

**DELAWARE COUNTY JUVENILE DETENTION BOARD OF MANAGERS
TUESDAY JUNE 20th, 2023 5:30 P.M.
HYBRID: DELAWARE COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING ROOM AND VIRTUAL**

Members:

Kevin Madden, Chair/Council Member	Marie N. Williams, Vice-Chair
Dr. Monica Taylor, Council Chair	Chekemma Fulmore Townsend
Kelly Diaz, Deputy Controller	Reverend James E. Turner
Candice L. Linehan	

Call Meeting to Order: The meeting commenced at 5:38pm.

Pledge of Allegiance: The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Public Comment (Agenda Items Only): Diamond Gibbs, Upper Darby, PA – Ms. Gibbs spoke on behalf of former Chester resident and juvenile lifer, Rodney Derrickson.

“As per my thoughts on what should be available at the new juvenile detention center, ensure:

- hire staff from the same communities from which the youth come;
- social workers, family psychologists, and counselors are available;
- youth receive well-balanced meals, indoor and outdoor recreational time;
- that they receive as much time out of their rooms as possible;
- youth receive proper educational jobs, job and life social skill trainings that can better prepare them for success when released from the juvenile system;
- any juvenile scheduled to be released should be matched with a mentor or big brother/big sister to deter self-destruction and lead them to a life of success and beautiful opportunities.

Please let me know what you think of these suggestions so far. I am excited to hear an update later. With strength and solidarity, Rodney Derrickson.”

Approval of Minutes: The meeting minutes from May 20th, 2023, were approved.

Reports:

Monthly Detained Youth Report – Juvenile Court and Probation Services: David Irizarry stated there were seven (7) detained youths, five (5) male and two (2) females.

Superintendent for Juvenile Justice Services Report: Mr. Irizarry, on behalf of Public Works, reported last month the County Council approved an agreement from Spiezle Architectural Group for design services, construction, and demolition of the current facility including pre-demolition surveys. Currently, the Public Works team and Spiezle are working together to negotiate the terms of that contract and should reach an agreement in July. Demolition of the existing facility is projected to begin between February and April of 2024. Kirshna Hillyard of Juvenile Justice Services has been facilitating walk-throughs of the facility so other county departments can make use of items which remain in the facility. Regarding boxes of evidence

retrieved from Harrisburg, an RFP was developed and distributed for file digitization services. Mr. Irizarry thanked the various departments working on digitally archiving the files and indicated the intent to make them available for the Board's acceptance sometime in July or August.

Councilman Madden, regarding reducing the size of the new facility, added the merits of that issue will be addressed on the Agenda next month.

Presentation:

Recommendations for a New Facility: Mr. Irizarry shared he and Board Member Nichols spoke on a school-to-prison pipeline panel in the City of Chester. They shared the proposed new Detention Center plan and asked the community in Chester for recommendations. Mr. Irizarry introduced Sister Adelaide Evans, Community Advocate, and Tasliym Morales, Parent & Youth Advocate, of Chester City to present those recommendations to the Board of Managers.

Ms. Morales said she was joined by Sister Adelaide Evans, Colin Corbin, and Director Tasha Little at the podium to present. Ms. Morales stated they provided a proposal in addition to this presentation with their recommendations to the Detention Center plan. She shared herself, Ms. Evans, Ms. Corbin, Ms. Little, and a Ms. Olivia Rosenberg met over three days to review the Board's plan for the new Detention Center. On behalf of the group, Ms. Morales proposed the following changes to the Board of Directors:

- The mission statement be made more specific. As currently written it is overbroad and does not leave room for accountability. The physical mental and emotional wellbeing of the youths should be the greatest priority and is not listed in the mission statement.
- The name be changed from Detention to Rehabilitation Center. The overall outcome is to rehabilitate rather than keep youths detained. They would like to speak truth to words to encourage returning youths to society as active agents of change.
- Allow for holistic remedies outside of the Chaplain Services. Not all individuals have good religious experiences so it should not be the only means for youths to find a moral compass.

Ms. Morales noted that while some of the services and programs are included in the plan, there are some they would like to name for importance:

- GED testing & preparation;
- employment placement & readiness;
- music, art, & animal therapy. Ms. Morales explained adult males in facilities with puppy programs fair well because of the engagement with animals. She noted it would be good to introduce that to youths.
- Safe spaces to learn about independent living & housing;
- transitioning care for foster children about to age out. Ms. Morales noted that foster child ends up in the prison population. Providing a supportive space may help navigate their transition to adulthood.

Ms. Morales shared they also have staffing recommendations, referencing Ms. Gibb's staffing comment. The group would like to ensure the staff represents the population serviced. Ms. Morales noted that they are aware the staff cannot always 100% mirror the population. She proposed that there is diverse staff with the empathy and emotional intelligence level to understand and support the population they are serving. Ms. Morales emphasized the importance of using both holistic and traditional counseling for the youths. Ms. Morales commented that people can be affected by those around them and what they hear so there should be a safe space for the staff to reflect and feel supported as well.

Ms. Morales proposed a zero tolerance for toxic work culture. She proposed being purposeful in staff position titles to make them more approachable rather than create negative connotations in the detainee's mind. Ms. Morales, as an example, proposed Youth Center Safety Officer as an alternative to Security Guard.

Ms. Morales proposed the development of a Juvenile Justice Center Oversight Committee. The stand-alone committee, like the Prison Society, would be able to do free walkthroughs of the facility, assist in mediation, and things of that nature.

Ms. Morales emphasized if the Board should only take one thing away from their recommendations, it be to change the mission statement. Ms. Morales restated the group's disapproval of the mission statement. She reemphasized the importance of the mental, physical, and emotional wellbeing of the youths must come first.

Presentation Question/Comments: Councilman Madden thanked the group for the initial memo the Board received and their presentation. Councilman Madden opened the floor up to the Board for any comments or questions.

Mr. Irizarry thanked the group for allowing him to come to the Chester meeting. He appreciates their willingness to work with the Board and looks forward to continuing in the future.

Board Member Townsend commented she appreciates the critical eye and intentional revision of language presented by the community members. She emphasized the importance of the mental, physical, and emotional wellbeing of the youths Ms. Morales mentioned.

Vice Chair Williams stated she was thankful for the constructive, actionable feedback presented before the Board.

Councilman Madden agreed the language surrounding the facility is paramount and stated his willingness to revisit the mission statement of the upcoming facility. He emphasized the goal of rehabilitation in his consideration of a name change. He also agreed with Ms. Morales on the importance of staff titles being positive and approachable.

Board Member Turner thanked the community and asked they remain engaged throughout the process of building the new facility.

Old Business: No old business.

New Business: Board Member Linehan asked if public attendance increased following the time change for the Board of Managers Meetings.

Councilman Madden responded the time change is not set in stone and welcomes public comment on whether the time change is helpful. He added he does not detect a large change in public attendance.

Public Comment: Anne Marie Ambrose, Stoneleigh Fellow – Ms. Ambrose suggested the Board update website information regarding entry to the building after 4:30pm.

Diamond Gibbs, Upper Darby, PA – Ms. Gibbs thanked the Chester Community members for their presentation and agreed with their recommendations. Ms. Gibbs stated there are two new proposed bills in Pennsylvania, HB972 and HB973, and one resolution, HR 80, sponsored by Carol Kazeem, a Chester native. HB972 requires every county to have Juvenile facilities to have a Board of Managers and be monitored by DHS. HB973 expands DHS's ability to respond to licensing violations. HR 80 directs the Joint State Government Commission to conduct a study and make recommendations regarding best practices for the operations of the juvenile detention centers.

Board Member Comment: No board member comments.

Adjourn: The meeting adjourned at 6:00pm.

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