

**BERKS COUNTY JAIL SYSTEM
PRISON BOARD MEETING MINUTES**

April 9, 2025

The Berks County Prison Board met in a regular session on Wednesday, April 9, 2025, at 9:00 A.M. at the Berks County Jail System and via Microsoft Teams.

Judge Lash called the meeting to order at 9:00 A.M.

NOTICE:

Public comment will be accepted in person and through the Q&A function. Please include your first name, last name and municipality for all comments. Any comments without name and municipality will not be considered. Each citizen can submit one comment. Comment length is dictated by limitations of the platform being used (Teams Q&A). In person comments will be accepted first, followed by comments submitted virtually. The meeting comment period is limited to a total of 30 minutes including both in person and virtual comments. This time period may be extended at the discretion of the Board. Please be concise. Comments that are germane to County business will be read during the meeting and should not be considered to be interactive dialog with the Board. The County Solicitor shall be the final arbiter of whether a comment is germane and should be read. Any response to public comment will be done at the discretion of the Board.

The following members were in attendance:

- Judge Scott Lash
- Commissioner Dante Santoni, Jr.
- Controller Joe Rudderow
- Sheriff Mandy P. Miller
- Commissioner Christian Leinbach
- Commissioner Michael Rivera
- District Attorney John Adams

The following County staff were in attendance:

- Warden Jeffrey Smith
- Deputy Warden Bradley Roberts
- Deputy Warden Stephanie Smith
- Deputy Warden Franco Tassone, Jr.
- County Solicitor Christine Sadler
- Chief Human Resources Officer Jessica Weaknecht
- Chief Clerk Amanda Bentzel

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The March 12, 2025, meeting minutes were approved as presented.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS

No comments.

AGENDA ITEMS

1. Jail Senior Staff members gave the following reports:

Warden Report

Today's Population – 715 including 3 Juveniles
(1 housed in Lehigh County and 2 housed in Wayne County)

Year To Date:

Average Daily Population – 700 inmates (for March 2025) Total
Commitments – 1016
Total Discharges – 1010

Inmates Sentenced to an SCI:

29 inmates are sentenced to an SCI.
10 are ready to be transported to an SCI between now and April 24, 2025.
19 inmates are either awaiting a transport date or pending other charges.

Current state of affairs

Since the last Prison Board meeting, the Jail has discharged 10 individuals who had detainers issued by ICE in the past 30 days. Every individual that ICE was notified about was picked up. Currently, there are 19 individuals at the jail who are either awaiting a transport date or pending other charges.

The VERA Institute of Justice is working with Building Justice in Berks and the Real Deal 610 and will be releasing a report on the jail system on May 1, 2025 that will highlight information from the individuals they have interviewed, the costs of detention, and their key takeaways. Last year, the jail provided the VERA Institute data in response to a right-to-know request.

Deputy Warden of Operations Report

Project Update:

All remaining quotes for 2025 projects have been submitted. Burkhardt Mechanical began installation of three tankless water heaters, one for the I, J, and K units. Bartlett Tree Service began pruning trees at the Heister Mansion entrance in preparation for closing the main driveway to the jail for the paving project. We are waiting on a start date from SJ Thomas to begin the remodeling of the public restrooms in the lobby area and the officer's restrooms. The recreational fencing was completed on Wednesday, March 19, 2025, along with the replacement of the L and M yard doors. The cadets are in their 11th week of training, with one week left before graduation.

**Deputy Warden
Custody Report****Staffing Update:**

There are currently 7 Correctional Officer vacancies and 6 Sergeant vacancies. The next testing date is April 17, 2025, with a new academy start date of the end of May 2025. There are 10 cadets in the academy with a tentative graduation on April 23, 2025.

Deputy Warden of Treatment Report**Programming Update:**

There are currently 93 D roster individuals in custody. This makes up 13% of the total population. The combined C and D active mental health roster makes up 62% of the total population. 19 individuals were sentenced and made eligible for work release per their sentencing order. There was an average Trusty population of 29 and 10 individuals were newly classified as Trusty.

At the end of March, one individual was waiting to go to Norristown for competency restoration, one was waiting to go to Norristown for treatment, and 2 were waiting to go to Wernersville. In March, there were zero admissions to Norristown for competency restoration and two admissions to Norristown for treatment. There were zero admissions to Wernersville. The individuals sent to Norristown for treatment waited an average of 13 days to be admitted after their order. There are currently 11 individuals at Norristown; 4 are there for competency restoration and 7 are there for treatment.

The PennDOT ID Program began accepting referrals on March 17, 2025. In March we received 100 referrals, processed 50 applications, and issued ten vouchers for individuals who were not eligible for a ID/DL copy. After release, they will be able to go to a PennDOT location to receive an ID/DL at no cost to them.

Solicitor's Report

No items for Executive Session. The interest arbitration hearing was held and are awaiting the decision.

Comments from the Prison Board

A discussion was held in reference to the ICE detainer policy. It was noted that inmates are usually picked up by ICE within 24 hours in Berks County. If the ICE policy is not followed, there could be a loss of FEMA funding.

A motion was made by District Attorney Adams and seconded by Commissioner Leinbach to amend the length of time the Jail holds ICE detainees to conform with the time period requested by ICE officials. Further discussion occurred. The motion carried.

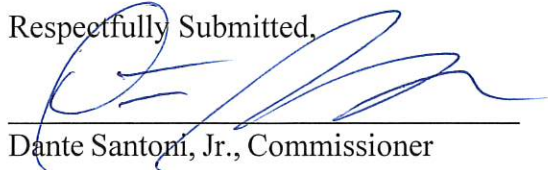
PUBLIC COMMENT

No comments.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Judge Lash adjourned the meeting at 9:17 AM.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Dante Santoni, Jr.", written over a horizontal line.

Dante Santoni, Jr., Commissioner
Prison Board Secretary