

**Prison Reform Advisory Board
Meeting Minutes**

November 14, 2018

9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Governor's Crime Commission – Room #100

Board Members attending: Beth Austin, Art Beeler, Stanley Drewery, Mike Killmer, Dorothy Ledford, James French, Stephanie Hollembaek.

Department of Public Safety officials attending: Reuben Young, Pam Walker, Kenneth Lassiter, Carlton Joyner, Loris Sutton, Pam Cashwell, Casandra Hoekstra, Jane Gilchrist, Tracy Little, Billy Lassiter, Tim Moose, Annie Harvey, Jodi Harrison, Gary Mohr.

Chairperson Austin welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order.

Minutes of the October 10, 2018 meeting were approved as presented following a motion by Stanley Drewery and a second by Art Beeler.

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

Robert Leon, director of Correction Enterprises, presented an overview of Correction Enterprises (CE) and the many industries in which it is involved, including agriculture, food, furniture, publishing and textiles. Director Leon stated that CE changed its vision 24 months ago to “Creating a Safer North Carolina Through the Changing of Lives,” to include both staff and offenders. Director Leon discussed security enhancements made within CE to include situational awareness training, new digital security cameras and upgrades, improved lines of sight, improved tool/key control processes, and improved perimeter fencing.

Art Beeler asked who was monitoring the new digital security cameras and Director Leon said Prisons personnel monitors them. Mr. Beeler also asked what specific steps are being taken to enhance tool/key control. Director Leon answered that CE and Prisons operate under the same tool/key control policy and are charged with compliance of the policy. Director Leon noted CE has created tool cages to secure tools in a safer fashion and hired full-time staff to issue tools instead of allowing offenders to issue tools, as had been the previous practice. Director Leon stated that following assessments of key control policies, CE staff now only have keys that Prisons has determined are necessary and appropriate.

Stephanie Hollembaek asked for further explanation of the situational awareness training classes. Director Leon stated all CE staff were required to attend situational awareness classes, and Ms. Hollembaek asked whether such training will be offered as an initial training or be offered annually. Director of Prisons Kenneth Lassiter added that situational awareness training

is included in Basic Correctional Officer Training as well. The classes teach staff to be observant of their surroundings, including how to logistically position themselves in the plant and how to interact with other staff and offenders. The class also covers interaction with offenders and staff, and how to respond to certain scenarios.

Mike Killmer asked why CE staff within a factory were no longer required to be in a certified position. Director Leon replied the decision to forego certification was made approximately 20 years ago and that he was not aware of all the factors considered

Chair Austin asked how offenders are chosen to participate in various CE work assignments. Director Leon said the selection criterion changed in October 2017. CE is not working close custody offenders (with the exception of Central Prison laundry), offenders under the age of 35 with a conviction of an assaultive crime against a person, and offenders who have a conviction for assaultive crimes on a public official. At each facility, there is an assignment coordinator who reviews job vacancies within Correction Enterprises and every job has a list of essential job functions. If an offender meets selection criteria and can perform the essential job functions, the offender will get an opportunity to fill that vacancy. Chair Austin also asked how the number of custody staff assigned to a factory work area is determined. Director Lassiter said an assessment is conducted at each CE plant to determine the offender-to-staff ratio. Chair Austin also asked if the Correction Enterprises posts can be pulled to cover other areas of the institution, and Director Lassiter stated that they can. Gary Mohr discussed the work of the Security Accountability Section related to tool and key control and noted that enactment of a single policy and standard audit for CE and Prisons should result in security improvements. Loris Sutton, director of the Security Accountability Section, announced that Harnett and Nash correctional institutions, and their respective Enterprises plants, are participating in a tool inventory pilot program, which will ultimately be rolled out statewide. Mr. Beeler asked what process is taken if a tool is missing. Director Lassiter replied that the facility automatically goes on lockdown of that area, and all offenders and staff, if necessary, are searched. If a tool is not immediately recovered, staff will review camera surveillance and the offender who signed out the tool is held accountable.

Tracy Little provided a presentation on prison safety and security updates. Ms. Little presented updates based on the following strategic plan framework categories:

- Enhancing Security Policies and Practices;
- Reducing Contraband in Prison Facilities;
- Improving Training for New and Veteran Employees; and
- Increasing Hiring and Retention.

Specific updates include:

- Deployment of a consistent safety package for all certified staff across all custody levels is nearly complete.

- Approximately 4,700 stab resistant vests have been shipped to close security facilities. Sizing is underway for medium security units, and DPS anticipates vests will be fully deployed in early 2019.
- Twelve of 14 compliance auditor positions are filled in the Security Accountability Section. The Department has conducted nine unannounced security accountability assessments and anticipates completing 20 by the end of 2018.
- The Department continues with remissioning of several facilities. It is anticipated Eastern and Southern correctional institutions will receive close custody males in early 2019 and females will be transferred to Lanesboro Correctional Institution (to be renamed Anson Correctional) in spring 2019.
- The Department is prioritizing supervisory training by adding more classes to accommodate the need.
- Personal body alarm “man down” technology is continuing to be piloted at three facilities. DPS anticipates having “pinpoint” location ability for all staff at one of the facilities in December.
- The revalidated male custody classification instrument and validated female instrument tool is expected to be in place by May 2019. Once Prisons management makes decisions regarding cutoff scores for the classification instrument, the agency will begin making upgrades in the computer system, rewriting policy, and training staff on the new classification instrument.
- The correctional officer (CO) vacancy rate is just under 17% for October 2018. Effective January 1, 2019, all interviews for CO positions will be conducted at local prisons.

Mr. Beeler asked whether facility staff are aware of the guidelines used for the unannounced security accountability assessments. Ms. Sutton stated that staff are aware of the guidelines, and the new standards are posted on the internal website.

Mr. Killmer asked if the vacancy rate included staff on extended leave. Ms. Little stated it did not and offered to make that information available at the next Prison Reform Advisory Board meeting.

Nicole Sullivan, Director of the Reentry, Programs and Services section, and Assistant Director Sarah Cobb facilitated a discussion of member engagement questions. The members discussed two questions that were provided to them in advance.

The first question was:

- What recommendations do you have regarding how to effectively engage offender families and advocates in reform efforts?

Member comments generally fell in the following categories:

- Utilize opportunities in visitation to share information;
- Provide training for staff regarding engaging this constituency; and

- Educate offender families and advocates about available programs.

The second question was:

- What communication strategies and techniques do you recommend to ensure prison staff are aware of reform initiatives and feel engaged in what's happening in their workplace?

Member comments generally fell in the following categories:

- Use multiple strategies and platforms for employee communication;
- Conduct engagement/climate surveys; and
- Train supervisors to communicate effectively and set accountability standards.

Chair Austin thanked members for their hard work, and stated meeting dates for 2019 would be forthcoming. She adjourned the meeting at 12:09 p.m.

