



TO: Pennsylvania Parole Board Members

FROM: Scott Woolf
Director – Office of Board Secretary

DATE: January 4, 2021

RE: Board Meeting Minutes
November 18, 2020

In compliance with *Act 175*, known as the *Sunshine Law*, effective September 17, 1976, the Office of Board Secretary provided notification to the public of the scheduled meeting on November 18, 2020, of the Pennsylvania Parole Board.

The public meeting convened at 9:02 AM at Riverfront Office Center in Harrisburg, PA with Chairman Ted Johnson presiding. A quorum of Board Members was present.

Attendance

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Chairman Ted Johnson | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BD Member Leo Dunn | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BD Member Tony Moscato |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BD Member Maureen Barden | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BD Member Jim Fox | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BD Member Linda Rosenberg |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BD Member Khadija Diggs | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BD Member Mark Koch | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alan Robinson, Chief Counsel | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Deb Carpenter, Board Secretary | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Chad Allensworth, Chief Hearing Officer | <input type="checkbox"/> Scott Woolf, Director – Office of Board Secretary | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Neil Malady, Policy/Legislative Affairs | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Laura Treaster, Special Assistant | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jennifer Storm, Victim Advocate | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Meghan Dade, SOAB Executive Director | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Morgan Davis, Assistant Chief Counsel | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Farrah Conjar, Executive Secretary | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Janaki Theivakumaran, SOAB | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Stacey Ginesin, SOAB | |

The Chairman recognized public guests:
Mark Bergstrom, Pennsylvania Sentencing Commission
Diane Shoop, Pennsylvania Sentencing Commission

APPROVAL OF OCTOBER 2018 BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Board Member Fox motioned to approve the Parole Board minutes. Board Member Diggs seconded the motion. The Parole Board unanimously approved the minutes.

OFFICE AND STAFF REPORTS

Office of Victim Advocate (OVA) Report

Unavailable for meeting

Sexual Offenders Assessment Board (SOAB)

Sexual Offenders Assessment Board Executive Director Meghan Dade

- Nothing to report but would be available all day if needed.

Communications/Media Report

Special Assistant Laura Treaster

- DOC institutional parole staff had reached out to Laura to create a Power Point to cover the information reviewed during the parole education classes. Some of these classes have been cancelled due to COVID. The information will be played on a continuous loop on the inmate TV until classes can resume.
- Parole dashboard will have three (3) more categories added; developers are focused on the priorities set by the Parole Board members.

Policy and Legislative Affairs Report

Policy and Legislative Affairs Director Neil Malady

- Legislature is in town to complete the budget; target passage date is Friday, November 20, 2020.
- There is a possibility they will try and put the merger bill (SB 968) through on a code bill.
- Nothing to report on the status of obtaining the ninth and final Board Member.
- Senator Baker has placed the medical parole on her agenda for early next year.

Office of Chief Counsel Report

Chief Counsel Alan Robinson

- Parole/DOC met and it was decided DOC will no longer identify people eligible for rebuttable parole. This was originally used to catch all the eligible person(s) when the bill was enacted. All those individuals have been captured and this category will be removed. Categories remaining are: RRRI, SSP and regular parole.

Office of Hearing Examiners Report

Chief Hearing Examiner Chad Allensworth

- Board agreed to conduct panel hearings for violations only at county facilities.
 - Regulations have no exclusions for the time spent there waiting on a panel. The previous practice was to transfer the inmate from the county to an SCI, conduct

the hearing and return the person to the county facility. This is no longer feasible due to the current pandemic. Recent legislation enacted allows the Board to conduct these proceedings virtually.

- Hearing Examiner candidate list was received. There were six names provided and the division is hopeful to fill all four vacancies from this list.
- Board Members are requesting that Hearing Examiners provide more information on how they reach/make their decision to parole or not to parole combined with what they used or relied on to support their decision. Hearing Examiner staff are doing a good job of hearing the cases, but the additional information will be helpful when the Board Members are reviewing the case for a decision. Chad advised he will discuss this request at his next quarterly Hearing Examiner meeting.

Board Secretary Report

Board Secretary Deb Carpenter

- Advised that in addition to Alan's report about rebuttable parole; DOC has hired a JRI coordinator, Jim Stover. Jim will be the single point of contact when any JRI issues occur.
- SCI Smithfield will be used as the PV and new commitment facility in approximately 6-8 weeks. The Parole Board's understanding for the selection of SCI Smithfield was due to it being centrally located and a transportation hub.
 - SCI Greene and Coal Township PVs will remain and the existing PV's will be handled there. These individuals will not be transferring to SCI Smithfield.
 - A meeting is scheduled later this week with Deputy Secretary Evans to review SCI Smithfield's plan to take over all preliminary hearings. It's believed this will ensure a smooth process from reception to hearing date.
- DOC is attempting to address the concerns regarding public defender availability along with allowing the attorney time with their client prior to the day of the hearing.
- DOC faces major challenges due to mandatory COVID 19 precautions. Hearings and interviews may not go as smoothly or quickly as before due to additional cleaning, how inmates are escorted and how staff can move throughout the facility. The Board's goal is to provide the number of decision makers that DOC can schedule, technology and resources allow. So far, the Parole Board has been able to do this with very few issues. Chairman Johnson asked everyone for patience and recognition that DOC parole staff is doing the best they can during these challenging times.

Office of Board Secretary Report

Office of Board Secretary Director Scott Woolf

- Memos are now fully operational in OnBase. If any decision maker experiences any issues, decision makers are asked to let Scott know so the issue can be addressed quickly.
- Che Deford has started and is working with Gina Davis in the circulation of cases. She is also working with the administrative remedies unit and case management. She will fill in when Gina is out on maternity leave. In addition, the Parole Board has received a temporary position to assist Che during this period of time to ensure cases continue to flow as they do now.

- A pilot project with SCI Coal Township is currently underway. The project is to transmit Board Actions to the DOC mailroom for inmate distribution. This project is for released to print, fully executed decisions. This process will eliminate the delay with Smart Communications mailing the Board Actions.
- Cara Sheffield is acting as case analysis chief. Marci Johnson has moved over to the administrative remedy unit. The Board Secretary Office is currently at full complement for staff.

Chairman Johnson advised he has some questions and concerns regarding the overall hearing process mostly regarding the inmates who do not have proper representation to no fault of their own. The Chairman stated the hearing examiner does advise and offers some guidance when an attorney is not present. The Chairman said he would like to review the process and maybe establish a different outline. Chad advised the Hearing Examiners follow the same process the courts follow. The sequence does matter for the record. The Board will review the process and structure to see if it can identify a way to simplify the process.

Chairman Johnson advised he attended the first annual meeting for the Homicide Review Committee. The key points from the meeting were:

- Board members meet quarterly to review the high profile homicide cases. This will allow him to better prepare for the annual meeting. Analysis should include what sentencing parameters were available to the decision maker.
- Mark Bergstrom was in attendance as well and added the following:
 - A review of the existing information received will be done and will identify if there is better information out there for decision makers and DOC and how to receive more consistent information.
 - A review of the concerns presented to identify if they were significant to build into parole guideline and/or change existing statutes.

ADDITIONAL REPORTS/PRESENTATIONS

None.

ADJOURNMENT

At 10:14 AM Board Member Fox made a motion to adjourn the public session. The motion was seconded by Board Member Diggs. The Board Members voted unanimously to adjourn the public session.

SAW/FC