



TO: Pennsylvania Parole Board Members

FROM: Farrah Conjar
Executive Secretary II to the Chairman

DATE: February 05, 2021

RE: Board Meeting Minutes
January 13, 2021

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 9:00 AM at Riverfront Office Center in Harrisburg, PA with Chairman Theodore 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 checked="" 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 checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> Stacey Ginesin, SOAB | |

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

APPROVAL OF JANUARY BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Board Member Barden 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

Acting Victim Advocate Jennifer Storm

- Marsy's Law ruling from the court was not approved. The Attorney General's office is going to appeal to the Supreme Court.

- Victim filed a complaint that she was not considered a direct victim of the case and could not give testimony. The Commonwealth Court agreed that she was not the direct victim in case of that offense, and therefore, the ruling was not in her favor to provide victim input.
 - Deb Carpenter asked if this is applicable to condition requests or just in-person testimony. Jennifer stated the case was specific to input for in-person testimony. There is no restriction on what can be requested by "notification" victims. Chief Counsel Robinson advised he needed to look at the status and properly present that to the Board so the Board knows if it's an actual defined victim or a member of the public that is not fully protected under the Crime Victims Act.

- Jennifer reported two new victim advocate positions had been established in satellite offices: one in the Williamsport-Scranton area and one in the Lehigh Valley area. She said a candidate for the Philadelphia site has been determined, but a background check is still in progress.

Sexual Offenders Assessment Board (SOAB)

Sexual Offenders Assessment Board Executive Director Meghan Dade

- SOAB will be presenting at next week's Basic Training Academy. Training is a basic introduction into SOAB. If any Board Members have anything to add for the training, please contact Meghan Dade or Janaki Theivakumaran.

Communications/Media Report

Special Assistant Laura Treaster

- A Power Point presentation called "Your Path to Parole" was completed and converted to an MP4 video. Content mirrors what is covered in the in-person parole education classes, which have been stopped because of COVID restrictions. BIT has accessed it and has made it accessible to all parole eligible inmates on each of the SCI inmate TV channels. Laura will send out the link to the Board Members to review.
- Parole dashboard continues to be worked on by the developers. Laura and Deb will be getting together to discuss workload/production.

Policy and Legislative Affairs Report

Policy and Legislative Affairs Director Neil Malady

- Legislature will return January 25, 2021.
- New bills are being introduced. Senator Street has introduced a version of medical parole that would address getting at this affected population now rather than moving forward with the ruling that DOC is using in their interpretation on how we should move forward with this issue.
- Pursuing a new Board Member to fill the ninth position on the Board as well as a second Board Member when Board Member Barden resigns at the end of February 2021.
- Expecting the merger legislation to be introduced again this session.

Office of Chief Counsel Report

Chief Counsel Alan Robinson

- *Scott vs. PA Parole Board* hearing will be held February 8, 2021, in Commonwealth Court. The case regarding the claim that precluding second degree murderers from being considered for parole violates the PA constitution.
- The Administrative Officer 1 position is in the process of being filled for legal office in March 2021.

Office of Hearing Examiners Report

Chief Hearing Examiner Chad Allensworth

- Personnel - Amanda Justh, hearing coordinator, will be leaving for a promotion.
- 39 interviews were conducted by Chad and Chairman Johnson for the Hearing Examiner positions. We will be finalizing the selection soon. Chairman believes the final decision on hiring should be Chad's decision.
 - Chairman Johnson noted that he is satisfied the Board will have more diversity within the division. When all is finalized, Chairman Johnson will send resumes via email to Board Members.

Board Secretary Report

Board Secretary Deb Carpenter

- Assessment update: no further action has taken place since the Board met with Vantage as far as doing any type of analysis or validation on the assessment tool. They were having a problem getting a sample data set, but this issue has been resolved. They are not comfortable with the data received from AOPC. This is not the only issue with the assessment. There are concerns from PSP on retention/sharing of the criminal justice history. Updates are received every two weeks
- SCI Smithfield will be used as the PV and new commitment facility beginning on Thursday, January 14. The hearings are scheduled to start January 19, 2021. There have been some issues securing a second public defender to assist. One has been secured, but the process is in need of one more person.

- SCI Greene and Coal Township PVs will remain and the existing PVs will be handled there. These individuals will not be transferring to SCI Smithfield.
- Deb stated that old business that needs clarification will be added to the meetings. So, if a Board Member discusses a concern(s), when the Board meets the following month, discussion can be re-opened with the appropriate answers.

Office of Board Secretary Report

Office of Board Secretary Director Scott Woolf

- Update on electronic Board Actions being distributed to institutions: the Office of Board Secretary started to electronically transmit electronic recommit Board Actions. Approximately two-thirds are currently online and, to date, there have been no issues.
- Impact of Karen's Law 5-year review vs 3-year review: OBS had to make internal changes with some of the documents we use. These updates are currently in process.
 - Board Secretary staff will continue to be the ones who can determine eligibility even with the new law.
 - Chairman Johnson asked if this change affects if the Board wants to see the offender the following year. Scott advised the new law does not prohibit them from doing that.
- Dr. Mike LaForest is working on a doctoral fellowship for Bret Bucklen's office. Some of the abstracts on the study are:
 - Emphasis on the amount of discretion that goes into the decision-making process. He is really interested in understanding the parole process because his experience is clearly academic and data driven.
 - Board would like to gather more information and have him present at an upcoming Board meeting.

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