

JUVENILE JUSTICE DELINQUENCY PREVENTION COMMISSION

Minutes of Commission Meeting Thursday, November 17, 2022 Location: Meeting held via Zoom

ATTENDANCE

Present

John Celichowski
Gabriela Ferreira
John Forhan
Lynn Houston
Barbara Kate Repa
Donna Tanney

Absent

None

Also present: Kim Shean, Deputy Chief Probation Officer
Melinda Barrera, Deputy Chief of Juvenile Services

The meeting was called to order at 10:03 a.m.

Probation Office Report

Shean—in her final meeting before retiring—reported the current population at the Juvenile Hall was up, at 30; Boys Camp population was 4.

Most of the report and questions focused on an overview of the incident that occurred the previous week on November 9 at Juvenile Hall.

Shean said that around 6 p.m., five of the eight individuals housed in Unit 5 caused a disturbance, barricading themselves onto the second tier. They broke through the security glass, but never got out into the yard. One staff member suffered injuries while being sprayed in the face with a fire extinguisher. The unit was rendered uninhabitable for an estimated six months. At the time, there were two staff in the unit and seven staff members in the facility, when there would normally be nine on duty. (Shean says that COVID has made both staff recruitment and retention more difficult.)

The other units were locked down, and as the situation escalated during the next hour, the sheriff's patrol was summoned, and three officers from the Special Operations Response Team (SORT) responded. The youth were then separated and put into Unit 3 (a one tier unit).

Debriefings and Behavioral Wellness and medical staff meetings were slated for the coming week.

Shean cited two main reasons for increased challenges of late:
Regulations have changed; room confinement can't be used to de-escalate.

Population is changing; some individuals stay for many years, so the “usual procedures” don’t work, and the individuals are more difficult to engage.

Questions

?—Ferreira said that given that the youth now “have little to look forward to,” more should be done to engage them in physical activities and career training, as well as the introduction of role models and mental health services.

Shean responded such programs are available, but the current population has an increased level of exposure to trauma, which results in “short fuses;” violent behavior is more prevalent as equipment is being destroyed and staff and other youth have been physically assaulted.

?—Forhan asked whether the most recent incident had caused any rethinking about housing “hardcore” and other offenders together—reinforcing his view that they should be separated.

Shean said the strategies across the country have “yinned and yanged;” now hampered by the inability to use confinement to de-escalate behavior.

Barrera added that in her 30 years of experience, half of that in facilities, the population has changed drastically. In the past, those whose sentences were pending were “on their best behavior” so they could mitigate their sentences. There are currently growing pains in moving with the changes of both engaging the youth for the longer haul, while dealing with behaviors of those who pose a risk to others.

?—Celichowski asked whether anyone was giving feedback to the state on the problems currently encountered on the local level, emphasizing the importance of maintaining security.

Shean said that Chief Probation Officers of California (CEPAC) is looking at regulations based on statutes; state is updating Title 15. There is a strong push by youth advocacy groups to limit room confinement and get rid of pepper spray.

?—Forhan said in his experience, reform happens when release is set. Advocacy groups work with those who are able to be “saved;” the hardcore offenders are largely ignored.

Shean said she hoped to pump up staff training and develop their skillsets.

?—Houston asked whether all five of those involved in the altercation were high risk.

Shean said they were. The unit was rendered uninhabitable for six months.

?—Tanney asked whether the number of staff in the unit was increased due to the level of difficulty.

Shean said they were looking into alternatives involving current staff.

Shean talked about the challenges of “managing the risk”—reintegrating the youth into the population. Two attacked another youth when let out—gang-related. Mental Health did not foresee behavioral changes.

?—Houston asked about the welfare of the youth in the Trust Unit.

Shean said the four individuals there had heard the uprising through the adjacent wall; received an additional session from Behavioral Wellness the next morning.

?—Forhan asked whether there was discussion of abolishing the California Youth Authority for those ages 18 to 25, reemphasizing his point of separating older and younger and high and low-risk populations.

Shean said that the CYA is closing at the end of 2023, as the idea of sending youth away from their counties wasn't working for re-entry. Old units and being rehabbed at JH to house the older individuals in the future.

ADDITIONAL TOPICS

Inspection Reports

Ferreira said she would sign the 4Kids2Kids report

Repa said the report of Boys Camp needed a substantial amount of information from Barton Clark on ministerial matters such as fire inspections before it could be completed; emphasized the importance of sending around the pre-inspection questionnaire before the inspections are held. The Hall report is much more complete—and will be sent for approval, with the two missing questions.

JJDPC Meetings

December 15-Full meeting—in light of the changed circumstances occasioned by the recent situation at the Hall; Ferreira said she would finalize agenda and inform Probation. There was unanimous approval to hold that meeting by Zoom

January 12-Approve Zoom for next meeting

January 26-Full meeting

Topics for 2023 Meetings

Suggestions for individuals to be guest speakers included:

- Behavioral Wellness
- Groups or individuals who deal with violent behavior in adult prisons
- More possibilities discussed in private session

Public Comments

There were no additional public comments.

Consideration of October Minutes

Celichowski moved to accept the minutes from the June JJDPC meeting as presented.

Forhan seconded.

The motion passed unanimously.

Adjournment. Houston moved to adjourn the meeting; Repa seconded.

The commissioners unanimously approved the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 11:24 a.m.

The next JJDPC meeting will be on December 15, 2022, beginning at 10 am.

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