

MINUTES  
BOARD OF CORRECTION  
APRIL 1, 1986

A regular meeting of the Board of Correction was held on Tuesday April 1, 1986, at the Board's offices. Members present were Vice-Chairman John Horan, William Booth, Angelo Giordanni, Wilbert Kirby, David Lenefsky, David Schulte, and Rose Singer. Chairman Robert Kasanof and Barbara Margolis were excused from attending. Mr. Horan called the meeting to order at 2:20 p.m.

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

Deputy Executive Director John Rakis presented a report on the February 7, 1986, escape from Bronx House of Detention for Men as follows: Five men escaped; all, however, were recaptured within the month. The men escaped from the sixth floor dorm by climbing down a rope made of bedsheets knotted together. In order to get out of the dormitory, the men had to get through a partition into the officer's catwalk, then penetrate a louvered security window and, with the aid of a hacksaw blade, cut through the bars outside the window. The following factors contributed to the escape:

1. The window through which the inmates escaped was broken. To keep out cold air, a black plastic garbage bag had been placed over a hole in an interior storm window. This effectively hid the inmates' work on the louvres and the bars.
2. In violation of regulations, a "housegang" inmate was allowed onto the catwalk several times each day to clean up, without the direct and constant supervision of an escorting officer. This inmate was one of the escapees.
3. Correction Officers and their supervisors did not tour the catwalk area conscientiously, as evidenced by the fact that the work on the bars and window was not discovered. A "watchman" system, designed to insure that officers made regular patrols, had been broken several years. A functioning "watchman" system is required under State Commission of Correction Minimum Standards.

4. One section of the fence in the yard was not properly topped with razor ribbon.

The Board members agreed that the inoperative "watchman" system was of particular importance and should be addressed. It was noted that a recent survey by Board staff revealed that no major facility in the system has an operative "watchman" mechanism.

Mr. Rakis briefed the Board members on changes in management at the Department of Correction. Chief of Operations Gloria Lee has resigned and will be replaced by Martin Monteiro; Wardens Quaslim Inham and Kathleen Serra are slated for promotion to Supervising Warden.

The Board reviewed the Mayor's requested smoking rules and expressed no objection to their implementation. The Board also expressed the desire to visit an institution or institutions, and hold a meeting, perhaps open to inmate complaints, at a facility.

Mr. Schulte suggested that field workers report on security problems in the jails they monitor. He also requested that fiscal information about the Board be distributed to Board members.

Mr. Rakis summarized the cuts in the Board's budget being ordered by the Mayor's office.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:15 p.m.