

**DELAWARE COUNTY BOARD OF MANAGERS  
TUESDAY FEBRUARY 21ST, 2023 4:30PM  
HYBRID: DELAWARE COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING ROOM AND VIRTUAL**

**Members Present:**

Chair/Councilman Madden

James E. Turner

Council Chair Dr. Monica Taylor

Councilwoman Elaine Schaefer

Chekemma Fulmore Townsend

Candice Linehan

Kelly Diaz

Judge Nathaniel Nichols

Vice Chair Marie N. Williams

Chris Eiserman

**Call Meeting to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 4:35PM.

**Pledge of Allegiance:** Pledge of Allegiance recited

**Public Comment (Agenda Items Only):** No public comment

**Approval of Minutes:** The Board approved the minutes for the meeting on January 17, 2023.

**Reports:**

**Juvenile Probation Services:** Kiersten Fitzsimmons, Resource Supervisor, provided the Monthly Detained Youth Report. There are currently four (4) youth detained. One (1) juvenile male in and two (2) juvenile females (direct files) in Morgantown. One (1) juvenile female (direct file) housed at Jefferson County, Ohio.

**Juvenile Detention Services:**

- A. Public Works Update:** Delaware County Architect Nicole Ward provided update for Public Works regarding status of plans for the detention center. Spieziel Architectural group is finalizing the square footage for both secure and non-secure side, and is also working on a layout. We met last week, and a proposed plan is expected within the next week or two.

Councilman Madden asked if the plans would be ready by next meeting.

Mrs. Ward replied yes but the costs may not be finalized, but we will at least have the layout.

Councilman Madden confirmed the plan will describe the construction of the building from scratch. He also asked whether this will be a preliminary plan and cost estimate. Finally, he asked whether we should expect approximately the same cost estimate and timeline as the 2<sup>nd</sup> plan.

Mrs. Ward affirmed that the plan would include these elements and would also take into consideration that the outside space will be shielded from the front. During the next meeting we expect the architect to present the plan, scope, and projected timeline. The cost and timeline will be broken down into one- and two-phase approaches.

Council Chair Dr. Taylor wanted to confirm if we would have the cost estimate by next meeting. Mrs. Ward stated that she would confirm with the Architect.

Mr. Irizarry stated we requested the plan, and the cost would be available during the next meeting. Councilman Madden reiterated we should press that timeline as much as possible.

**B. Community Listening Tour Updates(s):** Superintendent David Irizarry reiterated that his office is engaging people's thoughts regarding what services are needed at the center, gaining a perspective as to what services are needed for young people in Delaware County. He is proud of the engagement efforts thus far. This Thursday, February 23, 2023, representatives will be at Mt. Zion Church in Darby, 1008 Center St, Darby, PA 19023. On Monday, February 27, 2023 the meeting will be at Anson Banquet Room, 419 Edgemont Ave. Chester, PA 10913.

Councilman Madden asked for an update as to how the meetings have been going so far.

Mr. Irizarry responded that one meeting had been held so far in Upper Darby, with about 26 people in attendance. In the meantime, his office has been meeting with individual groups that wanted to meet privately with the board. He and his staff had the opportunity to join board members in a meeting with a group of young people, a conversation that provided an opportunity to find out what people want in more intimate setting and to include their preferences in the plans moving forward. Comments are welcome from the board members who attended. This more intimate setting allowed those in attendance to share a more personal side of themselves which seemed more productive.

Judge Nichols expressed his belief that people in the community are concerned with the juvenile justice system generally. In his opinion, they hold the Board responsible for the system to a certain extent. They do not understand this Board is not responsible for the child getting into detention; the decision is made by the courts. The community is upset about a lot of things that are not in the Board's control, but to the credit of Mr. Irizarry and the board members who were present, the Board has listened to what the community has to say. Judge Nichols thinks the Board should help community members understand how the juvenile justice system works and help them understand that most of the juveniles do not end up in detention: most are given a second or third chance. There are other opportunities for the juveniles to reconstruct their lives without going to detention or if they must be detained, it's in the least restrictive way possible. The Board also wants to know how the community members are feeling and why they are feeling the way they do.

Rev. Turner suggested that the community meeting presentations include a chart that lays out the process, explaining that it begins with the school and if that leads to the next level, it still has not gotten to the court, it goes to some type of community engagement i.e., Youth Aide Panel, then something else, then something else and so on and so forth. The last rung is the involvement of the court and a judicial determination. It would be great if someone in the room that could have these discussions.

Councilwoman Schaefer asked how these meetings are being advertised.

Mr. Irizarry responded that because the first meeting was a pilot, notice was provided via email about a week in advance. About one month's notice was provided in advance of the second meeting. This time around, meetings were publicized quite a bit more. The public relations team in the County had it posted not only on the County website, but also the County Council newsletter. Juvenile Justice Services contacts put it on social media. It was sent to state representatives, elected officials, etc. to send to their constituents.

Mrs. Williams stated she agreed with Judge Nichols that the Board should set the context of the meeting. The public does not often see the face of the juvenile justice system unless they are in a courtroom. Maybe an explanation can be provided as to the Board's charge, explaining its responsibility to provide a facility for detention where detention is required. Set expectations early.

Councilman Madden stated that many people do not know that even though there isn't a detention center in Delaware County, and there are youth being detained in other facilities. They are being detained hours from here, far from family and services that could be provided closer to home. Youth will continue to be detained as long a judge makes that determination for that youth. It is not the Board's responsibility to make that determination but instead to define what detention services look like and what our forward thinking looks like.

**Old Business:** David Irizarry stated that on February 23, 2023 a Delaware County team will be traveling out to Harrisburg to retrieve about six (6) pallets worth of evidence that was confiscated by the Attorney General's Office from the Delaware County Juvenile Detention Center. At that point the County will begin a process of having those files digitized and stored properly.

**New Business:** No new business; however, Mr. Madden wanted to inform the public that this meeting has a light agenda and that going forward, there may be many more meetings with a light agenda, hence the nature of construction.

**Public Comment:**

Mary Austin, Media -- commented on the statement most juveniles don't end up in detention is the reason why the public is concerned about the size of the center and the number of beds. The people participating in the community meetings have children who have been part of the juvenile system, so they understand the system, not the cost of the new center. Dollars should be spent on other resources to avoid needing the center in the first place. She expressed her appreciation for the community engagement meetings. She wanted to hear more about the youth surveys.

Mr. Irizarry responded, with regards to the surveys, we have contracted an organization from Washington, DC, which has projected a timeline between March 2023 and July 2023 for the surveys to be conducted and analyzed. They are looking for a local organization with which to partner.

Katie Riemer, Springfield, District Office Director for State Representative Mike Zabel -- Mr. Zabel was called away to a special session in Harrisburg and could not attend; he sent his apologies. He is hoping to attend the meeting in March 2023. She and Julia Wilder were there to update the board on what their office has been doing to promote juvenile justice reform. Based on the recommendations to the findings released by the Attorney General's Office released on December 13, 2022 regarding Juvenile Detention Center, they have been working

on a legislative package to prevent such tragedies from happening again. They are considering recommendations from the Juvenile Justice task force and all recommendations to protect youth and assist with the rehabilitation process in the future.

Diamond Gibbs, Upper Darby --Ms. Gibbs wanted to know if there was any affiliation between this board and the opening of Glen Mills. Ms. Gibbs also expressed concern that some brown and black youth do not have the same social safety nets as youth in more influential neighborhoods. The individual's situation should be taken into consideration when making these plans. She shared a specific case. With respect to the question about Glen Mills, Mr. Madden stated this is not the forum for questions and suggested that Ms. Gibbs direct questions to the email address on the website.

Ingrid Bird, Havertown, and victim advocate -- wanted to highlight that two youths have been killed since the last meeting. She reminded the Board that tools exist to help youths to make better choices. She also admonished the Board to recognize that there is a need to keep kids safe and sometimes from themselves.

**Board Member Comment:**

Chris Eiserman, responding to a comment made by Ms. Gibbs and regarding the specifics of a case she referenced, commented that juveniles must be held responsible. If not, they will continue their current course.

Mrs. Williams stated we could provide an answer to the Glen Mill question quickly.

Mrs. Linehan stated she personally does not sit on a board that has anything to do with Glen Mills. She wanted to commend Juvenile Probation and Parole for providing contract provider meetings that are happening on Tuesdays at 3pm, in which the providers walk you through their programs. As an advocate for 18 years, Ms. Linehan has found the presentations eye-opening and she appreciate the providers who represented.

Councilwomen Schaefer commented about managing expectations about this board. Although this board is here for this specific task, in a perfect world we would want to come up with a solution to eliminate the need for the task. We must understand the larger world and learn of shortcomings and begin addressing them. It's not enough to take this sliver of a task and say that's all we can do. She hopes everyone on this board see this as a higher journey as a child who is in trouble taking a different course. This is beyond the scope of finding a place to house a child. When we get a better understanding of the information we have been asking for, and a

better understanding of the process, and the statistics, there will be observations that for which we could advocate.

Reverend Turner commented on restoration from a community standpoint, asking whether there is a way to go to the State or Federal Government to request resources for underserved communities. We need to bring people together to come up with solutions. Maybe this group could spearhead a forum for the discussion.

Councilman Madden stated Glen Mills is a state-run institution. Delaware County has no say as to whether the state issues a license. To the issue of detention, we can “walk and chew gum” at the same time. While this board is focused on detention, we have three of five (members of Council who oversee social services. The contracts managed by the courts are still county contracts. This is why we are asking questions... and want to understand how the programs are being used? How effective have they been? We want to make sure county dollars are invested effectively. What are we missing? We want to see how close we get to preventing a child to enter detention even if it not possible. In terms of the cost and the number of beds, it must be higher than the census given prior to the close. The cost would be less if the goal was to build a cage for children but, that is not the purpose for which the board wants the center to be used. We want to offer services to provide youth a positive path, not a path to jail for youth.

Mrs. Williams commented on the presentations provided by Juvenile Probation and Parole. First, she wanted to thank them. She would like more comprehensive information on the use of the provider options, like how many youths were referred to those options? She would like data on the efficacy of those options, to find out how resources are deployed, implementation of those options, and data on the outcomes. The County would like to know if these providers are not delivering on their promises, especially if they are super expensive. This could have a major impact on the size of the facility that ultimately gets built. If we find out the resources are not effective, the 20-something beds may not be adequate.

Judge Nichols said that the courts make the decision on whether whatever is done for the youth is successful.

Mrs. Williams, with all due respect, acknowledged that if a child is sent to a program three times the problem could be the child, but it also could be the program. Sometimes a program can be great on paper but is not executing services with fidelity.

Councilman Madden agreed it is up to the judge to determine the next steps for a child on an individual basis, but the County is responsible for determining if these contracts that the county is funding are effective on a macro or holistic level.

Judge Nichols recommended a rubric for the measurement of effectiveness.

Kiersten Fitzsimmons wanted to let everyone know of an upcoming presentation from The Academy, which is one of the largest community-based providers. There is also an informational meeting on March 3, 2023 that explains the juvenile justice process. Councilwomen Schaefer asked that that presentation include the number of youth participants and the outcomes.

Kiersten Fitzsimmons stated there are over 100 youths using those services. They, The Academy, do track their outcomes. The average is 100 youth. They provide pre-adjudication and post-adjudication services plus GPS services.

Mrs. Williams noted that it would be helpful to get that type of information over the course of a contract. Looking at the outcomes of a provider over a three-year period could be helpful.

Kiersten Fitzsimmons stated she will bring that back to her Director.

**Adjourn:** The meeting adjourned at 5:21PM.