

# **BERKS COUNTY PRISON BOARD MINUTES**

## **JANUARY 29, 2020**

The Berks County Prison Board met for purposes of reorganization on Wednesday, January 29, 2020 at 9:00 A.M. in the Commissioners' Board Room on the 13th Floor of the Berks County Services Center, pursuant to due notice to Board members and the public.

### **CALL TO ORDER:**

Acting Chair Solicitor Sadler called the meeting to order at 9:00 A.M.

The following members were in attendance:

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

The following members were absent:

Controller Sandra Graffius

The following County staff also attended:

Chief Administrative Officer Ronald Seaman  
Deputy Controller, Ronald Rutkowski, on behalf of Sandy Graffius  
Human Resources Director Jessica Weaknecht  
Solicitor Christine Sadler

### **REORGANIZATION MEETING**

Acting Chair Solicitor Sadler called for nominations for Chair of the Berks County Prison Board. A motion was made by Commissioner Leinbach to nominate John Adams as Chair. Commissioner Rivera seconded the motion. Motion carried.

District Attorney Adams called for nominations for Vice Chair. A motion was made by Commissioner Rivera to nominate Kevin Barnhardt as Vice Chair. Commissioner Leinbach seconded the motion. Motion carried.

District Attorney Adams called for nominations for Secretary. A motion was made by Commissioner Barnhardt to nominate Sandy Graffius as Secretary. Commissioner Leinbach seconded the motion. Motion carried.

District Attorney Adams called for nominations for Solicitor. A motion was made by Commissioner Leinbach to nominate Christine Sadler as Solicitor. Commissioner Rivera seconded the motion. Motion carried.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A motion was made by Commissioner Barnhardt, seconded by Deputy Controller Rutkowski to approve the December 18, 2019 meeting minutes as presented. Motion carried.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

None.

**JAIL SENIOR STAFF REPORTS**

**INMATE POPULATION:** Warden Janine Quigley stated the inmate population was 909 and compared it to last year's average population of 1,044. Of the population reported, 115 were female and 4 were juveniles being housed in Chester County. She mentioned that the population reached 1,300 in the past few years and the current population was close to the lowest it has been. District Attorney Adams asked if there was reasoning from the Jail's perspective of why the population was down. Commissioner Leinbach suggested the data be evaluated to help consider rightsizing the Jail in the future. He added that it was important to know if this population drop is an aberration and if there are laws around lower populations that will impact the Jail.

Commissioner Leinbach pointed out the new bail reform in New York City that seems to eliminate bail for almost everybody. District Attorney Adams added that this type of bail reform was happening in New Jersey as well, which impacted incarceration rates, but he did not expect the trend to reach Pennsylvania. He pointed out that sometimes when people are committing criminal behavior, the first arrest is the only thing that stops them. Letting them out right away will allow them to continue in their path. They agreed that this type of bail reform was dangerous.

Commissioner Barnhardt explained, according to the CGL study, a reason the inmate population may be down has to do with the age group that commits the most crimes, juveniles to early 30s. As people age out of this group, they commit less crime. Less people are expected to replace them in Berks County which will cause a flat line trend to the inmate population. Warden Quigley planned to research the population data and gather information from other departments. She mentioned she could bring a chart that shows the yearly population trends that highlight the highest and lowest numbers per year.

The Board discussed the programs that help divert people from going to jail. Commissioner Leinbach was interested to see if the Stepping Up Initiative helped with diverting people. Commissioner Barnhardt mentioned the diversion programs that were run by Dr. Michalik of MH/DD since 2013 and stated all the diversion programs have been very effective. He added that the Adult Probation office would be applying for the AOPC grant for the Women's Reentry Assessment Program (WRAP) group. District Attorney Adams mentioned that he, Glenn Welsh, Chief Public Defender and Dr. Michalik focus on diversion when notified about an individual with severe mental health issues in the criminal justice system. The Warden gave a recent example of how the Jail works towards diverting severe mental health inmates to the appropriate facilities after they are incarcerated.

From a financial perspective, Solicitor Sadler asked if a housing unit could be closed since the population was so low. She added she understood the Community Reentry Center was recently closed and those inmates were moved back into the housing units. Warden Quigley answered that they needed to keep all the units running because they had to move protective custody inmates to make room for the Community Reentry group. She added, closing units is something that is considered on a regular basis and assured the Board that if they can close a unit, they will. District

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Attorney Adams asked if it would make economic sense to move the juveniles into a closed unit. The Warden explained that PREA standards required sight and sound separation. The cost to monitor the juveniles 24 hours a day is more than the cost of paying the \$150 daily rate to Chester County.

STAFFING: Chief Deputy Jeffrey Smith updated the Board on the status of the staffing; there were eight correctional officer vacancies. Six cadets were enrolled in the academy and were scheduled to graduate April 15, 2020. The next correctional officer testing was scheduled February 19, 2020.

RENOVATION UPDATES: Deputy Warden Mike Buono reported the status of renovation projects: the warehouse roof was completed; the slate roof project was completed; the tree removal project was started; and they will begin the A/B visitation project once notice to proceed is received.

PCCD VIVITROL GRANT: Deputy Warden Stephanie Smith reported the progress on the Vivitrol grant program funded by the DOC. She explained that the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter grant report showed 40% of the referrals were not grant eligible because of the type of charges and PCCD was made aware of the issue. Deputy Smith explained that Act 80 funding prohibits funding anyone with a violent criminal history, which includes inmates that have criminal history from 10 years prior. Commissioner Leinbach suggested the Prison Board send a letter to the Commonwealth after gathering the details to try to understand why an inmate with a violent criminal history could never use the program.

NCCHC ACCREDITATION: Deputy Warden Smith reported that the National Commission on Correctional Health Care (NCCHC) were onsite doing their accreditation process. She expects a report from them between March and April 2020.

**SOLICITOR'S REPORT**

None.

**COMMENTS FROM THE JAIL BOARD**

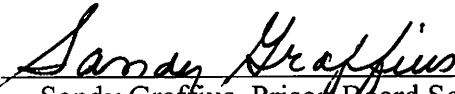
None.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

The Board moved to Executive session at 9:20 A.M. No action was taken.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The Board adjourned at 9:54 A.M. The next Prison Board meeting will be held February 26, 2020 in the Commissioners' Board Room on the 13th Floor of the Berks County Services Center.

  
Sandy Graffius, Prison Board Secretary