

**EBR Criminal Justice Coordinating Council  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING  
Thursday, May 28, 2020**

**MINUTES**

The Board of Directors of the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council held its regularly scheduled meeting on May 28, 2020 at 12:00 pm via teleconference.

Directors participating were the Honorable Yvette Alexander, Warden Dennis Grimes, Brandi Lawrence, Hillar Moore, Chief Murphy Paul, John Spain, Darryl Gissel (alternate for Mayor-President Sharon Weston Broome) and Michael Mitchell.

Directors not present or represented were Sheriff Sid Gautreaux, 19<sup>th</sup> JDC Judge Wilson Fields.

Sarah C. Gardner, and Lauren Crapanzano Jumonville participated from the Baton Rouge Area Foundation; Major Cathy Fontenot participated from the Sheriff's office; Lindsay Blouin participated from the Public Defender's office.

**CALL TO ORDER**

A quorum being present, Yvette Alexander called the meeting to order at 12:15 p.m.

**ACTION AGENDA**

Judge Alexander called upon Chris Csonka to provide updates on actions required of the board.

Mr. Csonka asked the board to give COVID-19 response updates for their respective departments

Judge Yvette Alexander and Ms. Brandi Lawrence gave an update for Baton Rouge City Court. Ms. Lawrence stated that when the court reopened the previous week, they received 500 to 600 people per day to handle City Court matters. This week they were averaging 550 people per day only turned away one person due to an elevated temperature. Judge Yvette Alexander indicated that the court rooms were being retrofitted with plexiglass to allow for normal court operations to continue later in June.

Ms. Lawrence continued by stating they are continuing to reduce all traffic violations to non-moving violations through July 31<sup>st</sup> which will hopefully reduce the amount of people who must personally appear in court.

Mr. Csonka added that he, Ms. Lawrence, and Elzie Alford (City Court Administrator) have been discussing of possibility of CJCC funding the cost of kiosks for City Court to help minimize the amount of direct interactions between the public and City Court employees.

Chief Murphy Paul gave the board an update on BRPD's COVID-19 response by stating he has directed his officers to continue the practice of not arresting for non-violent misdemeanors and some low-level felonies in hopes of reducing close interactions between his officers and the public.

Chief Paul continued by giving an overview of Operation Safe Summer which began May 25, 2020 and focuses on placing more officers in specifically noted high crime areas to conduct proactive patrols and hopefully help to reduce crime rates in those areas.

Warden Dennis Grimes updated the board as to current conditions of the East Baton Rouge Parish Prison stating that they have implemented all Department of Corrections and CDC guidelines for safeguarding against the spread of COVID-19. The Warden continued by stating they currently have only eight inmates who have positive test results and they are all being quarantined in a specific housing location.

Mr. Darryl Gissel added that the Parish Prison Medical contractor, Correct Health, has been providing weekly updates on testing numbers and results which are being shared among the justice partners and community members.

Mr. Hillar Moore and Michael Mitchell gave an update for the 19<sup>th</sup> JDC. Mr. Moore stated that the District Attorney's Office continues to meet daily with members of the Public Defender's Office to review new arrests for possible case expedition or resolution in order to minimize the number of people being held at the Parish Prison. Mr. Mitchell stated that the daily meetings are something they wish to continue after COVID restrictions have been relaxed.

Mr. Csonka showed the board a graph which illustrated the decline in the Parish Prison population since November of 2017. Mr. Csonka pointed out that the current Parish Prison population is at 1206 not including Work Release inmates which indicates a 42% reduction in the Parish Prison population since November of 2017.

## **PROGRAM UPDATES**

Mr. Csonka gave an update of the current state of the Pre-Trial Diversion and Recovery Program. He noted that program staff had assessed a total of 132 potential participants, that the program currently has 10 active participants, and that 31 participants have graduated to date. Mr. Csonka noted that Lisa Burns, a new LCSW had been hired just prior to the COVID shut down in March but has been working with the program's Resource Coordinator to get up to speed and hopefully begin conducting assessments again once the COVID restrictions have been lifted at the Parish Prison.

Mr. Csonka then reminded the Board of ongoing work related to the MacArthur Safety and Justice Challenge. He relayed that MacArthur has approved of sites realigning their initiatives with continuing successful COVID-induced policy and procedural changes which will help to maintain inmate population reductions.

Then Mr. Csonka asked all the board members to consider which changes they have put in place due to COVID they would most like to see continued moving forward. Mr. Csonka stated he

would talk with the board members individually to valuate which of these cold be funded with SJC funds.

Mr. Csonka added that he will be applying for a No-Cost Extension to the current MacArthur SJC grant which is set to end on September 30, 2020. He will be asking that the grant period be extended until December 31, 2020 so that available grant funds are able to be spent down.

Mr. Csonka added the renewal application for continued SJC funding for 2021 and 2022 will be due in mid-September and this group should start discussing initiatives they may want to fund for the next grant cycle so they can be included in the renewal application.

Mr. Csonka stated that a working group led by Judges Ronald and Donald Johnson have applied to BJA to receive funding and technical assistance in creating a Veteran's Court at the 19<sup>th</sup> JDC. Mr. Csonka indicated that a response to the funding request is not expected until the fall of 2020.

Mr. Csonka finished by stating the next Board meeting is scheduled for Thursday, July 23, 2020 at Noon.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

With no further business to conduct, the meeting was adjourned at 1:00 p.m.

Christopher Csonka  
Executive Director  
May 28, 2020