The monthly meeting of the Allegheny County Jail Oversight Board was held Thursday, November 5, 2020 as a virtual conference at 4:00 P.M.

**Members Present**

Honorable Judge Clark

Honorable Judge Lazzara

County Controller Chelsa Wagner

Barbara Parees representing County Executive

Bethany Hallam At-Large Council

Gayle Moss

Terri Klein

Abass Kamara

Others in Attendance:

Warden Harper

Deputy Warden Williams

**Meeting Guidelines** —

1. Everyone in this meeting will be treated with dignity and respect. No exception.
2. Everyone will have the opportunity to be heard, within reason. Depending on the number of public comments that sign up to speak there may be a time limit imposed.
3. Profanity and yelling will not be tolerated. Anyone using profanity or anyone who is yelling will be removed from this meeting.

**Announcements**

1. **Inmate Welfare Expense Fund Subcommittee Report**

**Judge Clark:**

Normally we start with the old business, including the public comments but I know Judge Lazzara has a conflict in her schedule. She has some duties with her daughter which are very important. So, I would like her to take her committee’s report out of order.

**Judge Lazzara:**

This is the report of the Inmate Welfare Fund Subcommittee. We had left off last time with the proposal from the University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work, to perform a needs assessment at the Allegheny County jail to better inform the committee and the overall board about, maybe some very productive uses of the inmate welfare fund. The original cost cited in the original proposal was tremendous and a sticker shock, I think for all of us and so Ms. Klein who had the contact with the school of social work went back to the Dean Elizabeth Farmer and asked if that proposal could be reviewed and revised so that we could perhaps have a better number to present to this board. That was done and we received a submission date of October 30, 2020 for the needs assessment done by the University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work. That proposal, which described how they would perform the assessment, with the fact that they would hopefully use the tablets in order to do so and all the data collection that they would be doing in analysis, came up with a new approximate cost for personnel between $12,000 and $15,000. Some additional cost for miscellaneous supplies and as well as some additional cost for perhaps additional time needed to do data collection and things of that nature. So, their total ballpark budget is now $14,000 to $19,000 which I think is a substantially better number. Everyone on the subcommittee was provided with a copy of that proposal and we reviewed it and there was an ability to ask questions for anybody who had any questions and what we decided was that we thought it was a very reasonable budget to perform a needs assessment which I think could certainly inform the board as to what the inmates believe the most pressing needs are in the Allegheny County jail. At this time the subcommittee would like to make a recommendation, that the jail oversight board accepts the needs assessment that was presented by the University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work and either enter into anything contract or authorize the county to enter into any contract to authorize the Pittsburgh School of Social Work performing the needs assessment and it’s further recommended that we allocate up to $20,000 from the inmate welfare fund to pay for the cost of the needs assessment. We do recognize that there may be additional funds needed if there is something to work with Global Tech Link, if there are funds that they are going to require to do that as well as perhaps to reimburse the inmates for any free time on the tablets that they would use during the completion of the survey but we’d like to start with that initial $20,000 for the University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work to perform the needs assessment. I would like to make that motion.

**Bethany Hallam:**

I’ll second it.

**Judge Clark:**

I actually have a couple questions. So, in terms of data, is this data that they are going to be collecting themselves through a survey or are they going to be requesting other data from the jail or from the county?

**Judge Lazzara:**

No, they’re going to be creating a survey that can be taken on the tablets that would be then available for the inmates to answer the survey and then they’ll use that survey data to come up with their conclusions.

**Terri Klein:**

May I interrupt? I also thought they might include some key personnel at the jail. So, there will be some Allegheny County employees who are asked to fill out the survey. But not every employee at the Allegheny County jail.

**Judge Clark:**

So, I guess Warden; Who typically when there’s a contract, who does that for the county? I know that typically the solicitors review the contracts and then there is some discussion about it but I’m not sure how that works with the jail.

**Warden Harper:**

The jail normally has a contract created by our purchasing department.

**Judge Clark:**

Okay. And is it reviewed at all by the solicitor?

**Warden Harper:**

Absolutely.

**Judge Clark:**

Okay. Thank you. Any other questions or comments?

***The board unanimously approved a motion by Judge Lazzara, duly seconded by Bethany Hallam to approve the expenditure of $20,000 from the Inmate Welfare Fund for the completion of the needs assessment.***

**Judge Clark:**

I think that, Judge Lazzara since you are the chair of the subcommittee, to have a sit down with Warden Harper and who ever it is in the jail that would initiate those things and to try to get the contract and then get it to the solicitor. I think that would be the best way for you to work with the Warden.

**Judge Lazzara:**

Okay, not a problem.

**Judge Clark:**

Does that seem feasible or okay Warden?

**Warden Harper:**

Yes ma’am. Me and Judge Lazzara can meet.

**Judge Clark:**

Okay, thank you.

**Judge Lazzara:**

Absolutely that will work. Also, in terms of the inmate welfare fund, we are very happy to announce that we actually have a fellow from the University of Pittsburgh School of Law. Because of the weird COVID situation, the Bar exam was postponed until October and so, the University of Pittsburgh School of Law was really great in coming up with a fellow program so that people that took the Bar and weren’t able to get jobs until they obviously passed the Bar. The school is actually funding fellows. These are graduate of the School of Law for up to 8 weeks and our fellow is a woman by the name of Sarah who is absolutely fantastic, and we love her. She’s helping the inmate welfare fund in terms of our idea of what are the things that the county should be paying for and what are the things that the inmate welfare fund should be paying for. So, she’s going to do a very deep dive into that subject, reviewing law and reviewing policy as much as she can find so that we can perhaps give this board some guidance on how to proceed in the future. We want to welcome Sarah. She is listening in on this as well so, we’re glad that she has joined us.

**Judge Clark:**

Thank you. So, now we’re going to go back to the agenda as it is normally.

* 1. **Public Comments**

**Judge Clark:**

We’re going to start with the public comments. I don’t know whether the public comments were submitted to all the board members and I do believe Deputy Warden Williams has prepared responses to those. They will be posted. Deputy Warden Williams, do you want to go over any of them for the meeting?

**Chief Williams:**

Judge, most of them are comments that were offered. There was one regarding staffing again, which I know has been discussed during multiple meetings. So, I feel comfortable continuing to address that when healthcare staff call off or are not permitted to work for whatever reason related to our procedures here. We can not mandate nurses and that we shift around coverage to make sure patients needs are met. But the remainders are comments and I did send those to you within a format so that they can be included in the minutes.

**Judge Clark:**

Alright. And have they been submitted to Ms. Pringle-Scaife so that she can include them in the minutes? I can remember whether you sent them to her as well.

**Chief Williams:**

I’ll forward those to her right now.

**Judge Clark:**

Alright. And I’ll ask her to forward the answers to the board and we will post the answers on the website. Thank you.

1. **Suicide Prevention Subcommittee Report**

**Judge Clark:**

So, we’ll move to the next item. The Suicide Prevention. Warden Harper?

**Warden Harper:**

Good afternoon everybody. I’m going to start with recommendation #3 lack of privacy. We met with the architect again to go over the drawings. There were some changes that we made to the drawings that’s going to cost some additional funding so they went back to the drawing board to redo the drawing and once we approve the drawing again, the construction will start. Recommendations #4 and #13 Additional training and interpersonal communication skills and specialized training for staff related to suicide prevention and interpersonal communication. The training staff finished their mental health first aid training for trainers’ course. The next step will be to enhance the training for the corrections environment. The trainers are exploring additional resources in order to tailor training for the jail. Training staff readjusted the security orientation in order to meet the content for suicide prevention and this training will be implemented within 8 hours. Now additionally I said I was going to add an additional day, but we found out that we can complete everything based on the recommendation within 8 hours and we have done that thus far. The additional suicide prevention online training has been developed including modules with case study. The interpersonal communication online training has been implemented. Recommendation #5 Suicide resistant cells. I have no further update. We did not renovate any of the cells as of the last meeting. Recommendation #7 Enhance policy. There’s not update of enhanced policies. We did not upgrade and policies since the last meeting. Recommendation #11 therapeutic community programing for mental health is limited. Individual therapeutic programing is occurring at this time. Additional group programing will be added once the restrictions regarding group gatherings related to COVID-19 are lifted. No further updates your honor.

**Judge Clark:**

Thank you, Warden. Does anyone have any questions for Warden Harper?

**Bethany Hallam:**

I do Judge Clark. I was just wondering could you give us an update. I know that the forms were sent out for all the people in the jail to get the stimulus check and now that, that deadline has passed. Can you give us an update on how many folks in the jail did apply for that?

**Warden Harper:**

We did not keep data as to how many people applied to it. As I stated in an email that I sent to you earlier, all the inmates were sent all the forms and given directions on how to send the stimulus package to where they needed to send it. Ever inmate was sent this notification on the tablets where we have an acknowledgement form or acknowledgement notification that they received the information and they were advised of the deadline and where and when to send it. But we did not keep data as to how many actually did it.

**Bethany Hallam:**

Thank you for that. And another question. What about voting in the jail? Did you keep any data on how many people cast in mail-in ballots from the jail?

**Warden Harper:**

You’re taking some of my thunder away from the Warden’s Report.

**Judge Clark:**

Yeah, we’re not there yet Ms. Hallam. You can answer the question Warden Harper. We haven’t gotten there. This is just about the suicide prevention report.

**Bethany Hallam:**

I’m so sorry. You can wait until we get to that part of the agenda. That’s totally fine.

**Judge Clark:**

Alright. Thank you.

**Bethany Hallam:**

Judge Clark can I just ask you one question? I’m just confused, and I should have brought this up earlier, but I didn’t realize it at the time. The public comments, I was under the impression that you were saying that all the public comments were about staffing and that’s why they were just summarized but it seems to me that there were public comments that weren’t about staffing. Can we read those?

**Judge Clark:**

We can. I think we had decided that since they take so long to read that we would post them on the website and make them available for all of the board. At the last meeting I did ask Deputy Warden Williams to talk about the staffing because there were a number of comments or questions about staffing in the medical department at the jail which she did do. Most of these were comments. If there’s one in particular you want to be read, you can do that. Typically comments people have the right to make a public comment and so, we do post them on the website. They are made part of the minutes and any questions that we have we either answer them in writing on the website or at the meeting or both. So, is there a particular comment that you want to be read?

**Bethany Hallam:**

Not necessarily one in particular. It’s just starting to seem like we’re at a point where, we’re just overly summarizing. So, I’m hoping to figure out a way to get away from that because I do think it’s important that the folks who submitted public comments are able to have their comments read in the public meetings. I understand if there’s 50 comments about one specific issue, that those are summarized but I think if there’s other ones that are unique issues in themselves that maybe we should figure out a way to better handle those.

**Judge Clark:**

Okay. We can discuss that as a board. I think in the beginning when we were first having virtual meetings, we got so many and it took a lot of time and we just could not address them all. So, then we decided that we would address just the questions and post the comments. But it still took a significant amount of time. We do answer some of the questions publicly at the meeting but if the board members want comments read I suppose what you can do is let us know in advance of the meeting so that we are prepared to read them. I did not print them for this meeting to read them publicly, but I could do that.

**Bethany Hallam:**

Do you know how many there were for this meeting?

**Judge Clark:**

I can tell you hold on. Give me one second. There were 7 this time.

**Bethany Hallam:**

Okay. I do know I had some folks reach out to me. I know that folks put in a lot of time drafting and submitting these comments. Could we maybe at the very least read the comments that were submitted from the PA Prison Society?

**Judge Clark:**

Yes, we could do that.

**Bethany Hallam:**

Okay. I really appreciate that and again I totally understand why we started on the summarizing method because we were getting a lot of comments all on singular issues at the beginning of these virtual meetings. But maybe if we could, going forward just talk about a way these could all be read or shortened or something.

**Judge Clark:**

Maybe we could say, if there’s more, we can read the first 10. In the beginning I think that’s what I did. I read them in the order in which they were submitted. So, we can go back to that.

**Bethany Hallam:**

I would really appreciate that and then for today, again if you have to move this to later in the meeting for agenda purposes I understand. But if at the very least, if we could just read the PA Prison Society comments I think that’d be helpful.

**Judge Clark:**

Alright. Well I can do that now because I have them pulled up on my iPad. So, I can read them.

**Bethany Hallam:**

Thank you so much.

**Comment: John Kenstowicz – PA Prison Society:**

RECOMMENDATION: THE ACJ OVERSIGHT BOARD CREATE A SUBCOMMITTEE FOCUSED ON STAFF RETENTION AND STAFF RECRUITMENT AT ACJ RATIONALE: 1) ACJ has experienced a consistent decrease in medical and mental health staff each year in the last five years: 2016 129 2017 122 2018 110 2019 99 2020(May) 75 2) ACJ is facing a lawsuit, Howard v. Williams, regarding the lack of mental health services and as a consequence people “experience serious psychological and emotional pain and suffering, routine decompensation, increased infractions resulting in harmful imposition of solitary confinement and excessive use of force”. 3) Staff at ACJ have stated that “employees are given double, triple, and sometimes quadruple assignments that should be distributed to 2, 3 or 4 employees” 4) The NCCHC consultant’s suicide prevention report from 2019 found “staffing challenges”, “supervisors report a high attrition rate, especially among medical nurses”. The ACJ Oversight Board could consider the following interventions to improve staff retention and recruitment: 1)The subcommittee would conduct exit interviews to develop an understanding of why people are terminating employment with ACJ. ACJ administration will make staff aware of staff’s opportunity to participate in exit interviews with the Oversight Board subcommittee. Periodically the subcommittee will make a report of its findings from exit interviews. Research has found that exit interviews are more informative when done by a third party. 2)The subcommittee will create an anonymous questionnaire for all current employees at ACJ. The questionnaire would consist of questions related to such issues as morale, workloads and fairness. 3)The subcommittee will work with the ACJ administration in developing a greater rationale of why someone would want to work in a county jail. Research has been done on this issue that would be helpful. 4)The subcommittee will recommend a job search encompassing the eastern seaboard and the mid west for qualified employees. Pittsburgh has a national reputation as an attractive place to live for individuals and families. 5)The subcommittee will work with HR and ACJ administration in contacting all of the professional schools related to corrections in western Pennsylvania, such as schools of social work, nursing and criminology. The opportunity for more field placements at ACJ would be explored. 6)The subcommittee will recommend the instituting of retention bonuses. Research has found that in workplaces with high turnover, it is fiscally advantageous to provide retention bonuses instead of suffering increased costs for searching, hiring and training new employees. 7)The subcommittee will consult with experts in the field of workforce development to improve ACJ’s capability in retaining employees and recruiting new employees.

**Comment: Jodi Lincoln, PA Prison Society – Allegheny County Chapter:**

Thank you for taking the time to listen to my comment. After speaking with someone at ACJ this week, I have a couple of concerns I would like to bring to the oversights board attention and 1) Regarding the tablets - have received reports that people are having a lot of trouble using their tablets in their cells because of Wifi limitations and only getting a good enough signal to use their tablets if it's up against the door of their cell. Unable to read, watch movies, etc elsewhere in their cell. In general, folks seem excited to have the tablets, but if they don't have the service to be able to use it they are not very useful. This has had monetary penalties for people as their are charged fees based on usage time and are having to spend a lot of time on the tablet with items loading, losing their connection and having to reload etc, all which costs money. The jail should look into the issues with their wifi reaching everyone's cells and the oversight board should ask for a report and follow up to make sure people are able to use their tablets. Especially because of the financial strain and harm this is causing folks, wifi access and usability of the tablets should not be ignored. 2) The free phone calls the jail was providing have also ended. These should continue to be offered to folks until regular visitation is resumed. Even though video visits and emails, etc are now allowed on the tablets, those

cost incarcerated individuals and their family's money. There needs to be a free and easily accessible way for people to connect with those on the outside. I would also like to express support for the other concerns brought up by PA Prison Society members and would specifically like to highlight the need to have a public response from board members to the suit and brief by the Abolitionist Law Center.

**Judge Clark:**

I think those are the two that we’ve received from the PA Prison Society. I would just ask based upon those two comments, Warden and/or Deputy Warden, with the tablets are inmates experiencing Wi-Fi difficulties in the jail that you are aware of?

**Warden Harper:**

I just want to say this your honor. I think that everybody in their home have some difficulties with Wi-Fi.

**Judge Clark:**

That’s true.

**Warden Harper:**

I just want to say to the board members this, I walk this jail, not just myself but my management team walks this jail every single week. And anytime an inmate brings an issue to our attention we look for a resolution to the issue. For an example, today four inmates brought to my attention that they didn’t have Wi-Fi in their cells etc. and when I checked, they were talking on the phone all day in their cell even though they reported to me that they didn’t have Wi-Fi. So, I just think that the board members need to know that when we are brought issues we resolve the issues and if there is an issue with the Wi-Fi we do try to talk to our IT department to see if we can raise up the Wi-Fi if we can. But 9 times out of 10 the complaints that I received were not factual.

**Judge Clark:**

Thank you. Does anyone have anything that they would like to add as to these two comments? Deputy Warden Williams is there anything that you want to add?

**Chief Williams:**

Not at this time.

**Judge Clark:**

Alright. Thank you.

1. **COVID-19 Update**

**Judge Clark:**

Alright Warden. An update on COVID-19?

**Chief Williams:**

I’ll provide that your honor. Our website reflects that we have tested 593 inmates. 38 have been positive. 550 have been negative. 5 have been undetermined. We have 0 pending test. We have 0 in the hospital related to COVID-19. We currently have 0 positive in the facility, all 38 have either recovered or have been released. For employees, 146 have been tested. 22 have been positive. 124 negatives. 0 are pending. We do currently have 5 individuals who are in their recovery process at home quarantining or isolating.

**Judge Clark:**

Thank you. Does anyone have any questions for Deputy Warden Williams?

1. **Review of the October 1st, 2020 Minutes**

**Judge Clark:**

The minutes were sent out with your meeting materials. I hope you all have had a chance to review the minutes from October 1st and if you have are there any additions or corrections to those minutes I would accept those at this time or otherwise I’ll entertain a motion to approve the minutes.

***The Board unanimously approved a motion by Gayle Moss, duly seconded by Judge Lazzara to approve the minutes from the October 1st, 2020 Meeting***

1. **President’s Report**

**Judge Clark:**

I don’t really have anything specific to report. I do think there was a recommendation in the comments by the Prison Society about exit interviews and things like that about the issue of retention. I know the jail has been working very hard on it. I would just say this, we’re a very small board. I honestly don’t think we could do another subcommittee. But I think what I will do is probably by email to the board members, have some discussion and then we can decide what, if anything we want to do with that recommendation. I know that, that’s been an issue and when you look at the numbers it is an issue. I know the jail works very diligently in trying to recruit and retain staff in the medical department. But we already have a subcommittee that’s working pretty hard and we just have such a small board it’s really sort of difficult. But I think it is worthy of discussions so we can do that and maybe have something to present at the next meeting.

1. **Warden’s Report**

**Judge Clark:**

Warden we can have your report now please.

**Warden Harper:**

Yes ma’am. The ACJ had 93 inmates that voted in the election and we also had 27 inmates at our alternative housing programs vote in this election. Also, I wanted to report that, I think everybody knows that Judge John Zottola passed away on October 12, 2020. As everyone knows he was very instrumental in the creation of the mental health court and he was also very instrumental in our veteran’s court and also in the veterans POD at the ACJ. One of the things that we wanted to do at the ACJ is pay tribute and dedicate our veterans POD to Judge Zottola for all of the work he’s done to help the veterans and individuals with mental health issues. I’m trying to set up a committee so that we can come up with a program so that we can dedicate Judge Zottola. So, if anyone’s interested from the board, let me know and we’ll be more than happy to have you join us and try to pay tribute to Judge John Zottola. Your honor that’s the only thing I have to report to the board this month.

**Judge Clark:**

Thank you. Does anyone have any questions for the Warden?

1. **Deputy Warden’s Report**

**Judge Clark:**

We’ll go to the Deputy Warden’s Report. Deputy Warden Williams?

**Chief Williams:**

Good afternoon everyone. I’m happy to report that within the last two weeks we have been testing out some audio-visual equipment in our large gymnasium so that we can expand group programs again within the facility. So, because Amy C. who is one of our reentry administrators and she never stops advocating for this population. She worked with our service providers with some large screens or televisions, microphones and spaced out chairs within our large gymnasium to start doing groups again with our service providers. We’re still limited with the capacity to do onsite groups because of social distancing as well as the number of individuals who are permitted to have out of cell. We also can not mix housing groups so she has found some very creative solutions to make sure that provision of services can still be delivered in a way that’s more meaningful than just packets. So, I’m very thankful for her commitment to this as well as the service providers who have worked with us to make sure that these classes can happen. We have one pregnant female currently in our custody. We have continued to report on that throughout the years as well as the pandemic. In terms of staffing we’ve also added a psychologist very recently. So, our psychologist is completing their initial orientation and then will start working with our mental health populations, conducting group settings on those housing units. Again, in groups that are reasonably sized and also able to be socially distanced. Other than that, I have nothing further to report.

**Judge Clark:**

Thank you. Does anyone have any questions for Deputy Warden Williams?

**Bethany Hallam:**

I have one Judge Clark. I feel like this is something we brought up at the last meeting too, but I heard in the public comments that it seems that there are no longer free phone calls. I know we brought this up last month and I thought that they said that that was incorrect and that they were still happening. So, I just want to make sure that they are still happening until visits have resumed.

**Warden Harper:**

I just want to make sure that I have honest communication with you guys. There were a couple of days recently that the free phone calls, the daily calls were not in effect. I have made a call to GTL and the free phone calls are up and running as of today.

**Bethany Hallam:**

Thank you very much.

**Judge Clark:**

Thank you. Any other questions?

1. **New Business**

**Judge Clark:**

We have a couple of items for new business. We have a motion from Ms. Hallam. Ms. Hallam? Well you have two. So, the first one.

**Bethany Hallam:**

Sure. I would like to first make a motion, it’s what we’ve been doing monthly it’s to put $50 from the inmate welfare fund on the commissary account for each person incarcerated in the jail. I don’t have the number in front of me but it’s somewhere around $90,000. I would like to make that motion.

**Judge Clark:**

I think what you had is $90,250.

**Bethany Hallam:**

Yes, that was based off of yesterday’s population.

**Gayle Moss:**

I have a question. Are they using the tablets also to call? I’m not sure and I need some clarity. Are they using the tablets when they’re calling? I see there’s two motions here. One for the tablets and one for the phone. So, I just need some clarity.

**Judge Clark:**

I think there’s two things so maybe we’ll ask the Warden to answer the first question about the tablets and the phone calls. And then I think the motion that’s on the floor right now is the motion to put it on their commissary account. That’s what the motion is right now.

**Gayle Moss:**

Yeah but they’re both for the commissary, right?

**Bethany Hallam:**

Ms. Moss I’m sorry if I wasn’t clear. So, the first motion that’s on the floor right now, that’s what we’ve been doing each month. That goes to their commissary account so they can buy phone calls and they can buy commissary items. At last months meeting we found out that actually it was a separate account to use the tablets. So, you don’t use commissary funds to pay for your tablet. So, that’s why there’s two motions this month. The first one is for the commissary account the second one that I’ll be introducing after this one is for the specific tablet account.

**Gayle Moss:**

Okay. That’s clear because that’s what I didn’t understand. Thank you.

**Judge Clark:**

Warden could you just answer the question about what they’re using the tablets for so that it’s clear to the board members.

**Warden Harper:**

Well to answer Ms. Moss’s question. The inmates can utilize the tablets to make phone calls. And I’m going to tell you guys something, while these guys are in their cells, they can actually make a telephone call while in their cells. They don’t have to wait until they are out for recreation to make calls. We’re going to have a presentation from GTL to show you guys almost everything that the tablets can do once the meeting is over with.

**Judge Clark:**

Are there any other questions? Just one thing that I asked Judge Lazzara to do, pretty much since the beginning of the pandemic we’ve been giving each inmate that’s in the jail $50 to put on the commissary accounts initially. And I’m not saying that’s not a good use of the money but I think we need to just have the subcommittee cost it out and see where we’re going to be maybe next year at this time. Because I think we’re sort of in for the long haul in the pandemic. So, we need to look at how much we have in the account. What’s the average that goes into the account every month so that we’re not depleting the funds because there are things that we want to utilize this fund for like the survey we’re proposing and other things. So, we just want to be careful that we’re not getting rid of all of the money, we want to balance it. That was my only concern. I’m not suggesting that we shouldn’t vote on this today or that we shouldn’t do it. I just wanted to let you know that I had sent an email to Judge Lazzara to ask them to look at that.

**Gayle Moss:**

That was my concern too Judge because that’s a lot of money and now we’re talking about two accounts.

**Judge Clark:**

Right. I mean I think we did a very good job with the inmate welfare fund and the jail has not for a long time requested any expenditures from it and I think we all recognized during the pandemic because they are not having in person visits. Many of the family members of people that are incarcerated are not working and can’t really put money on their books. And that this is an appropriate way to do it. I just want us to be cautious so that over the long haul we don’t deplete the account. But I’m not suggesting this isn’t a good use of the inmate welfare fund at all. I just wanted to let the board and the public know that I have requested Judge Lazzara’s subcommittee to look at it for the long haul. I’m not as optimistic as some folks that we’re going to have a vaccine right away and that we’re going to be out of this pandemic mode for quite some time. So, I understand the need to keep inmates connected to their families. I think that’s hugely important.

**Gayle Moss:**

I think it’s been very good to be able to give them that. My concern was that if we’re going to keep adding different things on. Are we going to run out of money? I’m like you, the pandemic is not going to be over like next month or the first of the year. And we’re going to still want to accommodate the inmates.

**Judge Clark:**

Thank you. Any other discussion?

**Chelsa Wagner:**

May I ask a question? I’m just curious, have we had anyone look into whether these expenditures would qualify under the CARES Act, in terms of the pandemic funding that we’ve received from the federal government?

**Judge Clark:**

I don’t think so. That’s something that I guess someone could look into. That’s a thought. But I’m sure that hasn’t happened.

**Chelsa Wagner:**

I would be happy to have my office do what we can to analyze whether that would be an eligible expenditure. So, that might be something potentially that could alleviate some of the long-term concerns, which I agree with.

**Judge Clark:**

I mean it’s just a very difficult situation for people that are incarcerated. And the court is trying to do what they can to get them out, but we have just resumed, as many of you know, jury trials. And we can’t really have more than 2 or 3 trials safely because the need to socially distance so many people and not having rooms big enough to accommodate that. So, it’s a slow process in getting the people who are waiting for jury trial out unfortunately. And they are not connected in the same way with their families in terms of being able to have in person visitation and many families are not working and able to put money on the inmate’s account. So, I think it’s worthy if you want to, I would appreciate that if you would like to have your office look into that Mrs. Wagner. Thank you.

**Chelsa Wagner:**

Okay. Thank you.

**Judge Clark:**

Any other discussion or questions? Alright I think we can call in a vote.

***The board unanimously approved a motion by Ms. Hallam, duly seconded by Chelsa Wagner to approve the placement of fifty dollars ($50) from the Prisoner Welfare Fund on***

***the commissary account for all current incarcerated persons at the Allegheny County Jail.***

**Judge Clark:**

Ms. Hallam you have a second motion.

**Bethany Hallam:**

Yes, sure. It’s very similar to the first one but we found out at last months meeting that commissary funds actually can’t be used for the tablets. So, this is actually the same amount of $90,250 based off of yesterday’s population. I would like to make a motion to put $50 on the tablet account of everyone in the Allegheny County jail.

**Judge Clark:**

Any discussion or questions?

**Terri Klein:**

I just have a discussion point that maybe this is something that could go on the needs assessment survey if we’re looking to conserve money maybe we could survey the inmates as to whether commissary or tablet money would be more beneficial.

**Judge Clark:**

That’s a good point. Yes, if we can’t do both maybe they have a suggestion as to what’s more meaningful. That’s a good idea. Thank you, Ms. Klein. Any other discussion or questions?

***The board unanimously approved a motion by Ms. Hallam, duly seconded by Terri Klein to approve the placement of fifty dollars ($50) from the Prisoner Welfare Fund on***

***the tablet account for all current incarcerated persons at the Allegheny County Jail.***

1. **Community Corrections Reports**
   1. **Program for Offenders**

**Judge Clark:**

I think we have our folks from the community corrections reports present. I think. So, I’m going to ask The Program for Offenders.

**Carol Hertz (Program for Offenders):**

Good afternoon everyone. I haven’t been here for a while; I’ve had other people doing this. So, today it’s my turn. And I just wanted to give you some good news. I think in the mist of this pandemic there are new and good things happening and so I’m going to tell you about one of them that’s happening at the program. In March we were awarded a grant to develop a peer and family recovery support program. It’s a non-clinical service that offers certified recovery specialist and certified family recovery specialist for individuals and families that have been affected by the opioid use disorder. Our goal is to engage the family in the recovery process in order to enhance the participants likelihood for success. The program is 100% grant funded so obviously no payment is required. Our services include referrals, transportation assistance, life skill groups, employment, housing search, goal and action planning, and support from individuals and family members of those with shared life experiences in long term recovery. The project began in July and currently 10 of our ACJ residence are participating in this program. They also have their family members involved and enrolled in the services. We’re also accepting people from the community for this program. But we want to be able to ensure that all of our other ACJ clients can participate and get first priority placement for the program. Also, for voting, 15 of the program’s residence voted either in person with staff escort on Tuesday or voted by mail in ballot. So, it was wonderful to be able to encourage their participation in the voting process. So, I don’t know if you have any questions or any additional information you would like me to provide?

**Judge Clark:**

Does anyone have any questions for Ms. Hertz or want any additional information?

**Terri Klein:**

May I ask a question? So, for the family support, are the family members coming on site for that? Or are they remote?

**Carol Hertz (Program for Offenders):**

No as a result of the pandemic. We had another program that invited family members on the weekends on a weekly basis to each of our facilities. But we had to stop and that is occurring remotely as well as this program for the most part. We do have a number of staff people who can go into the homes depending on what needs to happen. But we’re trying to be extremely careful during this pandemic so all sorts of reasons obviously. So, the short answer is for the most part things are happening virtually.

**Terri Klein:**

And how long is the grant for?

**Carol Hertz (Program for Offenders):**

It’s a two-year grant from the state. There’s also a possibility for renewal. We began to talk to other funding sources that perhaps at the end of the grant period, we don’t need additional funds at this point in order to operate the program because it’s a very generous grant. But at the end of the grant period we may need to begin to seek additional funding when we’re getting close to maybe 6 months towards the end of it.

**Terri Klein:**

Well congratulations for that.

**Carol Hertz (Program for Offenders):**

Thank you. We’re pleased about it.

**Judge Clark:**

Thank you. Any other questions or comments?

**Gayle Moss:**

Yes. Could you tell me again? I guess I missed it. How many people started the program in July?

**Carol Hertz (Program for Offenders):**

We currently have a total of 23 individuals and families involved in the program. 10 of them are ACJ clients. We gave them first priority and will continue to do that as new people are transferred to us from the jail.

**Judge Clark:**

Any other questions or comments? Thank you, Ms. Hertz these are very exciting things.

* 1. **Renewal**

**Judge Clark:**

Renewal?

**Adam Zach (Renewal):**

Good afternoon. I’m reporting for Renewal Incorporated. We are currently working with Divine Intervention Ministries. They will be providing our men and women with virtual bible studies and other faith services. At this point were getting the technical aspects of it worked out with the computer monitors and everything. We should be up and running with those in a couple weeks. Last month we were fortunate to have Bridges Community Outreach Organization donate 60 care packages for our men and women. They received draw string bags and the bags contain socks, mask, thermals, and various other hygiene products. Needless to say, the reentrance was very appreciative of receiving these. Finally, I just wanted to report that regarding our employable residence or those that are not disabled or handicapped or in our in-patient treatment program. We’re currently at a 72% employment rate. And that’s a very tremendous number considering the pandemic that we’re going through. That’s all I have for now.

**Judge Clark:**

That’s really excellent news about the employment. Congratulations on that. That’s wonderful. Does anyone have any questions or comments? Thank you.

* 1. **Electronic Monitoring**

**Judge Clark:**

Electronic monitoring?

**Frank (Electronic Monitoring):**

Good evening Judge. Outside of our report Judge, the only thing I’d like to mention is we had 103 out of 108 people successfully complete our program last month. And the month prior if you recall we had 100% of the folks successfully complete. So, kudos to the staff at our house arrest department. And I’d also like to recognize our staff at the house arrest electronic monitoring department. They have been working throughout the pandemic, going into situations some houses where their own safety may have been jeopardized and they’ve done a great job throughout. Outside the report, I don’t know if anyone has any questions?

**Judge Clark:**

I would just say that I could vouch for the hard work that they have done and how important it was to getting people out of the jail during the pandemic. The community is safe. We haven’t had any major safety issues because people have been released and are on monitoring. So, it’s really valuable particularly during this time. So, please extend the thanks from the board to your department. Does anyone have any questions or comments?

**Terri Klein:**

I have a question. I’m just sort of concerned when you said that there were safety concerns for your staff. Can you talk about how you protect your staff?

**Frank (Electronic Monitoring):**

The court provided us all with mask, shields, gloves but the officers that work at our house arrest unit obviously need to go into the house because they have to install the equipment and remove equipment. But we’ve also encouraged them to talk through a window or front yard, have someone come out to their porch while you stay in your car. Just to make that kind of person to person contact. But there are some instances where that may not be safe to do. So, the officers do need to go in the residence. To be honest, this was mostly early on when we were still kind of unsure of some of the things with COVID. Around March, April, May, that time. As we’ve gotten a little more use to it and more education on it, the officers have been doing a very good job of adapting.

**Terri Klein:**

May I ask a follow up?

**Frank (Electronic Monitoring):**

Absolutely.

**Terri Klein:**

Have you had any staff in the workplace exposure or test positive?

**Frank (Electronic Monitoring):**

We have not. We’ve had a few staff test positive, but it was traced back to outside of work. And those were folks early on. We haven’t had any positives probably in the last six months.

**Terri Klein:**

Thank you.

**Judge Clark:**

Any other questions?

**Bethany Hallam:**

I was just wondering if before we adjourn, I could have the opportunity to read for the record and for the board the letter that we all received a little over a month ago about the lawsuit that was filed against the jail? This is from the Pennsylvania Institutional Law Project. I was just wondering if I would be able to read it into the record please?

**Judge Clark:**

So, I would say not at this meeting. Before we read into the record some things about the lawsuit, I think the solicitor might want to weigh in on that. So, I would say no, today. That doesn’t mean we can’t do it at the next meeting.

**Bethany Hallam:**

Okay. Should I just follow up with you after this meeting?

**Judge Clark:**

Yes.

**Bethany Hallam:**

Okay thank you very much.

**Judge Clark:**

Is there any new business?

**Chief Williams:**

$9,800.00 for sweat suits for inmates who may be released during the winter and who do not have appropriate clothing.

***The board unanimously approved a motion by Bethany Hallam, duly seconded by Barbara Parees to approve the expenditure of $9,800 from the Inmate Welfare Fund for inmate sweat suits.***

**Chief Williams:**

$6,387.75 for inmate gifts for the Chaplaincy holiday party

***The board unanimously approved a motion by Bethany Hallam, duly seconded by Barbara Parees to approve the expenditure of $6,387.75 from the Inmate Welfare Fund for inmate gifts for the Chaplaincy holiday party.***

**Judge Clark:**

Warden, are there any action items for today?

**Warden Harper:**

No ma’am.

1. **Adjournment**

**Judge Clark:**

Alright. We are going to have an executive session after this meeting for just the board. So, if there’s no other business I’ll entertain a motion to adjourn the meeting.

***The Board approved a motion to adjourn the meeting at 5:03 pm by Judge Clark.***

Kindest regards,



Chelsa Wagner

**Public Comment – Jail Oversight Board Meeting – 11/4/2020**

**Comment: Anonymous Officer:** Is there any relevant information regarding the opening of the 1M officers/civilian gym? Many officers have expressed concern regarding over when it might become available again. It would really help with the moral of the building if it were to reopen. Please consider this request.

**Response:** The jail administration has continued to consider/evaluate the opening of the 1M gym. At this time, the gym lacks the capacity to appropriately conduct contact tracing and will not be opened.

**Comment: Concerned Concerned:** I WOULD LIKE TO KNOW WHY MEDICAL IS STILL SO SHORT STAFFED? THEY STILL DON'T HAVE MEDICAL IN THE PROCESSING DEPARTMENT ON 2ND SHIFT 5 OUT OF 7 DAYS.

**Response:** Healthcare staff continue to make every attempt to fill vacancies. When call off’s occur, nurses cannot be mandated.

**Comment: Mike Barone:** Hello all, thank you for you time. Through this pandemic the employees of the Allegheny County Jail have been experiencing many hardships. This list is a few common struggles. Childcare, concern with the virus, anxiety over making mistakes and being disciplined, taking county approved leave (forced or voluntary) and recovering lost benefit time or pay, stress from distancing ourselves, PTSD from stress. I believe that there is not one person here who has not been negatively impacted by this. I am upset with the contingencies our employers have implemented which have not improved the situation for us, instead we have seen discipline and micromanagement. Our gym has been shut down for months which is the only stress reliever we have in our institution for employees. While some other county departments have received some from of monetary benefit to offset the negatives of this pandemic, we have received a few months of free parking. I am not complaining considering that is a kind gesture, but not everyone benefits from this, approximately 2/3rds of the employees did. I am aware that one department of the facility received hazard pay when no-one else did, this concerns me considering the county received 212 million dollars from CARES act and could have shared some of our tax money with the people on the ground that are suffering the most from this. I have questioned a deputy warden about any hopes of us receiving any form of hazard pay and he stated that he would look into it, this was two months ago. For the length of time that this has carried on now, I think the negatives of this could be offset to a degree with the reopening of the Gym to assist our mental health, and some form of hazard pay for all employees considering we are at high risk in this environment, as well as many suffer additional costs of childcare, medical expenses, suspension losses, and mostly, this would improve morale which desperately needs a boost. I appreciate the time and hope that our concerns are heard, I realize that not many speak up from this facility, it saddens me although I fully understand why, I am one who is not afraid of the backlash. Please show some concern for the officers, staff, and civilians that work this facility, we have been left out of the loop for a long time and you can see the effects resonating throughout the facility, we are people too.

**Response:** This is primarily a comment.

**Comment: Family Member:** You all say that public comment/ questions is an important part of the meeting. Even though the questions have been in the minutes they go unanswered so what good are they if no one cares enough to answer the questions asked? Why even put them in the minutes, they are not even addressed?

**Response:** This is a comment.

**Comment: Jodi Lincoln, PA Prison Society – Allegheny County Chapter:** Thank you for taking the time to listen to my comment.

After speaking with someone at ACJ this week, I have a couple of concerns I would like to bring to the oversights board attention and 1) Regarding the tablets - have received reports that people are having a lot of trouble using their tablets in their cells because of Wifi limitations and only getting a good enough signal to use their tablets if it's up against the door of their cell. Unable to read, watch movies, etc elsewhere in their cell. In general, folks seem excited to have the tablets, but if they don't have the service to be able to use it they are not very useful. This has had monetary penalties for people as their are charged fees based on usage time and are having to spend a lot of time on the tablet with items loading, losing their connection and having to reload etc, all which costs money. The jail should look into the issues with their wifi reaching everyone's cells and the oversight board should ask for a report and follow up to make sure people are able to use their tablets. Especially because of the financial strain and harm this is causing folks, wifi access and usability of the tablets should not be ignored. 2) The free phone calls the jail was providing have also ended. These should continue to be offered to folks until regular visitation is resumed. Even though video visits and emails, etc are now allowed on the tablets, those cost incarcerated individuals and their family's money. There needs to be a free and easily accessible way for people to connect with those on the outside. I would also like to express support for the other concerns brought up by PA Prison Society members and would specifically like to highlight the need to have a public response from board members to the suit and brief by the Abolitionist Law Center.

**Response:** We remain committed to connecting families and want to have individuals out of cell more frequently. Unfortunately, we are prohibited from increasing out of cell time due to the limitations set by the federal court order which maintains a maximum of 10 inmates out of cell at one time.

**Comment: John Kenstowicz – PA Prison Society:** RECOMMENDATION: THE ACJ OVERSIGHT BOARD CREATE A

SUBCOMMITTEE FOCUSED ON STAFF RETENTION AND STAFF RECRUITMENT AT ACJ RATIONALE: 1) ACJ has experienced a consistent decrease in medical and mental health staff each year in the last five years: 2016 129 2017 122 2018 110 2019 99 2020(May) 75 2) ACJ is facing a lawsuit, Howard v. Williams, regarding the lack of mental health services and as a consequence people “experience serious psychological and emotional pain and suffering, routine decompensation, increased infractions resulting in harmful imposition of solitary confinement and excessive use of force”. 3) Staff at ACJ have stated that “employees are given double, triple, and sometimes quadruple assignments that should be distributed to 2, 3 or 4 employees” 4) The NCCHC consultant’s suicide prevention report from 2019 found “staffing challenges”, “supervisors report a high attrition rate, especially among medical nurses”. The ACJ Oversight Board could consider the following interventions to improve staff retention and recruitment: 1)The subcommittee would conduct exit interviews to develop an understanding of why people are terminating employment with ACJ. ACJ administration will make staff aware of staff’s opportunity to participate in exit interviews with the Oversight Board subcommittee. Periodically the subcommittee will make a report of its findings from exit interviews. Research has found that exit interviews are more informative when done by a third party. 2)The subcommittee will create an anonymous questionnaire for all current employees at ACJ. The questionnaire would consist of questions related to such issues as morale, workloads and fairness. 3)The subcommittee will work with the ACJ administration in developing a greater rationale of why someone would want to work in a county jail. Research has been done on this issue that would be helpful. 4)The subcommittee will recommend a job search encompassing the eastern seaboard and the mid west for qualified employees. Pittsburgh has a national reputation as an attractive place to live for individuals and families. 5)The subcommittee will work with HR and ACJ administration in contacting all of the professional schools related to corrections in western Pennsylvania, such as schools of social work, nursing and criminology. The opportunity for more field placements at ACJ would be explored. 6)The subcommittee will recommend the instituting of retention bonuses. Research has found that in workplaces with high turnover, it is fiscally advantageous to provide retention bonuses instead of suffering increased costs for searching, hiring and training new employees. 7)The subcommittee will consult with experts in the field of workforce development to improve ACJ’s capability in retaining employees and recruiting new employees.

**Response:** This is a comment. Current litigation will not be discussed

**Comment: Margaret Mary Martin:** Dear Board Members, Good news to report. The meeting between Trinity food service and the Board has had positive results. My son reports that throughout this past month he's had several servings of banana, pineapple, and applesauce, as well as one serving of steamed cabbage which was especially tasty. It's a relief to know that the dietary health of the inmates is being addressed. Also, I want to thank the Board for adding another $50 to the inmates' Commissary Accounts--a thoughtful and helpful gesture. The tablets are a blessing for everyone involved--the inmates, their families, and the guards. As my son still does not know how to use the tablet to its fullest potential, additional/ongoing instruction is needed. The inmate trustee who helped my son is to be commended for his assistance. The only negative issue with regard to the tablets is the expense incurred, which is significant and regrettable. Thank you to the Jail Oversight Board as well as to the jail staff and administration for all that you have accomplished and continue to do on behalf of Allegheny County Jail inmates. Sincerely, Maggie Martin **Response:** This is a comment.