

BOARD OF CORRECTION
MINUTES
JANUARY 7, 1986

A regular meeting of the Board of Correction took place on January 7, 1986, at the Board's offices at 51 Chambers Street, New York. Members attending were Mr. Booth, Mr. Kirby, Mr. Lenefsky, Mrs. Margolis, Mr. Schulte, and Mrs. Singer. Vice-Chairman Horan was excused from attending. Chairman Tufo was delayed. Mr. Schulte called the meeting to order at 2:15 p.m.

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved with necessary corrections.

Mr. Lenefsky opened discussion of the report on the New York City Adolescent Reception and Detention Center. Board Counsel Barbara E. Dunkel distributed copies of updated statistics, and copies of the revised executive summary. Executive Director Richard T. Wolf pointed out to the members that the staff had tried to balance the tone of the new version of the summary, and to give more emphasis to the Department of Correction's past efforts to gain control of ARDC.

Mr. Kirby praised the substance of the report, and Mrs. Singer concurred, but added that she was concerned that it was too long to be readable. Ms. Dunkel explained that the report, as now written, is intended to provide an overview of the problems at ARDC through the executive summary, and then to provide specific information to a number of different audiences in the body of the text. Thus, she explained, it is not the staff's assumption that everyone will read the whole report, but that individuals will read the summary and then browse through the rest of the report focusing only on the information relevant to their specific areas of responsibility. Mr. Wolf, in response to a question from Mrs. Margolis, stated that the intended audience was Department executive facility management and program staff, the Office of Management and Budget, and the Mayor's Office.

Mr. Lenefsky mentioned the necessity both of making certain that all information in the report be accurate and fully documented within the report itself, and of avoiding subjective, blanket statements which could prove difficult to defend if challenged. Mr. Schulte asked if the Commissioner of Correction would see the report, and have a chance to comment on its, before it was distributed to other agencies. Mr. Wolf indicated she would, if the Board chose to follow its own precedent.

Mrs. Margolis mentioned the closing of the Hart's Island work camp, which would reduce Departmental expenses by approximately one million dollars annually, and suggested the report might be useful to an effort by the Department to keep this money in its budget for the purpose of applying it to ARDC. Mr. Schulte added that it was important to make it plain that the report was in no way critical of the Commissioner. Mrs. Margolis wondered why the Commissioner should not be criticized, pointing out that she was the head of the Department. Mr. Wolf provided some background of the Commissioner's involvement with ARDC, noting that the Commissioner was appointed in 1984, and that the report included statistics dating back to 1983, and made mention of conditions as far back as 1976. Ms. Dunkel added that it was made clear in the introduction to the report that the Commissioner had inherited the problems with this facility, and that the Commissioner had undertaken several initiatives to correct the problems. Mr. Lenefsky suggested that a paragraph be added to the executive summary, directly after the first paragraph, to emphasize both these facts.

Chairman Tufo arrived and took the chair at 2:45 p.m. A discussion followed about the best way to proceed. Mr. Schulte advocated sending the Department a copy of the report for comment; Chairman Tufo informed the Board that the Department had already obtained a copy. It was agreed that a letter would be sent to the Commissioner requesting comment, along with a copy of the report in its current form.

Mr. Kirby reiterated his statement that the report was sound, but it was important to avoid subjective statements. Mr. Lenefsky provided an example of the kind of statement to which Mr. Kirby had been referring, asking whether anyone disagreed with the statement on page 5 citing lack of compliance with institutional rules and procedures by correction staff. There was a general agreement that many staff did not comply with rules, and Mr. Schulte suggested using language to establish examples of non-compliance, rather than implying that the staff as a whole does not comply with orders.

Mrs. Singer expressed concern that in some instances it was not clear that the discussion of problems at the Correctional Institution for Women involved only the male adolescent population of that facility. It was agreed that it would be re-emphasized that the female inmates of CIFW are not under discussion in this report.

Mr. Lenefsky suggested that the staff do a minimal redrafting of the executive summary, circulate it to the members of the Board, and that the members discuss it at a future meeting or telephone conference. In response to a question from Ms. Dunkel, Mr. Lenefsky stated that the new paragraph discussed earlier was to be only a summary, and should not replace any other material. Mr. Kirby suggested further emphasizing the special nature of ARDC, and Chairman Tufo suggested doing so in the cover letter to the report. Mrs. Singer mentioned the desirability of discussing the familial and social conditions of adolescent detainees in the report.

Mrs. Margolis suggested giving further emphasis to the recommendation that the Department seek rescission of the Consent Decree language allowing inmates to possess jewelry, and it was agreed that this issue would also be raised in the cover letter. Mr. Schulte raised the issue of adults housed in ARDC, and a general discussion followed of the policy which currently allows three hundred or more adult detainees to be housed there.

Chairman Tufo asked how soon the corrections could be made, and Mr. Wolf indicated that a new draft could be ready for circulation to the members within the week.

Chairman Tufo read a letter from himself to the Mayor, in which he resigned his position both as Chairman and member of the Board, effective at the Mayor's convenience.

A vote of confidence, thanking Chairman Tufo for his many years of extraordinary service to the Board and to the City, passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned in Chairman Tufo's honor at 3:30 p.m.