

BERKS COUNTY PRISON BOARD MINUTES

OCTOBER 27, 2021

The Berks County Prison Board met in a regular session on Wednesday, October 27, 2021 at 9:10 A.M. in the Commissioners' Board Room on the 13th 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 9:10 A.M.

The following members were in attendance:

Commissioner Christian Leinbach
Commissioner Michael Rivera
Commissioner Kevin Barnhardt
District Attorney John Adams
Judge Scott Lash
Secretary Sandra Graffius

The following members were absent:

Sheriff Eric J Weaknecht

The following County staff also attended:

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion was made to approve the September 29, 2021 meeting minutes as presented. Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

JAIL SENIOR STAFF REPORTS

INMATE POPULATION: Warden Jeffrey Smith stated the inmate population was 741. There are 3 juveniles being held in Lehigh County. There are 7 veterans in custody. There are 54 inmates sentenced to SCI. Thirty-three are scheduled to leave by December 28, 2021. Nineteen are waiting for a transport date. The remaining 2 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 work is scheduled for November 3rd. It is estimated to take 8 days. Jail staff will install the lock once it arrives and the project will then be complete. This project has been ongoing since 2018.

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

2021 Capital Projects:

Water pump and expansion tanks (heating/hot water)- waiting for parts to arrive then Berkshire Mechanical will be onsite.

NVR's- working with the Information Systems team. Waiting for updated quotes and then will proceed with recommendations on the preferred vendor.

STAFFING: Warden Jeffrey Smith updated the Board on the status of the staffing; there were 29 Correctional Officer vacancies. Twenty-six in Custody and 3 in Maintenance. There are 2 Sergeant vacancies. There are 5 cadettes in the Academy with a tentative graduation date of November 12th. There are 11 Correctional Officer candidates currently in the background check process with a tentative start date of November 24th. The next testing date is scheduled for December 7th.

Due to the staffing issues a letter was sent to all the District Judges asking for consideration when figuring out sentences. Some housing units are being shut down and consolidation of inmates.

PROGRAMS: Deputy Warden Stephanie Smith updated the Board regarding COVID vaccines. The staff continues to offer an incentive program. There is an increase interest and voluntary vaccination in the population.

There was some conversation with COCA and Primecare regarding the offering of Narcan to inmates returning to the community. A plan being put together for Primecare to administer the program and to identify inmates that are interested and eligible. There is no cost for this to the county. The program is voluntary and based on need.

The Berks County Jail has a partnership with BCPS for reentry work. They are currently seeking a grant through United Way and the jail has provided a letter of support for their application.

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COMPLIANT: There was a complaint from a nearby neighbor about the Jail's shooting range that is being done around 7:00 PM in the evening. The neighbor is wondering if the time of that practice could be changed.

Since the Jail does not train staff later in the evening it was determined to be other agencies that are doing lowlight training. Warden Smith will investigate this issue further.

SCHEDULE: After a discussion about the schedule for the 2022 Prison Board meetings, it has been determined that the schedule will be every 2nd Wednesday starting in January 2022.

SOLICITOR'S REPORT

Solicitor Sadler had nothing to report. No need for executive session.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Commissioner Barnhardt to adjourn at 9: 24 A.M. The next Prison Board meeting will be held on November 17, 2021.

Sandy Graffius

Sandy Graffius, Prison Board Secretary