



CHESHIRE PRISON ADVISORY COMMITTEE

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING
MONDAY, November 5, 2018
5:00 pm**

**CHESHIRE POLICE DEPARTMENT
500 HIGHLAND AVENUE
CHESHIRE CT 06410**

Committee Members Present: Representing the Town of Cheshire: Joseph Holstein, Margie Rogers, and Trip Sanders. From Department of Corrections: Angel Quiros, From CCI Annex: Scott Erfe. From MYI: Ken Butricks, Jr.. From the Police Academy: No attendees.

Representing Cheshire Police Department: Lt. Fred Jortner, and Brian Pichnarcik, Deputy Chief.

Representing Town of Cheshire: Sean Kimball, Town Manager

There was a Quorum.

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order at 5:06 p.m. by Mr. Holstein. The assembled body recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Acceptance of minutes from February 5, 2018

Mr. Holstein made a motion to accept the February 5, 2018 minutes as posted. Mr. Sanders seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Update on the Cheshire Facilities:

Police Academy: No attendees

There was nothing to report from the Police Academy.

MYI:

Everything is in order – no reportable incidents in the past 6 months. Census is 460 inmates. Mr. Butricks said that MYI works in tandem with CCI Annex when there is a reported escape.

CCI Annex:

The inmate escape on October 31, 2018 was discussed. Mr. Quiros and Mr. Erfe apologized on behalf of the Department of Corrections (DOC) for the incident; said that these matters are taken seriously and that active criminal and internal investigations are currently taking place. It is obvious that there was a failure in the system. The internal process needs to minimize response time so that the community is notified quickly. Notification of the escape was at 6:15 p.m. At approximately 6:30 p.m. the facility was placed in lock down after the inmate was unaccounted for at the conclusion of the evening outside recreational period between 5:00 – 6:00 p.m.

At approximately 7:00 p.m. the Cheshire Police Department was notified by the DOC and a reverse 911 (Code Red) went out to residents in the area from Cheshire Police at 7:30 p.m. Lt. Jortner said that he took the call from the DOC.

The inmate, 25-year-old Luis Clarke of New Britain, pushed a picnic bench up against the fence and climbed over, cutting himself on barbed wire. After walking to Maplecroft Plaza, south of the prison, he saw a running, unoccupied 2002 Toyota Avalon which he took.

After getting lost and leaving the car at Cheshire Academy, Clarke was approached by a man who the DOC report did not identify. Clarke, bloody from climbing through the prison's razor wire, told the man he was dressed as a prison inmate for a Halloween party and had gotten into a fight. He asked the man for a ride to Bristol.

The man said he'd take him to Meriden and offered him a change of clothes. The man also called an Uber for Clarke.

The owner of the vehicle reported the car stolen as well as the cell phone in the car, which Clarke had found and used to call his girlfriend.

The inmate also used the phone to contact friends and relatives through Facebook. They advised him to surrender, according to the report.

An off-duty FBI agent saw Clarke on Route 68 and after hearing news reports of the escape reported it to police. Following this lead that Clarke was in the Meriden area, members of the Department of Correction's Fugitive Team, along with local law enforcement, closed in on a suspect matching his description and he was quickly placed in custody without further incident, authorities said. Investigators were able to ping the phone in Wallingford and later in Meriden. DOC fugitive recovery officers and other police caught Clarke as he was getting into his ride near the Stop & Shop in Meriden. All resources were available in the apprehension which took place approximately three hours following the escape.

Clarke was serving an 18-month sentence for violation of probation and was classified as a low-risk offender. He has been charged with escape in the first degree and larceny in the third degree. Bond was set at \$500,000.

Corrections officials said Clarke will be reviewed for placement as a high-security prisoner at Northern Correctional Institution.

(Rudy Demiraj, who is President of AFSCME Local 387, which represents the correction officers and other staff at Cheshire CCI, released a statement in response to the escape :)

“The steady elimination of positions and reduction of staff presence within Connecticut’s prison system has left us more vulnerable to these types of incidents occurring. Initiatives enacted by the agency that allow for more leniency for inmates have also contributed to the increased risk facing our staff and our surrounding community. “Our jobs are dangerous and demanding. We understand that coming in. But we need to recognize the negative impact of cost-saving and inmate incentive programming on the safety and security of the staff and the public.”

Mr. Quiros added that the DOC Commissioner is leaving in January 2019 and that an Administrator is leaving in February 2019.

The DOC also released a statement reacting to the union's comments:

"It's disingenuous of the union to claim that this incident is directly correlated to staffing levels at Cheshire Correctional Institution. The fact of the matter is that staffing levels at the Cheshire Annex haven't changed in more than fifteen years.

"It's important to note that the Cheshire Annex, separate from the main campus of the Cheshire Correctional Institution houses very low security offenders nearing the end of their sentences," wrote DOC spokesperson Karen Martucci.

As a result of the escape, a Shaker fence, with an increase in razor wire, and an alarm system will be installed at Cheshire CCI to mirror a level 4 mentality. In addition, a meeting is being organized inviting all host towns to brainstorm processes for improvement.

Ms. Rogers asked about the notification delay. She said she received the call at 8:00 p.m. Lt. Jortner said that the Code Red goes out to over 22,000 residents on land lines and that the Police Department is looking into better measures to improve timing. He shared the Code Red number which can be programmed into mobile devices: 866-419-5000. This information is also clearly identified on the Town's webpage.

CCI Annex Census is 1,277 inmates.

Old Business:

There was no old business.

New Business:

Discussion of future meetings: February 4, 2019, May 6, 2019, August 5, 2019 and November 4, 2019.

Meetings are scheduled on the first Mondays (quarterly) per schedule in place.

Mr. Holstein made a motion to accept the 2019 meeting dates. Ms. Rogers seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Ms. Rogers asked if meeting start time can be changed to 5:15 p.m. to allow for travel time. Board members are in agreement to this change.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

The next meeting will be held on Monday, February 4, 2019 at 5:15 p.m. at the Cheshire Police Department, 500 Highland Avenue, Cheshire, CT.

Respectfully submitted,

Dawn Guite

Dawn Guite, Recording Clerk