

MINUTES

BOARD OF CORRECTION

September 13, 1983

A regular meeting of the New York City Board of Correction was held on September 13, 1983 at the offices of the Board of Correction, 51 Chambers Street, New York City. The meeting was called to order at 2:55 p.m.

In attendance were Chairman Peter Tufo, Vice-Chairman John Horan, Mr. Wilbert Kirby, Mr. David Lenefsky, Mrs. Barbara Margolis, and Mrs. Rose M. Singer.

Excused absences were approved for Mr. Angelo Giordani and Mr. David Schulte.

Board staff present were Michael Cleary, David Johnson, Rolando Torres, Alison Estess, Judie Ennett, Deirdre Nurre, Barbara Treen and Melba Wiggs.

Mrs. Rose Singer reported that Mr. David Schulte should have been indicated as excused for both the June and July meetings.

The Board went into executive session at 3:05 p.m.

The Board resumed open session at 3:45 p.m. Invited guests from the Department of Correction and the Legal Aid Society were in attendance. Chairman Tufo introduced Richard T. Wolf, former Inspector General of the Department of Health and the Department of Mental Health as the new Executive Director of the Board of Correction.

Department of Correction, First Deputy Commissioner Peter Seitchik stated that at the Board's request the Department was present to provide an update on all ongoing or proposed renovation or construction projects which will affect the housing capacity of the City correction system.

Sharon Keilin, Deputy Commissioner for Administration, reported that some housing space would be lost temporarily in the next year to eighteen months as a result of the C-104 window renovation project at the Bronx and Queens Houses of Detention. Fifty-three (53) beds will be down at any one time in the Bronx House while 60 beds will be lost in Queens.

Commissioner Keilin then outlined the housing space that would be added to the system. The Manhattan House of Detention (Tombs) is scheduled to open in November 1983 with a capacity of 426 inmates. At ARDC the lower dorm is being expanded to add 30 beds and 108 new permanent cells are also being added. A similar expansion at CFW will yield 22 additional cells. The current North Facility will be replaced by a new 800 bed modular structure which is scheduled to open in late 1984 or early 1985. This new North Facility will be a totally autonomous jail for sentenced misdemeanants.

The White Street jail will add approximately 500 beds to the system when it is completed. It is planned that the cells in the White Street jail will be 70 square feet. The City is also looking at other space, such as the brig at the Brooklyn Navy Yard, which might be made suitable for housing City prisoners.

Commissioner Seitchik indicated that the City would be losing 341 beds with the reinstatement of the population cap at HDM and AMKC by Judge Lasker. In addition, the Department is now taking in an additional 70 prisoners per week which is placing an even greater strain on the City correction system which is already operating at 100% of capacity.

In order to avoid releasing prisoners pursuant to Judge Lasker's impending order, the City is looking to the State to accept certain categories of prisoners into its correction system who are now in City Jails. The City has filed papers with Judge Lasker seeking such relief. The categories include parole violators and sentenced misdemeanants.

The City is also seeking assistance from the State Office of Court Administration to expedite disposition and sentencing in order to reduce the average inmate length of stay. For example, according to Commissioner Seitchik there are 900 convicted prisoners awaiting sentencing, of which 650 have been convicted for longer than three weeks. At present the average length of stay is 41 days, down from 49 days the preceding year.

Chairman Tufo added that the average length of stay in 1978 was 28 days.

According to Commissioner Seitchik, the opening of the Tombs will provide little relief, given the magnitude of this population increase, hence the Department's ongoing effort to identify and acquire additional space.

According to Commissioner Seitchik, if the City must release prisoners, the Department proposes to institute a furlough program for sentenced misdemeanants, or reduce their sentences by ten days and then, if necessary, release the longest held detainees with the lowest bails.

Commissioner Keilin then reported on the Department's plan to contract with a private food service vendor to provide prisoner meals. The Department currently provides 12,000,000 meals per year from nine separate kitchens. Since the City Charter requires that food be ordered through the Department of General Services, it is difficult for the Department of Correction to control the food it receives and, as a result, ensure that the minimum RDA is provided each day pursuant to the consent decrees. In addition, since the current civil service qualifications and salaries are not competitive with those in private industry, the quality and reliability of the civilian kitchen staff is poor. According to Commissioner Keilin, the Department has become the employer of last resort. Chronic attrition and absenteeism have made the delivery of meals constantly problematic.

Hiring an outside contractor to provide inmate meals from two centralized kitchens on Rikers Island would, in the Department's opinion, eliminate these problems and provide higher quality meals more efficiently.

Commissioner Keilin stated that requests for proposals (RFP's) would be sent shortly to nine food service vendors who might be interested in this contract. Once a vendor has been selected and a contract drawn, the matter will be presented to the Board of Estimate. She stated that the Department would like the Board's active support for this proposal.

Chairman Tufo requested that the Board be actively involved by the Department on this issue as well as the construction and renovation projects.

Chairman Tufo reported that he had been invited by Judge Lasker to a hearing on September 20, 1983 to discuss with other City criminal justice officials the options before Judge Lasker regarding reimposition of the population cap at HDM.

The next meeting was scheduled for October 4, 1983 at 12:30 p.m.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:30 p.m.