

**BERKS COUNTY PRISON BOARD MINUTES  
SEPTEMBER 29, 2021**

The Berks County Prison Board met in a regular session on Wednesday, September 29, 2021 at 9:00 A.M. in the Commissioners' Board Room on the 13<sup>th</sup> Floor for the Berks County Services Center, pursuant to the due notice to Board member and the public. This meeting was also available on Microsoft Teams.

**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  
Judge Scott Lash

The following members were absent:

Secretary Sandra Graffius  
Sheriff Eric J Weaknecht

The following County staff also attended:

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

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A motion was made to approve the July 28th, 2021 meeting minutes as presented. Motion carried.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

None.

**JAIL SENIOR STAFF REPORTS**

**INMATE POPULATION:** Warden Jeffrey Smith stated the inmate population was 778. There is one juvenile being held in Chester County and two juveniles being held in Lehigh County. There are 5 veterans in custody. There are 40 inmates sentenced to SCI. Ten are scheduled to leave by November 12. Twenty-five are waiting for a transport date. The remaining 5 have outstanding local cases and cannot be transported yet.

**FACILITIES & MAINTENANCE PROJECTS:** Warden Jeffrey Smith updated on the outstanding Capital Projects from 2020.

A/B Visitation glass is arriving today. When the lock arrives, the project will be completed.

End Cell & HVAC Project is waiting on NRG to install controls.

2021 Capital Projects:

Jail driveway lights, interior lights on Bravo unit, conduit replacement on the roof. Waiting on the Costars. Will most likely be moved to 2022 projects.

NVR's- working with the Information Systems team to finalize the demos of two vendors. The board will have conversations after that.

**NEWS:** Warden Jeffrey Smith updated on CGL's Organization Review that was distributed in August.

- CGL recommended the elimination of the Deputy Warden of Operations – The position was eliminated and approved by the Salary Board on September 16th.
- CGL recommended that the Facility Manager and facility maintenance function be elevated and be a direct report to Warden Jeffrey Smith. Facility Maintenance directly reporting to Warden Smith was done shortly after the Warden took his position in March. The Warden is currently working with HR to revise the Facility Manager Functions.
- CGL recommended elevating the Business Office function to directly report to the Warden. This was implemented in March.
- CGL recommended transferring the supervision of the kitchen operation from the Deputy Warden of Operations to the Deputy Warden of Treatment. This was done in March.
- CGL recommended to transfer the oversight of the Jail's Information Services needs to the Deputy Warden of Custody. This was done in March.
- CGL recommended reclassifying the Captain's position due to the redundancy in the Captain and Deputy Warden of Custody positions. The position of Captain overseeing Custody was eliminated and the creation of the Captain of Specialized Services was created on 9/16 and approved by Salary Board.
- The (3) remaining recommendations are dependent on contract negotiations and the Board's decision on CGL.

- Waiting to hear back from CGL on their facility assessment. They will be providing cost models. Warden Jeffrey Smith is hoping to invite CGL to the November Prison Board Meeting.

**GTL-FCC Mandate-**

- The FCC came out with new guidance and regulations to what the county can charge for inmate telephone calls.
  - Some of the provisions of the order include lowering the interim interstate rates for prisons and jails with an ADP above 1000.
  - Eliminating the separate cap on collect calls.
  - Maximum rates of commission (.14 for prisons, .16 for jails with ADP above 1000, and .21 for jails under 1000 ADP.)
  - Sets 3<sup>rd</sup> party transaction fee caps for single call services to \$6.95.
  - 90-day implementation period for all facilities (October 26, 2021.)
- The solicitor and Warden Jeffrey Smith met with GTL to discuss the proposal and how it impacts the commissions. Warden Jeffrey Smith asked the Prison Board recommend to the Commissioners that they approve the contract modification with the new rates of \$.10/ min for local, \$.14/min for Intrastate, \$.14/min for interstate prepaid, \$.14/min for interstate collect, the 3<sup>rd</sup> party transaction fee to \$6.95 and set Berks commissions to \$.04/min on all domestic calling.
- The belief is the change will result in an increase in revenue that will offset the cost of the new video visitation program that we plan to implement in the near future.

The Prison Board voted on the recommendation to implement the new FCC guidelines and the motion was carried.

**PROGRAMS:** Deputy Warden Stephanie Smith updated the Board on the status of the educational services offered to the inmates. Schuylkill Valley School District and IU entered into a one-year extension agreement to cover this current school year. The IU will continue to provide services at the jail. Discussions will be held at the end of October regarding the 2022-2023 school year.

Covid vaccines are still being encouraged in the jail. Some adjustments have been made in the incentive program. This change has tripled the interested from inmates.

**STAFFING:** Deputy Warden Jeffrey Schearer updated the Board on the status of the staffing; there were 26 correctional officer vacancies. There are 6 cadettes in the academy with a graduation date of November 10. There are 4 interviews being conducted today and 4 interviews tomorrow. The next testing date is October 13. Successful applicants will start the academy November 24. There were a few applications taken for Correctional Officers and a few for Administration at the job fair. Overall the job fair was successful.

**SOLICITOR'S REPORT**

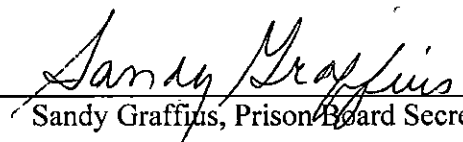
Solicitor Sadler had nothing to report.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

None.

**ADJOURNMENT**

A motion was made by Commissioner Barnhardt to adjourn at 9:13 A.M. The next Prison Board meeting will be held on October 27, 2021.

  
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Sandy Graffius, Prison Board Secretary