

Criminal Justice Policy Advisory Commission
Minutes December 10, 2009

Legislative Office Building (LOB) Hearing Room 1B
Hartford, CT
Thursday, December 10, 2009
9:00 AM

Members present: Brian Austin, Undersecretary, Criminal Justice Policy and Planning Division, Office of Policy and Management: Susan Hamilton, Commissioner, Department of Children and Families: William H. Carbone, Executive Director, Judicial Branch's Court Support Services Division: Kevin Kane, Chief State's Attorney: Susan Storey, Chief Public Defender: Robert Farr, Chairman, Board of Pardons and Parole: Laurie Deneen, Public Member: Nancy Kushins, Victims Services Representative: Brian K. Murphy, Acting Commissioner, Department of Correction: Chief James L. Kenny, Vernon Police Department: Patricia Rehmer, Acting Commissioner, Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services.

In addition, Lt. Ed Henion attended for John Danaher, Commissioner, Department of Public Safety.

Chair Brian Austin Convened the meeting to order at 9:22am. The Commission members introduced themselves.

Minutes: Suggested corrections from DMHAS to the Minutes of December 10th had been handed out to the Commission members for review of changes to pages 3 & 4. The minutes were reviewed and accepted.

Public Comment: There was no comment.

Discussion of Agency Updates:

Brian Austin from (OPM) Introduced John Forbes and Lisa Secondo who will be presenting the first half of the Office of Policy and Planning Division, Office of Policy and Management PowerPoint presentation.

This consisted of an overview of the Recovery Funds. Where the funds are going and what they are being spent on.

John Forbes updated information on the process of distributing the Recovery Funds. He discussed the process and how to apply for the dollars. (OPM) designed an online portal to make it easier both for (OPM) to capture information and for all participating towns as well. The funds are split up into several categories. One of the categories' is the Local Pass through funds for the Justice Assistance Grant, a portion of these funds have been allocated to 173 jurisdictions in the state of Connecticut. There were 15 towns that chose not to file for the funds.

Brian Austin stated that 40% of the dollars had to be allocated to municipalities and municipal needs. The Governor's office made the decision that every state municipality would have the opportunity to apply for some of the dollars. (OPM) set up a 4 tier system for each municipality in the state. The 4 tier system was based on population and crime rates. The three largest areas in our municipality in the state were eligible up to one hundred thousand dollars. There were up to 15 communities eligible for grants up to seventy-five thousand dollars. The remaining municipalities were organized police departments; they were eligible for up to thirty thousand dollars. This was leaving us with municipalities of patrolling police officers and resident troopers. Each one of these municipalities was eligible up to ninety-one hundred dollars. The local officials determined what the funds would be best used for in their community, as long as it was consistent with the Federal guidelines. OPM would approve funds with the appropriate budget. Once the towns had the approved application and budget they were then eligible for an immediate seventy-five percent upfront payment for the particular grant. On the completion of the reporting part of the application they would then be eligible for the remaining twenty-five percent. Approximately seventy-five percent of the communities have received payment out to them. At this time the remaining communities are being assisted to receive their funds as well.

The second portion of the presentation was presented by Ivan Kuzak from the Research Unit of OPM. Discussions consisted of an overview of current forecast and the correctional population with a brief update on recidivism. Ivan spoke of the February report on prison population and how the research department would collect information. In February 2008 the approximate prison population was 19,800, from February 2008 to December 2009 a decline of 70 inmates per month, or approximately 850 per year. Ivan spoke of finding prison population stabilization. One issue in Connecticut prisons is that the population rises very quickly and declines very slowly. Please see PowerPoint presentation attached for more information on prison calculations.

Lisa Secondo of OPM discussed the state agency projects that were funded by the ARRA Jag Fund. In March of 2009 Governor Rell developed an allocation plan to distribute 6.8 million dollars to state agency projects.

In September of 2009 one of the first projects was to Department of Public Safety, this is a state wide drug task force project. This provides funding to support trooper time and the local police stipends to participate in regional and statewide task forces. The estimation in stipends can be provided to 23 towns. The second initiative is going to be focused on the (DPS) forensic laboratories; this will supply funding to maintain 11 laboratory positions. Another project is based at Department of Corrections and Board of Pardons and Paroles which provides funding to band data information which will allow (BOPP) to have better access to information to better manage and supervise offenders. There is a project that is based at DOC which provides funding for temporary staff to collect DNA samples from felons who are imprisoned and then transfer the samples to the DNA forensic labs. Another initiative would be to collaborate

between DOC and the Judicial Branch, using a combination of funding to get this project up and running. There are 600 thousand dollars in ARRA Jag Funds for DOC and 1.8 million dollars in regular Jag Funds for the Judicial Branch, to install Video Conferencing in the courts, CSSD offices and DOC facilities.

Brian Murphy Acting Commissioner of Department of Correction informed the members that he had currently two projects under way. The first one being DNA testing and addressing the back log which is 3,500 hundred offenders. The second project is video conference equipment which in turn should save the state a tremendous amount of money in the future. Brian Murphy introduced Commissioner Carol Salsbury and Director Lynn Milling to update the members on the different projects and accomplishments.

Director Lynn Milling spoke about DNA testing and inmates currently ready for discharge for discretionary release. DOC has been allocated one hundred seventy thousand dollars to do DNA testing. DOC is working in coordination with the University of Connecticut. They have hired 4 new staff members to help with the DNA testing process. This program has officially started on November 23, 2009 at the Walker McDougal Correction Facility. With the funds allotted to DOC they have been able to purchase DNA testing kits, once the back log has been completed the plan is to start testing inmates when they are admitted into a facility.

Commissioner Carol Salsbury informed the members on video conferencing and how the use of this technology has brought court room hearings from 75 a month to approximately 450 hearings a month. Construction to start adding the wiring to put the new conferencing equipment into the facilities will be under way. Commissioner Salsbury stated this should have considerable cost savings to the state, especially in transporting the inmates to the different facilities. At CSSD the probation officer will be able to have a visit with the inmate without driving from facility to facility, again considerable cost savings. There are a few different units that are being evaluated, a large court room setting and several small individual units for the probation officers to talk with an inmate one on one.

Jennifer Robinson from the Judicial Branch discussed the different locations that would be receiving the new video conferencing equipment. Judicial has been awarded 1.1 million dollars in funds to purchase the new technology. Currently there are 6 courts with the new equipment installed. The Judicial Branch is working on the upgrades necessary to accommodate the new equipment. The plan is to install video conferencing equipment in 3 court rooms per month until complete.

Rich Sparaco from spoke of the 3 project goals consisting of evaluating a web based platform; expanding the existing case note system; developing the capabilities within the case note system.

Brian Austin introduced the chairperson for the Correction Staff Health and Safety Subcommittee Kevin Brace. Kevin gave a brief update on some concerns that would be addressed at future meetings. One concern is the closing of the Webster facility leading to the overcrowding of inmates, also the safety of the correctional officers due to the overcrowding.

There were concerns that inmates could find out personal information about the correctional officer and their families. This was a priority to insure this will not happen. Kevin informed the members that there would be more to report at the next meeting which is on January 07, 2010.

Other Business: There was none

Meeting Adjourned: 11:03am.