

Department of Corrections

Prison Issues Board

Crossroads Correctional Center

Shelby, MT

October 26, 2021

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 12:02 pm on October 26, 2021 at Crossroads Correctional Center.

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, Jim Salmonsens/MSP, and Gayle Butler/MCE.

Quorum is present.

The following persons were also present:Carolynn Bright, Chris Connell, Kathy Ralston, Jodi Stone, Brant Lodge, John Dougherty, Erika Wimmer, Andrea Evans, Kiela Harris, Natalie Smitham, Laurie Mills, Kari Alstead, Billie Reich, Colleen Ambrose, Wes Somogy, Jason Ness, Mark Hartman, Kurt Aughney, Kimberly Lamb

Members of the Public present: Kathleen Stewart

III. Approval of Minutes

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

IV. Director Update

- a) Interim Law and Justice Committee taking place at the end of this week that we are getting ready for. Cynthia Wolken will speak to the Legislative updates.

V. Division Updates

- a) Montana State Prison – Warden Salmonsens reported MSP rolled out new radios throughout facility. Conduit is currently being installed facility wide

for the new camera system. Montana State Prison remains short staffed. MSP has inmates and staff with COVID, and we are taking precautions to mitigate the spread. These measures have been successful in limiting any outbreaks.

- b) Montana Women's Prison – Associate Warden Moorman reported the radios are up and running at Montana Women's Prison. All wiring and conduit installed waiting on ATS for new camera system. Judges Conference was in Billings and they came to tour MWP. Electronic Medical Records is rolling out today. We have not had any COVID outbreaks at MWP for a long time.

VI. Grievance & Disciplinary Updates

- a) Billie Reich stated grievance and disciplinary staff have been hired specifically for CCC. Tomorrow we will be having a Grievance and Disciplinary Conference at CCC with legislative auditors attending.
- b) We should have all the numbers and information regarding grievance and disciplinary available at the next PIB meeting for the Director's Report.

VII. Inmate Work Assignments

- a) Kiela Harris reviewed Inmate Pay Comparison with Board (attachments). Board discussed long-term goals for Inmate Pay. Suggestions included incorporating different pay levels and tenure of inmates in positions. AW Moorman reported MWP has a tough time filling inmate positions in their smaller facility. Gayle Butler discussed the pay structure at MCE. Work group for Inmate Pay has not met yet as research took longer than expected. Director Gootkin asked to be a part of the work group. Pat Smith advised the need to be consistent throughout facilities for inmate work assignments/pay.
- b) Additional IWF spending authority was granted for MSP. These funds may be allocated to other facilities as needed. The amount of \$100,000 was allocated to inmate jobs and \$400,000 to operational authority.

VIII. IWF Annual Budgets

- a) Kiela Harris discussed IWF budgets for all facilities. IWF funds were approved for inmate physicals. Gayle Butler stated all her MCE workers must pay for these physicals on their own. Pat Smith discussed the need for consistency in granting IWF funds. Colleen Ambrose asked if criteria already exist for these IWF requests. Kiela Harris informed the criteria

with the group. Gayle Butler discussed the possibility of one of the facilities' providers being certified to conduct physicals.

- b) Warden Salmonsens presented an IWF request to the board to purchase an ice machine for the infirmary with a cost of \$6119. Gayle Butler does not approve as she feels this is part of operations and shouldn't be used with IWF funds. Director Gootkin concurs that this purchase should be paid for by operating funds. Kiela Harris stated funds are allocated in the general fund for the purchase. Group unanimously denied IWF request.
- c) Warden Blutworth requested \$16,000 in IWF funds to implement Go Further, an inmate re-entry program. Core Civic would fund the expenses of this program moving forward after initial investment. Gayle Butler moved to approve \$16,000 in IWF funds for program. Warden Salmonsens seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Warden Blutworth discussed bringing Prison Fellowship International Tier 2 residential community program to CCC. All funding will be provided by PFI. Committee requested the DOC Legal Team look into this program. No funding requested for this program.

Warden Blutworth discussed additional inmate programs; Pivot Tech Computer Skills Training Program for coding/cyber security training with a cost of \$12,000 and Home Builders International with startup costs of \$130,000 and a full cost of \$322,000. HBI assists with outside employment and transition out of the prison. No IWF funding requested for these programs at this time.

IX. Legislative Updates

- a) Study of telecommunications in prison system is rolling along. Discussion this week in Law and Justice Interim Committee of criminal justice status systems. Director will give an update on PREA certification at LJIC. Will give an update on Pell Grants and working with the University System and the Governor's Office to keep that project moving. Electronic Health Records launching today. LJIC was requesting information on suicides in the correction system. The governor will give an update to LJIC on the data with prison suicides and how we are trying to address the issue at MSP.

X. Roundtable

- a) Pine Hills – We put in our new cameras. New radios are a week or two out. We are seeing a spike in the youth population. It appears some of the

programs for youth in the communities have gone away so they are being sentenced to Pine Hills. Our sex offender population has spiked. We are also seeing a big increase in criminally convicted youth that will end up in the adult corrections system. Pine Hills is down 4-5 staff positions. It is just about impossible to recruit for positions when McDonalds is paying \$19 an hour and our positions start at \$15 an hour.

- b) Central Services Division – No new updates other than the rollout of Electronic Health Records is going great as of this morning.
- c) Crossroads Correctional Center – COVID precautions in place at CCC. CCC is trying to minimize the amount of time inmates from pods/units are mixed between each other to limit the spread. Initiating staff COVID testing starting tomorrow. We are hoping to get back to normal operations soon.
- d) Montana Correctional Enterprises – Six colleges are signed up to offer programming to offenders once Pell Grants to inmates are available. Working with Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks to get our pheasant program up and running. Jeff Bromley is retiring on Thursday and we will have all new staff in the Canteen. Price increases will be seen in the canteen. We will be out of aluminum for license plates. Alternative license plates without aluminum will be utilized. Legislative Education Interim Committee tour on November 17th at MSP to look at our Education programs. Gayle informed CCC of the Legislative Education Interim Committee requesting information on the CCC Education program at their next committee hearing in January 2022.
- e) Montana State Prison – The MDOC Leadership Meeting was held at MSP last week with a presentation from Google. Governor Gianforte visited MSP to present Bruce Squires with a Governor's Award and received a brief tour of our facility. MSP is currently short staffed. Local 4700 Union negotiations continue. A tentative agreement was made to implement a Career Ladder at MSP.
- f) Quality Assurance – Will bring 8 staff to CCC to complete the annual license. Security reviews have been completed at Pine Hills and MWP. MSP is scheduled but was pushed back.
- g) Deputy Director – Our new CFO is Natalie Smitham. She comes to us from the Department of Labor and Industry.
- h) DCCF – Dawson County Correctional Facility is short staffed. COVID has come in on county side and with staff members. DCCF is doing rapid

COVID tests once a week. Inmates are required to wear masks when outside of the pods and staff are required to have masks on around inmates.

- i) Technical Services – Billie Reich noted there have been changes to the MSP mail procedure.
- j) Montana Women’s Prison – Security staffing is almost at 100%. Food service is the only area where MWP is struggling with staffing. MWP has not been impacted by COVID recently and are in normal operations.

XI. Religious Requests

- a) Sante Marte group wanted one rosary each. This was approved by committee.
- b) Odinst – Requested to add sage, juniper, lavender and cedar; one plastic bag, one battery operated candle and one ruin tile. These were approved by committee.
- c) Colleen Ambrose brought to the Wardens’ attention an appeal in the Sixth Circuit regarding Kosher meals and is requesting input.

XII. Public Comment

- a) Kathleen Stewart – Discussed her concerns regarding lockdown of units at MSP, cleaning of phones, and religious channels.
- b) Email from Viola Lewis – Discussed email service.

XIII. Adjournment

Pat Smith adjourned the meeting at 2:33pm. Next meeting in February will be hosted by MSP/MCE.