

MONROE DETENTION AND LEINBERGER MEMORIAL CENTERS: ADAPTING THROUGHOUT POLITICAL AND PHYSICAL CHANGE

SUMMARY

The Monroe Detention Center and Leinberger Memorial Center, together commonly referred to as “the County jail”, are aging facilities that are about to receive some much needed attention. After obtaining a grant of approximately \$36 million, the facility is ready to embark on several upgrades. The officers and staff have over three years experience working under the provisions of Assembly Bill 109 (AB109) and have adjusted well to meeting the challenges brought about by more criminally sophisticated inmates. Voter approval of Proposition 47 in November 2014 reduced some felonies to misdemeanors, thus decreasing inmate population. Officers and staff show a strong commitment to the welfare of the inmates.

BACKGROUND

Penal Code section 919(b) states that “the Grand Jury shall inquire into the condition and management of the public prisons within the county.” The grand jury chose to visit the Monroe Detention and Leinberger Memorial Centers to fulfill the statutory obligation.

METHODOLOGY

On September 10, 2014, members of the Yolo County Grand Jury toured Monroe Detention Center and Leinberger Memorial Center in Woodland escorted by members of the command staff. The grand jury conducted interviews with staff, inmates, and members of other county departments. The grand jury reviewed the 2014 Biennial Inspection Report of the facilities by the Board of State and Community Corrections for California and its meeting minutes from Thursday, January 16, 2014. The grand jury also reviewed fire and health inspection reports for both facilities.

The grand jury visited the websites of the following agencies:

- Yolo County Sheriff’s Office
- California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation
- Board of State and Community Corrections for California

DISCUSSION

Overview

The Monroe Detention and Leinberger Memorial Centers are divisions of the Yolo County Sheriff’s Department. On the day of its visit, the grand jury observed that the facilities are generally clean and well-maintained. The Monroe Detention Center is a medium/maximum security facility and is rated to house prisoners with several different security classifications.

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It has 313 available beds, 251 beds for male inmates and 62 beds in a separate area for female inmates.

While the Leinberger Memorial Center can be used as an overflow facility for Monroe, it is primarily used to house lower level sentenced inmates who are approved to work at various state and local agencies to reduce their jail time. A sentenced inmate can be transferred to Leinberger after undergoing a careful screening process to determine if they meet the necessary criteria to ensure public safety. Leinberger has 142 beds bringing the total available beds for both facilities to 455.

However, under a Superior Court consent decree, adopted in 1990 then amended in 2002, to limit the inmate population to 90% of the total beds in the facility, the jail's maximum capacity is 409. In some cases, detainees brought in for a minor offense are processed and released on the same day to prevent overcrowding. In-home custody is encouraged for those inmates who are considered low level offenders. Typically, between 60 and 80 inmates are living at home with ankle monitors.

Effects of Assembly Bill 109 and Proposition 47

Going into effect in October 2011, AB109 attempts to reduce over-crowding and recidivism rates in state prisons by transferring inmates to county detention facilities. These inmates can be parole violators sent to the county of their last residence, violators of mandatory supervision, or inmates convicted of non-violent, non-sexual or non-serious offenses. The jail facilities were designed to house un-sentenced inmates preparing for court dates and inmates sentenced up to one year for minor crimes. The officers and staff must now work with inmates serving sentences up to several years, who are more criminally sophisticated than traditional county inmates. These inmates tend to have a better understanding of prison politics and are more demanding resulting in an increase in acts of non-compliance. In response to these challenges, officers and staff have used training and experience to improve the inmate classification process helping to enhance inmate and officer safety. The kitchen has adjusted to a larger variety in dietary needs including kosher, vegetarian, and halal, to name a few. Using programs, such as GED classes and drug education, as well as work details, an effort is made to keep the inmates engaged and invested in their own betterment. As of February 2015, there were 105 AB109 Yolo County inmates, of which, 34 were out on electronic monitoring.

In November 2014, California voters approved Proposition 47 which reduced many non-violent, non-serious, and drug crimes from felonies to misdemeanors. It also allowed inmates serving sentences based on a conviction of one of these reclassified crimes to be re-sentenced. As a result, some inmates who had felony convictions reduced to misdemeanors

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were released for time served. While the effects of Prop 47 on the community have raised debate and concern, the most prominent effect on the jail has been more open beds. The resulting space allowed the command staff to adjust the inmate population. Prior to the implementation of Prop 47, Leinberger, a dormitory setting with several beds per room, was too full to house female inmates. After Prop 47 went into effect, space was cleared to allow female inmates into Leinberger, giving them more access to programs. An additional outcome of Prop 47 opened up space at both facilities allowing Monroe to detain persons with misdemeanor bench warrants. Before, a person who was issued a bench warrant for skipping a court date might only be cited and released, creating a cycle in which a case could be delayed for years. Now, that same person can be held until their court date, helping to adjudicate cases in a timely manner.

Facilities and Renovation

On the day of the visit, the grand jury observed that the facilities were well lit with no obstructions in the hallways. All doors are controlled at a central hub by officers who monitor the hall cameras. The pods (cell blocks) are monitored by officers and security cameras. During the tour, interviewees informed the grand jury of deficiencies in the camera surveillance of the pods. There are no rotary, pan-and-tilt cameras in the pods which might aid in security. Emergency drills are run quarterly and vary as to type of potential emergency that could be faced. The fire department inspects the facility annually to make sure it is up to code. Potentially dangerous chemicals are stored away from inmate areas.

The facilities are aging (Monroe opened in 1988 and Leinberger in 1991) and while security is unaffected, the grand jury noticed visible water stains on floors and ceilings, and some floors looked in need of resurfacing. The Environmental Health Report issued, in January 2015, noted water leaks from the ceilings in Pod A and the Kitchen Facility. The report also noted a number of needed corrections mostly involving damaged bedding and plugged ventilation.

In March of 2014, Yolo County was awarded a grant of \$36,295,000 from California Board of State and Community Corrections to help renovate the facility. Officers questioned were optimistic, some even excited, about the upcoming renovations. There are plans to upgrade laundry, kitchen and intake areas as well as to expand the medical and mental health areas. A new building will be built to house the kitchen and laundry areas. The larger space will double the amount of laundry that can be processed. Plans for the new kitchen include a classroom that can be used to add a culinary program for inmates. The areas vacated by existing kitchen and laundry will house an expanded medical and mental health unit. Currently, there are only three beds available in the medical area. The renovated medical and mental health unit will contain approximately 24 beds, divided into a dormitory area, 4-bed cells, and single-bed cells. A larger in-custody area will be added with four classrooms,

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allowing for more program space. The intake area will be renovated to facilitate a smoother custodial transition between outside agencies and the jail and lessen contact between incoming and out-going inmates. Out-of-custody day reporting will also be moved from an area near probation to the Monroe Center. Although the work has yet to be contracted, ground breaking is scheduled for the middle of 2016 with a planned completion by late fall of 2018.

Staffing and Inmates

The staff at the time of the visit was 102, including officers and support staff. Command staff believes that an ideal number would be closer to 152.

The grand jury found the officers to be knowledgeable, professional and courteous to inmates. They complete 24 hours of training per year including CPR and a gang identification program. Attrition levels remain low. Interviewed officers reported a positive work experience and feel confident that they are making a difference.

A nurse practitioner is available on site. The grand jury learned that there is a system in place to facilitate the nurse practitioner addressing all non-emergency requests by inmates, usually within one day. A psychiatrist and dentist visit one day per week to address the respective needs of the inmates. The detention centers offer mental health services and anger management programs to those inmates who need or request them. Some mental health screening is done via video interviews. Clergy is available. Community volunteers run group programs such as reading and bible study. Inmates can get help to earn their GED, and parenting classes are available. There is a drug and alcohol program, as well as meeting times for Alcohol Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous. The general consensus among both staff and inmates is that more space for these programs would be helpful.

During the tour of the Monroe and Leinberger facilities, the grand jury observed suitable living conditions for the inmates. The pods are well lit (permitting easy reading by individuals with normal vision) and kept at a comfortable temperature. Inmates have access to clean, potable water, toilets and showers, as well as a recreation yard and equipment. A commissary is available for inmates to purchase personal items.

Upon arrival, officers conduct a thorough search and medical screening before an inmate is admitted. Incoming inmates receive an orientation manual. A list of rules and grievance procedures are posted in the pods and the inmates, to whom the grand jury spoke, understood them. None of the inmates interviewed by the grand jury felt that they were mistreated or abused and observations of the interactions between officers and inmates were neither confrontational nor inappropriate.

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Inmates are issued reasonably fitted, durable and easily laundered and repaired clothing, which includes: clean socks and footwear, clean outer garments, and clean undergarments, including shorts and tee shirts for males; or, bra and two pairs of panties for females. Inmates are provided special clothing for work in the kitchen or outside. Under normal conditions, outerwear, except footwear, is exchanged once per week and undergarments are exchanged twice per week. Under certain circumstances, such as illness or climatic conditions, the garments can be exchanged more frequently. Inmates to be held over 24-hours are provided personal care items if needed.

Discharge Planning

Before release, inmates have the option to go through a discharge planning process. When AB 109 went into effect, the command staff recognized a need to help inmates reintegrate back into the community to try to decrease the likelihood of a return to criminal activities. Needs vary depending on the inmate, and include, but are not limited to, housing, continuing education, vocational training, and drug education. Interns from the Public Defender's office perform an informal assessment of inmates who are nearing their release dates to determine their potential needs. Recently, the county received a grant to fund a Treatment Coordinator who focuses on inmates to be released in the next six months to one year. The Treatment Coordinator assesses what can be done to help inmates prepare themselves before their release dates, such as enrolling them in GED classes. One of the bigger problems, however, is convincing an inmate to admit when they need help and ask for it.

Originally, command staff held a monthly meeting to discuss inmates who were to be released in the next 90 days. As the release program has been refined, staff now meets based on need. Along with their own in-house medical and mental health staff, command staff invites representatives from departments such as Sheriff's office, Probation, Public Defender's office, State Parole, Veterans Affairs, and Employment and Social Services. Representatives from community and church groups are also invited as well as organizations like Cache Creek Lodge, 4th and Hope, and Delancey Street to help the inmates transition. Inmates can also submit an interest card to include a group that they think will be beneficial to their success in the community. Although anecdotal evidence suggests that some inmates have benefitted from this planning, there is no system in place to track its effectiveness.

FINDINGS

- F1. Officers and staff continue to adjust to AB 109, working with inmates with longer sentences who have more of a prison mentality. Through training and experience, officers have honed the classification system used to house inmates and continue to use programs and work details to keep the inmates engaged.

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- F2. Officers are optimistic as the Monroe Detention Center is preparing to undergo a \$36 million renovation which will make inmate conditions and staff working environment better.
- F3. Officers and support staff are knowledgeable and well-trained in their areas of expertise, but continue to work with less than ideal staffing numbers.
- F4. Staff and inmates meet with outside agencies and organizations to help inmates transition back into the community. There is no system in place to track the effectiveness of this program.
- F5. More space is needed for the programs used to keep inmates engaged in their personal growth and to help inmates transition back into the community.
- F6. Deficiencies exist in camera surveillance of the pods.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- R1. By January 1, 2016, the Board of Supervisors, as the governing entity of the Detention Center, shall tour the facility to view the areas to be renovated and observe the workload of the staff. As funds become available, strong consideration shall be made to increase the current staff to strengthen the safety of staff and inmates.
- R2. By June 1, 2016, the Detention Commander, in conjunction with the Chief Probation Officer, shall develop and implement a plan to track the effectiveness of discharge planning and in-house programs as they apply to inmates who successfully complete probation.
- R3. The County Administrator, in conjunction with the Detention Commander, shall meet prior to the start of renovations to ensure that all areas originally planned to be in-house program space shall remain as such.
- R4. By January 1, 2016, the Detention Commander shall identify any deficiencies in the surveillance systems and, in conjunction with the Board of Supervisors, take the necessary steps to remedy the deficiencies.

REQUEST FOR RESPONSES

Pursuant to Penal Code section 933.05, the grand jury requests responses as follows:

From the following governing bodies:

- Yolo County Board of Supervisors – R1 and R4

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INVITED RESPONSES

- Yolo County Administrator – R3
- Detention Commander, Monroe Detention Center – R2, R3, and R4.
- Yolo County Chief Probation Officer – R2.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- California General Election Official Voter Information Guide November 2014
- Yolo County Sheriff's Office website: <http://www.yolocountysheriff.com/>
- California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation website: <http://www.cdcr.ca.gov/>
- Board of State and Community Corrections for California website: http://www.bscc.ca.gov/s_thebsccboard.php