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PAROLE COMMISSION
Staff Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, June 2nd, 2021
3099 East Washington Avenue
Madison, WI 53704

Presiding: John Tate II, Chair

Present: Doug Drankiewicz, Jennifer Kramer, Shannon Pierce, Sara Tome, Oliver Buchino

Guests: Joan Streetar-OVSP, Alaina Burger, Amanda Readman, Chris Donahoe, Pamela Subotich, Madeleine Nyman, Ben Turk, Jim Beadle, Tai Renfrow

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 at 10:00 AM.

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

A discussion was held regarding resumption of visitation at the institutions. The Chair noted that, as circumstances continue to change, Commissioners have discretion in terms of resuming in-person parole reviews.

The Chair described the high number of PRIs that had been coming in, and mentioned the option for Commissioners to amend decisions in cases where approved PRIs have come in well in advance of a scheduled future parole review.

Commissioner Drankiewicz began a discussion regarding the procedure for victims presenting materials during parole reviews. The Chair outlined that parole reviews serve to assess parole eligibility for the person-in-custody present. While victim input is sought, such presentations would be better served through other avenues. ORA Buchino described other ways victims have recently provided input by contacting the Commission.

Commissioner Drankiewicz described assessments of sex-offender programming needs from the institutions, and how these evaluations have changed over time. The Chair described that while the Commission expects programming to be completed at the institution, certain programming needs can be accomplished in the Community, and encouraged Commissioners to include that option in their recommendations.

ORA Tome followed up regarding receiving victim presentations. Commissioner Drankiewicz recommended that such input be submitted to OVSP, who will provide guidance as to appropriate submissions. Joan Streetar from OVSP, who was in attendance, gave additional input.

The Chair then answered several questions about Commission policy, practice, and procedure that had been submitted from the public in advance of the meeting.

Question: When the Commission is considering grants or PRI requests, are delays in a person-in-custody being transferred to reduced security held against them?

Delays are not held against them. The Commission makes endorsements for reductions in security for two reasons. First, given how long parole-eligible persons-in-custody have been incarcerated, it is important for them to become familiarized with the broader Community. Second, seeing how well someone does in a reduced security setting is important to the Commission's assessment of risk reduction. Although custody level is not by itself one of the criteria for a parole grant, it is one important factor among many that the Commission looks at in the process of parole consideration.

Question: What can supporters of parole-eligible people do in the process?

They can write in, through email or in the mail, with specifics of outside support for the person-in-custody. Supporters can also help the person-in-custody prepare for the review in terms of describing their perspective to the Commissioner. Commissioner Kramer also emphasized the importance of outside resources in ensuring a stable reintegration, noting how much the world has changed during a person's incarceration.

Question: What can supporters do for parole-eligible people who do not have community support?

The Chair recognized that these are challenging situations that may involve a lack of resources, but highlighted that the Commission will not release to homelessness. The Chair described how any support from outside advocacy groups is better than no support, as developing a viable release plan is the biggest variable towards a successful release. The Chair described, however, that a lack of support does not prohibit a parole grant, but that the Commission has to be cautious in its consideration. The Chair also noted that some approved grants are dependent on viable housing being secured. Commissioner Pierce provided description of DOC support. Commissioner Drankiewicz noted that cases with lack of support represent a small percentage of parole-cases, but require much caution in decision-making.

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

The next staff meeting was scheduled for Wednesday, August 4th, 2021, at 10am.

The meeting concluded at approximately 10:50am.