

Minutes of the Monthly  
Meeting of the  
Lancaster County Prison Board  
April 16, 2020

The meeting was called to order by Commissioner Joshua Parsons at 9:15 a.m. The meeting was conducted remotely due to the COVID-19 Pandemic State of Emergency Declaration and was livestreamed to the public.

Members Present: Commissioner Joshua Parsons, Commissioner Ray D'Agostino, Commissioner Craig Lehman, President Judge David Ashworth, District Attorney Heather Adams, Sheriff Christopher Leppler, and Controller Brian Hurter.

Others Present: Cheryl Steberger, Tammy Moyer, Larry George, Gayle Scott, Neil Ward, and Diana Rivera.

Commissioner Parsons stated that the Prison Board met remotely on Thursday, April 16, 2020 at 8:45 a.m. to discuss labor negotiations, litigation, and personnel matters related to the discipline, suspension, and termination of employees. Specifically under litigation, the Board discussed the Cox (18-08525), Gbotoe (5:20 CV 00890), Lausell (16-11551), Reinhart (19-04061), Rodriguez (5:19 CV 03988), and Vasquez (5:18 CV 04999) cases.

Commissioner Parsons stated that this is a difficult time for everyone dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic, especially for the Prison and the staff. He stated that they are proud of all the staff who continue to go to work during this tough time and it is appreciated.

Commissioner Lehman commented that they are very grateful for what the staff is doing at the jail and that they are respected and appreciated.

Commissioner Lehman moved to approve the minutes of the February 20, 2020 Prison Board Meeting. Controller Hurter seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Cheryl Steberger, Warden, gave the report for the entire Prison. The report, including operations and statistical information, is posted on the County's website.

Cheryl Steberger, Warden, gave a report on how the facility has prepared for the COVID-19 pandemic. She reported that all employees are considered essential and are working at the facility during this pandemic. She reported that the entrance to the facility is locked to minimize the traffic coming in. She stated that visitation and volunteer services have been cancelled. Warden Steberger reported that anyone who is entering the facility must have their temperature checked as well as the inmates entering the commitment area. She stated that medical staff and attorneys are seeing inmates on the block, and video conferencing is being used as much as possible. Since

March 23, 2020, up until April 15, 2020, there have been 431 video conferences completed during the hours of 8:00 a.m. through 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Warden Steberger reported on the quarantine protocols for inmates and staff. She stated that there is an isolation area for the male and female inmates. She reported that each inmate receives two free 15-minute phone calls per week to keep them in touch with their families. This will run for the next 30 days. Warden Steberger reported that masks have been provided to all staff on April 6, 2020 and as of yesterday, all inmates have been provided with a mask. She reported that the administrative team has been in the facility attending all line ups, visiting blocks, and communicating what is going on during this fluid situation. Warden Steberger stated that they are doing the best they can with communicating to the staff, inmates, and the community.

Warden Steberger reported that they have been working with the criminal justice agencies to identify the inmates that might fit the early release criteria. She thanked the District Attorney's Office, Public Defender's Office, Adult Probation & Parole, President Judge David Ashworth, and the Lancaster Court of Common Pleas with their collaboration on this.

Warden Steberger reported that there have been increased cleaning schedules in the housing and public areas. She stated that hand sanitizers were provided to the staff and extra soap is being provided to the inmates at no extra cost. She reported that medical costs to the inmates have been suspended. Warden Steberger reported that isolation kits have been prepared containing N95 masks, goggles, gowns, and gloves for staff protection when dealing with an inmate suspected to be positive. She stated that health screenings are provided daily for all inmate workers, kitchen workers, and cleaners. General information has been posted on the Prison website and the kiosks system that is on the housing units for the inmate population. She stated that they have weekly telephone conversations with the Department of Corrections and the PrimeCare medical providers. Warden Steberger stated that they notified the Lancaster Bar Association that any attorney visiting a client in the facility must wear a mask. Warden Steberger reported that the inmates are now eating in their cells. She stated that COVID-19 education was added to their re-entry information and is provided to all inmates as well as staff. She reported that Inmate Services has been working with the local churches and a taped Easter service was provided to the inmate population during the Easter holiday.

Warden Steberger reported that the average population for March was 729 and the population today is 635, which is the lowest count in 25 years.

Warden Steberger reported that the first inmate was confirmed positive for the COVID-19 yesterday. Prior to the individual being committed, earlier in the week he had been experiencing symptoms of the COVID-19 and was tested at a local healthcare facility. Upon his arrival at the Prison the individual was wearing a mask and was immediately

placed on their pandemic precautions. She stated that he is being housed alone in a restricted isolation area in the facility. Warden Steberger stated that the individual has worn a mask and gloves whenever out of his cell and all Prison staff in close proximity have worn their Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). She reported that there are two positive cases with their staff members which were confirmed on April 7, 2020 and on April 15, 2020. She stated that staff members who tested positive have been placed on an immediate paid administrative leave and were asked to self-quarantine. Additionally, an assessment was conducted on who the individuals may have come in contact with in the course of their jobs and any colleagues who have been in close proximity are being placed on leave. Warden Steberger reported that a specialized remediation service came into the facility and cleaned the areas that were deemed in need of the cleaning. She stated that they are providing information and support to both the staff and the inmate who are on isolation. She reported that they have notified the County Administrators in Human Resources and are following all Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommendations for notification of those who may have been exposed. The entire Prison staff has been notified and are updated on what is going on. Warden Steberger reported that they are taking inmates' temperatures in affected housing areas twice a day as a precaution. Warden Steberger stated that they are encouraging staff members to be tested and to date there have been 18 staff members who have been tested. Twelve were negative, two were positive, and four awaiting results. She stated that there were three areas of the facility that were on quarantine because of elevated temperatures involving four different individuals. Currently, there is one housing area that is on quarantine and the rest of the Prison is running as normal. Warden Steberger stated that block out is being conducted as normal in the housing unit.

Warden Steberger reported that there was an attempted suicide on one of the maximum-security units yesterday. She stated that she is grateful that the prognosis is very good for the individual. She thanked the medical and corrections staff that were involved for their wonderful work and the Emergency Medical Service (EMS) support that they received.

Warden Steberger stated that they continue to do what they were doing prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and keeping in mind the stressful conditions and the mental health issues that may arise. She stated that they are doing the best they can and are committed to making this work and they will get through this.

Commissioner Lehman commented that these are trying times but that the Warden's openness and transparency about what is going on in the facility speaks volumes about the type of work that the Warden, the Corrections Officers, and staff are doing in the facility. He stated that he appreciates the Warden's honesty and openness with the Board and the public today.

Commissioner D'Agostino commented that there are probably not many private sector or public sector areas like the Prison that are going through this pandemic and how the Warden is handling this situation is extraordinary and an inspiration. He thanked the Warden and the staff for what they are doing.

Commissioner Parsons commented that the Warden is not alone in going through this situation. He stated that this is a challenge for every Prison. Commissioner Parsons stated he saw a report that Chester County Prison has 17 confirmed cases, ten for inmates and seven for staff. Like nursing homes or any other facility that have close contact where it is difficult to socially distance, it is a huge challenge and the fact is that the Warden is doing everything she can to meet that challenge. Commissioner Parsons stated that they have asked the Emergency Management team to reach out to the Warden to see if there is anything else that they can do to support the Warden and her team. He stated that he thinks it is only going to get more challenging, but they will emerge from this at some point hopefully soon.

Warden Steberger wanted to note that as a result of the attempted suicide, all treatment staff are now on the housing units. The treatment staff are speaking to the inmates every day in addition to the Corrections Officers that are already working in the units. She stated that they will continue doing this throughout the COVID-19 situation. Warden Steberger stated that she is grateful for all the support she is receiving from the Board.

In business from guests, Larry George read a question from Gayle Scott. Ms. Scott asked how physical distancing is being accomplished given the type of environment within the Prison facility and what additional resources does the Warden need to improve the situation in terms of safety of staff and detainees. Warden Steberger stated that it is very hard to keep social distancing in the facility. She stated that they are doing half a tier at a time in the housing units and they are asking inmates to eat in their cells. She stated that the masks are also a big help. Warden Steberger stated that currently they are good with resources and she is comfortable with what they have in their inventory.

Commissioner Lehman commented that by having a population of 635 enhances the ability to do as much social distancing as you can do in the facility which is a credit to the Court, the District Attorney, the jail staff, and all others that are helping to try and make the jail as safe as it can possibly be under these circumstances and still have community safety and public safety in mind.

Larry George read another question from Gayle Scott. Ms. Scott stated that with mental health issues, isolation is a known suicide risk. She asked if detainees have access to anything to keep them busy such as books, games, drawings, etc. when they are in isolation. Warden Steberger stated that the inmates have access to all of the things mentioned and they are still able to receive commissary items. She stated that they

gave out postcards to the inmates and they still have access to mail and the kiosk system. Warden Steberger stated that the chaplains, mental health team, and the medical staff are also on site. She stated that the inmates still have access to the library and recreation is still being conducted at the facility.

Larry George read a question from Neil Ward. Mr. Ward asked how often the staff is being tested. Warden Steberger stated that they are testing as they see fit. She stated that they are recommending that staff be tested, but she only knows of the 18 individuals that she indicated earlier.

Commissioner Parsons commented that the protocol right now for most people is if you have any symptoms, or if you have been contact with someone who is confirmed positive, you can get a test ordered by your doctor. He stated that you can also walk into a testing site without an order from a doctor to get tested, but at this time they cannot order anyone to get tested.

Larry George read another question from Neil Ward. Mr. Ward asked if the Warden is satisfied with the number of individuals who have been released and if there are plans to release any additional inmates. President Judge David Ashworth stated that this is a fluid situation because people are constantly coming in and being released. He stated that he is satisfied that for the cases they have reviewed so far, the releases are appropriate. He stated that he is dealing with bail petitions and non-custodial petitions on a daily basis. President Judge Ashworth stated that yesterday he dealt with seven or eight additional bail petitions, so it is not a static situation. People are constantly coming in and going out of the jail and they are addressing them as they need to.

Warden Steberger commented that between March 16, 2020 and yesterday, they have had 219 inmates committed and 342 inmates released. Warden Steberger stated that they are dedicated to keep the facility safe and she has no doubt that they will get through this situation. She thanked everyone for their support.

Commissioner D'Agostino moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:47 a.m. Commissioner Lehman seconded. The motion carried unanimously. The next meeting is May 21, 2020 at 9:15 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Brian K. Hurter  
Secretary