



BLAIR COUNTY PRISON BOARD

c/o Blair County Controller, 423 Allegheny St., Ste 141, Hollidaysburg, PA 16648

Blair County Prison Board Meeting of January 9, 2025 at 8:30 a.m. In the Commissioner's Public Meeting Room

Board Members in Attendance:

Commissioner David Kessling, Commissioner Laura Burke, Controller A.C. Stickel, Sheriff James Ott, District Attorney Peter Weeks

Board Members not in Attendance:

Commissioner Amy Webster, President Judge Wade Kagarise

Quorum: Present

Media in Attendance: Kay Stephens – Altoona Mirror

Non-Board Members in Attendance:

Warden Abbie Tate, Deputy Warden Cory Yedlosky, Deputy Warden Shaun Edmundson, Kristina Hatfield, Sherry Socie, Alicia Tiracave

Primecare Representatives in Attendance:

NONE

AFSCME Representatives in Attendance:

NONE

Prison Society Members in Attendance:

Earnest Fuller

Call to Order: Commissioner Kessling called the meeting to order at 8:33 a.m.

Moment of Silent Reflection: Led by Commissioner Kessling

Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag: Led by Commissioner Kessling

The roll was called by Commissioner Kessling. No additional attendees over phone.

Call for Public Comment on Prison Board Items: Earnest Fuller – Prison Society: thank the Prison staff for the Christmas tour and allowing Prison Society members to carol for the prisoners and provide cookies. He would advocate keeping the Zoom option for this meeting for individuals who can't always make it to meetings. Provided a letter to all the of Board members. The Society has visited the Blair County Prison monthly and had been hoping to hear news of a new building. Some points presented in his letter include space for services and programs that the current building does not have room for, smaller cell blocks of 30-50 people, and separate cell blocks for mentally ill. Other matters are included in the letter but Mr. Fuller thanks the board for its time.

Commission Dave Kessling: the board does not commonly comment, but I do not feel like there is a member on this board who disagrees with your statements. However, nothing has been done for 56 years, and something should have been done a lot sooner than this. This Board is addressing a lot of the issues you mentioned. The last board started the search for property. We are a year into this board, and I may have been naïve thinking we could just get things going, but it's been a year because no one wants a prison in their back yard. No one wants to sell land for a Prison. Now we think we've found land and are in the process of that and talking to architecture and construction crews to look at plans for a new prison. A lot of the things you described in there we were already aware of, but we're hoping to build good repour we can address more issues you have brought up. From myself and the board we appreciate you and the Prison Society for what you do and bringing your input to the Board.

Kay Stephens- the Altoona Mirror: Recommend keeping the Zoom option for this meeting. If this board would have a discussion on what this board wants in the new prison?

Meeting of January 9, 2025 continued. . .

Commissioner Kessling: I will respond to that as well. There is a lot of input from people, education people, Prison Society, and others who have shown an interest in being part of the process. I know the Prison Board hasn't discussed that to discuss whether that will occur or not, but I think there is value in doing that. If we can get a lot of input. We want to make sure this, though this will be a very costly endeavor, we want to make sure we get it right. We're not building it for today were building it for twenty, thirty, forty, fifty years down the road. It's imperative we get this right, so the more input we get the more informed decisions we can make.

Approval of Minutes from October 17, 2024 Meeting: A motion was made by Commissioner Kessling and seconded by Sheriff Ott to approve the minutes from the October 17, 2024 Prison Board Meeting. The motion was unanimously carried.

Recognition of BCP Employee: Warden Tate recognized Case Manager Kristina Hatfield for her work. She came in and caught on very quickly to her duties and the needs of her cases. Case Manager Hatfield works primarily with the female inmates who often have more complex needs. She has filled a position that was left open for nearly a year and the Prison had a desperate need for. The Prison and the Board thank Case Manager Hatfield for her service to the County and deeply appreciate the work she is doing.

Inmate Population Report: Warden Tate provided an updated Inmate Population Report which will be kept on file with the minutes.

Inmate Services Report: Deputy Warden Edmundson provided an updated Inmate Population Report which will be kept on file with the minutes.

The Prison and Board would like to thank Deputy Warden Edmundson on keeping all these programs running and possible. All programs are free to the county and your outside volunteers making Deputy Wardens Edmundson's ability to schedule and oversee all programs happening in the limited space available highly valuable to the Prison and County to help stop recidivism.

Warden's Report: Warden Tate provided the Warden's Report which will be kept on file with the minutes.

Staffing Update: Deputy Warden Yedlosky provided a Staffing Report which will be kept on file with the minutes.

Facility Study: Commissioner Kessling gave a brief update on work being done to find property for a new prison and a facility study being done this month for the new facility and what is needed to construct a new prison that will be lasting and effective.

Discussion on eliminating Zoom option: No action was taken on this item. This Board will be keeping the Zoom option.

Prison Sub-Committees: No sub-committee reports presented at this time.

Adjournment: There being no further business to come before the Board, Commissioner Kessling made the motion to adjourn and it was seconded by Sheriff Ott. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 8:58 a.m.

Meeting of January 9, 2025 continued. . .

The next monthly meeting will be held Thursday, February 13, 2025 at 8:30 a.m. at the Blair County Prison.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "August C. Stickel IV". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "August" being the most prominent part.

August C. Stickel IV
Chairperson