

JUVENILE JUSTICE DELINQUENCY PREVENTION COMMISSION

Minutes of Commission Meeting Thursday, May 26, 2022 Location: Meeting held via Zoom

ATTENDANCE

Present

Gabriela Ferreira
Lynn Houston
Barbara Kate Repa
Donna Tanney

Absent

John Celichowski

Public member present: John Forhan

The meeting was called to order at 9:48 a.m.

Probation Office Report

Presented by Probation Chief Tanja Heitman

Heitman began by recapping the April, 2022 statistics for the two current detention facilities. The total number of supervised youth for April was 203, a small variance over the past year.

Juvenile Hall: Heitman reported that the biggest change was in Juvenile Hall (JH), where one short-term female resident (13 years old), drew down the overall age of those in placement, so skewed the statistics on age, which has been trending up. However, there is also one 19-year-old there. Average age for April was 16.38 years old.

Boys' Camp: Also consistent with past statistics on population. There are currently nine residents. Average age is 16.13—with all residents between 15 and 18 years old.

Listening Forum

Heitman noted she had sent commissioners an invitation flier to a meeting dubbed a “Virtual Listening Forum,” slated for June 9, and intended to “allow the community to have a more clear understanding of what the proposal is” related to the planned Boys’ Camp closing. She said Probation has been “hearing a lot of misinformation circulating in the community, just indicative of people having some historical understanding of the program, but not really being familiar with its current form.” She observed many are shocked to learn of the total decrease in the supervised juvenile population, especially the low number of youth now at the Camp.

Heitman reported that a common question asked is why the Juvenile Hall facility is not brought to the Camp property. She said most people don’t realize Title 24 regulations around JH would not make that “a practical solution,” since complying would require constructing a whole new building up at Camp—and that property “does not lend itself to that development.”

Discussion and Questions for Probation

More on the potential Camp closing. Lynn Houston noted the many benefits of the Camp programs and property and asked: Is it literally that Title 24 that ties our hand in being more inclusive and bringing some of the youth from the Hall up to the Camp?

Heitman answered that her approach was best understood as two separate options.

Option 1: *Bring more of the Juvenile Hall population (currently at 24) up to the Camp.* She said this is not feasible in reality, since the Camp is a post-dispositional program, available after a youth has been fully adjudicated, but not before that. She underscored that:

- a sizeable population currently at the Camp has not yet been sentenced
- a portion of the population is female (currently three at JH) who are not candidates for the Camp, and
- three youth are currently in adult court so it is not a legal option to transport them to the juvenile facility.

Heitman added that there are three or four youths in the secure track who may be able to go to Camp in the future if the court considers them appropriate for a step-down option. (Not commonly an option for those convicted of offenses such as double homicide; they will also likely age out before the court would consider the step-down possibility.)

Option 2: *Bring the entire JH population to the Camp.*

Heitman said Title 24 requirements for “fresh bookings” mandate a certain type of facility—typically, what are considered cells in JH that allow protections and early services for youths who are going through the court process. She said those processing through adult court also require a fully secure environment, which would require building a new facility to accommodate those youth, defeating the purpose of the Camp’s more humane outdoor environment.

Heitman said Title 24’s requirements and strictures call to mind the situation in San Francisco, where the hope was to completely eliminate Juvenile Hall and provide an alternative environment that would feel less like a correctional facility. She said SF has been working on the plan for the last three or four years, but has been stymied by the regulations, which essentially would require building a new juvenile hall. She noted in particular that the safety cells required for those who are suicidal or homicidal are especially problematic.

Returning to local concerns, Heitman said that Probation believes those who are newly arrested and vulnerable need to be evaluated and not put into a treatment facility at once. In addition, she said Camp was an isolated location—making it difficult to get youth there released or placed into psychiatric hospitals if necessary.

Lynn Houston asked for the percentage of those who are suicidal or homicidal in Santa Barbara County.

Heitman said since realignment, there is a higher number of youth now incarcerated who are homicidal—not that they are committing more of those serious offenses, but that they are staying in the facilities longer, until they are transferred to state prison.

The number on enhanced monitoring because of suicidal ideation or propensity has remained constant—a handful on any given day.

Heitman then gave a quick rundown of the more serious offenses committed by the current JH population.

- Those proceeding through adult court: three youths on murder charges

- Those proceeding through juvenile court: three on murder or attempted murder, and two more violent felonies

Fodder for upcoming community forum. Heitman asked for “community-friendly” information that might be presented at the upcoming public forum.

John Forhan suggested adding, for comparison purposes, the nationwide drop in violent youthful offenders that has been cut in half in the last decade. Heitman said Probation tends to share longer trend lines, but the challenge is that crime rates don’t necessarily break down in characterizing juvenile v. adult offenders / reported v. adjudicated crimes –and the meanings often get lost or confused by the listening public. (Said Heitman: “I never want to make it appear that we’re not open to sharing all the data because we absolutely are. But we try to present it in a way that’s the most understandable”)

Heitman underscored that it is “really good news” that incarceration rates for youth have decreased more kids are staying in the community, but because the Camp is so beloved, she said the decrease is seen as a negative because it affects the place—though putting more kids there could be detrimental.

She said discussions are underway that might allow for longterm use of the Camp property--not for individuals to stay in the dorms, but to help with cleanup, training, recycling, camping and to use the gym and dining hall for the leadership conference while getting the added benefits of being closer to public transportation and educational opportunities.

Heitman noted that because the boys are there 24/7, others can’t be brought up to the property to intermingle, but if housed elsewhere, there would be more opportunity to do so. “If we are strategic about it, we could actually expand the use of the property in more and different ways,” she said.

Gabriela Ferreira asked whether other agencies that provide youth services would be able to use the property. Heitman said she hoped so, but that would depend on negotiations with the Forestry Department, which owns the Camp property.

Barbara Kate Repa asked whether the potential expansion in uses of the Camp property might continue beyond the expiration of the Special Use Permit in 2024.

Heitman said they are in negotiations and discussions about how to make modification to the permit to allow it to stay within the county’s control, but in partnership with other departments to ensure liability for buildings and upkeep.

Additional issues. John Forhan expressed concern that the less serious offenders would be intermixed with the more serious if the Camp and JH populations combined.

Lynn Houston emphasized the prisonlike atmosphere at JH. Forhan mused whether a policy decision could be made by the courts and Probation that youth who are not dangerous could access the new beds that will soon be available on the mental health side (84 new beds are proposed).

Gabriela Ferreria suggested having a conversation with the D.A.'s office about how offenses are charged—noting that there currently is a problem with overcharging. Barbara Kate Repa suggested having a representative from the D.A.'s office come to speak at an upcoming JJDPC meeting about current charging practices; Ferreira said she would reach out to a D.A. in charge of juveniles.

Changes to the JJDPC website. Barbara Kate Repa reported on updating JJDPC's Web page, which has been somewhat delayed, but the lobbied-for changes should be made by next meeting.

Inspection reports. Barbara Kate Repa reported she had submitted reports for all three STRTP inspections to the requisite authorities—with a bulleted list emphasizing special concerns the commissioners expressed about one of the sites.

Support for legislative reform efforts. Sonoma County Juvenile Justice Commission is spearheading efforts to examine and reform current Continuum of Care legislation, with an upcoming Zoom meeting to focus on and define the efforts.

Donna Tanney moved that the JJDPC would like to support the investigation of the issue; Lynn Houston seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Donna Tanney and Lynn Houston agreed to act as a subcommittee to attend all relevant meetings and report back to the JJDPC as a whole to keep all in the loop, including those not able to attend.

June meeting by Zoom. Lynn Houston moved that the next JJDPC meeting, slated for June 23, 2022 should be held by Zoom. Barbara Kate Repa seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Public comments. There were no additional public comments.

Consideration of minutes. Donna Tanney moved to approve the minutes from the April JJDPC meeting; Lynn Houston seconded.

The commissioners unanimously voted to approve them.

The meeting continued in closed session.

Adjournment. Donna Tanney moved to adjourn the meeting; Barbara Kate Repa seconded. The commissioners unanimously voted to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 11:27 a.m.

Next JJDPC meeting will be on May 26, 2022, beginning at 9:30 am. It will be held via Zoom.

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