

Cumberland County Corrections Jail Officers Question Freeholders before Upcoming Election

PBA Local 231 Cumberland County Dept. of Correction Officers would like to address the community on issues concerning the jail as citizens, tax payers, parents, and law enforcement servants of the public. In retrospect to the article, Cumberland County Jail officer overtime pay hard to slash warden says ,we would like to offer other information to this reported statement.

In August 2012 then Deputy Freeholder Director Thomas Sheppard called for an efficiency study, recently adopted and carried out by the current board, hiring Perselay Associates, Inc. at the cost of over \$50,000. The study titled Executive Summary on the Cumberland County Jail reports ideal staffing analysis in a quintessential or perfect setting. Cumberland County in its present state could easily be deemed imperfect according to a report from FindTheBest in all of New Jersey ranking 2 of Cumberland's cities in the top 10 for most violent and number 44 in the United States of America for most dangerous cities, as reported by the F.B.I. analysis data bank. Cumberland County also ranks as the second poorest and unhealthiest county of New Jersey as reported from the Legal Services of New Jersey Poverty Research Institute.

PBA Local 231 has always stayed in touch with the community because we also make up the community. Our local in the past and present contracts has always taken the community in consideration and has saved jobs by taking concessions by working with Freeholder boards to do our part. Overtime costs of a present officer working offsets the cost of the County paying newly added officers who's pension contributions would have to matched, health benefits paid including family, academy training and equipment, and overall salary which increases year to year. For example if an officer makes \$40,000 a year with \$15,000 in overtime in addition, it saves the county money to pay one officer \$55,000 then pay 2 officers one at \$40,000 and a recruit which starts at \$28,000 but with benefits turns to \$50,000.

Currently the jail is at approximately 153 officers with an average of 500 prisoners including Gloucester's Shared Services Agreement. In the 1998 the jail housed over 700 inmates with 130 to 140 officers. Staff consisted of 2 sergeants, 1 lieutenant per shift and two captains for the facility opposed to the 4 sergeants, 2 lieutenants per shift and now 3 captains for less inmates.

Presently the Jail has taken on huge spending with renovations and new equipment which consequently has created **record breaking overtime**. This overtime includes staff sergeants and lieutenants at top pay to escort and supervise engineered authorized projects. Currently there are plans in place to hire an additional 25 officers as quoted by Warden Robert Balicki, all in accordance with an Executive Summary for “ideal” circumstances.

PBA Local 231’s stance on the current Freeholder Boards Executive Summary of the Cumberland County Jail introspective with recent Correctional trends by highest standards in New Jersey deems it obsolete, ineffective, and insubstantial with future ramifications. Our current Union Board is involved with the NJSPBA Corrections Committee from Sussex County to Cape May County and the growing trend is downsizing.

Governor Christie’s early order of business was to remand state inmates back to prison from county jails substantially reducing populations statewide. Then the trend of Alternative Incarceration such as privatized halfway houses like Kintock, Bo Robinson and Delaney Hall contributed heavily to inmate population decreases. Programs such as Intensive Supervised Program, SLAP, Community Service, Drug Court, Last Chance, Electronic Monitoring Program, and many Rehabilitation Centers some of many that are court appointed or mandated by Judges as an Alternative means to incarceration.

Governor Christie and legislatures recently convened on a Bill, a ballot question this coming election, to no longer incarcerate low level bail offenders but mandate alternatives that Warden Robert Balicki was recently quoted to say would reduce Cumberland’s numbers by 40 to 60 percent. All these mitigating factors will evidently show why Cumberland County Jails population is in the low five hundreds even combined with Gloucester County offenders.

The question to the current administration is how can we justify losing long term committed officers, which is now a 30 year career, when the trend says less? Cumberland County actually partook in another trend of Shared Services which essentially closes one jail completely to combine to another. Union County Jail now faces this exact action sending their complete population to Hudson County. The Jail Study will not reflect any of the following as Corrections as well as the world is in constant change daily.

PBA Local 231 has an obligation to its members and the community to be proactive, research trends, and not be bound to independent agenda studies that do not address all aspects of Corrections. Rumors and Speculation has now become instrumental tools to consider valid as municipalities and counties such as Camden PD,

Gloucester County Jail, and Union County Jail have shown from history that 2 municipalities or boards can convene in secret and create drafts, which technically are not law, and cannot be obtained, which are subsequently adopted at a junction of the parties choosing giving Law Enforcement Agencies little to no time to react.

With the rumors of a Regional Jail being built in Cumberland or Gloucester County, Local 231 vows to leave no stone unturned to maintain our very existence, preserving and protecting ourselves against trends and agendas off the backs of its community. It is our obligation to our membership to learn from our past negotiations and history of Gloucester, Camden and Union to ensure that we are not told our officers have outgrown themselves closing our doors because our jail is now obsolete.

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