

DRAFT
Prison Reform Advisory Board
Meeting Minutes

February 5, 2019
10:00 am – 1:00 pm
Warren Correctional Institution

Board Members Attending: Beth Austin, Art Beeler, Stanley Drewery, Stephanie Hollembaek, and Mike Killmer

Department of Public Safety Officials Attending: Reuben Young, Casandra Hoekstra, Pam Cashwell, Jodi Harrison, Jane Gilchrist, Chris Holland, Kenneth Lassiter, Tracy Little, Annie Harvey, Loris Sutton, Twyla Philyaw, Diana Kees, Jerry Higgins, John Bull, Sarah Cobb and Robert Leon

Chair Austin and Interim Chief Deputy Secretary Reuben Young welcomed everyone and thanked Warren Correctional staff for hosting the meeting.

CDS Young introduced Chris Holland, a new Deputy Secretary overseeing Health Services and Correction Enterprises. CDS Young also announced that Tracy Little had been promoted to Deputy Secretary and along with her leadership in Prison Reform, she will now have oversight of Adult Correction and Juvenile Justice Human Resources and Budget.

Board members and NCDPS officials introduced themselves.

A motion to approve the Nov. 14, 2018 meeting minutes was made by Art Beeler and seconded by Stanley Drewery. Minutes were approved as presented.

The Board heard two presentations related to current operations and initiatives. Copies of the presentations can be found on the DPS Prison Reform [website](#).

Tony Taylor, Director of the Special Operations and Intelligence Unit, provided a presentation on the section to include Operations, Communications and Intelligence:

- Operations involves sworn task force officers participating in high risk fugitive apprehension training, training in firearms laws, tactics, raid planning and case preparation, prison escapes, investigation, action and security regarding threats, high risk entry to residences, surveillance of wanted offenders or criminal suspects, and interview/interrogation of felony level suspects.
- Communications involves the Division of Criminal Information (DCI) which provides warrant and wanted person information and emergency parole holds, a dispatch center which utilizes the VIPER radio system to provide 24/7 radio communication and sharing criminal record information with field staff. There are also inmate telephone investigators who process legal requests and provide offender call information. Lastly, there is extradition that monitors expired absconder cases, all out of state and federal parole detainee cases and coordinates extradition missions for NCDPS.

- Intelligence section duties include suspicious activity reports (SARs), hotline complaints, background workups, validation of Security Risk Groups (SRGs) and cell phone reception, extraction and data reports.

Deputy Secretary Little provided a presentation on Prison Safety and Security Updates. Ms. Little presented information based on the following strategic plan framework categories:

Enhancing Security Policies and Practices

- Deployment of standard safety package (radios, batons and pepper spray) is nearly complete. This will fully equip certified correction officers and case managers in facilities at all custody levels.
- Distributed more than 10,000 stab resistant vests for certified staff at all but two facilities.
- Received demos of personal body alarm “man down” technology at one of three pilot facilities.
- Effective February 5th, a modified policy has been implemented to restrict depositors to offender accounts. Deposits will be restricted to approved visitors only.
- Continuing unannounced security assessments by auditors from central office. Eighteen unannounced assessments were completed in 2018; the auditors will assess all facilities in 2019.
- Deploying nine portable guard towers to improve safety and security on facility offender recreation yards.

Reducing Contraband in Prison Facilities

- Utilizing managed access radio frequency technology to detect, intercept, and block use of unauthorized cellphones. Six assessments using mobile managed access completed thus far; will conduct 30 total. Installing stationary equipment at two locations.

Improving Training for New and Veteran Employees

- Moved to six weeks of Basic Correctional Officer Training, effective January 2019.
- Scheduled leadership development workshop facilitated by Gary Mohr. The workshop is to focus on identifying challenging issues and recommending solutions as a team.
- Initiated Back to Basics training concept across the state. Train the trainer sessions were conducted in three regions; scheduled for late February in fourth region.

Increasing Hiring and Retention

- Returned interview process for correctional officers to facilities. All facilities are conducting interviews effective Jan. 1, 2019.
- Effective Jan. 1, 2019, suspended use of Correctional Officer Physical Abilities Test (COPAT). The agency is working to implement an alternative measure of physical ability to perform job functions.

- Implemented an Employee Recognition Program to honor employees for exemplary service on the job and in the community. Statewide recognition set for February 2019.

Communicating with Internal and External Stakeholders

- Developing digital recruitment strategy. Public rollout is expected in the first quarter of 2019.
- Adding a second communications officer to work directly with Prisons. Additional staff capacity will allow for opportunities to promote “good news” stories of what’s happening inside facilities and more timely posts on social media.

Mr. Drewery and Mr. Beeler expressed congratulations to Ms. Little on her recent promotion.

Mr. Beeler asked if data is available as to the number of assaults at minimum custody facilities, and Ms. Little indicated staff would provide the information. Mr. Beeler also asked if the unannounced assessments include vulnerability assessments. Prisons Assistant Director Loris Sutton responded that they do not at this time; however, it is something that can be considered in the future.

Mr. Beeler requested reports on the hiring/retention and vacancy rate trends, and Mr. Killmer requested information on employee separations and the reasons behind them.

Drew Stanley, Warden at Warren Correctional Institution, provided an overview of the facility and introduced management team members.

Warren Correctional Institution is designated as a male, medium-custody facility. The population consists of 702 regular population beds, 42 restrictive housing beds, 9 minimum custody beds, and 10 protective custody cells. There are more than 300 permanent staff positions consisting of custody, food service, programs, medical, dental, mental health, administration and maintenance personnel.

Prisons Deputy Director Sarah Cobb facilitated member engagement questions with the staff of Warren Correctional. The questions and responses were as follows:

Question: Mr. Beeler asked how much emphasis is on programs at Warren Correctional.

Answer: Staff responded that the facility encourages participation in programs to benefit offenders, such as GED, vocational trade, alcohol and chemical dependency, self-help courses and evidence-based programs to help offenders make a positive change in their lives.

Question: Ms. Hollembaek asked about food service and special diets. What special diets are currently offered to offenders?

Answer: Staff responded that vegan, kosher, bland, soft mechanical and specific calorie diets are available. The offender must request the diet, then the dietitians review their medical chart and determine if the diet is appropriate. The medical doctor must then agree and approve the diet. Chaplaincy or other designated religious services staff are also involved when a request for a special diet is associated with an offender’s religion.

Question: Mr. Killmer asked about program graduation events and whether offender families are offered the opportunity to attend. Also, are vocational training and college level courses offered to the offenders?

Answer: Staff responded that offenders' families are invited to attend all the annual graduation events. Warren also partners with Vance-Granville Community College to offer training and courses.

Question: Mr. Killmer asked if climate surveys were done for staff.

Answer: Staff responded no official survey is done, but daily interaction and communication are in place and facility management stated this helps them gauge where the prison stands in terms of employee morale.

Question: Mr. Drewery asked how many veteran staff were employed at Warren Correctional.

Answer: Staff responded most employee separations are less experienced staff and that they feel it takes longer to develop a sense of loyalty and ownership with these jobs, with younger staff. Warren staff also indicated they are finding that they need to interact with younger staff differently and continue to develop training programs to meet their needs.

Question: Mr. Beeler asked the staff to explain what makes them want to come to work and what they would change at their facility or within DPS.

Answer: An employee stated that "the ability to assist offenders is why I come to work. I have parents call me and thank me for doing my job." Staff also indicated they have an administrator they can talk with, and that helps them be successful.

A second employee indicated that it would be helpful if there could be more personnel to train new staff as offenders today are different and much younger now. Staff indicated they try to teach new staff, help them to know what to expect, and how to stay safe.

Question: Chair Austin asked staff how the new prison initiatives have helped them do their jobs.

Answer: Staff responded that additional cameras have helped in reviewing video footage from offender incidents, such as physical altercations. The stab resistant vests have required some adjustments, and staff are looking forward to receiving the new man down equipment to improve communication.

An additional staff member responded that she enjoyed her job with Correction Enterprises, and that she has a passion to help offenders return to society. She said she enjoys teaching offenders and giving them the tools to help them be successful outside of prison.

Warden Stanley expressed his thanks for the initiatives. He indicated staff want to feel safe and the mirrors, cameras, batons and whistles are helping. Further, he noted the changes in the offender disciplinary policy helped staff gain more control of the offender population.

Mr. Drewery acknowledged his association with the State Employees Association of North Carolina (SEANC). He said that he had been a member for 37 years and is involved because he has the opportunity to help state employees. He thanked the staff for all they do each day.

Question: Ms. Hollembaek asked the staff how they keep the communication flowing. Do they feel that there are things that can be done to improve this?

Answer: Staff responded that communication is very good at Warren Correctional. Mr. Stanley commented that conference calls between Prisons leadership and facility heads have been very helpful and that the agency needs to continue to take advantage of technology to share information in a timely manner.

Question: Mr. Beeler asked how many mental health offenders at Warren are currently on psychiatric meds, how staff manage these offenders when a crisis happens and how many are in restrictive housing.

Answer: Staff responded that on average approximately 200 mental health offenders are on meds. In times of crisis, Central Prison is called to help triage the situation. Less than half of these offenders are in restrictive housing.

Question: Ms. Hollembaek asked how the staff manages its chronic care clinic.

Answer: Staff stated chronic care can include TB, seizures, hepatitis, cardiovascular or other medical conditions. Assessments are done on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Medications and lab work are ordered as needed. Out of 700 offenders, approximately 300 are on the chronic care caseload.

Chair Austin thanked Sarah Cobb for facilitating the member engagement Q&A session. She also encouraged the Board members to share with DPS leadership what they would like to discuss in future board meetings.

Mr. Beeler stated he would like further clarification of the role of the Special Operations and Intelligence Unit, such as how do wardens received day-to-day intelligence information. Ms. Little responded the agency would provide the requested information.

Mr. Killmer asked Ms. Little to provide specifics on how contraband is getting into facilities and what types of contraband is the most prevalent.

Mr. Beeler asked about the management structure of Health Services, and Ms. Little responded that she would ask Deputy Secretary Holland to provide this information.

Chair Austin stated that the future 2019 Board meeting dates are May 22, August 20, and October 23.

Chief Deputy Secretary Young thanked all the staff and management for their attendance and all that they do each day. He stated that there have been a lot of positive things that have come from having these meetings.

Chair Austin thanked Warden Stanley for hosting the meeting at Warren Correctional and adjourned the meeting at 12:49 pm.