

NEW RIVER VALLEY REGIONAL JAIL AUTHORITY
July 16, 2021
Held at the New River Valley Regional Jail

A. CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting of the New River Valley Regional Jail Authority was called to order at 10:05 a.m. by Chairman Mark Armentrout.

Prior to roll call, he read a note from Giles County appointing Chief Deputy Scott Moye as Sheriff Millirons' alternate.

MEMBERS PRESENT:	Bland County:	Sh. Ramsey; Mr. Workman
	Floyd County:	Mr. Turman
	Giles County:	Mr. Chidester
	Grayson County:	Sh. Vaughan; Mr. Shepley
	Pulaski County:	Sh. Worrell
	Radford City:	Sheriff Armentrout; Mr. Fleisher
	Wythe County:	Mr. Vaught

ALTERNATES PRESENT:	Carroll County:	Ch. Deputy Spangler
	Floyd County:	Ch. Deputy Harris
	Giles County:	Mr. Martin; Ch. Dep Moye
	Wythe County:	Ch. Deputy Foster

STAFF & GUESTS PRESENT:	Superintendent Gregory Winston
	Major Keith Fleeman
	Mrs. Tonya Akers-NRVRJ
	Mr. Chuck Dunavant-NRVRJ Retiree
	Ms. Veronica Loop-NRVRJ Retiree
	Sgt. Travis Hamilton-NRVRJ
	NRVRJ Officers: Toni Trueheart, Kristi Dalton and Dawn Havens
	Mr. Robert Lyons-Citizen

B. ROLL CALL:

Mrs. Tonya Akers called roll and reported a quorum with ten (10) members and five (5) alternates present.

Chairman Armentrout expressed the Authority's deepest sympathy at the loss of Sgt. Arthur "Woody" Palmer.

C. APPROVAL OF MAY 2021 MINUTES:

Copies of the Minutes from the May 14, 2021 meeting were mailed to each member. Chairman Armentrout asked if there were any additions or additional corrections to the Minutes as presented.

Motion: Sheriff Vaughan moved that the May 14, 2021 Minutes be approved as presented. Ch. Deputy Foster seconded the motion.

Action: The motion passed unanimously.

On behalf of the regional jail employees, Superintendent Winston thanked all of the Authority members that reached out to acknowledge the tragic passing of Sgt. Palmer. The investigation is still ongoing and few details have been released. But the Authority's outpour of support has been impactful to the staff.

Superintendent Winston recognized two recent NRVJR retirees: Officer Chuck Dunavant (22 years of service) and Sgt. Veronica Loop (21 years of service). Sgt. Travis Hamilton spoke of working with Chuck for many years and of his wonderful character, of being a great co-worker and friend. Major Fleeman spoke of Veronica's accomplishments through the years attaining the positions of Master Jail Officer and Sergeant as well as serving as a teacher/mentor to all of the new officers that came in. We wish both Chuck and Veronica the very best in their retirement and they will be missed.

D. OLD BUSINESS:

E. COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Finance Committee:

Copies of the monthly financials were distributed. Mr. Workman reviewed the report in detail with the group.

Motion: On behalf of the Finance Committee, Mr. Workman made the motion to approve the Finance Report as presented.

Action: Following a roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously.

F. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT:

Academy:

There are six officers still in the academy with graduation scheduled for August 5th. We look forward to having them all back as certified officers.

Operations:

- Headcount today: 826
- Total days served 26,868
- Average Daily Population: 896
- Average Daily Population for male prisoners: 717
- Average Daily Population for female prisoners: 178
- Number of commitments: 377
- Avg Daily commitments: 12.6
- Number of releases: 485
- Avg Daily releases: 16.2

Staffing:

Like all of the jails in the state, we have staff shortages. Based upon the number of inmates we have and the projects that are going on, Superintendent reached out to see if DOC could possibly take around 30 of our state responsible inmates. They ended up taking over 100 inmates which reduced our ADP to around 830 and our prisoner forecast for budgeting purposes is 884. It will take a while for us to get back to that amount but we'll keep a close eye on those numbers.

Accreditation:

A few months ago, our accreditation sergeant submitted his resignation so we hired a part-time person to come help out then the accreditation sergeant decided to stay. Now our part-time has resigned and our accreditation sergeant has re-resigned and will be leaving at the end of the month. We're actively looking for an accreditation person to help us in that area until we get someone moved over there.

HR:

We have five people starting this week and currently have a little over sixty vacancies. We always keep about twenty vacant positions to help offset the cost of part time employees and locally funded positions. Some additional records clerks have been hired to perform data entry and answer the phone in the back to free up our correctional officers to perform their duties. We've had great success by hiring control room officers and letting them work on the civilian side for 6 months or so before promoting them to a correctional officer. It's a good program and worked so well that we've lost a few of those officers to the jurisdictions.

IT:

We've been working diligently on the inmate telephone contract trying to negotiate something that is not only lucrative but also fair. The initial negotiation gave us a \$3 million dollar up front payment and a million dollars each year for 5 years after that. However, if a something happens

with the FCC that curtails/eliminates inmate commissions, then they had the right to re-negotiate the contract or recover the difference of what we made until the change and the \$3 million they paid us. That version wasn't going to work for us. The new contract states that they will pay us \$1 million up front every year and if the FCC makes a change, it triggers a clause that we can get out of our contract and go to another vendor if need be. That minimizes both our risk and theirs' as well. Essentially the contract will pay us the \$1million up front per year. Once they reach making \$1 million back, they will pay 90% commission on telephone calls. We also will have an on-site person to assist with problems as well as the software DataIQ to assist staff as well as outside jurisdictions. Our attorney, Steve Durbin has approved the contract but there are a few technical terms and conditions that still need to be adjusted from a municipal contracting standpoint. Mr. Durbin was unable to be here today but had asked that someone on the board make a motion to give the Superintendent the authority to sign the contract once our attorney approves the terms and conditions.

Chairman Armentrout asked if there was a motion from the floor.

Motion: Mr. Chidester made the motion to give Superintendent Winston to sign the Inmate Telephone contract once it receives final approval from legal counsel. Mr. Workman seconded the motion.

Action: Following a roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously.

Updates:

Superintendent Winston updated the Authority on two ongoing investigations.

Maintenance:

We sent out an RFP for Security System Upgrade and Improvements. We had three vendors respond and two of them submitted proposals. We've met with both of them and hope to select a vendor so we can begin negotiating a price. This is a project we've been saving up for this but it should be in the neighborhood of \$750,000.

Performance Contracting Project:

The concrete pad has been poured and the chiller will be shipping soon to be set on August 3rd. The cooling tower is being shipped to the crane operator on July 23rd to be delivered to us once the chiller is complete. The project is expected to be finished in August and we've already seen some savings in electricity costs.

Trustees:

We're still struggling to find inmates that qualify to work in the jail even before DOC picked up all of the inmates. Superintendent Winston asked the jurisdictions if we could compile an eight-member inmate workforce would it be better to break them up one or two inmates at a couple jurisdictions or all eight at a jurisdiction for one day at a time on a rotation. Mr. Vaught said that from Wythe County's prospective, years ago they started a trash pickup that was very popular among the citizens. A vehicle was bought for this and there is a line item in the county's budget for it. He added that he constantly receives citizen complaints that the trash isn't being picked up and it was very frustrating for his board that we can't get this program started again.

Superintendent said that he and Sgt. Hamilton are searching for solutions to the problem. They've discussed possible working with the judges to order inmates as part of the judgement to work during their weekend sentences once the weekender program begins again. Until then, he said he'd utilize the trustees that we do have wherever they're needed. If the jurisdictions have a priority project that needs done to contact him and he's open to ideas.

Sgt. Hamilton prepared some documentation and has gone through the entire facility application that we have for trustees. Right now, we just don't have the inmates. The inmates that we would generally send to out in a workforce are bonding out or getting light sentences. To get workforce outside our best avenue would be with our weekenders or inmates that are court ordered to work. We will have to get them medically cleared and get them out there. Also, it's been our practice to not send inmates out to the county they're from or they offended in. The Superintendent said he would open to waiving that with the Authority's approval and Sgt. Hamilton added it would require some direct supervision. Mr. Vaught said his board's perspective they're mainly concerned with trash pickup not anything for building and grounds. Those departments are fully staffed so the inmates that they would need for trash pick-up would be supervised. Mr. Workman said as soon as we can get the inmates out the better that he's received the trash complaints as well. One or two days a week per jurisdiction would be better than what we've been getting. Chairman Armentrout said to keep Jerel Dobbins' work crew staffed first and foremost. He asked as members have a need to send the Superintendent an email so he can prioritize them. Mr. Vaught said what adds to the frustration is that Wythe County has an open security position out there when there are no trusty inmates to supervise. Mr. Shepley added that any help that Grayson County could receive would be appreciated.

Mr. Vaught commended Officer Joshua Arnold that handles our video arraignments stating that Officer Arnold does a great job and the judges love him. Superintendent Winston added that he was a great employee and was recently selected Officer of the Quarter.

G. NEW BUSINESS:

Mr. Workman said the Finance group has been looking at starting salaries across all of our jurisdictions. One of the challenges the jail is currently facing is that we have around sixty vacancies. The new telephone contract will generate approximately \$450,000 a year in revenues. Also in the FY 21-22 budget, extra money was budget for any short falls in an effort not to change per diems but still leaves \$360,000 extra revenue due to the new telephone contract. The request out of Finance is to take that \$360,000 and utilize it to increase/improve salaries here at the jail. Currently our starting salary for the jail is \$35,149 and a 3.6% increase would move it to \$36,414 which is slightly more in line with what localities are paying law enforcement. That was discussed today in Finance and the idea was to bring it before a full board for discussion and possible approval. Chairman Armentrout said that this increase would put us more in line with where we were several years ago. He added increasing starting salary would help compete with other employers when we're all that are fighting for the same employee pool.

Mr. Vaught said his fear is with the current General Assembly leadership in Richmond what happens when they say that we shouldn't charge inmates to make phone calls. Where will that

3.6% come from...it's going to fall back on the localities. He added that he didn't know anything about this until this morning and with the uncertainty of the General Assembly that he just couldn't vote for it. Chairman Armentrout said we'd touched on this back in November and dabbled with doing a pay increase then and didn't do it. So, we wanted to address it again while we had the opportunity to do so.

Sheriff Vaughan mentioned many ways that River North Correctional Center is advertising and asked what ways we were using here. Superintendent Winston said we're doing career days and are most successful with our employee referral program. In the past we've not had a lot of response with newspaper and radio ads. Word of mouth has been most successful for us so far. Several members mentioned sign on bonuses and possible same day application/interviews. Sheriff Vaughan asked the status was of the employment contract. Superintendent Winston thinks we should move forward with it once our attorney finishes reviewing it.

Mr. Workman asked what we were doing for retention. Superintendent Winston said that the comp board gives a regrade after one year once they've been through the academy but we need to look at some short-term retention to lead up to that. Several options were floated around and Superintendent Winston said he is open to any ideas that members may have on the matter.

After much discussion, Mr. Workman suggested tabling this issue until our next meeting. That will give everyone time to think this over and also allow the Superintendent to work with our attorney to get the telephone contract signed.

Ch. Deputy Moye said he'd just went through a salary study and they were given a certain amount of money. One thing he found was if he gave a flat increase across the board, it did nothing to help compression or retention so they comprehensively changed their entire pay scale. He said we may need to do an entire pay scale adjustment. We need to keep the people that have been here the longest. It may be lower on the bottom end and incrementally goes up. So doing 3.6% just because the money is there, he doesn't think we're exploring every option that we need to do to address retention.

Sheriff Vaughan added that the General Assembly goes into special session on August 1st and there is a \$900 million surplus in the American Recovery Act money so they're probably going to do a substantial hazardous pay bonus to regional jails, deputy sheriffs and corrections staff. Mr. Vaught added that his county in the past had done plaques, t-shirts, etc. but most recently they've started doing \$10 a year for every 5 years of service. It's not much but it's something.

Chairman Armentrout said he'd sent that pay report out to the sheriffs yesterday to spur this conversation. He thinks this is a great discussion and what we need to move forward plus keep people here. Chairman Armentrout also thanked Superintendent Winston for all the work he did with the telephone contract to have this money and be able to do something with it to make the organization healthier. His point was he wants to do something for the folks in the back of the jail to let them know they are appreciated and we have an opportunity. We will table it for now to bounce some ideas around to come up with something good.

H. CITIZEN'S COMMENTS:

I. OTHER BUSINESS OR INFORMATIONAL ITEMS:

Sheriff Ramsey asked a question of how many staff members would we need to be down before we were unable to operate. Superintendent Winston said we're not doing mandatory overtime but most of his colleagues that are at our level are requiring it. We're asking people to volunteer for overtime and paying them a non-discretionary bonus to work overtime. In many cases the need for overtime is when we have multiple inmates in the hospital which requires us to send two officers per inmate.

J. ADJOURNMENT:

With no further business to discuss, Chairman Armentrout asked for motion to adjourn.

Motion: Sheriff Vaughan made the motion to adjourn the meeting.
Mr. Vaught seconded the motion.

Action: The motion passed unanimously.

There being no further business to come before the Authority, Chairman Armentrout adjourned the meeting at 11:40 a.m.

Chairman Mark A. Armentrout