

BERKS COUNTY PRISON BOARD MINUTES

AUGUST 27, 2020

The Berks County Prison Board met in a regular session on Wednesday, August 27, 2020 at 9:00 A.M. in a Microsoft Teams Meeting.

CALL TO ORDER:

District Attorney John Adams called the meeting to order at 9:00 A.M.

The following members were in attendance:

- District Attorney John Adams
- Commissioner Kevin Barnhardt
- Commissioner Christian Leinbach
- Commissioner Michael Rivera
- Controller Sandra Graffius
- Judge Scott Lash
- Sheriff Eric Weaknecht

The following County staff also attended:

- Chief Administrative Officer Ronald Seaman
- Human Resources Director Jessica Weaknecht
- Solicitor Christine Sadler

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion was made by Controller Graffius, second by Commissioner Barnhardt to approve the July 29, 2020 meeting minutes as presented. Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

JAIL SENIOR STAFF REPORTS

INMATE POPULATION: Warden Janine Quigley stated the inmate population was 707. Of the population reported, 632 were male and 75 were female. Five of the inmates were juveniles being held in Chester County. Before COVID there were 15 to 18 commitments and discharges per day compared to 10 to 12 in July and August. Warden Quigley noted that population numbers were steadily rising.

There was a back log of state sentenced inmates that were scheduled to serve a sentence in the State Prison. The State required a negative COVID test within seven days of the transfer, but the test results were returning in 13 to 14 days, resulting in transport cancellations. The State made an agreement with the counties to use a State lab. The Jail began ordering and administering the COVID tests and a courier service was delivering them to the State lab. Within a week, they reduced the back log from 50 to 17 inmates awaiting transport to the DOC. Additional transports were scheduled in the upcoming weeks.

**BERKS COUNTY PRISON BOARD MINUTES
AUGUST 27, 2020**

2

STAFFING: Chief Deputy Warden Jeffrey Smith updated the Board on the status of the staffing; there were 19 correctional officer vacancies; 18 custodial and 1 maintenance. The next correctional officer testing was scheduled September 3 and September 4, 2020, which will be modified due to social distancing and sanitizing guidelines. They will implement a new video-based testing to replace the written portion. The next academy was tentatively scheduled to begin October 21, 2020.

FACILITIES & MAINTENANCE PROJECTS: Deputy Warden Mike Buono updated the Board on maintenance projects and proposed projects:

- **Tablet Project:** Tablets were distributed to six housing units and an additional two units were scheduled to receive tablets that week. The response from the inmate population was positive.
- **Delta Unit Painting and Steam Pipe Removal:** The project was pending purchase orders.
- **Office and Video Visit Construction in Multipurpose Room:** They were in the process of obtaining the Bern Township permits and creating a list of materials to be ordered.

EMERGENCY SWITCH GEAR REPLACEMENT: Deputy Warden Buono broke down the quotes for the switch gear replacement and explained the different options available:

- Retrofit equipment into existing cabinet costs \$62,714
- Purchase of new cabinet with less manual labor costs \$86,595

During the replacement the power will be running on a generator. The rebuild to retrofit the existing cabinet will take three to four days. Replacing the unit with a new cabinet will take one to two days of labor.

Deputy Warden Buono explained the other findings and recommendations from the quotes; a breaker associated with the switch gear that was 30 years old and obsolete needed to be replaced, costing \$63,690. If the breaker failed it would require a 10 to 12-week lead period for replacement. A system coordination study to coordinate the work was recommended and would cost about \$5,000. A transformer testing and oil sampling to judge the life expectancy of the existing transformer was recommended and would cost \$15,532. Deputy Warden Buono explained that he, Facilities Manager Reppert and Director of Maintenance Lieutenant Himic discussed looking for quotes for a new transformer compared to the transformer testing and oil sampling.

The new cabinet with all other options will cost \$170,737. Retrofitting the switch gear into the existing cabinet, and all other options will cost \$146,856. Commissioner Barnhardt clarified that the funds for the emergency switch gear options will require approval of the Commissioners and asked for a recommendation from the Prison Board. Deputy Warden Buono mentioned the experts noted the equipment was old and had a higher chance of failure. He added that they could consider the potential timeline of the new jail construction. He explained that some of the options could wait if they planned to build the new Jail soon. Long term, Deputy Warden Buono recommended that they go with all options.

Commissioner Leinbach asked for the total cost. Deputy Warden Buono repeated the total cost and explained that the retrofit of the cabinet will require more time on the generator and the equipment would not be put in as it was designed which could be a risk.

Commissioner Leinbach and Commissioner Barnhardt both supported the all-in option. Commissioner Rivera asked if they received multiple quotes or if it was just from one company. Deputy Warden Buono explained the County paid about \$5,000 to Square D to determine what needed to be done. Pagoda Electric provided the overall quote and had a history of work with the County. Commissioner Leinbach asked to clarify that Square D provides the materials and equipment and Pagoda Electric does the installation. Deputy Warden Buono confirmed that was correct. Commissioner Leinbach asked if the Square D equipment could be purchased from the State contract. Deputy Warden Buono was not sure but would research it.

Commissioner Leinbach added that because it was a large cost, they should consider the bid process. Deputy Warden Buono explained the initial decision was made to label the replacement as Emergency because they were being billed on estimated electric use, but they could request bids instead. Commissioner Leinbach said the bid process can be short, over a 1-2-week period, and did not have to be the lowest bid but instead the lowest responsible bid. Commissioner Barnhardt agreed, adding that the equipment was neglected for years as opposed to an immediate threat. Deputy Warden Buono said he will get the bid process started.

Christine Sadler added they could have a recommendation from the Prison Board, but ultimate approval will need to go through the Commissioners' meeting for the expenditure. The Prison Board recommended the all-in option. No objection was made.

EVENTS, PROGRAM & TRAINING: Deputy Warden Stephanie Smith updated the Board on programs. The Jail continued to have in-cell programming for re-entry, drug and alcohol, cognitive behavioral and specialized groups. Starting that week, education programming for high school diplomas, GED prep and ESL classes were being provided by the BCIU through in-cell programming with social distancing.

Commissioner Barnhardt asked about the Vivitrol grant and the expected shortfall that could affect the counseling component. Deputy Warden Smith said the grant will expire June 30, 2021. She explained there was a concern that the projected budget cuts within the State would affect PCCD grants. If the grant funding went away, they planned to reach out to Alkermes for the product and PrimeCare would provide the medical portion. The case manager provided by the grant would not be covered. Deputy Warden Smith noted, she had not received an indication from PCCD that the grant funding was being reduced or ended early. Commissioner Barnhardt said neither the CARES grant nor PCCD grant for COVID-19 related expenses would cover the expense, so the County would have to support that expense if the grant went away.

Chairman Adams said he was hopeful that the grants would not be cut since the opioid crisis was increasing. Deputy Warden Smith added that she reached out to her PCCD contacts and the MAT coordinator through the DOC, where the funds came from, and they indicated they did not see anything in the future that would target opioid crisis related funding.

**BERKS COUNTY PRISON BOARD MINUTES
AUGUST 27, 2020**

4

SOLICITOR'S REPORT

Solicitor Sadler required an executive session for three items which did not require action from the Board.

COMMENTS FROM THE JAIL BOARD

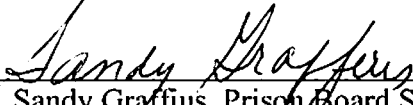
None.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Commissioner Barnhardt, second by Commissioner Leinbach to adjourn at 9:19 A.M into Executive session which adjourned at 9:30 A.M. The next Prison Board meeting will be held in a Microsoft Teams Meeting on September 30, 2020.



Sandy Graffius, Prison Board Secretary