The monthly meeting of the Allegheny County Jail Oversight Board was held on Thursday, November 5, 2015, in the Gold Room of the Courthouse in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania at 4:00 p.m.

Members present:

The Honorable Judge Joseph Williams

The Honorable Judge David Cashman

County Controller Chelsa Wagner

Austin Davis representing Allegheny County Executive Rich Fitzgerald

County Council President John DeFazio

County Sheriff William Mullen

Dr. Claire Walker

Also present were Warden Orlando Harper, Marion Damick, Deputy Warden LaToya Warren and other interested parties.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Ms. Marion Damick representing the Pennsylvania Prison Society addressed the Board with the following:

* Commended the good things happening in the re-entry programs.
* Emphasized on the difficulty individuals have finding employment once released from the ACJ.

Judge Williams stated that he would like to address the employment issue in the President’s Report.

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES:**

A motion to approve the minutes of October 1, 2015 by Mr. DeFazio and seconded by Controller Wagner and unanimously approved by the board.

**PRESIDENT’S REPORT:**

Judge Williams indicated a shared concern with Ms. Damick stated in her comment in the beginning of the meeting. There needs to be realistic expectations for inmates when they are released from jail. It is not realistic to send released individuals out into society with high hopes of obtaining employment only to be turned down. This rejection further strips them of what little esteem they may have gained. The board needs to focus on substantive changes on how people who have served time in the ACJ can be reintegrated into the community. There needs to be opportunities for these individuals to be welcomed back into the community with the ability to succeed. The yearly budget for the ACJ is approximately $80 million. If the number of detainees were reduced by 1/3 this would allow roughly $10 million to be put into re-entry programs. These funds could support re-entry services, housing and employment incentives for the people who have served their time. The jail could downsize and use the space more effectively, reduce staff and overtime. It is important for the ACJ to develop relationships with the faith based organizations as well as universities to expand the options for those reentering society. We need to provide individuals with a realistic future without recidivism.

**WARDEN’S REPORT:**

Warden Harper explained the ACJ Report has recently been revised with the help of Ms. Bohm. The board is now able to get a better sense of the Census, Age, Custody Levels, Housing, Classification, etc. Also revised was the Medical Department Report for the board to review. This information will change monthly accordingly. Judge Williams stated that he had asked Warden Harper to give the board a better inventory of the ACJ assets. The same was asked of Mr. Scherer from Electronic Monitoring. This was done so that all of the components can be reviewed and determinations can be made as to what works most efficiently. Dr. Walker stated that in the section labeled Security Classification Level there is no history available but what needs to be noted is the way the jail has dramatically changed the way classifications are used.

**EXECUTIVE ACTIONS:**

None

**OLD BUSINESS:**

None

**NEW BUSINESS:**

Judge Cashman stated in a previous meeting that Criminal Court was considering transferring all detainer hearings to one judge. Since then, the Court has decided to have every judge devote at least one day a month to review and clear their own detainers. Last month there were a significant amount of people released from jail from this process. Dr. Walker inquired how this new procedure is different from the past. Judge Cashman explained that what happens now is individuals in the jail who are there on detainers will wait as time goes by before they are reviewed. These individuals are losing their jobs, homes, etc. For example, if it is a weekend and a state or county parole officer brings them in, the officer will place a detainer on the individual for what could be a minor infraction. Then the detainer will sit in a pile of paperwork until it is reviewed. There are many cases that come through the judges’ offices and unless the detainer is brought to the attention of the judge, it could sit in a pile of other many other cases which need to be reviewed. The new approach will enable judges to specifically review only detainers with the probation office to see which are at high risk and which are not so that they can be addressed in a timely manner. The defendant’s lawyer is the one who would initially file the petition to have the detainers lifted. Currently there are no standard petitions set up for this and one is currently in the process of being drafted to alleviate any confusion or unnecessary paperwork. Judge Williams stated that within the last month it has been discussed that there needs to be more focus on how to make this system work more efficiently. It was explained that every day that an individual spends detained when it is not necessary, it is costing the county money that could be used to assist the re-entry programs. Controller Wagner inquired as to how the detainees were reflected in the intake process at the ACJ. Warden Harper explained that the ACJ is aware when an individual is processed whether or not they have a detainer. When a law enforcement agency brings an individual into the ACJ they must provide documentation which indicates why they are being processed. Controller Wagner asked if these individuals who are processed with detainers are or can be provided in a census in the Warden’s Report which is disbursed to board members. It was suggested that this might make it easier for everyone to see numbers and make things simpler for the judges reviewing detainers. Warden Harper said it is definitely something that could be looked into. Judge Cashman stated that additionally being looked into in the courts are individuals who are on parole and commit an offense. This would mean they are in violation of their probation. When the case is to be looked at to make a determination, the problem arises that it cannot be reviewed until the parole office is present. Judges schedules are booked 2-3 months ahead of time for various cases. This would mean that an individual who commits an offense while on probation may have to wait longer than necessary to have their case reviewed. This produces unnecessary costs for the county. If a judge is able to make an assessment that a detainer can be lifted and release the individual and still schedule the violation hearing for a later time. This will shorten the length of time in jail which in turn will be more economical and productive for all involved. Judge Williams described that there are different stages in the jail. There may be individuals that may have served or overserved their sentence by the time their bond is set. This is an example of wasted time and money. The focus needs to be what can be done to make this system more efficient so things like this do not occur.

**ALLEGHENY HEALTH NETWORK:**

Warden Harper took this time to point out the new ACJ Healthcare Services Report. There have been new categories added to the report to enable more efficient data for the board. Warden Harper indicated that when compared to last month’s Corizon report, the new healthcare service numbers have improved. For example, Corizon reported 602 Clinical Visits for the month of August whereas the Allegheny Health Network reported an increase of 871 Clinical Visits for the month of September. The quality of medical services in the ACJ is progressively improving Warden Harper stated.

Controller Wagner provided an update on the follow up audit of Corizon in which the Controller’s Office had been conducting. A draft report was being sent out on November 5th to the ACJ and Corizon. Both are afforded the opportunity to respond to the report which is requested by close of business on November 12th. Controller Wagner stated that it is expected that the county will have no response as expected since there is pending litigation in regards to Corizon. During the period of review for the follow up report on Corizon, Controller Wagner explained that there had not been much improvement made since the original audit on Corizon. Corizon was not able to backup figures that were reported due to lack of documentation and the numbers reported showed barely any improvement. Controller Wagner stated that the full report on the Corizon follow up audit will be provided at the next Jail Oversight Board meeting in December.

**COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS REPORTS:**

***Program for Offenders-*** Mr. Ted Johnson, Deputy Director, communicated that the occupancy permit had been signed and are currently hiring for the new facility. Currently one nurse has been hired to assist the psychiatrist for all three facilities. Mr. Johnson encouraged that the word be passed along that Case Managers, Monitoring and Workforce Development positions are currently being interviewed for and anyone with experience should apply. Dr. Walker wanted to recognize Mr. Johnson’s experience and passion for what he does. Judge Williams stated that Mr. Johnson has been extremely helpful resource in getting the re-entry program conceptualized. One of the ideas addressed was trying to get Federal grants and tax benefits for employers who are willing to hire individuals leaving the jail system. Judge Williams asked Mr. DeFazio if at some point he could address city and county council on what change is needed to receive a better outcome for individuals who enter and leave the ACJ. Society has a problem hiring individuals who have at one time been incarcerated. Therefor a completely talented inmate has no hope of being hired due to being branded a convict. Judge Williams stated that this is a waste of resources. Mr. Davis informed the board that the county implemented a policy approximately a year ago where the individual has the right not to disclose any past criminal history on a county employment application. The city implemented this same policy three years ago. Judge Williams replied that he has heard from individuals that have left the ACJ and re-entry programs are not being released into a receptive environment. This needs to be changed or the chance of recidivism is will occur. Dr. Walker stated that these individuals have also been disconnected from their families where some people find employment. Mr. DeFazio mentioned that a program that helps the individual before they are labeled as a criminal is what could help. Judge Williams suggested that maybe there should be an incentive for unions willing to hire inmates before they are to be awarded contracts in the county. Controller Wagner mentioned that council member DeWitt Walton is an advocate of a program in which the Steelworkers Union have backed called Breaking the Chains of Poverty. This program may be helpful in looking forward. The job placement with this program is over 90% and many of the graduates have been formerly incarcerated. While going through training the program has a stipend which is helpful. As far as city and county contracts, Controller Wagner stated it was extremely helpful to have provisions in those contracts of those companies which hold large amounts of money. Controller Wagner informed the board that earlier in the day she had attended an ACBA lunch for Veterans. One of the topics during this lunch was on incarcerated veterans. The question arose to whether data is captured at the jail to include incarcerated veterans. Warden Harper replied that data for the veterans is captured. The suggestion of a veterans pod was discussed at some point but there were not enough veterans incarcerated to be cost efficient. There are under fifty veterans are currently incarcerated at the ACJ according to self-reported information.

***The Renewal Center-*** Mr. Adam Zak, County Case Management Supervisor, informed the board that last Thursday and Friday the Renewal Center underwent unannounced audits for their County, State and Federal programs but have not yet received the finalized report from the County audit . Mr. Zak stated that improvements will continue to be made in all areas of the program regardless of the outcome and will address any areas of concern if needed. For community service events on Thanksgiving Day numerous residents will participate in the Annual PNC Turkey Trot.

***Electronic Monitoring***- Mr. Steve Esswein highlighted the September 2015 report. There were 772 participants in the program. During this time, 102 participants successfully completed the program and 9 individuals were removed for violations. For the month, Electronic Monitoring has saved 18,551 jail days.

***Goodwill-*** Ms. Cindy Owoc reported that Goodwill this month will be addressing financial needs for its residents. Goodwill has reached out to First Commonwealth Bank to assist with classes for residents to supply information on how to help restore credit, cash checks and open a checking/savings account. These services are being provided free of charge. Ms. Owoc introduced Goodwill’s new Case Manager, Gaye Velar.

A motion to adjourn made by Sheriff Mullen, duly seconded by Controller Wagner and approved by the Board.

Respectfully submitted,

Chelsa Wagner

Secretary