

Department of Corrections

Prison Issues Board

Montana State Prison
Deer Lodge, MT
April 7, 2022
12:00 pm to 4:00 pm

I. Call to order

Pat Smith called to order the regular meeting of the Prison Issues Board of the Department of Corrections at 12:08 pm on April 7, 2022 at Montana State Prison.

II. Roll call

The following members of the committee were present: Pat Smith/Chairman, Brian Gootkin/MDOC Director, Cynthia Wolken/MDOC Deputy Director, Peter Bludworth/CCC, Steve Ray/Pine Hills, Michael Moorman/MWP, Tom Green/DCCF, Jim Salmonsens/MSP, and Gayle Butler/MCE.

Quorum is present.

The following persons were also present: Jim Anderson, Natalie Smitham, Kiela Harris, John Daugherty, DJ Godfrey, Billie Reich, Travis Brown, Rachel Weiss, Amber Robbins, Brent Doig, Senator Tom McGillvray, Andrea Evans, Matt Moore, Cecily Simons, Chris Conell, Colleen Ambrose, Molly McCarty, Laurie Mills, Alex Schroeckenstein, Scott Eichner, Shane Hildenstab, Carrie Villa, Cindy Hiner, Tammy Finely, Renee Seiler-McDonald, Kathy Ralston, Melissa McEwen, Kurt Aughney, Andres Haladay, Erica Wimmer and Kimberly Lamb,

Members of the Public present via Zoom: Kasey Hugs, Crystal DeBerry, Edie Shreves, Clemente Arciga, Gayle Christensen, Jeff Carter, Josie Cheetham, Lita Pepion, Lynne Bos, Yolanda Andrews, Ben Keyes, Wanda Johnson, Connie Grove, Karen Harrison, and Kimberly Kano.

III. Approval of Minutes

Warden Salmonsens moved to approve the minutes from last meeting. Administrator Butler seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

IV. Legislative and Management Team Updates

- a) State Tribal Communication Committee and Family and Child Services Division would like to come to MWP and MSP. May also have legislature members come visit our facilities.

V. Division Updates

- a) Director Gootkin acknowledged the changes the Department of Corrections has been going through and thanked everyone for their patience through these changes. Introduced new executive team for the Department of Corrections.
- b) Jim Anderson reported the Public Safety Division is undergoing a reorganization. Public Safety Bureau Chief position has been posted. Training Manager position interviewed for last week. Expect to see a finalized organizational chart in the next couple months.
- c) Scott Eychner discussed the focus of the Rehabilitation and Program Division and how we can support inmates' transition into the community.
- d) John Daugherty – Records Department will be moving under the Administrative Services Division.
- e) Natalie Smitham – No new business.

VI. Grievance & Disciplinary Updates

- a) Pat Smith reviewed the Grievance Procedure and said this is how we want inmates to communicate with facilities and discuss concerns they have. We have a Grievance and Disciplinary Conference annually to discuss any improvements needed.
- b) Billie Reich reported the Department of Corrections hired a grievance and disciplinary staff for CCC. Discussed substantial upcoming changes in disciplinary procedures.
- c) Billie Reich reviewed grievance numbers throughout the Department of Corrections. She will be doing a Director's Report to show the issues offenders are grieving in the facilities. John Daugherty asked if the codes will be changing. AW Reich stated there will be a couple codes added, but no big changes to codes.

- d) Colleen Ambrose discussed the importance of the grievance process. Colleen believes this process has helped in solving issues inmates have brought before us.

VII. Discussion on IWF

- a) Natalie Smitham discussed updates on the Performance Audit of the Inmate Welfare Fund. We will have an update on the Performance audit at the next PIB meeting.

VIII. Review of Inmate Work Assignments and Compensation

- a) Kiela Harris reviewed the Inmate Pay for FY 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021 for each individual facility.
- b) Kiela reviewed the projected cost to increase inmate pay (see handouts). If we chose to do a 40% increase, it would have a general fund impact of \$111,845.08. Director Gootkin questioned if the inmate pay is statute or policy. Pat Smith discussed the history of the IWF and how we got to where we are now with IWF. Natalie discussed the questions the performance auditor has regarding IWF funds.
- c) Kiela reviewed the Inmate Welfare Fund History of Revenue and Expense (see handouts). Current Cash Balance is \$1,079,258. Kiela discussed the 2020 increase in expenses. Director Gootkin asked if it would be more consistent if 2020 year could be taken out since we have federal funds to cover the COVID year. Kiela stated that could be a possibility.
- d) Kiela discussed the Inmate Pay Comparison document (handout). Inmate Pay Comparison included comparison of inmate pay with Wyoming, South Dakota, North Dakota, Idaho, and an average. On the Inmate Pay Comparison of all States, Montana is ranked 6th in inmate pay. The Inmate Pay Comparison document is based on all inmate jobs, not just comparable jobs.
- e) Kiela reviewed White Paper - Notes for Inmate Pay Increase Proposal. Gayle Butler requested we leave out the MCE Inmate Pay increase as those workers are paid substantially higher. We will do a follow up to Inmate Pay at the next meeting.

IX. Inmate Phone System

- a) John Daugherty reported the Legislature held a hearing about inmate phone calls and IWF. The Legislature conducted a study bill to review the inmate phone rates and inmate welfare fund. John communicated with committee his discussions with IC Solutions, our telephone provider, and their proposed solutions to concerns heard by the legislative committee.
- b) MSP -Warden Salmonsens stated the IWF reps recommended reducing phone call limit to 15 minutes from 30 minutes to reduce wait times and lines.
- c) MWP - AW Moorman stated MWP has lines for phones but do not know if they have infrastructure to add more phones. Inmates must sign up to use the phones at MWP.
- d) CCC - Warden Bludworth stated CCC has 15-minute calls and have not experienced long wait lines.
- e) DCCF - Warden Green stated there has not been an issue at DCCF and have not had any wait lines. DCCF has a 30-minute talk limit.
- f) Pine Hills - Steve Ray has not seen a phone issue at Pine Hills.

X. IWF Annual Budgets, Global Fund Updates, Requests, Funding and New Business

- a) IWF reports are sent each month. Global Fund is \$58,426. Month of March - \$18,747 spent. Expenditure breakdown includes bus tickets, treatment, and special items. Kiela reviewed each facility's budget, revenue, expenditures to date, and remaining balance. We will set our annual IWF budgets at the next meeting.
- b) MWP is requesting 100 additional Edovo tablets due to the increase in population. Request is \$20,000 for these tablets. Committee moved to table this request until next meeting.
- c) MSP is requesting ice dispensers for each individual unit to dispense ice in a sanitary manner. Price may not be set in stone as the prices may fluctuate from 6 months ago. Warden Bludworth motioned. DJ Godfrey seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

- d) MSP is requesting a treadmill for the WRC for \$5029. This would come out of the MSP IWF fund. Warden Green made motion. Warden Blutworth seconded. Motion passed unanimously.
- e) CCC requested equipment for their outside recreation due to the increase in inmate outdoor recreation. The cost of the equipment would be \$8000. Since it is over \$5000, we would need to get three quotes from other vendors. Warden Salmonsens motioned. Chis Connell seconded. Motion passed unanimously. Approved on condition of receiving two more bids.
- f) CCC requested soundproofing for the two gyms for \$36,545. This would assist in expanding the amount of programming planned. Committee discussed the logistics of the soundproofing for CCC. Kiela Harris moved to pass. MSP seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

XI. Roundtable

- a) Pine Hills – We were able to get new radios. Camera system is 75% operational and adding 136 new cameras. Staffing is a struggle. Education has come into some roadblocks with online courses and our State IT. Youth population is spiking with dangerous crimes. We have a lot of issues with behaviors and mental health issues. We are calving on the ranch. We will be planting gardens as we go into spring.
- b) Crossroads Correctional Center – We have seen a decline in staff/inmate positive COVID cases. We are doing more to increase visitation opportunities. We are working on increasing programming and getting inmates outside of their housing units.
- c) Montana Correctional Enterprises – Ready to start Last Mile coding program on June 5, 2022. They have 22 inmates signed up for the two-year program. Job Fair scheduled for April 27th for inmates where they will complete mock interviews to prepare for transition to community. Will start the pheasant program in conjunction with FWP. MCE has been tentatively approved for \$1.1 million education grant from the Governor’s Office. Nicole Chandler will receive a national staff award. Joel Miller is moving on to another agency as he lives in Helena.
- d) John Daugherty – Starting a project to replace OMIS, an internally created software program with an off the shelf system. Clarified new Radio systems were purchased with General Funds; not COVID funds.

- e) Natalie Smitham – We are working on putting together EPP requests to submit to the Legislative Office. We are continuing to realign our budget to coincide with the reorganization.
- f) Scott Eychner – Director has asked for two task forces to focus on Recidivism and Education. Scott will be working on establishing those groups in the upcoming weeks.
- g) Jim Anderson – With the reorganization of the Public Safety group we will look to include Probation and Parole partners into this meeting to best utilize our resources.
- h) Colleen Ambrose – Entered into a settlement agreement with Disability Rights Montana regarding their litigation with Severely Mentally Ill offenders at MSP. Toured MSP facility with Warden Salmonsens and AW Lamb to ensure we are still compliant with Langford Agreement.
- i) Shane Hildenstab – Trying to build some bridges with local jurisdictions to assist our investigators.
- j) Clinical Services Division – Connie Winner has retired. Electronic Health Record is up and running and has really impacted the continuity of care.
- k) Montana State Prison – MSP is experiencing short staffing. Contract with Union was ratified which increased correctional officer pay \$2 an hour. Our new training class has 11 new correctional officers which is a great increase from past classes. Inmate population is increasing.
- l) DCCF – Dealing with staffing issues and trying to get back to full staff. Next week we are looking forward to working with DOC Financial. Working on nailing down a PREA audit.
- m) Montana Women’s Prison – We are struggling with staffing issues as well. Jennifer Buckley did a two-day session with our Native American population. New Kitchen flooring project is upcoming. New Radios were added at MWP and about a third of the cameras are up running. Family day at MWP will be May 11th.

XII. Public Comment

- a) Gayle Christensen – Discussed limited phones on units and attorney phone calls.

- b) Kasey Hugs – Discussed tablets, bandwidth availability, and visitation.
- c) Crystal DeBerry – Discussed visiting approval rules and water at MSP. Expressed desire for longer in-person visits and vending machines in visiting area.
- d) Edie Shreves – Discussed 15-minute phone calls, visitation, and tablets. Interested in MSP bringing back Family Day.
- e) Clemente Arciga – Discussed visitation approval process.
- f) Lita Pepion – Discussed the water at Montana State Prison, visiting, mail, and phone calls.
- g) Jeff Carter – Discussed visitation and requested to look at extending the two-hour visitation time slot.
- h) Yolanda Andrews – Discussed the water at Montana State Prison, inmate wages and a community garden.

XIII. Adjournment

Pat Smith adjourned the meeting at 3:11 pm. Next meeting is scheduled for June 9th and will take place in Billings at MWP.