

To: Allegheny County Jail Oversight Board

From: M. Gayle Moss

Re: of Allegheny County Jail Tour February 28, 2023

On Tuesday, February 28, I conducted an on-site inspection of the Allegheny County Jail. I arrived at the facility around 12 p.m. and concluding my inspection around 1:30 p.m. During the visit, I was escorted by Warden Orlando Harper, Deputy Warden Toma, and Communication Specialist Jesse Geleynse. I requested to see the kitchen and library.

Our visit began in the kitchen on the ground level. Additional staff present on my tour of the kitchen were Captain Sullivan and Sergeant Slaby, who are the staff members assigned the responsibility of overseeing the kitchen operations. MaryBeth Shearer, the general manager from contractor Summit Foods, was also present. I toured the kitchen facility and observed meal preparation for the lunch service on the main preparation line and special diets. The main meal being served was pizza casserole, salad, cornbread, and cake. I was informed that special diet meals are based on resident records that reflect a documented religion with dietary requirements or a medical dietary requirement. I observed some food on the ground and a little bit of water, but that is expected during meal service in a high-capacity kitchen operation. Overall, the facility appeared clean.

I interviewed Captain Sullivan and Sergeant Slaby, and they discussed the changes to an A/B 12-hour schedule for the voluntary workforce. This provides a one day on, one day off rotation. They are still trying to improve the schedule as they make operational adjustments to the meal service. I observed the lounge area for the voluntary workforce that has phones that were recently made operational for use while on break. I was also informed that they are working on adding TVs to the kitchen area for use during breaks. Captain Sullivan also discussed other changes that are being made to include bringing in outside professional cleaners to perform a deep clean of the kitchen, ovens, hoods, warmers, and other equipment. Deputy Warden Toma stated they had companies touring the facility this week to provide quotes.

Next, we visited the library. Bookshelves line an entire wall and were filled with books – some three rows deep. Deputy Warden Toma discussed the Book Request and Book Appeal process on the tablets, how carts are processed when returned from housing unit and prepared for return to housing units. I observed two containers full of damaged books that had to be removed from circulation when carts were returned last month. There was also a laundry cart full of books that were collected from housing units that were left behind by released residents. I was informed all these books must be collected and returned to the library to be checked, re-sorted and shelved. Deputy Warden Toma indicated furniture has been ordered but not installed, and that this new furniture includes the addition of a dedicated space for an individual to work in the library. This will provide a dedicated space for current jail staff that are working in the library or future volunteers once that program is re-establish that existed before COVID.

The final stop visited was 2F to speak with a resident that had filed Book Appeal regarding books returned for lack of receipt. Deputy Warden Toma had referenced at previous meetings that they were working on a long-term solution, but a short-term solution was in place as they worked with varying individuals on a new process for submitting receipts. This resident shared that the process to get books without receipts takes too long, but that it has improved from two weeks to 3-5 days. This resident appeared to be an avid reader and utilizes the on-pod library as well as receives book deliveries from BarnesNoble.com at least monthly.

During the tour, I observed that the hallways on Levels 1 and 2 were clean. We returned to the warden's office, where we retrieved our belongings (cell phones, keys, etc.)

Other than what has been specifically noted in this report, overall, the jail was clean and in order, and no other specific deficiencies were noted during this tour.