



Board of Juvenile Justice
Thursday, September 23, 2021
Decatur, GA
Board Meeting Minutes
DJJ Central Office and via Audio/Zoom Conference

Opening Remarks

On Thursday, September 23, 2021, Chair Sandra Taylor called the meeting of the Board of Juvenile Justice to order at 10:10 AM. The meeting was held at DJJ Central Office and via audio/Zoom conference for those who could not attend in person.

DJJ Staff Present: Commissioner Tyrone Oliver, Deputy Superintendent Zane Shelfer, DJJ Executive Team Members, and various DJJ Staff Members.

Attendees included: Assistant Attorney General Amy Radley (in person), Kit Cummings, Dr. John King, and public guests (remote attendance).

Invocation: Chaplain Danny Horne

Pledge of Allegiance: Led by Chief Gary Yandura.

Roll Call: Members present were Chair Sandra Taylor (in-person), Vice-Chair Willie C. Bolton (in-person), Secretary Adam Kennedy (in-person), Angie M. Holt (via Zoom), Judge Lisa Colbert (via Zoom), Chief Gary Yandura (in-person), Penny Penn (in-person), Thomas Coleman (in-person), Joyette Holmes (in-person), Kathryn Powers (via Zoom), Danny L. Blackmon (in-person) and Timothy McCulley (via Zoom). Judicial Advisory Council Member Senior Judge Quintress Gilbert participated (in-person). Quorum was declared.

Agenda approval: Chair Taylor called for a motion to approve the September 23, 2021 agenda. The motion was made by Board Member Holmes, seconded by Vice-Chair Bolton, and approved unanimously.

Minutes approval: Chair Taylor called for a motion to approve the minutes of the August 26, 2021 board meeting. The motion was made by Board Member Yandura, seconded by Board Member Coleman, and approved unanimously.

Commissioner's Report

Commissioner Oliver began the meeting by expressing his condolences to the family and Wilkes RYDC family of Sgt. Lisa Denise Huff regarding her passing on September 14, 2021. The Commissioner also informed the Board regarding the CNN special memorial of 9-11 and how Support Specialist January Towles will be featured as one of the students in the classroom when President George W. Bush was notified of the second plane attack. Commissioner Oliver also updated the Board regarding the upcoming completion of the FY2021-22 Annual Report, stating the report will be available via e-mail and hardcopy.

COVID-19 Update

Commissioner Oliver updated the Board regarding the number of DJJ staff members and youth who tested positive for COVID-19. He thanked the DJJ staff members for continuing to follow safety protocols to minimize exposure risk.

Divisional Report

Special Investigations Unit Manager of the DJJ Gang Unit, Ray Ham, discussed their training events with different entities throughout Georgia. He provided data on the gang-related affiliations at the secure facilities. The data included gang-motivated incidents, youth on youth assaults, and youth on staff assaults. Investigator Ham also discussed the challenges and concerns the secure facilities face due to the increasing number of gang affiliations.

Question/Comments (Gang Unit)

Vice-Chair Bolton wanted to know how staff members are informed about the training events that are offered throughout Georgia. He also asked how does the local school superintendent receive notification for the training sessions.

Secretary Kennedy asked how many youths at the secure facilities are truly affiliated with a gang. And if the youth crime rates are currently on the rise, and what is being done while the youth are at the secure facilities to prevent the gang-related incidents.

Board Member Colbert wanted to know the goal of the trainings.

Chair Taylor asked if gang initiation is causing youth from the urban areas to go into the suburbs to commit crimes. She also asked whether agencies are informing DJJ if a youth is affiliated with a gang.

Special Presentation

Commissioner Oliver introduced Kit Cummings. Cummings is an award-winning author, teacher, and coach. He is the founder of the Power of Peace Project (POPP). POPP is committed to redirecting underserved youth, reducing the overall incidence of offenses, rehabilitating youthful offenders, lowering academic dropout rates, and inspiring young people to discover and develop the untapped power and potential within them.

Cummings discussed the inspiration behind the POPP movement and ways his organization can redirect the youth.

Questions/Comments (POPP)

Board Member Colbert commended Cummings for the excellent presentation and his organization's partnership with DJJ.

This concluded the Commissioner's Report.

Chair Taylor called for a motion to adjourn the regular DJJ Board Meeting and reconvene as the DJJ School Board. A motion was made by Board Member Colbert to adjourn the Board of Juvenile Justice and reconvene as the Board of Education. The motion was seconded by Board Member Holmes and approved unanimously.

Board of Education

Deputy Superintendent Zane Shelfer shared information about the education data dashboard, including the percentage of the student body with special education needs. DJJ is currently in the process of setting up interviews to fill vacant positions.

Questions/Comments

Secretary Kennedy asked if substitute teachers are brought in until the vacant teacher positions are filled.

Georgia State University - Perimeter College Juvenile Justice Education Program (GSU-JJEP)

Deputy Superintendent Shelfer introduced Connections Graduate Program (CGP) Coordinator Carrie Hamilton-Shavers. She gave an overview of CGP along with the mission and goals of the program. She also gave a brief overview of eCore. eCore is a collaborative program of the University System of Georgia (USG), in which affiliate institutions collaborate to offer general education courses to students in an online setting. Shavers introduced Dr. John King, a mathematics professor at Georgia State University (GSU)-Georgia Perimeter College. He updated the Board on the partnership with GSU through their Juvenile Justice Education Program (GSU-JJEP) for DJJ youth. He also gave an overview of the current course offerings within the program.

This concluded the Deputy Superintendent's report.

Chair Taylor called for a motion to adjourn from the DJJ School Board and reconvene as the regular DJJ Board. A motion was made by Secretary Kennedy to adjourn the

Board of Education and to reconvene as the Board of Juvenile Justice. It was seconded by Board Member Colbert and approved unanimously.

Comments: Chair Taylor encouraged Board Members to attend the upcoming training session.

Old Business: Board Member Holmes wanted to recognize the Office of Reentry Services Director Cathy Smith-Curry and her team for conducting a brief training session on their division's services.

New Business: No new business.

Executive Session:

Chair Taylor called for motion to move into executive session to discuss personnel matters and litigation updates. The motion was made by Board member Penn and seconded by Vice Chair Bolton, and approved unanimously (Chair Taylor, Vice-Chair Bolton, Secretary Kennedy, Board members Blackmon, Colbert, Holmes, McCulley, Penn, and Yandura). (Board members Coleman, Powers, and Holt left prior to the Executive Session).

With no further business before the Board, the meeting was adjourned after returning from executive session. The motion to adjourn was made by Board Member Holmes and seconded by Board Member Yandura and approved unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 12:20 PM.

Sandra H. Taylor, Chair
Board of Juvenile Justice

Tyrone Oliver, Commissioner
Department of Juvenile Justice

Adam Kennedy, Secretary
Board of Juvenile Justice