

CONNECTICUT SENTENCING COMMISSION

Full Commission Meeting

Thursday, March 21, 2013

2:00 p.m.

Legislative Office Building, Room 2C

Hartford, CT

Members Present: Hon. Joseph Shortall (Chair), Mike Lawlor (Vice Chair), Hon. Robert Devlin, William Carbone, Vivien Blackford, Maureen Price-Boreland, Pete Gioia, Kevin Kane, Deborah Sullivan (Representing Susan Storey), David Shepack, Thomas Ullman, Garvin Ambrose, Rich Sparaco (Representing Erika Tindill), Mark Palmer, Mike Norko (Representing Patricia Rehmer)

Members Absent: Hon. Patrick Carroll, Hon. Gary White, Tracey Meares, Susan Pease, Hon. David Borden, John Santa, Leo Arnone, Reuben Bradford

Also Participating: Andrew Clark (Acting Executive Director), Jason DePatie, Sarah White

MINUTES

I. MEETING CONVENED

Judge Shortall called the meeting to order at approximately 2:15 p.m.

II. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FROM THE MEETING OF DECEMBER 20, 2012

Upon a duly made and seconded motion, the minutes were **approved by a unanimous voice vote.**

III. LEGISLATIVE UPDATE: 2013 BILLS

Judge Shortall welcomed Garvin Ambrose, the new State Victim Advocate, to the Commission.

The Commission was updated on the progress of its 2013 legislative proposals since the December 20, 2012 Full Commission meeting. Most recently, on March 11th, the Judiciary Committee held an informational public hearing on the Sentencing Commission and its nine bills. At the forum, Judge Shortall conveyed to the Judiciary Committee some background on the Commission, including its broad based membership and consensus-based decision-making policy. At the hearing, members testified on each of the Commission's nine bill proposals.

Andrew Clark reported that Judiciary Committee members seemed favorably disposed to the bills. There were some clarification and technical questions posed, which mainly centered on the "Drug-Free Zone" bill and the "Certificates of Rehabilitation" bill. After the

CONNECTICUT SENTENCING COMMISSION

hearing, many remaining questions and clarifications were further discussed and no “red flags” were raised. The deadline for the Committee to act favorably on the bills is April 19th.

Discussion ensued among members as to the movement of Commission bills through the legislative process. Members agreed that it would be best if the bills were received and acted on in whole to accurately reflect the consensus process. Judge Shortall indicated that he, Mike Lawlor, Justice Borden, Andrew Clark and Jason DePatie would act as liaisons to the legislature on Commission proposals. He requested that if any member became aware of particular issues with a bill, they should get in contact with Andrew Clark or Jason DePatie. Additionally, in anticipation of bills being voted favorably out of the committee, at which point they would receive a file copy, members were asked to note whether they anticipated a fiscal burden on their agency due to any particular bill.

IV. RECIDIVISM REDUCTION COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

A copy of the Committee’s ten recommendations was provided to Commission members and a discussion on the topic was led by Commissioners Price-Boreland and Blackford. The recommendations were derived from a white paper authored by Linda Meyer and Sarah Russell on the impact of positive social relationships. The committee chairs indicated they had met with Com. Leo Arnone and discussed the implementation of the recommendations. While these recommendations are considered “low-hanging fruit,” it is indisputable that they will impact the quality of inmates’ lives. From there, more complicated issues that are part of the process can be addressed. These recommendations are seen as a good starting point. It was mentioned that Dr. Norko sent in an article in response to these recommendations, citing research that demonstrated the negative impact of having incarcerated parents. While this is about reducing recidivism, in a broader sense, promoting positive social relationships has been empirically demonstrated to have a broader impact than just reducing recidivism.

Most of the recommendations are directed at changes within the Department of Correction. The Commission examined each individual recommendation. For recommendation 3, it was mentioned that while visitation is a regulated process, there is limited data that is in a useful form for studying. It was suggested that a uniform visitation policy explored and that it would be useful to track visitors’ feedback on which facilities are better to visit. For recommendation 5, child friendly visitation features and how they vary based on facility location, warden’s flexibility, and safety/security issues were discussed. For recommendation 6, it was noted that visits can be under half an hour, but that at least an hour would be better. It was proposed that recommendation 7 be expanded to include recommendation 9, due to similarities. For recommendation 10, the meaning of case management was discussed. Concerns were raised about the cost of increasing staffing or programs. It was noted that anything done by DOC would be within its budget and the governor’s charge includes reducing recidivism, therefore these recommendations fall within that scope.

Concern was raised as to whether it would be difficult to carry these out after Com. Leo Arnone’s recent announcement that he will be retiring. No one knew the answer to this, but

CONNECTICUT SENTENCING COMMISSION

some members believed that if Com. Arnone supported this work and communicated his agreement, there shouldn't be a problem. A potential additional recommendation could be to track whether there is a positive effect on inmates who have had expanded family contact, etc. It was questioned whether this concept should be tested empirically once the recommendation elements are put into effect. It was acknowledged that a mitigating factor is that family relationships are not always positive or beneficial. Still, the intent is to raise DOC's awareness that they can facilitate family arrangements in a more productive way, in policy and processes.

It was agreed that this set of recommendations will be subject to budget limitations determined by appropriations. These recommendations are meant to be applied within DOC's restraints pertaining to budget, safety and security. Judge Shortall asked the Commission if it will adopt this recommendation package to send to DOC with cautionary language about budgetary appropriations and safety/security relations and clarification of the relationship of these recommendations and recidivism.

Garvin Ambrose abstained from the voting process and refrained from endorsing anything, as he is new to the Commission. The Commission achieved **consensus** to move forward with this proposal.

V. 2013 FULL COMMISSION MEETING SCHEDULE

- June 20, 2013, 2-5 p.m.*
- September 19, 2013, 2-5 p.m.*
- Commission Public Hearing: November 21, 2013, 10:00 a.m.*
- December 19, 2013, 2-5 p.m.*

* Location TBD

VI. OTHER BUSINESS

No other business was discussed.

VII. MEETING ADJOURNED

The meeting adjourned at approximately 3:37 p.m.