**Erie County Community Corrections Advisory Board**

Minutes – Meeting #9 September 11, 2012

**1. Call to Order -** Rev. Eugene Pierce @ 1:15pm

**2. Pledge of Allegiance**

**3. Roll Call**

Present

Culhane

Ansari

Pierce

Haynes

Sacco

Amin

Covert

Absent

Carr

Kubik

Burgin

Cercone

Lex

***Vacancies Open: Cabrera, Constantino and Koch***

**4. Approval of Minutes from August 7, 2012**

Reading of minutes

Motion to approve by Culhane

2nd by Sacco

Motion passed. Minutes approved

**5. Election of Vice Chairman, Secretary**

Rev. Pierce nominates Nan Haynes for Vice-Chair, 2nd by Amin

No other nominations. Nominations Closed.

All in favor 7, Opposed 0 - Nan Haynes named Vice-Chair

Nan Haynes Nominates Joseph Sacco for Secretary, 2nd by Pierce

No other nominations. Nominations Closed.

All in favor 7, Opposed 0 - Joseph Sacco Named Secretary

**6. Communications**

* Letter to Sheriff regarding vending machines - confirmed the vending machines were used by staff only, not inmates.
* Letter to Superintendent Diina - asking for a name and phone number for member of the board if there are any concerns.

**7. Introduction of Acting Superintendent Thomas Diina and Staff**

**Thomas Diina:**

Our aim is to gain a mutually beneficial relationship with the public, in order to restore some of the programming that was lost during the red/green budget. In particular, to get diversion programming back into the facilities.

Feels that the teenagers and young adults in the system now are committing more violent and egregious crimes. They are becoming hardened criminals at a much younger age, and jail may be the first stop in getting them to see there are other options in life besides the gang lifestyle.

States that his plan is to give young adults the resources they need to prevent re-offending.

Also states he treats every allegation of misconduct by the staff seriously

The more specifics that can be given as to the misconduct of the staff, the better chances for the staff member to be identified and disciplined.

Diina states he does **not** support the creation of an Ombudsman position, because he feels that the new leadership of Jail Management will be able to perform the pertinent tasks necessary to facilitate better conditions of the ECHC/ECCF.

**\*Distributes contact information to the board\* Advises board members to call anytime if there are questions or concerns that need to be addressed**.

**John Rodriguez:**

Adds Jail Management would like this to be a cooperative and transparent effort. Wants to reduce the finger pointing. States “our clientele are not the best in society” and “we will investigate every claim of misconduct”. The time for blame must come to an end in order to help the citizens of Erie County be safe.

**Rev. Pierce:**

Recounts the story of a being called upon by Diina to come talk to a young man in the holding center was exhibiting dangerous behavior. He met with young man, his mother and a lieutenant. Engaged in dialogue with the mother and the son. The mother stated the son better straighten up and fly right. A subsequent report showed his behavior had in fact, improved. Says all this to note that in all his years working with the jail system, he had never seen such a response to the concerns of an inmate’s welfare, the way he had in this instance. Hopes this is the start of something wonderful, and is appreciative to the staff of the holding center.

**Nan Haynes:**

Asks Diina what happened to the greenhouses that were at the ECHC?

**Thomas Diina:**

Stated Chris Collins lost the election and therefore the funding for the Horticultural Program had been lost. As a result, new boilers are being put in the correctional facility where the greenhouses currently are.

**Karima Amin:**

Expresses that that questioning about the conditions and behaviors of those in the ECHC/ECCF are less about finger pointing, and more so about answering the questions of the community. So they have a clear understanding as to what is happening to their family members who are confined.

Asks who is the outreach person that will potentially be the go-to person for the answers in the future?

**Thomas Diina:**

“I am”.

It may become more than he can handle, yet hopes that there is an acceptable change within Jail Management in the near future.

**Karima Amin:**

Wishes the process will become more therapeutic. Because the way people treat people is important, regardless of circumstance.

Cannot combat screaming and shouting with screaming and shouting.

That doesn’t make things any better.

**Leg. Tim Hogues:**

“I applaud Diina for taking a stand to improve the circumstances and conditions at the ECHC/ECCF”.

It takes the top level to get involved in any positive change. The initial push is out in place.

Transparency has not been available up until this point, and this seems it can be the start of something great.

**Nan Haynes:**

Asks if there is a phone number that the public can have access to - where someone would actually answer the phone to let them know if a family member had been arrested and/or where they are located within the facilities.

**Barry Covert:**

Not having a general contact number really exacerbates the situation. Especially when there is no one to answer the line when a young person is in the jail and parents are trying to locate them. There must communication both ways.

We need computer access to find out if someone is in one of the facilities.

**Thomas Diina:**

Points out 6 more records clerk positions will be created and filled in the near future, as well as the matriculation of five classes of 32 corrections officers within the next year.

There will be a call center set up with a mandated civilian captain.

He wants to get a lot more information made available online.

Kiosk based commissary system will also be implemented.

The fewer people in line waiting for a cashier or being on hold over a telephone, the better for everyone.

“I will get you to trust me, I promise you.”

**Michael Reardon:**

Says that it is not that no one is answering the phone, there are just not enough people working the lines to answer and the phone just continues to ring and ring. States the facility is working on a better system.

**8. Comptroller's Audit of Commissary/Telephone Funds**

Comptroller was not present to report on the Audit.

**Nan Haynes:**

Says she was excited to learn Shenk would be here and disappointed that he is not here as agreed. Suggests sending a letter to the Comptroller’s office querying why the audit has not been reported to us. Suggests newly appointed Secretary Joseph Sacco should write a letter to comptroller’s office asking someone to be at the next meeting with the report on the telephone and commissary funds.

**Joseph Sacco:**

Says take the word back to the community to say that ECHC is working hard to make positive changes to help inmates and families.

We need to let people know when positive strides are being made.

We have to let the media know when positive things are happening, not just the negative.

**Rev. Pierce:**

Went to Saint John Baptist Church where he had been given 10 job applications designed for inmates being released from ECHC/ECCF

We need to focus on reentry and job readiness/preparedness.

**9. Sanitation at ECHC/ECCF (COC-7015)**

**Joseph Sacco:**

He and Dr. Ansari went and toured the holding center.

Expresses that he didn’t see the conditions to be egregious as far as the cleanliness.

Yes, certain areas needed to be cleaner, but the cell blocks and the pods were generally clean.

Also toured the medical and laundry facilities, nurses’ station, law library and general library.

**Michael Reardon:**

Reardon states health/sanitation report in 2009 was over 30 pages. As of 2012, it was down to three paragraphs. So, the ECHC/ECCF has come into compliance with the Department of Justice.

The average stay is only 11 ½ days, therefore it would be difficult to implement a standard of transitional mental health or counseling.

**Dr. Ansari:**

ECHC/ECCF still needs more programs.

They don’t have the resources to make life better for both the staff and the inmates.

A lot of mutual support is needed in order for the conditions to be improved. Not just cleanliness, but mental health support as well.

Youth counseling is a must.

Board must Ask Dr. Bernstein to develop transitional counseling for the young people. It doesn’t matter how long their stay is, people need support 365 days a year.

**10. Division of Jail Management-Mission Statement (Inmate Programs)**

**Leslie Haynes:**

Discusses her support of the Ombudsman position. Believes this position should be held by a more neutral person that an employees of Jail Management or the Sheriff’s Department.

States the people are not foolish, yet just want basic rights for humans, even those who have been accused of breaking the law.

**General Questions that call for responses from Jail Management/Sheriffs’ Department:**

How do we get programs aimed at those that are not there for that long?

Should there be more emphasis on programs at Alden because they are there for a longer time?

Don’t want to implement it for it to fail?

Are AA/NA programs still active?

Absentee voting/Voter registration within the facilities. How is this handled?

**Rev. Pierce:**

We need to continue to get reports on the states of what is going on the facilities.

**Legislator BJG enters @ 2:34pm**

**Rev Pierce:**

Says Buffalo news is not circulated in ECHC/ECCF.

States the local paper should be circulated in the facilities, because it is a part of the county system and library system.

*The Challenger, Artvoice* and *USA Today* are given out weekly.

**Leg. Betty Jean Grant:**

Why asks is the *Buffalo News* is no longer circulated? Is it because the *Buffalo News* had not endorsed Timothy Howard for Sheriff?

**Michael Reardon:**

Confirms that Sheriff Howard does not allow access to Buffalo News in the ECHC/ECCF. Inmates can watch the local news on television.

**Rev. Pierce**:

Makes a motion to write a letter to the Sheriff requesting the re-distribution of Buffalo News. Amin 2nd

All in favor.

**11. Other Business**

File minutes from September meeting with the Public Safety committee.

**Speakers:**

* Michael Reardon (Diversion Programs), Thomas Diina (Acting Superintendent) and John Rodríguez from Jail Management
* Leslie Haynes
* Amy Nice

**12. Adjournment**

2:55 pm