BOARD OF CORRECTIONS MEETINGS – FEBRUARY 2015

February 13 Meeting. The Board of Corrections met February 13, 2015, in Des Moines. Vice Chairman Richard LaMere recognized Acting Director Jerry Bartruff for his report. Mr. Bartruff highlighted the General Assembly’s interest in the new Iowa State Penitentiary, with Department of Corrections (DOC) staff presenting information to three different legislative committees. There was also a tour of the facility in January. Mr. Bartruff indicated the DOC is collaborating with:

- The Office of the Attorney General and the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) in regards to construction issues at the new ISP.
- The Iowa Workforce Development (IWD) on offender re-entry coordinators. Currently, there are four IWD staff working with offenders in the Institutions; it would be helpful in reducing recidivism to have IWD staff working directly with offenders on probation or parole.
- Local community colleges and building trades to expand opportunities for apprenticeships for offenders.
- Disability Rights Iowa to improve services to offenders that have a serious mental illness or physical impairment.

Recidivism. Board members discussed the downward trend in recidivism as indicated in the report, Prison Recidivism FY 2014. Recidivism is defined as a return to the state prison system. Mr. Bartruff responded that the DOC is focused on offender re-entry and has engaged with community partners, provided cultural competency training to staff, and opened offender re-entry centers in Des Moines and Waterloo.

Legislation. Ms. Lettie Prell, DOC Director of Research, informed the Board about Senate Study Bill 1149 that relates to enhanced penalties for domestic violence, harassment, and stalking. The focus is on ending the cycle of violence in families. Parts of the Bill require risk assessments to be conducted while being held in jail on pre-trial status, or while sentenced to county jail for contempt for violations of a protective order or conviction of a no contact order. The risk assessment requirement is to help judges decide what to do to enhance victim safety. Parts of the Bill limit parole eligibility and earned time accrual for certain offenses. The Bill requires certain offenders to participate in batterer’s education while in State prison, or lose earned time. The accrual of earned time reduces the length of stay in prison.

Batterer’s Treatment. Ms. Sally Kreamer, Fifth Community-Based Corrections (CBC) District Director, updated the Board on the implementation of a new treatment program for offenders convicted of domestic violence, Achieving Change Through Value-Based Behavior (ACT-V). Ms. Kreamer indicated the previous treatment program based on the Duluth model, did not reduce recidivism. The DOC and CBC District Departments collaborated with the University of Iowa and received a grant to conduct a research-based assessment of the ACT-V. Midway through the assessment process, the ACT-V shows preliminary benefits in reducing recidivism. About 23.0% of offenders treated under the previous program had a new conviction for a violent offense. About 13.0% of offenders that received treatment through the ACT-V Program had a new conviction for a violent offense. The ACT-V program requires a significant investment in staff training.

Crisis Response Teams. Mr. David Siler, DOC Central Office Investigator, provided information on Crisis Response Teams in the Institutions. Mr. Siler serves as the statewide Crisis Hostage Negotiation Team Coordinator for the DOC. The Teams focus on reducing the use of force on offenders that are noncompliant with Institutional rules. The DOC Teams have won awards for their effectiveness. Board members discussed the investigation of rule violations and crimes committed within the Institutions. The DOC staff responded that each Institution has investigators. There is a chain of command in place for investigating criminal complaints that may ultimately be referred to the county attorney for prosecution.

Easement. The Board took formal action to approve a perpetual easement at the Anamosa State Penitentiary for Interstate Power and Light Company.
Board Discussion. The Board discussed the process of filling the Director position. Former Director John Baldwin retired January 29, 2015. The Board is required to recommend qualified individuals to the Governor for the Director position, per Iowa Code section 904.105(3). The Board also discussed the Governor’s recommendation to close the two Mental Health Institutes (MHIs) at Clarinda and Mount Pleasant. The DOC shares these campuses with the Department of Human Services (DHS).

February 20 Meeting. The Board met telephonically February 20, 2015. The Board moved to accept the following names as meeting the qualifications of the position of Director of the DOC, and recommended them to the Governor:

- James McKinney, Warden of the Fort Dodge Correctional Facility.
- Jerry Bartruff, Deputy Director of the DOC.
- Daniel Craig, Warden of the Iowa Medical Classification Center at Oakdale.
- Diann Wilder-Tomlinson, Deputy Director of the DOC.

Next Meeting. The Board’s next meeting is scheduled for March 6, 2015, at the Central Office in Des Moines. See the Department of Corrections website for more information: http://www.doc.state.ia.us/.

STAFF CONTACT: Beth Lenstra (515-281-6301) beth.lenstra@legis.iowa.gov