

**Prison Reform Advisory Board
Meeting Minutes**

June 19, 2018

9:00 am - 12:30 pm

Governor's Crime Commission – Room #100

Board Members Attending: Beth Austin, Art Beeler, Stanley Drewery, James French, Stephanie Hollembaek, Mike Killmer, Dorothy Ledford, Gary Mohr

Department of Public Safety Officials Attending: Secretary Erik A. Hooks, Reuben Young, Casandra Hoekstra, Jodi Harrison, Pam Walker, Tim Moose, Billy Lassiter, Tracy Little

Chairperson Austin welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order.

A motion was made to approve the March 20, 2018 meeting minutes. Minutes were approved as drafted.

Formal presentations related to hiring, training, alcohol and drug testing of offenders, programs and facility re-missioning were given; copies of the presentations are posted on the Department of Public Safety website.

Shari Howard, Human Resources Director, and Twyla Philyaw, Prisons Assistant Director for Administrative Services, provided a presentation on correctional officer Recruitment and Onboarding. The presentation addressed vacancy levels, recruitment initiatives, and implementation of a field training or mentor program for new hires after they complete Basic Correctional Officer training.

Stanley Drewery inquired about the effect of moving the Correctional Officer Physical Abilities Test (COPAT) from pre-employment to Basic Correctional Officer training. Ms. Philyaw stated that the new process seemed to be working well but that the change occurred only a few months ago and that it may be too early to adequately assess its impact.

Mr. Drewery supported returning the correctional officer interview process back to facilities, a reference to a pilot currently being conducted at 10 prisons. He stated he felt facility staff used good judgement in hiring new people. Also, he noted the mentor (field training officer) program is extremely beneficial.

Art Beeler stated that a recruiting plan is necessary. Mr. Beeler also asked if there will be evaluation of the Field Training Officer (FTO) program, which pairs new hires with mentor officers immediately after Basic Correctional Officer training. DPS staff replied that feedback from program participants is being solicited and that benchmarks for evaluation are being developed. Mr. Beeler also asked about retention efforts. He indicated that based on what he's hearing from current and former staff that employees are leaving, in part, due to how they are being treated by their supervisors.

Gary Mohr recommended that the agency analyze the factors regarding why employees leave. An analysis can be helpful to identify what needs to change for people to stay. In reference to a referral bonus, he recommended paying the referral if the employee stays a certain length of time. He also

suggested the agency consider rewarding local sites for retention. Finally, Mr. Mohr commented that COs hired in Ohio are interviewed by the warden.

Stephanie Hollembaek asked whether exit interviews and surveys are being conducted for those leaving. DPS staff noted that exit surveys have been conducted on a limited basis and are being expanded statewide. Chairperson Austin commented on the public service announcement promoting corrections as a profession and noted that it was very well done.

Tracy Little, Special Assistant, stated the department is conducting a workforce analysis, looking at gender, length of stay, age, and education level. This information will help with both retention and recruitment. She also noted that a committee has been established and is developing a policy for a recognition program for Prisons' staff. Mr. Drewery requested Ms. Little to notify him when the policy is implemented so he can share the information through the State Employees Association of North Carolina communications channels.

Stephanie Freeman, Director of the Office of Staff Development and Training, provided a presentation on training initiatives, including an overview of Basic Correctional Officer and supervisory training. Ms. Freeman provided information on scheduling of Correctional Officer Basic training. Prior to July 2017, new hires typically attended Basic Training several months after employment. In July 2017, two initiatives were instituted to discontinue that practice – the first was to eliminate the backlog of correctional officers waiting to attend training and the second was to schedule every correctional officer hired in Basic Training within two weeks of their hire date. Currently, the backlog has been eliminated. Director Freeman also noted that she and her staff regularly add additional classes depending on the number of new correctional officers hired throughout the year.

Mr. Mohr noted that the final day of training in Ohio is scenario based and that it works well for their staff. Mr. Drewery stated that Basic Training is important and sets the tone for new employees. Mr. Beeler commented on the importance of resiliency training to address issues with burnout; he also agreed that scenario training is a great idea and learning tool.

Ms. Hollembaek inquired if an add-on class to address the higher number of female correctional officers being hired would be all females or a mixed gender class. Director Freeman responded that they aim for mixed gender classes, but that a large percentage would be females. She also noted that instructors will have cross gender experience.

Loris Sutton, Prisons Assistant Director of the Security Accountability Section, gave a presentation on Drug/Alcohol Testing within the prison system, including testing policy, frequency and results. Ms. Sutton acknowledged that Mr. Beeler had requested reports on drug screening results and that she is working to gather data in a format that can be shared.

Chairperson Austin inquired about turnaround time for lab results. Ms. Sutton responded that the turnaround is not as quick as the agency would like; it is usually between three to four weeks. Ms. Hollembaek asked what was currently the largest drug problem. Ms. Sutton stated that the biggest issue now is synthetic cannabinoids.

Mr. Mohr asked what intelligence gathering strategies are used inside the prison system. Ms. Sutton replied that phone calls, informants, and letters sent to offenders are used. Ms. Sutton stated that facilities use local law enforcement officials to assist with criminal investigations and they work with the

department's Special Operations Intelligence Section (SOIS). Tony Taylor, Director for SOIS, gave a summary of his section's services to facilities.

Carlton Joyner, Prisons Deputy Director for Auxiliary Services, provided an overview of prison re-missioning efforts for three facilities – Lanesboro, Southern, and Eastern Correctional. Mr. Joyner stated that Prisons' objective is to enhance the safety and security of male close custody facilities and to increase flexibility for managing the female offender population. As a result, Lanesboro Correctional will be converted to a female facility, and Southern and Eastern will be converted to male facilities. In addition, Neuse Correctional will temporarily convert to a female facility and North Piedmont Correctional Center for Women will re-open to house female offenders. Lanesboro Correctional facility will be renamed Anson Correctional Institution when females are transitioned there.

Mr. Mohr commended Mr. Joyner and staff on these initiatives. He suggested that the National Institute of Corrections could be helpful in the transition of female offenders to Anson Correctional.

Sarah Cobb, Assistant Director of Rehabilitative Programs and Services, provided a presentation on Facility Missions and Program Structure, including offender assignments, case planning, and re-entry efforts. In general, the section is responsible for the overall guidance of programming in Prisons and Community Corrections.

Mr. Mohr stated that research of evidence-based practices shows that the earlier you engage offenders into programs, the less violent they are going to be and greater the impact for reducing recidivism. Ohio works very hard to get offenders enrolled in programs shortly after arrival to prison.

DPS Secretary Erik Hooks addressed the board, welcoming and thanking all the members for their time and attention. He stated he hoped that everyone finds the information educational and valuable. He stated he appreciated all the questions and asked that members keep a "critical eye" toward what information is shared as the agency strives for improvement.

Ms. Little provided an update on Prison Safety Improvements and Legislative Action. Ms. Little reported updates based on the Strategic Plan, which is divided into five parts: Hiring and Retention, Training for New and Veteran Employees, Reducing Contraband in Prisons, Enhancing Security Policies and Practices and Improving Communications with staff. Ms. Little also provided information related to the budget and prison reform legislation to enhance criminal penalties for offenders who are convicted of exposing themselves to staff or who willfully throw bodily fluids at staff.

The proposed bylaws were unanimously approved following a correction in Article V, Section 2. The corrected language is: Duties of the Vice-Chairperson. In the absence of the chairperson or in the event of his/her inability to act, the vice-chairperson shall perform the duties of the chairperson, and when so acting shall have all the powers of the chairperson. The vice-chairperson shall exercise such other duties as may be assigned by the chairperson or the Board.

Mr. Beeler requested mental health/healthcare information to be presented at a future meeting. Chairperson Austin requested any other suggestions be sent to Ms. Little. Chairperson Austin adjourned the meeting shortly after noon.

Approved 10/10/18 – TAL

