

Meherrin River Regional Jail Authority Board Meeting Minutes

Thursday, November 4, 2021

The Meherrin River Regional Jail Authority Board held their meeting in the Meherrin River Regional Jail Training Room.

I. Call To Order

Members Present are as follows:

Brian Roberts, Brunswick County Sheriff
Keli Reekes, Brunswick County Assistant County Administrator
Bernard Jones, Brunswick County Board of Supervisors
Duck Adams, Dinwiddie County Sheriff
Kevin Massengill, Dinwiddie County Administrator
Bobby Hawkins, Mecklenburg County Sheriff
Wayne Carter, Mecklenburg County Administrator
Tom Tanner, Mecklenburg County Board of Supervisors

Others in attendance are as follows:

Crystal Willett, Superintendent
Major Brent Wright, Major Administration and Support
Major Cliff Allen, Major Security and Operations
Brendan Hefty, Hefty, Wiley & Gore, P.C. via Conference Call
Captain Steve Kennedy, Dinwiddie Sheriff's Office
Jennifer Derrenbacker, Finance Director
Shelley Slaughter, Executive Secretary

II. Approval of Agenda

Sheriff Brian Roberts made a motion to approve the November 4, 2021 agenda. Wayne Carter seconded the motion. All members present voted in favor of the motion.

III. Approval of Minutes

Tom Tanner made a motion to approve the May 13, 2021 Board Meeting Minutes. Sheriff Bobby Hawkins seconded the motion. All members present voted in favor of the motion.

IV. New Business

A. Superintendent's Report

1. Monthly Status Report - The Monthly Status Report for the months of August 2021 through October 2021 was presented.

Prior to the Monthly Status Report being discussed, Superintendent Crystal Willett informed the Board that the Jail is now officially National Commission on Correctional Health Care (NCCHC) Accredited. The Jail underwent an on-site survey with a physician and other healthcare experts; they surveyed the facility for compliance with standards on safety, personnel training, healthcare services and support, patient care and treatment, health promotions, special needs and services, health records and legal issues. The standards are much greater than the standards set by the Department of Corrections. Thanks to Dr. Ramesha Walker, HSA and Major Brent Wright for overseeing this process.

STAFFING UPDATE – As of November 4, 2021 we have 2 new hires that started November 1, 2021 and no resignations to date in the month of November. Since April 2021 when the Jail initiated the new incentives, we have had 30 new hires, 27 resignations and transferred/promoted 6 staff members. We looked at all of our specialty positions and were able to hire civilians for 2 of these positions. We have also freed up 1 of the specialty positions in regards to the new infrastructure that was contracted with GTL, such as mail scanning, tablets and kiosks. Of the 6 staff that were transferred or promoted, these were positions that were in dire need of filling such as 2 Sergeant positions and the Intake Department. We had 40 net shift vacancies in April and we are now at 38 net shift vacancies. Compared to last year within this same timeframe, we had 21 new hires so it appears that the incentives are helping.

Tom Tanner inquired on how this compares to other Regional Jails. Superintendent Willett informed him that we send out surveys to other Regional Jails to help with this type of information, however due to all sites being short staffed we are all competing for the same small pool of qualified candidates and at times are hiring from the same pool of people and are basically hiring from each other's facilities as well. Out of the facilities that did respond, Rappahannock Regional Jail has 97 vacancies and Riverside Regional Jail has a large number of vacancies as well. Out of everyone that has responded, it seems that Meherrin River Regional Jail is in a much better position than most. Sheriff Brian Roberts stated that Emporia Jail has 40 vacancies, GEO Prison has 110 vacancies and Greensville Correctional has over 300 vacancies. Superintendent Willett stated DOC reported 1600 vacancies at the end of May 2021 and as of the end of September 2021 they had 2700 vacancies with 400 of those being critical positions.

Superintendent Willett presented a spreadsheet with the Jail's current staff. This spreadsheet shows Certified Officers, those slated to attend the next Academy, those that are currently in the Academy and new hires that are in the OJT program. The OJT is handled by the Training Lieutenant and lasts 1 month. After this, the officers spend the next 3 weeks working 13 shifts alongside another officer. They cannot work a post alone until these trainings are complete and signed off on. We have 1 new hire that is slated to start on November 15th and 7 new hires pending to be hired on November 8th that are not yet on this list.

Once an officer is hired they must attend the Academy within 1 year. During the COVID pandemic the Academy allowed for more than 1 extension for this current Academy but they are no longer allowing for multiple extensions. We have 7 officers slated to attend the next Academy.

It takes 10 Officers on shift to operate the Alberta Facility with no room for vacations, call-outs, etc. and 12 Officers on shift to efficiently operate with a relief for vacations, etc. Our goal is 15 Officers per shift. We have 3 vacancies in Intake and once the current Academy graduates, 1 Officer will be transferred to Intake to cover one of these vacancies. As of now we have 8 Officers assigned to the Mecklenburg Facility but are currently working at Alberta. Wayne Carter asked when the Mecklenburg Facility would be able to open back up. The original date was January 2022, however with these current numbers this will have to be re-evaluated again January 1, 2022. Hopefully with our incentives more will apply and we will have the ability to hire more staff by that time and re-evaluate on January 1, 2022.

APPLICATIONS – The Jail has received 214 applications since April 2021 when we began our incentives. Out of the 214 applications received, 21.9% were rejected due to arrests (felonies or Jail time was served), 21.5% were rejected due to not receiving required information after numerous phone calls and left messages and 16% were rejected for failing the background check. These failed background checks include being terminated from 2 or more jobs within a recent time frame and applicants that are not eligible for rehire with DOC. The 2 main reasons that a person is not eligible for rehire with DOC is fraternization with offenders and bringing contraband into the facility.

INCENTIVES – The Jail has been looking into many different options of additional incentives that would help with new hires as well as retention. Superintendent Willett presented 3 temporary bonus options.

The first option is the Voluntary Overtime Incentive Bonus. This overtime would be voluntary and the employee would sign up for it. For every 12 hours of voluntary overtime worked in Security, the employee would receive their overtime pay plus a \$100 bonus. The \$100 bonus is only available to employees who do not take any unscheduled leave during the same 28-day cycle. If an employee signs up for a voluntary overtime shift and does not work it, they will be responsible for finding someone to cover that shift or they will no longer be eligible for this bonus in the future. This is not pro-rated. The employee must work the entire 12 hour shift to receive the \$100 bonus. We know of 2 other Regional Jails, Northwestern Regional Adult Detention Center and Western Tidewater Regional Jail, that are using this incentive and it is working well for them. Superintendent Willett presented projected costs for this incentive based on estimated percentages of use. This would be a temporary incentive and would be re-evaluated at year end.

The second option is a Sign-On Bonus in the amount of \$1,000. The new employee would receive \$250 upon being hired and would receive the remaining \$750 upon completion of the Academy (which must be done within a year of being hired) or if the new hire is already DCJS Certified they would receive the remaining \$750 after their probationary period which is one year. There is concern with this incentive because a new hire could start one day, receive the \$250 and quit the next day and the Jail would be out of the \$250. Tom Tanner made a

recommendation that the employee receive the \$250 after they have completed their OJT training.

The third option is the Double-Time Bonus. The employee would be paid double their hourly rate for their overtime. The employee must work more than 171 hours in a 28-day cycle to be eligible for double-time pay. It is hopeful that this incentive would help reduce the number of call outs after an employee has worked their on-call day, which happens regularly.

Wayne Carter is concerned that if we start using these temporary incentives it is going to be hard to stop using them and will affect morale once no longer in effect. He also feels it will affect morale with other staff within the counties that work overtime that will not receive this type of incentive. Sheriff Roberts also does not care for temporary incentives and does not feel that the Double-Time Bonus Incentive will be of any help. Kevin Massengill stated that these are important concerns however he is glad that Superintendent Willett brought these options to the table to be discussed because they are "thinking outside of the box". The Jail is looking into options to help hire new employees as well as retain the current employees, but it must be meaningful to the localities as well. Kevin recommended that each option be discussed. He feels that any option that is chosen needs to be offered as "temporary" and he feels the Voluntary Overtime Incentive Bonus is something that could be done as a temporary incentive and re-evaluated annually. He also feels that the Sign-On Bonus would be effective and easily offered temporarily as well. Sheriff Roberts asked how these incentives would be funded. All of these incentives will be funded 100% by vacancy savings, which would incur no extra costs to the localities. Keli Reekes likes the Voluntary Overtime Bonus and the Double-Time Bonus versus the Sign-On Bonus. Her concern with the Sign-On Bonus is that it only benefits new hires and could affect morale with current employees. The other 2 options benefit both. Kevin feels that the best option would be the 2 first options (Voluntary Overtime Incentive Bonus and the Sign-On Bonus). These would be of no costs to the localities and could be re-evaluated at year end.

Wayne Carter inquired as to why this was not discussed with the Finance Committee prior to today. This was not discussed with the Finance Committee because it does not have any budgetary implications and was not on the Agenda for any action. This was brought up during today's meeting for discussion and to get the Boards thoughts and concerns.

Sheriff Roberts made a motion to approve the first two options that were presented, the Voluntary Overtime Incentive Bonus and the Sign-On Bonus, on a temporary basis through the remainder of this fiscal year and be evaluated by the Executive Team while building next year's budget on whether to move forward or not at that time and to be self-funded out of vacancy savings having no operational implications. Bernard Jones seconded the motion. All members present voted in favor of the motion.

2. Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (FY21) – The Board Members were provided a copy of the Annual Comprehensive Financial Report. Robinson, Farmer, Cox Associates conducted fieldwork remotely in September 2021. They finalized their audit of the Jail's financial statements on October 20, 2021. The Jail received an unmodified opinion, which is the best opinion that can be received and there were no management comments. The Jail's Net Operating Position for FY21 increased \$3,043,372 and our Unrestricted Net Position as of June

30, 2021 is \$14,551,674. The Jail has several reserves, such as the Operating Reserve Fund, the Rate Stabilization Fund, the Capital Reserve Fund and the Supplemental Reserve Fund, which total \$7,704,966, which leaves a remaining Unrestricted Net Position balance of \$6,846,708. This report will be on our website following today's meeting and we are also required by the APA to run a condensed version of the Jail's financial statements in the Brunswick Times Gazette, which will run in the next 2 weeks.

3. Upcoming ITB's – Mattresses and Housekeeping Supplies – Invitation to Bids will be issued in January 2022 for Institutional Mattresses and February 2022 for Housekeeping Supplies. The Jail's current contract with Cornerstone Institutional for mattresses expires May 22, 2022 and the Jail's current contract with Birsch for housekeeping supplies expires June 20, 2022. All bids will be evaluated prior to the May 2022 Board Meeting in order for the Board to vote and approve the final selections.

4. Quarterly Financial Report (Q1 FY22) – The Quarterly Report for Q1 FY22 was presented. As of September 30, 2021, the Jail has collected 25.43% of budgeted revenues and spent 22.26% of budgeted expenses. Revenues are slightly higher than expenses due to additional revenue sources. At the end of the first quarter, ADP was 369 with Brunswick accounting for 34.05%, Dinwiddie 21.73% and Mecklenburg 44.22%. As of September 30, 2021 the Actual True-Up is Brunswick would owe \$32,792, Dinwiddie would owe \$41,455 and Mecklenburg would receive a refund of \$74,247. If trends stay the same, the Projected True-Up as of June 30, 2022 is Brunswick would owe \$130,099, Dinwiddie would owe \$164,469 and Mecklenburg would receive a refund of \$294,568.

5. Compensation Board Bonus – The General Assembly approved the allocation of Federal American Rescue Act (ARPA) funding to the Compensation Board to provide a one-time bonus in FY22 for Compensation Board-funded sworn positions in sheriff's offices and regional jails. The Jail has several positions that are not sworn positions. Superintendent Willett is recommending using Vacancy Savings to fund the one-time \$3,000 bonus to those positions not covered through the ARPA. The Jail has over \$900,000 in Vacancy Savings and can easily cover this cost of \$87,196. There was discussion about the Jail and the differences between the Jail and the localities. For instance, the Jail has positions that supervise offenders, such as kitchen staff, that are not sworn officers. After discussion, Sheriff Bobby Hawkins made a motion to approve the one-time \$3,000 bonus to be paid to non-sworn positions out of Vacancy Savings. Sheriff Brian Roberts seconded the motion. All members present voted in favor of this motion.

6. Capital Reserve Fund & Rate Stabilization Fund Policy Revision – The Jail implemented GASB 84 for fiduciary activities in the FY21 ACFR. This implementation requires the Jail to report net fiduciary position separately from net operating position. Due to this change, we need to revise the Capital Reserve Fund and Rate Stabilization Fund policies to state the annual transfer will be calculated on the increase in net operating position. We need to make this revision to establish that these funds will be calculated on the increase in net operating position solely and will not include the increase in net fiduciary position. Wayne Carter made a motion to update the Capital Reserve Fund and Rate Stabilization Fund Policies to state the annual transfer will be calculated on the increase in net operating position. Tom Tanner seconded the motion. All members present voted in favor of the motion.

7. Annual Report – The FY 2021 Annual Report has been finalized. This report is updated annually and highlights all divisions within the Jail. Trends, accomplishments and statistics are reported for the divisions and for the Jail as a whole. This report will be on our website after today's meeting.

V. Good of the Order

Wayne Carter expressed his appreciation to the Jail staff and thanked them for everything they do. Bernard Jones also expressed his appreciation and thanked the Jail staff as well.

VI. Next Meeting

The next Board meeting has been scheduled for Thursday, February 17, 2022, at 12:30 p.m. at the Meherrin River Regional Jail Training Room. Lunch will be provided.

VII. Adjourn

There being no further business, a motion was made by Sheriff Duck Adams to adjourn the meeting. Sheriff Brian Roberts seconded the motion. All members present voted in favor of the motion.