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PAROLE COMMISSION
Staff Meeting Minutes
Thursday, October 15, 2020
3099 East Washington Avenue
Madison, WI 53704

Presiding: John Tate II, Chair

Present: Doug Drankiewicz, Jennifer Kramer, Sara Tome, Oliver Buchino, Katelyn Hendricks

This meeting was conducted in-part through Zoom Videoconferencing due to the closure of state office buildings and social distancing guidelines because of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

The meeting began in open session at 9:00 AM.

Chairman Tate opened by introducing himself and members of the commission.

The Chair described how operations of the Commission had continued through the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic since the most recent Parole Commission staff meeting in March, and asked the Commissioners for updates regarding their workloads.

Commissioner Drankiewicz described his workload as heavy, but that he had been able to catch up in part because of the restrictions on statewide travel as a result of the pandemic, with some reviews conducted through videoconferencing. Commissioner Kramer also described the workload as high, but that Commissioner Drankiewicz had provided assistance.

ORA Buchino described that support correspondence continued to be responded to quickly, and that the backlog at the beginning of the year had been cleared. ORA Buchino mentioned working on an ongoing records request, with assistance from ORA Hendricks.

ORA Hendricks described the quick pace of the recent workload, but had managed to clear the backlog of institution correspondence and was in the process of scanning a large volume of documents.

Chairman Tate complimented the Commission on their dedication and ensuring operations were continuing normally despite the pandemic, with grants continuing to be issued. Chairman Tate complimented ORA Hendricks on the approaching completion of her LTE position, and in clearing the institution correspondence backlog.

Chairman Tate described upgrade to the Polycom services to improve virtual communication and attendance to hearings with the institutions, with an expected timeline of the next several months.

Chairman Tate announced the hiring of Shannon Pierce from the DCC sex offender unit as a new Commissioner, and described some of the hiring process that went into the selection. Chairman Tate and Commissioners Kramer and Drankiewicz discussed some of the expected onboarding processes for Ms. Pierce, including shadowing parole reviews and reviewing state statutes.

ORA Tome described working with BTM to secure the necessary office equipment and technology for the new Commissioner.

Commissioner Drankiewicz discussed future review operations to consider the mask mandate, including the possibility of conducting reviews through video from Central Office. Commissioner Drankiewicz described the ongoing quarantine at OSCI, which had resulted in all scheduled reviews being postponed.

Chairman Tate described working with Angela Hansen of the Bureau of Offender Classification and Movement to prioritize cases involving Commission endorsement for movement/reductions in custody. Chairman Tate also described a planned meeting with Megan Jones to acquire the data of cases with pending reductions-in-custody, and expected the ORAs to assist with it.

Chairman Tate provided instruction to the Commissioners regarding assessing Sufficient Time when conducting future reviews; specifically that upon a Commissioner evaluating sufficient time had been served, subsequent evaluations should maintain that evaluation. In order to evaluate differently, a significant change must occur with the person in custody, and should be specifically articulated by the Commission in the action.

ORA Buchino inquired with Commissioner Drankiewicz regarding concerns about officers being present in the room during reviews at RCI. Commissioner Drankiewicz described addressing these concerns with RCI and that they had been resolved.

ORAs Tome and Hendricks asked for guidance regarding a case with an ongoing Pre-Release Investigation, and described the need for DCC agents and supervisors to be aware of the policy of verifying residency to ensure satisfactory completion of release planning. Chairman Tate said he would discuss the process with DCC.

Chairman Tate described expectations going forward during the pandemic, including intentions to request release planning in cases where Commission recommendations were limited to currently-suspended opportunities such as work-release, should circumstances not improve over the next six months.

Chairman Tate announced a meeting in the next week with Lance Wiersma of DCC regarding the possibility of programming taking place in the community, and integrating this into Commissioner assessments.

The meeting then transitioned into closed session, and the No Action case was reviewed.

The meeting concluded at approximately 10:15am.