



Meeting Minutes
Iowa Prison Industries Advisory Board
Friday, June 18, 2021
Meeting held online / conference call

Present: Dr. Doug Hillman, Megan Ellsworth, Bonnie Winther, Tim Diesburg, Jennifer Gardner, Helen Miller, Greg Steggerda, Dan Clark

Absent: None.

Staff: None.

Guests: None.

I. Call to Order.

Dr. Doug Hillman called the meeting to order at 9:02am on June 18, 2021.

II. Review and Approval of Previous Minutes.

Mr. Diesburg made a motion to adopt the minutes from the meeting held March 12, 2021. The motion was seconded by Ms. Winther. During discussion of the motion, Mr. Diesburg asked Mr. Clark whether a meeting of the so-called “IPI alumni association” was still planned for June. Mr. Clark stated that this was being delayed indefinitely. The motion to accept the minutes of March 12, 2021 was approved unanimously.

III. Approval of new private sector subcontract program at MPCF.

A motion to approve a new subcontracting operation at the Mount Pleasant Correctional Facility was made by Ms. Miller. The motion was seconded by Mr. Diesburg.

Discussion of the motion ensued. Mr. Clark outlined the subcontracting program that would assemble items for the Burlington company Winegard. He stated that the company had satisfactorily demonstrated that it had been unable to hire a sufficient number of qualified civilian employees. Mr. Clark explained that there had been concerns expressed by the statewide AFL/CIO organization about prison work programs and the safety of IPI and DOC staff when supervising incarcerated men and women in the IPI programs.

Ms. Winther asked how the company advertised for new employees, and Mr. Clark explained the requirement that the company issue a 30-day statewide job order with IWD, and report the results of the job order. Ms. Winther asked for the specific results, which Mr. Clark recited from the company: 18 people had viewed the job order, 4 people applied, none ultimately joined the company (one applicant declined the offer, one had previously worked at Winegard with poor attendance, one applicant did not respond, and one applicant did not meet the hiring requirements).

Mr. Steggerda related that his company Diamond Vogel, which also has a facility in Burlington, competed with Winegard for manufacturing employees, and that Winegard utilized billboards and signage to attract applicants. Mr. Steggerda stated that retention was a big challenge, and as a result Diamond Vogel increased employee wages after 60 days, 90 days, and after 6 months.

Mr. Clark clarified that the incarcerated men would be employees of IPI, not the company. He contrasted that with the off-grounds programs, where incarcerated program participants are company employees.

Ms. Winther confirmed that Mr. Clark had corresponded with the Iowa Federation of Labor AFL-CIO, and asked Mr. Clark what was done with feedback from organized labor. Mr. Clark stated that any concerns were reported to the DOJ, but that there had not been any claim or evidence provided that civilian employees would be displaced by this new program. Mr. Clark said that this was the primary focus of the PIE regulations – was a company displacing free world workers in order to have products made by incarcerated individuals?

Mr. Clark also stated that the cost to the company would be higher than their internal production costs, since IPI included its staff and other overhead costs to the company. Mr. Steggerda stated that sending materials out to subcontractors was also costly due to extra administrative and logistics costs. Ms. Winther stated that she has not seen evidence of displacement of civilians.

The motion was put to a vote and passed unanimously.

IV. Support for sale of rented farm ground to fund infrastructure.

Mr. Clark asked the Board to offer its support for the sale of IPI farm ground adjacent to the Rockwell City prison, in order to fund a security fence project at the Homes for Iowa site in Newton. He stated that the approximately 140 acres was custom farmed, and that no IPI or DOC staff would be affected by the sale. The Iowa Code allows the DOC Director to sell real estate and use the proceeds for other real estate and capital projects such as the Newton security fencing, whose cost had been significantly underestimated.

A motion to support the sale was made by Ms. Gardner and seconded by Ms. Winther.

During discussion of the motion, Mr. Steggerda asked whether this was real estate owned by the DOC and managed by IPI Farms, and if so, what had been the Department's rationale in acquiring it. Mr. Clark stated that this was correct, that farmland provided the DOC with the opportunity to expand if necessary, as well as land on which to grow food crops that would feed incarcerated men and women.

Ms. Gardner related how farming has changed in scale and the cost of equipment, and that small farms such as this are no longer practical in most cases. Farming is more mechanized and computerized than ever, and utilizing short term minimum security inmates can be dangerous. Although there is still value in teaching the value of work, the farm programs aren't practical vehicles for teaching men and women.

The motion to support sale of the Rockwell City farm ground was passed unanimously.

V. Board member updates.

Mr. Steggerda's appointment to the Board is now official, and Dr. Hillman welcomed him.

Ms. Ellsworth announced that she will be resigning from the Board as her other responsibilities don't allow her to give it the attention she would like. Dr. Hillman thanked her for her service, and Mr. Clark informed the Board that another DMACC employee had agreed to apply, and that this potential new Board member was very familiar with vocational education and the Department of Corrections.

The terms for Ms. Winther and Ms. Gardner expire June 30, 2021, and Mr. Clark encouraged them to reapply if they wanted to serve another term. Mr. Clark will send the link to the boards and commissions website to them.

Finally, Ms. Miller announced that she was retiring from her position as Chair – Iowa Board of Parole as of July 2nd 2021. She related how she had been asked many times to join the BOP, and that she had largely finished the work she had set out to do two years ago. She has recommended that Andy Boettger be appointed as the new BOP Chair. Mr. Clark thanked her for her service and for her strong support of IPI, which extends back to her time as a legislator from Fort Dodge.

Mr. Clark outlined the requirements for Iowa board composition – there must be gender balance, political party affiliation balance, and preferably geographic balance. He reviewed the five positions appointed by the Governor (agriculture, manufacturing, finance, vocational education, and organized labor) as well as the seats appointed by the DOC Director and BOP Chair. Due to these various requirements, appointments can get a bit tricky in order to maintain the required balance.

VI. Iowa DOC Apprentice Programs.

The DOC's statewide apprenticeship coordinator Dane Sulentic was unable to attend the Board Meeting, and so Mr. Clark provided an update on the Department's programs. A table showing occupations at each institution was displayed. Mr. Diesburg complimented the Department on its continued growth in programs, which now stand at 29, and soon to be 30. He noted that participants had declined below 300, which Mr. Clark attributed to COVID and the staff killings of March 23rd.

Mr. Clark highlighted for the Board the barbering apprenticeship, which allows incarcerated men and women to sit for the state's written and practical examinations without having to attend barbering school. The first graduate has been released from prison and opened his own shop in Des Moines.

Mr. Clark announced that unfortunately, due to the situation at Anamosa, the CNC Machinist and Software Developer apprentice programs would not go forward.

Mr. Clark informed the Board that a new Quality Control Technician apprenticeship was being developed, which would include third party certification by the American Society for Quality (ASQ). Mr. Steggerda mentioned that the curriculum could benefit by including internal auditor training and certification (similar to ISO 9000 auditing) as well as certification in the use of quality instrumentation. Mr. Steggerda will send more information on these programs.

VII. Status of IPI Programs following March 23rd staff killings.

Mr. Clark reviewed for the Board the current status of IPI programs statewide, and the Department-wide reviews underway of movement, tool use, and classification. Specific to movement, the Anamosa State Penitentiary is working to limit access to the IPI program buildings, as well as certain other areas. Tool use was being reviewed statewide at all institutions, in all areas including IPI, dietary, grounds care, and so on. Finally, the Department had implemented a new classification tool which determines which programs an incarcerated man or woman was eligible to join.

Mr. Clark informed the Board that the Department of Corrections had a number of new individuals in leadership positions, soon to include five wardens due to retirements.

IPI programs at the Iowa State Penitentiary in Fort Madison and the Anamosa State Penitentiary remain closed since Officer Robert McFarland and nurse Lorena Schulte were killed on March 23rd. At other locations, tool use has become more restrictive and some incarcerated individuals have been removed from some IPI programs, but otherwise they continue to operate.

Off-grounds programs are in the process of restarting, including private sector work programs.

VIII. Board Discussion.

Dr. Hillman, Ms. Ellsworth and Ms. Miller departed the meeting at this point due to other obligations, and as Board Vice-Chair, Mr. Diesburg assumed the role of Chair.

Mr. Steggerda recommended that IPI not move too quickly to sell off equipment from suspended furniture programs, since it would be costly and time consuming should IPI want to reinstate them in the future. He said it may be possible to lease equipment to local companies.

Mr. Diesburg and Mr. Steggerda recommended that IPI increase the use of training programs that don't require tools and whose content can be delivered via computer or online. They specifically mentioned OSHA 10 certification, forklift licensing, soft skills training, and Microsoft Office.

IX. New Business.

Mr. Diesburg asked for any new business, and there was none.

X. Adjourn

Mr. Diesburg asked for a motion to adjourn, which was offered by Mr. Steggerda and seconded by Ms. Winther. The meeting was adjourned at 11:17am.

Minutes submitted by:

Daniel J. Clark

Dan Clark, Director

Minutes approved by:

Mr. Tim Diesburg, Vice Chair

Tim Diesburg