 prisoners.

"Quite obviously," said the city's application, "at any given time, the new prison popu-

lation may exceed this 480-people figure, as well as the A&O (processing) inmate figure.

"Concepts of correction are changing so rapidly that, in our opinion, it may well be that various facilities of the existing prison may well be used as an adjunct to the new prison."

The case stems from a suit on behalf of inmates, charging conditions at the prison constitute cruel and unusual punishment.