**Erie County Community Advisory Board**

**Agenda**

**December 4, 2012**

**1. Call to Order** Rev. Eugene Pierce 1:03 p.m.

**2. Pledge of Allegiance**

**3. Roll Call**

Present

Amin

Cercone

Colon

Covert

Culhane

Diina

Haynes

Lex

Marciniak

Pierce

Sacco

Schultz

Absent

Ansari

Carr

**4. Introduction of new board members**

* Kenneth Colon – Buffalo Urban League, recommended by Hispanic Community of Buffalo and Erie County
* William Schultz – People, Inc., recommended by Alternatives to Incarceration
* Superintendent Thomas Diina – Erie County Division of Jail Management, recommended by Jail Management

**5. Communications**

**Joseph Sacco:**

Per our last meeting, we had discussed sending a letter to the county attorney regarding the commissary. We have yet to hear something back yet, but in defense of the county attorney they just recently received the letter. Hopefully there will be something to report next month

**Barry Covert:**

Communication from **North Neck Regional Jail** which lists various programs and services offered at their facilities. There are no programs such as AA and NA at the downtown facility. There is concern for those inmates who may not be incarcerated for a long period of time, that they should still have access to rehabilitation programs.

When he has discussions with his clients they say they are not made aware of transitional/rehabilitation programming at the downtown facility they can access.

**Supt. Thomas Diina**

Inmates are made aware they can participate in the programs that are available as long as they pass a background check and complete the application. States he is not against any service that would keep inmates occupied. A main goal of mine is to increase transitional services that can be made available to all inmates. We have quite a few and we are working on more.

A main objective in regards to programming is seeing how it can be implemented without increasing costs in terms of manpower.

**Nan Haynes**

What about religious programs? Even if they are confined for ten days, such programs can help. There are people willing to come in and do the work for free which would not affect the budget.

We maybe should look at different types of programs instead of not having any at all.

**Rev. Pierce**

Says **Northern Neck Regional Jail** has a comprehensive inmate welfare program.

Perhaps we can use this as a guide for programs that may be feasible to implement here in Erie County.

**William Schultz**

As a layperson, his observations are that the court system, working with pretrial and probation and judges, the will opt to provide an inmate with programming instead of jail time. Credits the Forensics Services department for assessments and services being offered at a higher rate then they were two years ago.

**Michael Lex**

Points out that at 2 pm across the hall the budget for next year will be voted on and they are looking to cut overtime to the jail. The very issue we are talking about now and constantly bringing up in these meetings is the lack of staff available for such programs to be implemented.

Asks is it too late to speak to the legislature in opposition of budget cuts to the Sheriff’s office?

**Rev. Pierce**

Asks clerk do you think we can do that?

**Shiana Eve, Clerk**

No.

**Rev. Pierce**

We must keep pressing this issue because without programming we just have warehousing.

**6.** **Inmate Telephone Fund**

Waiting for a response from the county attorney.

**7. Ombudsman Position**

**Supt. Thomas Diina**

Commission of Corrections expressed to me that they would not support the position of an ombudsman. They felt it was a redundant layer to the grievance program that is already in place. Commissary funds would not be able to be used for that.

**Rev Pierce**

We were asking about telephone funds to be used, not commissary just to be clear.

**Joseph Sacco**

Asks if anyone is aware of any other county that uses and ombudsman.

**Nan Haynes**

There are states and counties throughout the country that have successfully implemented this program in their jurisdictions.

It is not significant that there are not any yet in NYS.

**Rev. Pierce**

Advises new members to refer to the ***Governmental Ombudsman Standards*** handout as a guide.

**Legislator Hogues**

Welcomes new members to the board.

States he understands that there has been discussion of the ombudsman position. Early on it was his position that we needed someone in place to be the intermediary between the public and those who receive grievances within the jail.

With Tom Diina in place at the new Superintendent of Jail Management, he and his team will be able to begin address many of the issues the board had been concerned with - in regards to the welfare of the inmates within the correctional facilities. With this new level of transparency, he feels that at this time we should table the issue of an ombudsman.

Expresses to the board that Budget constraints and severe cuts to the Department of Jail Management in the 2013 budget would also be a hindrance in creating the ombudsman position.

If in the future we see this issue needs to be reevaluated, we have already laid a foundation of information to refer back to.

**8. Chaplaincy staffing at ECCF/ECHC**

No new action.

**9. *Buffalo News* for inmates**

Consensus of the board to remove this item off of the agenda.

**10. Inmate voter registration drive**

150 inmates were registered by the staff of the facilities on two different occasions. Those forms were sealed and taken to the Board of Elections. Those that would be there during election would receive absentee ballots. Letters of thanks were sent to the officers that helped to coordinate the registration. There was even an inmate who registered to be an organ donor on his voter registration form.

**11. Inmate employment** - Construction jobs filled by St. John Baptist Church

122 inmates applied for construction positions at St. John Baptist Church. Ten were hired, and St. John intends to keep employing applicants from the list as needed, for as long as the list exists.

**12. Establishment of procedure to contact the Jail Management Division**

**Rev. Pierce**

General public still does not have a number they can use for general inquiries of complaints.

There is a big gap between the community, Jail Management and the board. This is pressing issue that comes up daily.

People end up calling karima or I but they should have another option.

**Rev. Pierce**

Has the inmate locator system available on the internet?

**Supt. Diina**

Not yet.

The system has gotten better, and we intend to add three more reception positions within the next year.

I recognize the issues the public has in regards to no one answering the phone at the holding center. I am open to suggestions, as this is an ongoing process of improvement.

**13. Other business**

None.

**14. Adjournment** 2:03 p.m.