PAROLE COMMISSION

Staff Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, September 28th, 2022

3099 East Washington Avenue

Madison, WI 53704

Presiding: Christopher Blythe, Chair

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

Guests: Allyson Smith, Amanda Readman, Ashley Payne OVSP, David Liners, Diana Lewis OVSP, John Pilmaier OVSP, Joyce Ellwanger, Kali Zettle, Kate Finley, Tina Jones

The meeting began at approximately 10:00 AM.

Chairman Blythe opened by introducing himself and members of the Commission. The Chair gave a short description of the history of the Parole Commission, and underscored that it is an independent state agency that is attached to the DOC for administrative purposes. The Chair described how the Commission is required by state law to conduct regular reviews for purposes of parole consideration for eligible individuals, and how that differs from individuals who are under the Truth-in-Sentencing (TIS) law. The Chair thanked members of the Commission staff for their work.

The Chair then answered questions submitted in advance by members of the public concerning parole policy, procedure, or practice. The Chair noted he would take it under advisement from the Office of Legal Counsel as to whether public comment would be included at future meetings.

**Question:**

Donell McKennie, convicted of Child Abuse and 1st degree reckless homicide of a 17-month old was paroled in 2019. He had a Mandatory Release (MR) date in 2027. Why was he released much earlier than his MR Date?

The Chair will not comment on specific cases. The Commission considers all appropriate criteria in assessing eligibility for parole. Release at MR is required except under certain cases that fall under Presumptive Mandatory Release (PMR), under which the release criteria differs slightly.

**Question:**

Many loved ones of victims of some of the most heinous homicides were quoted recently in an online news publication that they were not notified by the Parole Commission/DOC that the person responsible for their loved ones’ murder was being paroled/ had been paroled. How did this happen?

What steps are being taken to ensure this does not happen again?

The Chair described how this process is conducted by the Office of Victims Services and Programs (OVSP), and gave contact information for the office. Immediate family victims, as defined by state statute, are entitled to notice of parole reviews and release, but must be enrolled with OVSP.

**Question:**

How many inmates serving time for violent offenses (rape/murder) are currently being considered for parole in 2022?

There are approximately 1,700 individuals currently incarcerated who are eligible for some form of parole. Most are considered at reviews in a given year, so a large number of hearings are conducted annually by the Commission.

**Question:**

Is Community corrections being overwhelmed in supervising parolees with such violent histories?

What steps are being taken by supervising parole agents to ensure the safety of the community from these violent offenders sets that are in the community?

The Commission does not oversee the DOC Division of Community Corrections (DCC). Questions regarding DCC procedure should be directed to the DOC.

The meeting concluded at approximately 10:10AM.