

Penobscot County Commissioners' Meeting Minutes March 9, 2021
9:00 AM Commissioners Peter Baldacci
Commissioners Laura Sanborn & Andre Cushing via Zoom

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Roll Call -

Commissioner Baldacci opened the meeting at 9:00 a.m. from the Commissioners Chambers and Commissioners Sanborn and Cushing attending via Zoom.

Public Comment -

Larry Dansinger – Citizen of Bangor had two comments –

- Larry discussed correspondence he sent to the Sheriff, Commissioners and the Board of Visitors. There were concerns regarding communications he had received from people in the jail and what they're experiencing. Chair Pat Kimball of the Board of Visitors responded saying, "Thank you for your email. The Board of Visitors continues to fulfill their responsibility which includes the physical and mental safety of those residing at PCJ." Larry feels that was a very non-committal response. Larry has seen little to no actions being taken and this shows that there is a serious lack of leadership. Larry would like to see a cleaning of the house in that committee very soon.
- Larry would like to know what has been decided with Sheriff Morton and PCHC in arranging for people to be vaccinated. Larry would like the Commissioners and Sheriff Morton to establish a policy if people are to work in the jail, they are required to be vaccinated. If they refuse, then they work without pay or find a position to work that doesn't include being near inmates.

Ms. D'Alessandro – concerned citizen from Northern Penobscot County –

- Ms. D'Alessandro states she had a crash course of addiction, what it is and causes. Ms. D'Alessandro watched it destroy her family, town and the next generation of her family because there is no family, church or supervisors available like we did growing up. Many parents are working two jobs to survive or are incarcerated and not getting the resources they need. Because of this, they end up repeatedly being re-incarcerated; kids are raising themselves, usually on the street, soon to be the next inhabitants of PCJ. Once incarcerated, the treatment has not been good at all. I understand that money is an issue, but like Randall Liberty stated on March 7, 2020 "If we truly want to decrease county operating costs, then let's work together on identifying prevention efforts..." The cost savings would be to have programs/resources placed so people don't end up in jail. Children won't be raising themselves and following in the path of their parents.

Public Comment Continued:

Ms. Dicranian – discussed the following:

- Ms. Dicranian introduced herself as a Quaker and on the Maine Council of Churches. She states she previously had worked as a correctional officer in three county jails; Penobscot was not one of them.
- Ms. Dicranian questioned how many here have been inside the jail. Regardless of the reason of incarceration, inmates are allowed the basic rights of healthcare. It is the Sheriff and Board of Visitors purpose to ensure the safety of the inmates. Failing to test correctional officers when they return to work after leaving the complex, is negligent. Ms. Dicranian believes that regular testing of inmates and officers and vaccination to all is the right thing to do.
- Ms. Dicranian requests that more inmates are released to lower the jail population.

Pastor Holly Reid – a concerned citizen from Bath

- Pastor Reid introduced herself as wearing two hats; a nurse for over 30 years and also as a pastor.
- Issues surrounding COVID are not limited to just one county or place; it affects all of us. It is up to the State of Maine to figure out how we are all going to get inmates vaccinated in the state. It is also up to the County to make sure that those working with the inmates are vaccinated. There needs to be a safe plan in place so that those incarcerated do not get ill.

Zeraph Moore – a concern citizen

- Zeraph is in support of Ms. D'Alessandro's statement of more outside assistance to treat dependency to strengthen our community. If you look at today's roster who are being incarcerated at PCJ, a lot of them are in for substance related charges. Zeraph feels it to be essential that these inmates be released as they would be safer in their homes right now.
- Zeraph has heard from some inmates that they are scared of contracting COVID as they feel appropriate precautions are not being followed. Some of the concerns are as follows: officers not wearing masks, officers going in between quarantine and regular cell blocks and inmates having to share masks. Zeraph wants highlighted this concern: COVID quarantine is being used as a punishment or as a threatened punishment.

Public Comment – Continued:

Janet Drew – a concerned citizen from York, Maine

- Ms. Drew revisited her question from last week of what made the six original cases of COVID in the jail come to light and the follow up process going forward in protection of inmates. Ms. Drew agrees with both Pastor Reed and Ms. D'Alessandro when they stated we should be releasing those inmates back to their community where they can be safe. The Sheriff and DA has some control over who are non-violent, has short stays and has a place to go. Those people should be a priority in being released.

Jenny Ingwersen – concerned citizen from Southern Maine.

- Jenny introduced herself as a mental health provider from outside Penobscot County and also a member of a local chapter of Showing Up for Racial Justice. Jenny has concerns of the outbreak of COVID at PCJ. Some people incarcerated are at an economic disadvantage and are incarcerated because they cannot pay bail; because Courts are backlogged, these folks are sitting in jail being potentially exposed to COVID. Jenny is appalled by hearing that quarantine is being used as a punishment. These inmates are living in cramped, overcrowded cells, sitting or lying on the floor, very little outside recreational time and ten-minute showers. Jenny feels like the health risks at PCJ are not being taken seriously. More testing needs to be completed on both the inmates and personnel, what is being done on the reports received from inmates regarding threats of quarantining, why vaccines are not readily available for the inmates, and multiple other issues listed. Something needs to be done of this inhumane treatment of these inmates.

Alan Gitelson – concerned citizen

- Mr. Gitelson main concern is that inmates are not offered the opportunity of vaccines while being incarcerated.

Carol Spencer-LeMay – concerned citizen

- Ms. Spencer-LeMay reiterates that inmates should be regularly tested and vaccinated. If CDC guidelines cannot be met with social distancing and clean face masks, the inmates with lesser charges should be released.

Sheriff's Update –

Sheriff Troy Morton reported the following on Corrections:

- Sheriff is disappointed hearing comments from participants that received a document that may not be totally accurate; a little misleading. Sheriff responded to some of the questions brought up during the public comment segment.
 - Sheriff sits on calls with CDC and DOC for best practices. These are the ones being followed at PCJ.
 - Correctional Officers are screened every day before their shift starts a temperature check. Mask wearing is mandatory for the officers.
 - Inmates are provided clean masks daily – there is NO sharing of masks. However, it is found that it is the inmates that we struggle with wearing their masks consistently.
 - Laundry is done every single day.
 - We have an outside cleaning service that we have come in daily. It started with just high traffic area, now has extended to other areas.
 - There is a great difference between our jail managing 180 inmates versus Piscataquis County managing 20.
 - Sheriff feels that we should all be on the same team – it is recognized we need additional resources and services for the inmates. This is what we all should be fighting for. Why are suicides and overdose deaths increasing on the outside? This is not a direct reflection on the jail – this has to do with
 - The Sheriff does NOT set bail. The Sheriff cannot simply let people go. Currently we have 205 people released to Pre-trial Services. Those are the people deemed low-risk, no risk is best served out in the population whether in counseling or at work. Sheriff states that with 205 out of the jail, it proves a great effort in minimizing the number of inmates.
 - We have the MAT program still in place. (12-16 participants at this time)
 - Peer coaching is still in place.
 - Our contract with MEDPRO provides 24-hour RN nursing; Two days a week with a nurse practitioner; 12-16 hours a day with mental health clinicians, and 4 hours a week with a psychologist.
 - Penobscot County received a \$750K mental health grant. This will allow us more clinician services in the facility, as well as out on the road.
- In response to the inhumane conditions at PCJ with quarantine. Quarantine is the most recommended practice to use when new individuals are coming in the facilities, or have left the facility for some reason and coming back. Those that unable to make bail stay in

Sheriff's Update – Continued:

quarantine for 14 days as recommended by the CDC. Our quarantine block is 24 beds. Today there are 14 individuals in there right now.

- In-house jail population is 115; 47 boarded out to other facilities, no federal inmates, county swaps and there **205** inmates in Pre-trial Services.
- As soon as Governor Mills permitted vaccines for our officers, we had them available for our employees. We did not delay any further vaccines, as with Moderna you must wait 28 days for the second vaccine. We also cannot force our employees to be vaccinated as that is a personal choice.
- According to CDC and Dr. Shah, there is no date provided to vaccinate all inmates. However, there have been a few inmates that have had their first Moderna shot, and while incarcerated needed their second shot, we have been able to provide that for them.
- Our Board of Visitors are a diverse group of volunteers. Sheriff is incredibly disappointed as how they have been harassed and tormented by a very few individuals. There have been five members resigning.
- Sheriff revisited a question from Jenny Ingwersen on why rapid testing is not performed on each officer upon start of a shift. Simply answered, Binax is not to be used without any symptoms.
- Sheriff stated that inmates leaving quarantine, before going into the general population are given the PCR test.

NWDB Update –

Executive Director Joanna Russell presented the following updates:

- The Northeastern workforce board will meet Thursday from 10-1 via zoom.
- The NWDB executive committee has reviewed the assessments related to the Northeastern Maine One-Stop Centers. The executive committee will make the recommendation that NWDB conditionally certify the Bangor Comprehensive One-Stop CareerCenter and the affiliate sites of East Millinocket, Dover-Foxcroft, Presque Isle and Machias. Under the condition the ADA coordinator from the Bureau of rehab services conduct a site survey on eight sites.
- The NWDB is engaging in a strategic plan of process for four years and will involve our partners across the five regions.

NWDB Update – Continue:

Benjamin Hawkins – Program Coordinator reported the following:

- The Opportunities initiative program helps people that have in one way or another been affected by substance use either directly or indirectly. This program gives them the training they need to find a job and get them back on their own two feet. In the last three months our teams have met with 784 individuals; letting them know about the resources we have available. Penobscot County alone had 400 of those individuals reaching out. We've had 129 enrollments for training to help them succeed.
- The Board is working on two initiatives to engage community leaders, employees, and employers to discuss recovery and how to support the recovery process.
 - Recovery Coaches Basis training which had 55 attendees
 - Recovery Works for ME in partnership with BARN with 51 attendees
- This Thursday at the Board meeting will bring up employee recovery friendly.

Leah Gulliver – EMDC Assistant Director of Workforce Services reported the following:

- We are working hand in hand with Bangor Housing Authority's Family Self Sufficiency Project which is a workshop series designed for outreach purposes. Through this program we offer how an individual would move through the process to employment.
- We requested with Bangor Adult Ed to collaborate with work readiness training for CDL B driving.
- We have successfully conducted our Young Mainer's Workforce Academy for ages 16-24. There were ten participants who moved through this program.

Deeds Update –

Registrar Bulay presented the following:

- February is typically the slowest month of the year. This year, however, brought in \$92K in revenue which is the most in the last ten years.
- We have a new employee that started two weeks ago and is fitting in quite nicely and learning well.
- There is one employee out on leave.

Facilities Update –

Director Brian MacDonald reported the following:

- The same mason repairing the damaged cell walls will provide an estimate of the front steps of the jail.
- Waiting on an estimate on a plumbing repair in the jail.
- Heating issues in the courthouse has been restored to normal.
- Locksmith has rekeyed repurposed filing cabinets. He will provide a quote for a better master key system for the non-Sheriff buildings.
- Director MacDonald has received a great deal of electronic information from WBRC; including the 1969 drawings of when the YMCA was built and some of the most recent work.
- Met with Bangor Fire last week and they would like to use the exterior of the Y building for ladder training.

Sheriff Morton thanked Director MacDonald for all the work he has done over to the jail. He walked into a very difficult job and he has shown his dedication by coming in on the weekends. Sheriff has seen him outside shoveling and snow blowing – Director MacDonald is doing a tremendous job!

Commissioner Baldacci echoed the Sheriff's comments. There is still a lot to be determined, such as what will be done with the Y. We need to make informed decisions on that building and we are very lucky to have Brian getting us the information we need.

Finance Update -

Director Alexander provided a report on expenditures and revenues through February 28, 2021:

On expenditures:

- Expenditures should be at 16.67%. All departments with exception of Treasurer's are within that spending.
- "Contingency" line has been added as agreed. This will be used for employees that have been here and have a large amount of vacation/sick time being paid out.

On Revenue:

- Revenues are starting to come in
- All prior tax commitments have come in
- Registry of Deeds income does not include February.

Administration Update –

Administrator Erika Honey reported on the following:

- Employment within the County:
 - DA's Office full time Clerical Specialist I position closed and interview will be held tomorrow.
 - IT Manager position closed and interview will be held today.
 - Full time Clerical Specialist position in Probate closed and interviews will be held this Friday.
 - We received over 30 full application packages for the Victim Witness Coordinator position and interviews will be held next week.
- There will be site visit with DOJ for the EMA grant on Monday.
- Recapping on COVID cases within the County. We are at the tail end of the quarantine period. As of right now, we have three active COVID cases; all others have been cleared to return to work.
- A sincere thank you to the Sheriff's office and staff for picking up additional shifts and quickly adjusting their schedules to accommodate the County's needs.
- Commissioners approved the use of emergency sick time for COVID related incidents. To date, the County has provided over 3300 hours of COVID sick time. This is a huge commitment by our County to keep our workplace safe. Not all employers took this action, so I want to thank you Commissioners for supporting our efforts.
- MCCA will be meeting tomorrow.
- Commissioner Sanborn moved to approve the warrants as presented. Commissioner Cushing seconded the motion. Vote to approve passed 3-0.
- Payroll Change Notices signed for: Levi Thompson and Brandon Anctil – Hired part time.
- Payroll Warrant to be approved for 03.05.2021: \$261,834.71
- A/P Warrant to be approved for 03.05.2021: \$50,387.79
- A/P Warrant to be approved for 03.09.2021: \$404,634.57
- UT Warrant to be approved for: NONE
- UT TIF Warrant to be approved for: NONE

Executive Session---Commissioner Sanborn made a motion to go into Executive Session at 10:42 a.m., under 1 M.R.S.A. § 405 (6) (A) Personnel Matter. Commissioner Cushing seconded the motion. Vote to approved passed 3-0. Present were: Commissioners, Administrator Honey and Sheriff Morton. Session ended at 10: 55 a.m.

Executive Session---Commissioner Sanborn made a motion to go into Executive Session at 10:56 a.m., under 1 M.R.S.A. § 405 (6) (A) Personnel Matter. Commissioner Cushing seconded the motion. Vote to approved passed 3-0. Present were: Commissioners and Administrator Honey. Session ended at 11:15 a.m.

Meeting Adjourned-

Commissioner Cushing moved to adjourn the meeting at 11:16 a.m. with no further business on the agenda. Commissioner Sanborn seconded the motion. Vote to approve passed 3-0.

Certified By:

Administrator, Erika Honey

Peter K. Baldacci, Chairman

Laura J. Sanborn, Commissioner

Andre E. Cushing, III, Commissioner