

BOARD OF CORRECTIONS

February 4, 2021

Forsyth, Georgia

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Sheriff Barry H. Babb
Mr. Duke Blackburn - Chairman
Mr. Chris Clark
Mr. Mike Coggins
Mr. Wayne Dasher
Mr. Ester Fleming Jr.
Mr. Larry Haynie
Sheriff Stacy Jarrard
Ms. Janelle King
Mr. John Mayes
Sheriff Donnie Pope
Mr. Alton Russell
Ms. Andrea Shelton
Mr. Luis "Lou" M. Solis Jr.
Mr. W. D. Strickland
Ms. Rose Williams

CONFERENCE CALL:

Mr. Bill White

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Mr. J.C. "Spud" Bowen
Mr. Tommy M. Rouse

ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE CONFERENCE CALL:

Ms. Tina Piper, Senior Assistant Attorney General

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS:

Mr. Timothy C. Ward, Commissioner
Mr. Ahmed Holt, Assistant Commissioner
Mr. Jay Sanders, Assistant Commissioner
Mr. Randy Sauls, Assistant Commissioner
Mr. Alan Watson, Assistant Commissioner
Ms. Jennifer Ammons, General Counsel
Mr. Dan Brown, Director of Office of Information Technology
Mr. Sharrod Campbell, Office of Professional Standards
Mr. Terry Edge, Director of Office of Professional Development
Ms. Joan Heath, Director of Public Affairs
Ms. Gwendolyn Hogan, Executive Assistant
Ms. Simone Juhmi, Board Liaison
Ms. Dawn Mock, OIT
Mr. Clay Nix, Director of Office of Professional Standards
Mr. Mike Riley, Office of Professional Standards
Mr. Savario Spencer, AV Specialist
Ms. Betsy Thomas, Human Resources Director
Mr. Dexter Walker, OIT

VISITORS:

Mr. Evan Joseph, Warden - Richmond County-Conference Call
Mr. Cedric Taylor, DWS - Richmond County-Conference Call

First, Chairman Duke Blackburn called to order the February meeting for the Board of Corrections ("the Board") at 10:00 a.m. and Board Liaison, Simone Juhmi, recorded the minutes.

Chairman Blackburn then asked Dr. Allen Hughes to deliver the invocation. Following such, Chairman Blackburn led everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance. Chairman Blackburn welcomed and recognized all guests, and the Board meeting, being duly convened, proceeded with business.

Next, Chairman Blackburn confirmed that Board Member Bill White, Senior Assistant Attorney General Tina Piper, Mr. Evan Joseph, Warden of Richmond County, and Mr. Cedric Taylor, Deputy Warden of Security for Richmond County, were connected via conference call.

Chairman Blackburn presented the February 2021 Agenda to the Board for approval. Sheriff Stacy Jarrard made a motion to approve the Agenda, which was seconded by Ms. Rose Williams. The Agenda was voted “approved” by the Board as presented.

Chairman Blackburn also presented the January 2021 Minutes to the Board for approval. Mr. Wayne Dasher made the motion to approve, which was seconded by Ms. Rose Williams. The Minutes were then voted “approved” by the Board as presented.

COMMISSIONER’S REPORT

To begin the Commissioner’s Report, Commissioner Timothy C. Ward discussed the dashboard, which is a four-page overview highlighting key areas and significant events within the Agency.

To follow, Commissioner Ward asked Mr. Randy Sauls, Assistant Commissioner of the Health Services Division, to present a Division Update. Mr. Sauls began his presentation by discussing the COVID-19 Prevalence Report, the vaccination plan, and the COVID-19 vaccination information.

Some of the highlights Mr. Sauls discussed were the active COVID-19 offender population, offenders positive versus offenders recovered, positive COVID-19 offender cases per day, COVID-19 positive hospitalizations, and the COVID-19 vaccination implementation plan.

To conclude, Mr. Sauls discussed the various vaccine types, estimated delivery and storage, staff education, offender education, eligible offenders in Phase 1A, the logistics of distribution, and COVID-19 vaccine stations.

This concluded Mr. Sauls’ report.

Next, Commissioner Ward asked Mr. Alan Watson, Assistant Commissioner of the Administration and Finance Division, to give a Division Update on the Annual Fiscal Year 2021 and Fiscal Year 2022 Budget.

Mr. Watson began his report by discussing the Annual Fiscal Year 2021 Governor’s and House Recommendations (House Bill 80). In his briefing, Mr. Watson went over the jail subsidy, the Probation Detention Centers, Food and Farm, Health Services, Offender Management, State Prisons, Transition Centers, and the total Annual Fiscal Year 2021 Governor’s Recommendation.

In addition, Mr. Watson discussed the Fiscal Year 2022 Governor’s Recommendations (House Bill 81) on the overall Statewide Changes, Probation Detention Centers, State Prisons, Transition Centers, the Fiscal Year 2022 Bonds, the total Fiscal Year 2022 Governor’s Recommendation, and the total Fiscal Year 2022 Bond Recommendations.

This concluded Mr. Watson’s report.

Following such, Commissioner Ward asked Mr. Ahmed Holt, Assistant Commissioner of the Facilities Division, to give a Division Update.

Mr. Holt began his report by discussing the inmate population. Mr. Holt discussed the inmate breakdown on violent and non-violent offenders, inmate security levels, the offender mentoring program, gang renunciation, Evidence Based Facilities (Metro Reentry Facility, Lee State Prison, Hancock State Prison), staff training, and mental health expansion facilities and their benefits. To finish, Mr. Holt discussed leveraging technology and useful items like virtual court (Video Court Hearings), Hawk’s Ear (contraband mobile devices), Next Generation Assessment (Validated Security Classification Instrument), Optamo (Inmate Assignment Decision Support System - IADSS), and Body Worn (technology to reap the benefits of behavior). Mr. Holt closed his presentation by discussing the Special Operations unit and showing a short video on the Interdiction Response Team.

This concluded Mr. Holt's report.

Last of all, Commissioner Ward asked Ms. Jennifer Ammons, General Counsel, to give an Inmate Publication Update.

Ms. Ammons began by discussing Georgia's Slayer Statute (enacted in 1979), which prevents offenders from benefitting financially from media produced using their thoughts and feelings about their crimes.

In her presentation, Ms. Ammons discussed O.C.G.A. §17-14-31, a Georgia law providing that anyone who contracts with an offender for the expression of the convicted person's thoughts, feelings, opinions, or emotions about his or her crime must submit a copy of the contract to the Board of Corrections and remit any funds owed to the inmate under the contract to the Board of Corrections for the benefit of his or her victim.

Ms. Ammons continued by explaining the law and discussing a book that was released by Amazon from an inmate housed at Pulaski State Prison. Ms. Ammons stated that Amazon has provided a copy of its contract and they will begin sending any proceeds from sales to the Board to be placed in escrow for the victim(s).

To close, Ms. Ammons provided the author's information.

This concluded the Commissioner's Report.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Chairman Duke Blackburn began the Chairman's Report by moving into Regular Session to approve the appointment of Mr. Cedric Taylor, Deputy Warden of Security for Richmond County Correctional Facility.

Chairman Blackburn called upon Ms. Rose Williams, Chairman of the Facilities Committee, to give the Board the Committee's recommendation on Mr. Taylor. Ms. Williams stated that the Facilities Committee received Mr. Taylor's board packet, and after reviewing his report, the Committee unanimously recommends appointment approval for him.

Ms. Rose Williams made the motion to approve, which was seconded by Mr. W. D. Strickland. The motion was voted approved by the Board as presented. Chairman Blackburn congratulated Mr. Taylor, and Mr. Taylor thanked the Board for the opportunity.

Thereafter, Chairman Blackburn asked the board members to review the proposed 2021 Board Calendar. Chairman Blackburn then asked Vice Chairman Dasher if he had an update on the April board meeting in Glennville. Vice Chairman Dasher stated that he would like to tentatively move the Glennville board meeting to October 2021 and keep the April 2021 board meeting in Forsyth.

In addition, Chairman Blackburn stated that he would like to cancel the July and August board meetings, unless there is business that requires Board approval.

Chairman Blackburn then asked the Board to vote on all calendar items in one motion and placed his vote in the form of a motion. Mr. Wayne Dasher seconded the motion, and the motion was voted "approved" by the Board as presented.

Lastly, under Old or New Business, Chairman Blackburn stated that the Board voted to draft an honorary resolution for Mr. Ricky Myrick, former Chief of Staff for the Department of Corrections, and the resolution was drafted and available for Board approval.

Chairman Blackburn asked for a motion to approve the honorary resolution and present it to Mr. Ricky Myrick at the next board meeting. Mr. Wayne Dasher made a motion to approve the honorary resolution, which was seconded by Ms. Rose Williams. The honorary resolution was voted "approved" by the Board as presented.

To close, Chairman Blackburn and Vice Chairman Dasher thanked several staff members of the Georgia Department of Corrections for their continuous hard work. Then, Chairman Blackburn reminded the Board that the next Board of Corrections meeting is on March 4, 2021 at State Office South at Tift College in Forsyth, Georgia.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Duke Blackburn, Chairman

Andrea Shelton, Secretary

Simone Juhmi, Board Liaison