

# **Meherrin River Regional Jail Authority Board Meeting Minutes**

**Thursday, March 24, 2022**

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:

Captain Joseph Lopresti, Captain Brunswick County Sheriff's Office  
Leslie Weddington, Brunswick County Administrator  
Bernard Jones, Brunswick County Board of Supervisors  
Sheriff Duck Adams, Dinwiddie County Sheriff  
Kevin Massengill, Dinwiddie County Administrator  
Bill Chavis, Dinwiddie County Board of Supervisors  
Sheriff Bobby Hawkins, Mecklenburg County Sheriff  
Wayne Carter, Mecklenburg County Administrator

Others in attendance are as follows:

Crystal Willett, Superintendent  
Major Brent Wright, Major Administration and Support  
Major Cliff Allen, Major Security and Operations  
Bill Hefty, Hefty, Wiley & Gore, P.C.  
Keli Reekes, Brunswick County Assistant County Administrator  
Alex Gottschalk, Mecklenburg County Deputy County Administrator  
Major Andy Ezell, Mecklenburg County Sheriff's Office  
Captain Steve Kennedy, Dinwiddie Sheriff's Office  
Jennifer Derrenbacker, Finance Director  
Shelley Slaughter, Executive Secretary

## **II. Approval of Agenda**

Wayne Carter made a motion to approve the March 24, 2022 agenda. Bernard Jones seconded the motion. All members present voted in favor of the motion.

## **III. Approval of Minutes**

Bill Chavis made a motion to approve the November 4, 2021 Board Meeting Minutes. Sheriff Bobby Hawkins seconded the motion. All members present voted in favor of the motion.

#### **IV. New Business**

##### **A. Attorney's Report**

1. Election of Officer – Vice Chairman – The role of the Vice-Chairman has been vacant since August 13, 2021 due to Dr. Charlette Woolridge resigning from her role as County Administrator of Brunswick County.

Wayne Carter made a motion to nominate Leslie Weddington as Vice-Chairman for the Meherrin River Regional Jail Authority Board. Bernard Jones seconded the motion. All members present voted in favor of the motion.

##### **B. Superintendent's Report**

1. Monthly Status Report - The Monthly Status Report for the months of December 2021 through February 2022 was presented.

COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS – The Jail is still under strict COVID-19 protocols. In working with the Health Department and the CDC, all COVID-19 protocols that were put into place during the start of the pandemic are still in place and have not changed. Masks are still required by all staff and offenders and there is still a 14 day quarantine when an offender is booked into the facility and/or when an offender returns from court/outside appointment, etc.

The Jail is hoping that some restrictions may begin to be lifted in late April, however vaccination statuses may play a role in what restrictions can be lifted and when. Sixty-two percent of staff has received the initial two COVID-19 vaccinations and 18.5% have also received the booster shots. Thirty-two percent of the offenders have been vaccinated.

The Medical Department went through the process with the Virginia Department of Health and became a Vaccination and Booster Clinic and can vaccinate the offenders and staff. The Jail has already had 2 Vaccination Clinics and there is a Booster Clinic currently planned.

WATERLINE PROJECT EASEMENT – Mecklenburg County sent a letter to the Jail advising us of a project installing a waterline across from Coleman Creek to serve Microsoft. A portion of the water line is on the Meherrin River Regional Jail's (Mecklenburg Facility) property. An easement will be needed for this project at a later date. Wayne Carter made a motion to approve Superintendent Crystal Willett or Chairman Kevin Massengill to sign the easement. Leslie Weddington seconded the motion. All members present voted in favor of the motion.

VIRGINIA PASSENGER RAIL – The Virginia Passenger Rail Authority sent a letter to the Jail informing us that they are currently working on a project and will need access to the Jail property between April and May. The letter was asking for permission, however also cited State Code that states they do not need permission. Superintendent Willett has tried to contact them regarding this to simply get a little more information, such as where they will be on the property and what they need to see, but has not heard back from them as of yet. Kevin Massengill

informed the MRRJA that this project is for the Southeast High Speed Rail and they are currently surveying for the project.

CRATER CRIMINAL JUSTICE ACADEMY – Crater Criminal Justice Academy sent a letter to all of their agencies asking for vehicle donations to aid in the driving portion of their Basic Jail Academy (BJA) classes. The Jail has a Dodge Charger that is a second backup car for Administration. It has 171,000 miles and is rarely used. The Jail's academy students do participate in this driving course during the course of the BJA. This would be a no-cash transaction and would only require a letter donating the vehicle to them. Superintendent Willett recommends that we donate the backup Charger to Crater Criminal Justice Academy. Wayne Carter made a motion to approve the recommendation to donate the backup Charger to Crater Criminal Justice Academy. Sheriff Bobby Hawkins seconded the motion. All members present voted in favor of the motion.

STAFFING UPDATE – The Board was provided an excel spreadsheet with staffing numbers as of March 24, 2022 that captures data since the incentive to increase the starting salary for Jail Officers to \$40,000.

The Jail has received 316 applications since April 2021, with 44 new hires and 41 resignations. Nine officers have been transferred to another position and/or promoted; therefore, our net change is -6. The Jail had 40 vacancies in April 2021 and now has 41 vacancies as of March 24, 2022. There have been more resignations over the past 3 months due to increased suicide watches, mentally challenged offenders and high risk offenders. One offender in particular had to be restrained in a restraint chair over 200 times in the past 3 months and by policy it takes 4 officers to restrain the individual each time. The restraint chair keeps the offender from hurting themselves and others. One officer resigned specifically due to this offender and stated that she is not able to handle this type of situation. Wayne Carter asked if we had any type of solitary room for these types of offenders. Superintendent Willett is looking into a "padded room" in our Intake Department. She is reaching out to DOC and gathering information on what needs to be done to have a certified padded room installed.

The Jail continues to find new ways to advertise openings, such as at the Southside Virginia Community College in Brunswick County and the Rowanty Technical Center in Dinwiddie County. The job advertisements are regularly updated on Indeed.com as well as the Jail's social media pages.

The Finance Committee met prior to the Board Meeting and the morale of the staff was discussed. It appears that with the incentives approved by the Board along with trainings, recognition, etc., the morale of the staff is improving.

MECKLENBURG FACILITY – The opening of the Mecklenburg facility was briefly discussed, however due to staffing shortages the facility cannot yet open as the Jail does not want to jeopardize the safety of staff or offenders. The facility will open, but not at this time.

Kevin Massengill feels that the morale seems to be better than it has in a while even with the challenges that the Jail staff faces every day. Kevin stated that corrections in general is a very

tough profession but also a meaningful profession. He thanked all Jail staff for everything they do as it takes special individuals to perform this job.

2. Quarterly Financial Report (Q2 FY22) – The quarterly report as of December 31, 2021 was presented. As of December 31, 2021, the Jail has collected 49.3% of budgeted revenues and spent 45.87% of budgeted expenses. Revenues are slightly higher than expenses due to additional revenue sources.

At the end of the second quarter, ADP was 348 with Brunswick accounting for 32.93%, Dinwiddie 23.27% and Mecklenburg 43.81%.

As of March 23, 2022, ADP was 336 with Brunswick accounting for 32.44%, Dinwiddie 24.41% and Mecklenburg 43.15%.

As of December 31, 2021 the Actual True-Up shows Brunswick owes \$13,177, Dinwiddie owes \$154,368 and Mecklenburg receiving a \$167,545 refund. The June 30, 2022 Projected True-Up shows Brunswick would owe \$26,139, Dinwiddie would owe \$306,219 and Mecklenburg would receive a \$332,359 refund.

3. Proposed FY23 Budget – The FY23 Proposed Budget was presented. The proposed budget includes a few estimates to include VACORP and salaries and wages based on the Compensation Board. As of now the salaries and wages are based on a letter received from the Compensation Board on December 16, 2021 indicating a proposed 5% increase, and an increase to the starting salary for C7 positions to \$42,000. There is also a proposed \$100 compression raise for every year of service as long as you have been employed by the Jail for at least 3 years for sworn positions. However, the FY23 Proposed Budget includes the compression raise for all positions. The usage percentages change from the FY21 Adopted Budget for the localities as follows: Brunswick's portion decreases to 31.56%, Dinwiddie's portion increases to 20.65% and Mecklenburg's portion increases to 47.79%. The Jail is recommending that the budget's ADP stay the same at 400. The total locality contributions are increasing by \$145,615, with Brunswick decreasing by \$43,650, Dinwiddie increasing by \$87,342 and Mecklenburg increasing by \$101,923.

The operating expenses are expected to increase by \$1,196,183. A portion of this increase is due to salary increases at \$395,392. The largest portion of this increase is \$588,947 for the Medical Services Contract to include 24/7 LPN coverage at the Mecklenburg Facility which would allow that facility to house 50 offenders and also a contract price increase. There is an increase in heating costs due to the increase in propane costs. Propane has increased 40% since June 2021. The criminal justice academy fees have increased by 5% and other contracts are increasing prices as well, such as housekeeping supplies and inmate supplies.

Wayne Carter recommended that due to the fact that the Mecklenburg Facility will not open by July 2022 and possibly not by January 2023, to remove the 24/7 LPN coverage from Mecklenburg for 6 months to possibly a year and supplement those funds to offset some of the budget increase associated with salary increases and the compression raises. The Finance Committee recommended creating another budget scenario using this method. Superintendent

Willett will create another budget scenario as discussed and send to the Finance Committee to review and discuss. The FY23 Budget will not be voted on until May 2022.

**V. Good of the Order**

Wayne Carter expressed his appreciation and wanted to thank all the Jail staff for everything they do.

**VI. Next Meeting**

The next Board meeting has been scheduled for Thursday, May 5, 2022, at 12:30 p.m. at the Meherrin River Regional Jail. Lunch will be provided.

**VII. Adjourn**

There being no further business, a motion was made by Bernard Jones to adjourn the meeting. Wayne Carter seconded the motion. All members present voted in favor of the motion.