

BERKS COUNTY PRISON BOARD MINUTES AUGUST 22, 2018

The Berks County Prison Board met in a regular session on Wednesday, August 22, 2018 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:

Commissioner Kevin Barnhardt called the meeting to order at 9:01 A.M.

The following members were in attendance:

Commissioner Kevin Barnhardt
Commissioner Christian Leinbach
Controller Sandy Graffius
Judge Scott Lash

The following members were absent:

Commissioner Mark Scott
District Attorney John Adams
Sheriff Eric Weaknecht

The following County staff also attended:

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The May 9, 2018 and June 13, 2018 meeting minutes were approved as presented.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

JAIL SENIOR STAFF REPORTS

Chief Deputy Warden Jeffrey Smith stated the inmate population was 1,137. Of the population reported, 108 inmates were residing at the Community Reentry Center, 8 inmates were being held for Schuylkill County and 43 inmates were technical parole violators from the State. The mental health inmate population was 676, with 113 considered seriously mentally ill.

Chief Deputy Smith updated the Board on the status of the staffing. There were 7 correctional officer vacancies due to retirements, a termination, a resignation and a promotion. Testing was scheduled for September 13, 2018. Four candidates were scheduled for the academy on September 26, 2018. The next testing was scheduled for November 13, 2018 and the academy will tentatively begin January 30, 2019.

Chief Deputy Smith had one item for Executive session regarding personnel. No action necessary.

**BERKS COUNTY PRISON BOARD MINUTES
AUGUST 22, 2018**

2

Deputy Warden Kyle Russell reported on the progress of the project to replace the drainage culvert at the bottom of the main driveway. The invitation to bid was posted on August 13, 2018 and the pre-bid conference was scheduled for August 23, 2018. He explained that the main driveway will be shut down for up to a week and an alternate route to the Jail will give access to staff and professional visitors. The project is expected to begin in September.

Deputy Warden Stephanie Smith spoke about meeting Ken Lebron, Deputy Director of Veteran Affairs, in June to tour the Jail and discuss the programs that the County Veterans Association can offer. Ken Lebron was working on acquiring clearance for himself and volunteer clearance for Association members to provide 2 informational sessions for veteran inmates in September. Controller Graffius requested the Board elaborate on this initiative.

Commissioner Leinbach stated that this initiative is based on a program in Douglass County, Nebraska. He mentioned that there were over 30 veterans in the Berks County Jail and this initiative would help provide support and services to those veteran inmates. Commissioner Barnhardt added that this initiative aligns with the Behavioral Health Task Force as a special population.

Deputy Warden Smith explained that historically, the Jail identified inmates who served in the military, upon arrival. They sent the information to the Federal VA, who would follow up by interviewing inmates to verify information and check for eligibility for services. This initiative is aimed at enhancing this service by working with the County VA to coordinate application of services, provide informational sessions and setup veteran volunteer peer groups. Deputy Warden Smith stressed the importance of the education piece that will link veteran inmates to services to help them transition back into the community. Commissioner Leinbach added that the Federal and State VA offices do not share information to the County, so it is very difficult for the County VA department to identify veterans. A discussion took place about the importance of this program.

Deputy Warden Smith spoke about the stakeholders meeting, regarding policy and procedure reform, she attended with Warden Janine Quigley and Emily Scordellis, Mental Health Regional Manager of PrimeCare, at the Norristown State Hospital. The purpose of this meeting was to help decrease or eliminate wait time going into state hospitals for competency evaluation. Commissioner Barnhardt added that the meeting was segregated by elected officials, jail staff and mental health service providers. Deputy Warden Smith will be attending the follow-up meeting with all stakeholders in Harrisburg.

Commissioner Barnhardt spoke about the Behavioral Health Task force meeting he attended and the upcoming seminar at State College in December. The aim of the seminar will be to align the member's purpose and language with regards to mental health issues in the criminal justice system and to potentially discuss regional alternatives. The Task Force is recruiting teams of six from each county (with a member maximum of 300) from the offices of Pretrial Services, Public Defenders, District Attorneys, Courts and Jails. Commissioner Barnhardt spoke about the State's support of the Behavioral Health Task Force.

SOLICITOR'S REPORT

Solicitor Sadler updated the Board on the Justice System Needs Assessment and Analysis being conducted by CGL Companies, LLC. She stated that they were gathering information and conducting interviews with the Jail, District Attorney's office, Public Defender's office, Adult Probation, Berks County Pretrial Services (BCPS) and other departments. CGL will also be meeting with police departments and judges on their next visit.

Peggy Kershner, Co-Executive Director of BCPS, confirmed that CGL seemed to be digging deep and requesting the right kind of information. She added that CGL was impressed with the amount of documentation Berks County provided in a short period of time. Solicitor Sadler noted that the documentation, acquired by the summer intern from manually pulling documents, will be a critical part to CGL's assessment at the Jail. Solicitor Sadler summarized that CGL was making significant progress in gathering information for the analysis.

COMMENTS FROM THE JAIL BOARD

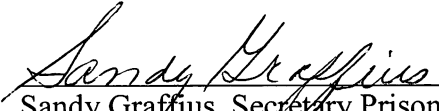
Deputy Warden Russell spoke about the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) complaint filed in the kitchen and explained the federal laws the Jail is required to follow. An investigation was completed and sent to the Internal PREA Committee, who determined that the staffing level was inadequate. Warden Quigley's response was to add two kitchen officers, per shift, for adequate supervision of inmates to prevent future occurrences. On behalf of Warden Quigley, Deputy Warden Russell asked the Board to make a motion supporting the request for five additional correctional officer positions to the Salary Board.

Commissioner Leinbach noted that some union positions were being switched from Teamsters to AFSCME and recommended that this factor be included with the issue before the Board considers this request. Commissioner Barnhardt suggested that the Prison Board send a recommendation to the Position Control Team, Ronald Seaman, Jessica Weaknecht and Robert Patrizio, to analyze the factors involved in the request and present a determination the following month. The Prison Board could then endorse their recommendation.

1. A motion was made by Commissioner Leinbach, seconded by Controller Graffius, to examine the request for additional correctional officer positions, due to a PREA investigation, while considering the recent positions that switched unions, to the Position Control Committee. The Board requests to receive a recommendation at the September Prison Board Meeting. Motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT

The Board adjourned at 9:28 A.M. into Executive session which adjourned at 9:32 A.M. The next Prison Board meeting will be held September 12, 2018 in the Special Operations Center at the Berks County Jail.


Sandy Graffius, Secretary Prison Board