



Meeting Minutes
Iowa Prison Industries Advisory Board
Friday, June 19, 2020
Meeting held via Google Hangouts

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

Absent: Andrew Bright

Staff: Al Reiter

Guests: None.

I. Call to Order.

Dr. Hillman called the meeting to order at 9:01 am on June 19, 2020.

II. Approval of Minutes from Previous Meeting.

Ms. Winther made a motion to approve the minutes from the Board's March 27, 2020 meeting, held via conference call. Ms. Gardner seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

III. Policy Regarding the PIE Program / Life Sentences.

Mr. Diesburg made a motion, seconded by Ms. Miller, to adopt the following policy addition to OP-WI-01:

Men and women serving life sentences without the possibility of parole shall be eligible to participate in on-grounds Private Sector programs. Participation shall be limited to "entry level" positions so as to provide advancement opportunities to those men and women scheduled for release. The percentage of men and women serving life sentences in a private sector program shall approximate the percentage of those serving life sentences within the host institution.

During discussion of the motion, Mr. Clark noted that men and women serving life were already allowed to participate in the IPI Traditional Industries program as well as the DOC apprenticeship program, and that incarcerated persons serving life with the possibility of parole or 50-year sentences were allowed in the Private Sector program. So he didn't view this as any different. In addition, Mr. Clark had surveyed other state Correctional Industries programs and was unable to find any others with this restriction. There is no prohibition based on state or federal statute.

Ms. Winther expressed concern that this could become "the norm" and that it could detract from IPI's mission to prepare men and women for re-entry. Mr. Reiter noted that this was a valid concern and was why IPI self-imposed a limit on so-called "lifers" in the Anamosa shops. His experience was that lifers were a stabilizing force to a program, and that IPI staff were very careful in selecting lifers because they would be in the program for a long time.

Mr. Diesburg related that lifers serve as mentors to apprentice students, allowing IPI to expand its number of apprenticeships, and that lifers assist those men and women that will be released. His experience was that lifers consider the program to be their home in a way, and that they take special care as a result.

Board members asked Mr. Clark how many incarcerated men and women this would involve. Mr. Clark said that the policy would require it to more or less match the local prison population, which for Rockwell City, Fort Dodge and Mitchellville, locations where we have on-grounds programs, it would be less than 10%. Mr. Clark stated that security policies at Clarinda do not allow lifers in the H&H area, similar to the restriction we have at Newton.

Ms. Winther wondered if allowing lifers in the Private Sector program was a matter of convenience for industries or IPI, and expressed a desire to limit it to times of need, such as during the COVID emergency. Ms. Winther said she would oppose the motion unless there were further limits to the policy.

The motion passed 4-1, with Ms. Winther opposed.

Ms. Ellsworth departed the meeting at this point due to another obligation.

IV. NCCF Welding Program / Apprenticeships.

Mr. Reiter shared a PowerPoint presentation about the welding program at the North Central Correctional Facility in Rockwell City. He shared some history of the institution as well as the IPI program located there, which began as an extension of the Fort Madison wood furniture division.

Mr. Reiter reviewed the traditional industries work with DOT such as the refurbishment of snow plows and signal trailers, as well as the more recent programs with private sector partners.

The welding apprentice program has been updated and includes AWS Qualification. There are currently 20 welders in the Rockwell City program. The men are also trained in the lean manufacturing program, including Standard Work for the safest and most efficient way to complete a job.

The board commended Mr. Reiter and the IPI staff for the program in Rockwell City, which is training men for a much needed occupation.

V. Homes for Iowa Update.

Mr. Clark informed the board that IPI had delivered its third home and showed a photo of the first house in Jefferson, IA. He described the training program, which led to NCCER certification, DMACC certification as well as OSHA 10 for Construction card. Although visits have been limited by the DOC, Mr. Clark said the program is continuing more or less normally.

VI. COVID-19 Risk Level Assessment Tool.

Mr. Clark reviewed the many steps being taken by the Iowa DOC and IPI to prevent the coronavirus from entering and spreading inside Iowa's state prisons. These steps include daily wellness checks, hand sanitization, masks, elimination of visits and outs crews, and careful control of new prison admissions. Mr. Clark also commended the Iowa Board of Parole for running "double panels" which had helped the DOC reduce its population by nearly 900 men and women. This was critical so that prisons would have sufficient space and flexibility to deal with a potential outbreak.

VII. Racial Composition of IPI Program Participants.

The board reviewed and discussed the program data previously sent by Mr. Clark, which seemed especially appropriate since today was the Juneteenth holiday. Overall, 22% of IPI program participants are African-American, versus 26% for the population of eligible men and women.

Mr. Clark reviewed some of the structural impediments that may prevent incarcerated African-American from participating in the IPI program at higher rates (from a recent DOC racial disparity draft report):

- African-American individuals are more likely than those of other racial groups to be supervised under maximum custody;
- Compared to institutional population figures, African-Americans are slightly over-represented in administrative segregation;
- Individuals of color either are enrolled in HiSET programming or are on the waiting list to receive HiSET programming at higher rates than those who are White, largely driven by the fact that these populations tend to enter prison at higher rates without a high school diploma, HiSET, or GED.
- Examining guilty discipline violations, African-American individuals are slightly over-represented and White individuals were slightly underrepresented compared to institutional population figures.

Participation in the IPI program normally requires a high school degree or equivalent, and higher security classifications and disciplinary history can exclude men and women from participating. These measures are in place to encourage positive behavior (e.g., getting your HiSET, staying out of trouble) but at the same time mean that fewer African-Americans are eligible to join the IPI program. Mr. Clark will be working with the IPI management team and the Iowa DOC to find ways to increase program participation by under-represented groups, without risking safety and security.

Ms. Winther asked whether, like an alternative high school, there was a way to provide HiSET instruction while participating in the IPI program, an idea which Mr. Clark was going to review with the Iowa DOC.

Ms. Miller asked for data for specific jobs, showing participation by race for welders, painters, etc. Mr. Clark stated that this was burdensome to collect at present, but could be done in a “one off” fashion. But since this would be manually intensive, he didn’t want to report this monthly as this would take IPI staff away from their security, safety and training roles. Ms. Winther pointed out that several board members had requested this data for several years.

Ms. Miller stated that people will not apply to the IPI program or for certain positions if they don’t feel welcome, and so job-level data will help to assess whether this is a problem. This is a now or never moment in her opinion, and we shouldn’t shy away from doing the hard work to find answers. Mr. Clark agreed to work with the DOC to see how this information could be extracted from ICON, and to inform the board at its September meeting.

VIII. YTD Program Review, Including PPE.

Mr. Clark reviewed the state of affairs for IPI, which had been going quite well until mid-March. He stated that projects for furniture, particularly wood furniture from Fort Madison, were being delayed or cancelled. The level of uncertainty is great right now and with the potential shutdown of an IPI facility looming due to the virus, it was concerning.

Mr. Clark reviewed the production of PPE by the men and women of the IPI program, which exceeded 100,000 masks, 30,000 gowns, 20,000 face shields and 26,000 gallons of hand sanitizer! Mr. Clark and the board expressed their pride in the work of IPI staff and associates to help the citizens of Iowa.

IX. New Business.

It was decided to hold the meeting scheduled for September 18, 2020 online.

X. Adjourn


Dr. Hillman asked for a motion to adjourn, which was offered by Ms. Winther and seconded by Mr. Diesburg. The meeting was adjourned at 11:02am.

Minutes submitted by:



Dan Clark, Director

Minutes approved by:



Dr. Doug Hillman, Chair