

BERKS COUNTY PRISON BOARD MINUTES OCTOBER 30, 2019

The Berks County Prison Board met in a regular session on Wednesday, October 30, 2019 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 9:00 A.M.

The following members were in attendance:

Commissioner Kevin Barnhardt
Commissioner Christian Leinbach
Controller Sandra Graffius
District Attorney John Adams
Judge Scott Lash

The following members were absent:

Commissioner Mark Scott
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 July 31, 2019 meeting minutes were approved as presented. The August and September meetings were cancelled due to lack of quorum.

The 2020 meeting schedule was presented to the Board for approval.

A motion was made by Commissioner Leinbach, seconded by Controller Graffius, and all voted unanimously to approve the 2020 Prison Board meeting schedule. Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

JAIL SENIOR STAFF REPORTS

INMATE POPULATION: Warden Janine Quigley stated the inmate population was 1,057. Of the population reported, 140 were female, 114 were residing at the Community Reentry Center and 5 were juveniles held in Chester County. Warden Quigley noted that the female population was trending down towards the normal average of 120.

Warden Quigley announced that two inmates passed the GED high school equivalency test, administered by the BCIU. She explained that completing and passing the GED in the Jail was difficult because inmates are usually released before finishing the program.

**BERKS COUNTY PRISON BOARD MINUTES
OCTOBER 30, 2019**

2

Commissioner Leinbach requested an updated summary of the population statistics including mental health and veteran inmates for a meeting at the White House the following day.

Commissioner Barnhardt requested the monthly population reports be adjusted to include separate lines for veteran and severe mental health inmates.

VETERAN INMATES: Commissioner Leinbach shared a conversation he had with a volunteer who participates in the Jail Veteran Program. He questioned why some veteran inmates did not want to participate. Warden Quigley was told, some inmates did not want to miss recreation time, which prompted the Jail to adjust the schedule so they could meet with volunteers. Other veteran inmates were not interested in the program. The Warden spoke about the positive impact of the program and gave an example of how it helped an inmate post release. She explained that the program was run by volunteers and changed to allow inmates to talk about their experiences.

Commissioner Leinbach asked for verification that veterans lose their healthcare benefits from the first day in Jail. The Warden confirmed that the County takes the responsibility of inmate healthcare immediately. A discussion took place about the ongoing efforts throughout the State to address benefits for the pretrial population. They also spoke about outcomes of the efforts, such as suspension versus termination of inmate's Medicaid benefits and the updated online platform that shortened the application process and verifies inmates more efficiently.

STAFFING: Chief Deputy Smith updated the Board on the status of the staffing; there were seven correctional officer vacancies and two sergeant vacancies. Eight cadets were enrolled in the academy and were scheduled to graduate January 21, 2019. The next correctional officer testing was scheduled December 3, 2019.

FOOD VENDORS: Deputy Warden Mike Buono spoke about the recent food vendor issues; he was notified on October 2, 2019 that the food vendor was not able to deliver the scheduled months' worth of food, due to filing for bankruptcy. The cancelled delivery was expected the following day. Deputy Buono pointed out that Kitchen Supervisor Sergeant Tassone's preparation for natural disasters allowed the Jail to continue to provide meals to inmates for a period without an incoming food source.

The Purchasing department worked with the Jail to find a replacement vendor to avoid impacting the inmates. The current vendor was more expensive which may have an impact on the food budget. The old food vendor had very competitive prices. Purchasing planned to go against the bond to try to recoup some of the costs which will last about 6 months.

VIVITROL PROGRAM: Deputy Warden Stephanie Smith updated the Board about the Vivitrol program, funded by PCCD. She reported the program was fully staffed, injections were administered in November and the first reports were submitted and accepted. Overall, the program was going well.

SOLICITOR'S REPORT

Solicitor Sadler reported they had an arbitration the previous month for a discipline case of excessive use of force. A decision should be received within 30 days. Another arbitration was being scheduled for a violation of work conduct rules.

Solicitor Sadler reported they were in the process of negotiating with Teamsters for a new contract that will expire at the end of this calendar year.

COMMENTS FROM THE JAIL BOARD

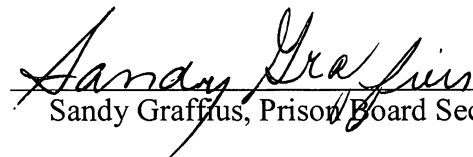
None.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

None.

ADJOURNMENT

The Board adjourned at 9:14 A.M. The next Prison Board meeting will be held November 27, 2019 in the Commissioners' Board Room on the 13th Floor of the Berks County Services Center.


Sandy Graffius, Prison Board Secretary