

**BERKS COUNTY PRISON BOARD MINUTES**  
**DECEMBER 14, 2022**  
(DRAFT FOR APPROVAL)

The Berks County Prison Board met in a regular session on Wednesday, December 14, 2022, at 9:00 A.M. in the County of Berks Jail and Microsoft Teams Meeting.

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Commissioner Kevin Barnhardt called the meeting to order at 9:00 A.M.

The following members were in attendance:

Commissioner Christian Leinbach  
Commissioner Michael Rivera  
Commissioner Kevin Barnhardt  
District Attorney John Adams  
Secretary Sandra Graffius  
Judge Scott Lash

The following member were absent:

Sheriff Eric J. Weaknecht

The following County staff also attended:

Executive Assistant Jessica Blausen  
Solicitor Christine Sadler  
Warden Jeffrey Smith  
Chief Deputy Warden Stephanie Smith

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A motion was made to approve the October 12, 2022, meeting minutes as presented. Motion carried.

**APPROVAL OF 2023 PRISON BOARD MEETING DATES**

A motion was made to approve the Prison Board Meeting dates for 2023. Motion was carried.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

None.

**JAIL SENIOR STAFF REPORTS**

INMATE POPULATION: Warden Jeffrey Smith stated the inmate population is 716. Forty inmates that are scheduled to an SCI. Twenty of those will be scheduled to leave between now and December 23rd. Fifteen inmates are awaiting transfer date and 5 will remain in custody due to other circumstances.

PROJECT UPDATES: Warden Smith updated the board with the capital projects:

- Yard paving project was completed two weeks ago – a few outstanding issues need to be addressed with the vendor
- Roof Conduit repairs currently underway
- Kitchen HVAC unit replacement – waiting on remaining parts
- Sewage pump at FCRC – pumps arrived. Waiting on other components.
- NVR upgrade project – Was completed two weeks ago

STAFFING: Warden Smith updated the Board on the status of the staffing:

- Thirty-seven Correctional Officer vacancies
- Four Cadets currently in the academy
- Tentative graduation – February 2023
- Nine candidates currently in the interview phase
- Next testing date- January 9<sup>th</sup>
- A handful of employees from BCRC are showing interest in open positions at the jail

PROGRAMS: Chief Deputy Warden Stephanie Smith updated the Board on programing of the jail. PrimeCare Medical provides quarterly reports regarding the overview of different operations and programs they have in jail. In March 2023, the reports will be an annual summary of the past year and trends.

On December 6<sup>th</sup> Chief Deputy Smith attended the Berks County Forensic Task Force meeting with a good number of community partners to start the strategic planning with Berks Connections. There are good ideas from the community providers as far as services that could help the current population.

Alvernia University and Berks Connections is going to explore additional educational options for incarcerated individuals as well as people who are being integrated into the community. Some challenges have been identified with the inmate population and opportunities for post release. This is a program that is currently being looked into further.

### **SOLICITOR'S REPORT**

County Solicitor Christine Sadler had 2 items for executive session with no action required.

**PRIMECARE MEDICAL PRESENTATION**

Chief Medical Officer Dr. Pamela Rollings for PrimeCare Medical spoke to the Board about corrections psychiatry. Due to the shortage of mental health providers that is affecting people in communities also carries over to those individuals coming to the jail. Some tend to neglect their medical and mental health which then causes challenges for the jail.

After evaluation new inmates are rated on a scale from A through D based on their mental diagnoses. Substance abuse and addiction disorders have been increasing since Covid with the closure and shortages in medical availability and navigating the complex system to get the help they need. These challenges is changing the way PrimeCare needs to look at providing assistance to these inmates.

Commissioner Leinbach spoke about a preliminary meeting with Reading Hospital about repurposing the BCRC since Reading Hospital closed Spruce Pavilion which is where mental health issues would be directed to.

**COMMENTS FROM THE JAIL BOARD**

Commissioner Leinbach announced Commissioner Barnhart is going to become the new COO effective January 9<sup>th</sup>. Reorganizing for the Prison Board will be added to the agenda for the next meeting. Commissioner Leinbach asked for the Board to consider becoming the new chair of the Prison Board. John Adams is currently the Vice Chair of the Prison Board.

**STEERING COMMITTEE**

Commissioner Barnhardt updated the board on the Steering Committee's upcoming work for 2023. Which will focus on opportunities for population reduction, as well as creating documents and procurement templates.

- The Steering Committee will focus its efforts on opportunities for population reduction in five specific areas: work release; day reporting; diversion/deflection; reduction of average length of stay; and legislative changes.
- The County's Owner's Representative, CGL, is also preparing criteria documents and procurement templates as part of its deliverables for the predesign and preconstruction phase.
- Given the continued importance of mental health on the correctional facility population, the Steering Committee has also appointed a new member, Pam Seaman, MH/DD Administrator.
- The Steering Committee will continue to meet monthly in 2023, at 1 pm on the first Thursday of each month. They are held as an in-person-only format at the Berks County Services Center. These meetings are open to the public.

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**PUBLIC COMMENT**

None.

**ADJOURNMENT**

A motion was made by Commissioner Barnhardt to adjourn at 9:31 A.M. And seconded by District Attorney John Adams. The next Prison Board meeting is tentatively scheduled for January 11, 2023.

*Sandy Graffius*

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Sandy Graffius, Prison Board Secretary