

**BERKS COUNTY PRISON BOARD MINUTES
NOVEMBER 27, 2019**

The Berks County Prison Board met in a regular session on Wednesday, November 27, 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
Sheriff Eric Weaknecht

The following members were absent:

Commissioner Mark Scott

The following County staff also attended:

Solicitor Christine Sadler
Human Resources Director Jessica Weaknecht

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The October 30, 2019 meeting minutes were approved as presented.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

JAIL SENIOR STAFF REPORTS

INMATE POPULATION: Warden Janine Quigley stated the inmate population was 942. Of the population reported, 108 were female and 4 were juveniles held in Chester County. Warden Quigley noted that the female population decreased compared to the peak of 168 in July. Warden Quigley directed the Board to the information added to the population summary sheet requested at the prior meeting; mental health stability roster rating, number of veteran inmates and juveniles in Chester County.

TEXT BEHIND CONTRACT: Warden Quigley spoke about the TextBehind service that was implemented the prior year to prevent contraband from entering the Jail through the mail. She explained that incoming mail was scanned and printed at TextBehind, then delivered in bulk to the Jail so inmates could receive a copy of their mail. In the renewal contract, TextBehind proposed providing printers to the Jail to avoid bulk delivery which required no additional work from the County.

However, about 15 money orders are received weekly, which are currently forwarded to the Jail. TextBehind does not wish to receive or be responsible for the money orders. Warden Quigley asked the Board if the Jail should eliminate money orders from coming in physically, like many other Jails. She noted, those sending money orders may not have access to the internet or transportation. However, if the Jail accepted the money orders directly, they would still have the risk of contraband entering the Jail.

Solicitor Sadler pointed out that assuming the risk is part of TextBehind's service and another option is to push back on the proposal. After discussion, Commissioner Leinbach asked that they push back on the contract proposal and require TextBehind to continue forwarding the money orders to the Jail. The Warden added that Paul Bradshaw, Assistant County Solicitor, sent an email to the vendor requesting an extension of the contract to continue services until the changes were worked out.

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, 2020. The next correctional officer testing was scheduled December 3, 2019. The next academy was tentatively scheduled for January 29, 2020.

Commissioner Leinbach asked about the staff that was gained from the CRC being closed. Solicitor Sadler explained that the staff from the CRC helps to fill posts but does not help the overall headcount. The Warden added that there was a reduction of two full time posts which reduces drafting and overtime. She explained at the start of a shift 40 people are on duty per shift compared to 42 with the CRC. A lot of time, those two people that were being paid per shift were drafting numbers.

RENOVATION UPDATES: Deputy Warden Mike Buono reported the recently completed renovation projects: smoke detector installation for laundry and old education, emergency power for the negative airflow cells in medical and mansion roof patchwork. Deputy Buono reported the start of the old jail slate roof replacement.

SOLICITOR'S REPORT

CGL PROPOSAL: Solicitor Sadler reported that an additional proposal had been received from CGL that would need to be executed by the Commissioners. A discussion will take place at a Budget Operations meeting tentatively scheduled for December 12, 2019. This will be a follow-up meeting to the workshop in September to discuss the goals regarding the proposed contract. Solicitor Sadler invited the Prison Board to join the discussion about setting financial goals and looking at costs. Solicitor Sadler noted that Rick Davidson from CGL was willing to come in to answer questions and provide any clarification needed.

Commissioner Leinbach expressed concern and explained that CGL will charge \$500,000 to help the County through the process and an architectural firm will most likely charge between 10-15% of the entire project. These costs could total three-quarters to a million dollars before a shovel is put into the ground. He wanted the Commissioners to think carefully before signing a contract for the large sum of money.

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PRIMECARE CONTRACT RENEWAL: Solicitor Sadler announced that Todd Haskins from PrimeCare was present to talk about the change in the renewal contract for medical services. Solicitor Sadler stated that the contract proposes a Nursing Supervisor position at the Jail. She explained that PrimeCare had been assuming the cost over the past several years without adding it to the overall cost of services. This position was added at the same time additional mental health staff was placed in the medical department. They have asked the County to assume the cost for this position which is about \$92,000 per year. Further discussion regarding personnel will take place in the executive session.

Solicitor Sadler has items for executive session regarding personnel, litigation and contract negotiations. No action will be required.

COMMENTS FROM THE JAIL BOARD

None.

PUBLIC COMMENT

VETERAN INMATES: Joseph Jaafari from the PA Post raised a question regarding veteran inmates. Commissioner Barnhardt clarified that the current veteran inmate population was 26. Mr. Jaafari mentioned the Veterans Treatment Core program and asked if the veteran inmates were pretrial or currently convicted. The Warden did not have that data and was not sure what stage in the process the current veteran inmates were in. She pointed out that the 26 veteran inmates were the number of identified veterans in the Jail, some do not identify as veterans.

The Warden explained that once an inmate is entered into the system and identified as a veteran, they are linked with other resources: Berks County Veteran Affairs office and Lebanon Veterans Affairs office. These offices begin interviews to help veterans get on track and show them how to get benefits. Through this process, a program was developed where volunteers visit once a month, 8 sessions per inmate, to deliver topics to the group of veterans who want to attend. There were currently 16-17 inmates that attended these sessions. The program now includes one-on-one mentoring so inmates can talk to other veterans. Mr. Jaafari responded that it sounded similar to services Vet Core provides. He asked if the contract was with the Veteran's Justice Coordinator at the VA. The Warden confirmed that was correct.

The Warden stated Veterans Court was handled through the County Probation office. Mr. Jaafari asked how many veterans refuse to go to court. Solicitor Sadler answered that this was handled through the Courts and the Prison would not necessarily know this information. District Attorney Adams pointed out that some veteran inmates may be facing serious charges with a potential state prison sentence. He added, the juveniles are all on pretrial.

PROCESSING AND ROOM & BOARD FEES: Mr. Jaafari asked if there had been a conversation about whether collecting fines and fees was still effective considering there is little intake as far as getting back processing fees. Warden Quigley explained that there is a flat processing fee and not all inmates are charged room and board. Mr. Jaafari pointed out the work release inmates are charged room and board. The Warden confirmed that was correct.

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Mr. Jaafari asked if there was a problem collecting the processing fee, if there had been talk of lowering the fee and how to address nonpayment. The Warden responded that the Jail had not done a full analysis on the topic but was open to one, at the Board's request. The Warden explained that there was a \$50 processing fee per commitment. In the 1990s, there used to be a daily fee of \$10 a day for room and board but it was changed to a \$50 processing fee. Commissioner Leinbach requested a report to show the ratio of inmates that paid the processing fee, for the next meeting.


Mr. Jaafari requested clarification about the work release fees for room and board. He referenced the inmate handbook, saying an inmate was responsible for paying a \$10 daily fee and the weekly fee, which was \$75 for first week and \$50 for each following week. The Warden clarified that the room and board fee was \$50 per week, which broke down to \$10 for each day that the inmate worked. The \$10 was not added to the \$50 weekly room and board fee. She explained that the first week of the room and board fee was \$75 because it was like a withholding. Mr. Jaafari verified that the fees were taken out after taxes were deducted and the Warden confirmed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

The Board moved to Executive session at 9:23 A.M. until 10:30 A.M. for personnel, litigation and contract negotiation topics. No action was taken.

ADJOURNMENT

The Board adjourned at 10:30 A.M. The next Prison Board meeting will be held December 18, 2019 in the Special Operations Center at the Berks County Jail.



Sandy Graffius, Prison Board Secretary