

BERKS COUNTY PRISON BOARD MINUTES

JUNE 24, 2020

The Berks County Prison Board met in a regular session on Wednesday, June 24, 2020 at 9:00 A.M. in a Microsoft Teams Meeting.

CALL TO ORDER:

District Attorney 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 Commissioner Barnhardt, second by Controller Graffius to approve the May 27, 2020 meeting minutes as presented. Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

JAIL SENIOR STAFF REPORTS

INMATE POPULATION: Warden Janine Quigley stated the inmate population was 598. Of the population reported, 546 were male and 52 were female, which was up by about 30 individuals from the previous month. As anticipated, there was an increase in the number of commitments; from 149 in May to 167 as of June 23. There were 150 discharges which kept the population balanced.

The Warden said the video hearings and conferences were ramping up and to predict the resources needed in the future, they had to focus on the length of time events require instead of the number of events occurring. She gave the example of a 3 hour preliminary hearing. She expects to have an idea of what resources will be needed in a few months once the events become standard.

ANTIBODY TESTING: Warden Quigley announced that the antibody testing will not be used in the Jail because of CDC interim guidelines that were released around May 23. According to the guidelines, the antibody test results should not be used to make decisions about grouping persons

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or admitting persons in congruent settings. The Warden would consider antibody testing in the future if it becomes beneficial.

QUARANTINE UNIT: The Warden spoke about the quarantine units becoming full due to an increase of commitments and transport of inmates to the courts and medical appointments. To make room, individuals were relocated, and a second quarantine unit was opened for the overflow. Commissioner Leinbach read a question from Karen Shuey of the Reading Eagle: "Before Covid-19, was the Jail population around 910?" The Warden answered with the numbers of the average daily population per month: January 912, February 921; March 852; April 653; May 580.

ONSITE & VIDEO VISITATION: Warden Quigley said the Jail was receiving requests for onsite visits but because the Jail is a congruent care facility, they decided to keep the same protocol in place until September 1. In September, they will consider whether the Jail should start to reopen to the public. The Warden hoped to use video visitation as a supplement to keep the inmates connected with their families. There were electricians and contractors on site working on the tablet project so that most inmates will have access to a tablet for video visitation. They continued to provide free weekly phone calls and pre-paid envelopes and paper to keep them connected. They were also permitting legal representation to enter the Jail with an option of using phone conferences.

STAFFING: Chief Deputy Warden Jeffrey Smith updated the Board on the status of the staffing; there were 16 correctional officer vacancies; 15 custodial and 1 maintenance. Six cadets were enrolled in the academy. Their graduation date was scheduled for mid-July and the next correctional officer testing was scheduled in September.

FACILITIES & MAINTENANCE PROJECTS: Deputy Warden Mike Buono updated the Board on Facilities and Maintenance projects.

- The emergency electric switch gear replacement was complete. To avoid the risk of a fire, the sewage shed was torn down, a pad of concrete was laid, and the switch gear was replaced.
- The paving project was complete, which included a ramp and sidewalk for Door 8. A portion of the sidewalk was patched outside of Door 8 and around the turn in the parking lot which could be utilized by the bus company. A representative from the bus company reviewed the spot, confirmed sufficiency and was looking for a shelter that could be added to the bus route.
- The tablet project should have significant completion and potentially go live in the beginning of July. One of the project workers had a fever which may delay the project. Until they receive COVID-19 test results, the crew will not continue working onsite.
- Body scanners were installed in the booking area and by Door 8 which will check individuals for contraband. Several weeks will be required for training, registration with the State and policies approved before they can begin utilizing the two scanners.
- MetEd was onsite and planned to shut down the electricity to measure the cabinet for the PT and CT equipment that failed. When the new equipment is setup, the facility will be back on metered electric.
- CHM was onsite to work on the coping capping for the year's allotment.

Controller Graffius asked if the tablets were paid by the inmate account and if they will be sent home when they were released. The Warden explained that the funds were provided as part of the contract with GTL and will remain the property of the Jail. Commissioner Barnhardt asked if the body scanners can record body temperatures. Deputy Buono did not believe they did but would check with the company.

PUBLIC COMMENT: Commissioner Leinbach read a question from Karen Shuey of the Reading Eagle: “Had there been any COVID cases at the Jail?” The Warden said there was one confirmed case of COVID with an inmate and two confirmed cases with staff members.

District Attorney Adams spoke about trials stating the third jury trial was completed the day prior and compared to other counties, Berks County was ahead. Warden Quigley said the Jail had been responsive to what the Courts required and focused their resources to accomplish those tasks.

IN-CELL PROGRAMMING: Deputy Warden Stephanie Smith reported the in-cell programming for the general population was going well. They began in June starting with 48 inmates and had 66 inmates on the waiting list. They planned to bring back counselors on July 6, 2020 which should enroll about 30 inmates into programming.

VIVITROL GRANT: Deputy Smith explained that in January a letter was sent from the Board regarding the Vivitrol grant through PCCD and the limitations on violent offenders being able to access the program. On Monday, Deputy Smith received an email from PCCD indicating the restriction had changed. The grant was opened to any offender committed to the County Jail that had an opioid disorder or alcohol use disorder.

SOLICITORS REPORT: Solicitor Sadler stated an executive session was required and spoke about a meeting with the District Attorney and Warden regarding transportation of inmates to the Services Center. Solicitor Sadler explained, five out of seven individuals transported on a particular day were for finger printing purposes which requires inmates to be quarantined for 14 days when returned to the Jail. Before the COVID 19 epidemic, there were eight to ten individuals being transported for finger printing weekly. The Solicitor explained that regular intake of commitments and those transported for in-person court hearings and fingerprints combined, creates a space issue because they quickly fill the quarantine unit. The DA, Warden and Solicitor agreed that the process was not efficient.

Solicitor Sadler said Sheriff Weaknecht was willing to help the Jail get a CPAN live scan machine installed and assign Sheriff staff to process fingerprints at the Jail, potentially twice a week. The cost of the machine will be about \$37,000. Deputy Warden Buono, the Warden and the Solicitor were deciding the physical location the machine should be set up. Solicitor Sadler noted she had individual discussions with Commissioners and the majority of the Board supported the fiscal expenditure. District Attorney Adams added that every defendant required a fingerprinting for every case.

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EXECUTIVE SESSION: Solicitor Sadler required an executive session for two items for litigation and personnel purposes. The items did not require action.

SOLICITOR'S REPORT

Executive session items needed to be discussed requiring no action.

COMMENTS FROM THE JAIL BOARD

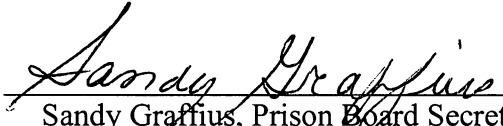
None.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

ADJOURNMENT

The Board adjourned at 9:23 A.M into Executive session which adjourned at 9:43 A.M. The next Prison Board meeting will be held in a Microsoft Teams Meeting on July 29, 2020.


Sandy Graffius, Prison Board Secretary