

JUVENILE JUSTICE DELINQUENCY PREVENTION COMMISSION

Minutes of Commission Meeting Thursday, March 24, 2022 Location: Meeting held via Zoom

ATTENDANCE

Present

Gabriela Ferreira
Barbara Kate Repa
Donna Tanney

Absent

John Celichowski
Lynn Houston

The meeting was called to order at 9:42 a.m.

Probation Office Report

Presented by Chief Tanja Heitman and Deputy Chief Kimberly Shean

Heitman began her comments by underscoring she had “substantial news to share.” She then reiterated that the probation population in Santa Barbara County has “been steadily declining for some time.” Currently, there are 22 residents in Juvenile Hall (7 in the Trust Unit, which has a capacity of 8). And there are 4 in the Boys’ Camp, where Heitman says, the population has consistently remained low—resulting in a program that is “not fiscally viable.”

Closure of the Boys’ Camp: She said that in April, Probation will propose to the Board of Supervisors that the camp close operation and the population should be folded into the treatment program at Santa Maria.

The upside, she said, is that will allow for savings for improvements to the Juvenile Justice Center—especially the three current older and outdated units. Unit 3, for example, is currently being considered for conversion to treatment and programming; an update on this is expected by July 2023. During the year’s planned remodel, Heitman said that stakeholders can work on the program design.

The downside to the closure, Heitman noted, is that there is no natural environment at the Juvenile Hall facility; she said more field trips would be proposed to allow residents access to outside activities.

- Barbara Kate Repa asked whether there are specific details for any of the planned improvements to Juvenile Hall. Heitman said the county will need to hire a firm to come up with a design, and that the aim would be for less rigidity—echoing some of the elements of the current Trust Unit—with the current heavy doors removed to allow for more privacy. She added that the state “is looking to put out more resources” for the remodel, and that the legal intent is not to commingle the secure and non-secure populations. She said there would be savings due to reducing the current staff by 11.
- Donna Tanney asked whether community-based organizations will be used to supply services. Heitman said nonprofits that provide services at the camp will also provide them at the new facility.

- Gabriela Ferreira said that “in a perfect world, it would also be vice versa”—meaning that the two forums could share to supplement and enrich the services and programs offered at both facilities. Heitman said the camp is non-secure, so it’s not a legal option to house all populations there. She noted that a portion of the currently incarcerated juveniles is slated to transfer soon to the adult program.
- Donna Tanney asked whether other counties could bring juveniles from other locales to increase the population at the Boys’ Camp. Heitman responded that too many counties are in the same situation—fighting to stay fiscally viable and keep available funds in their own counties, and that the smaller counties that lack camplike facilities are located too far from Santa Barbara. Deputy Chief Shean emphasized the importance of keeping juveniles in proximity to their families. Heitman then stated the view that while more robust programs would deliver higher quality services, the state recently dismantled this through Realignment, adding that “very active youth advocates are pushing legislation making it difficult for counties to do their work.”
- Gabriela Ferreira asked whether the camp property could be used in some other way to provide youth services. Heitman responded that the property belongs to the U.S. government, with authorized use under a special use permit that expires in 2024. If no one takes over the permit then, she said, the property would have to be reverted to its original conditions—with the buildings and improvements removed.

Update on Probation’s February data, by Deputy Chief Kimberly Shean

[The monthly stat report was somewhat brief, as Probation staff were preparing to meet with staff at the Boys’ Camp later that afternoon.]

Current youth populations: The number of youth in the Probation system is down overall, with the most remarkable trend that the population is skewing older: average age is over 16, almost half are 18 or older. No one is currently residing in a STRTP.

- Gabriela Ferreira asked why Latinos are consistently such a high percentage of the incarcerated youth population. Shean said “there is much social justice theory behind what drives that”—and added that at an April 1 JJCC meeting, representatives were slated to present its plan and identify gaps in needs.
- Gabriela Ferreira asked whether there are programs that get reports from junior and senior high schools that aim at preventing delinquency. Shean said some schools offer early intervention and restorative justice programs, but emphasized that “kids would need to attend school” to access them.

Additional JJDPC Matters

Commissioners Ferreira, Repa and Tanney agreed to table discussions of the amended JJDPC Bylaws, Continuing Care proposition and potential finalization of the Hope Refuge inspection report until next meeting, when all members would likely be present.

There were no public comments.

Upcoming meeting: The commissioners discussed the upcoming April 21 meeting. Donna Tanney moved to conduct it by Zoom; Barbara Kate Repa seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Consideration of January 27 and February 17, 2022 minutes: Donna Tanney moved to approve the minutes as written; Gabriela Ferreira seconded. The minutes were unanimously approved.

The meeting continued in closed session.

Donna Tanney moved to adjourn the March meeting; Barbara Kate Repa seconded. The commissioners unanimously voted to adjourn at 11:34 am.

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