

MSBA CORRECTIONAL REFORM SECTION COUNCIL

Minutes of Meeting of March 9, 2010

Members Present: Michael Berlin, Phil Dantes, Wendy Hess, Arnold Hopkins, James Johnston, Roland Knapp, Stephanie Lane-Weber, Walter Lomax, Scott Oakley, and Joseph Tetrault.

Guests Present: Amanda White, Public Justice Center

The meeting was called to order at the Dogwood Restaurant in Hampden at approximately 7:05 by Chairperson Wendy Hess.

Review of Minutes of Meeting of January 12, 2010

The minutes of the meeting of January 12, 2010 were reviewed. James Johnston made a motion that they be approved without change, Roland Knapp seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

Council Member Vacancy

There was discussion about how the Council might go about filling the remainder of the term (2008-2011) of the Council member vacancy created by the departure of Marv Robbins. Wendy Hess mentioned that she was aware of two individuals who might be interested: Booth Ripke of Nathans & Biddle in Baltimore, and Monique Dixon of the Open Society Institute in Baltimore. It was also mentioned that Kim Berger, Supervising Staff Attorney for the U.S. District Court in Baltimore, may be interested. Scott Oakley suggested that the approximately 250 members of the Section be canvassed to determine if there might be interest among them, and Wendy agreed to arrange for an e-mail canvass. Scott also suggested that the Council consider whether it might be desirable to increase the size of the Council to bring added energy and resources to the Council's work, and agreed to review the By-Laws to determine how that might be accomplished. Scott also agreed to research the size of the other sections and their respective councils for whatever guidance that information might provide.

Section Council Website

Amanda White reported continuing progress in the development of the Section Council website: the Council members' biographies have been posted, and within days the web links suggested by Council members will be posted. Members are free to suggest additional web links to Amanda. Additionally, notice of the call for nominations for the Paul Davis Award will be posted within days.

Maryland Legislative Session

Wendy Hess provided a handout summarizing corrections related bills pending before the General Assembly, and there was discussion about some of them. While it was suggested that many of the bills proposing the reduction or elimination of diminution of confinement credits

constituted misguided public policy, it was suggested that the fiscal notes reflecting significant additional costs of incarceration would probably “kill” them anyway. Wendy also circulated a copy of a letter to the editor of the Baltimore Sun sent last year on the topic of diminution credits. Some inmate health related bills were also discussed, particularly two introduced by members of the Frederick County delegation proposing significant fees for medical and dental care provided to local and state inmates. This led to a discussion of the larger issue of inmate health care and the eligibility of inmates for Medicaid. There was also discussion of bills pertaining to the jurisdiction of the juvenile courts and the “Lifers’ Bill,” HB 940/SB 901.

The members of the Council will continue to “discuss” pending legislation via the ListServ and the Council will seek approval from the Board of Governors to take a formal position on any given bill if there is sufficient agreement among the members.

Paul Davis Award

The MSBA will publish in its publications as well as the Daily Record the call for nominations and will announce the ultimate winner. An *ad hoc* committee was formed, consisting of James Johnston, Roland Knapp, Stephanie Lane-Weber, and Scott Oakley, to review the nominations and make recommendations to the Council. Roland will receive the e-mailed nominations.

Requests for Assistance

Wendy Hess presented two requests for assistance: (1) from the Pre-Release Conference for Women @ MCIW (similar to the conference last year), and (2) from the Storybook Project. After discussion it was the sense of the Council that the Council should not put itself in the position of awarding cash “grants” to other organizations or activities, however, worthy, but Council and Section members should be encouraged to consider individual donations of time and money to worthy organizations and events. Wendy will pass along information concerning these requests for assistance to the Section at large.

Leadership Symposium

Arnold Hopkins gave a presentation of his efforts thus far to put together a major event featuring U.S. Senators Cardin and Webb as well as other prominent government and academic officials, focusing on S.714 proposing the National Criminal Justice Commission Act. Arnold provided a handout to assist in structuring further deliberation and decision-making. Michael Berlin, Wendy Hess, and Scott Oakley will assist as needed. The event is now being targeted for the Fall of 2010. In any event the Council will seek to recognize Senator Cardin’s work on the legislation, promulgate information on the legislation, and increase the visibility of the legislation. Arnold asked that Council members provide feedback on his handout at the next Section Council meeting.

MSBA Annual Meeting and Report

It was suggested that it is probably too late to develop a Correctional Reform presentation at the MSBA Annual Meeting in June, 2010, but the Council will try to put together an annual report.

U.S.D.C. Attorney Panel

Wendy Hess reported that the Staff Attorneys Office at the U.S. District Court in Baltimore would like assistance from the Council in putting together a training manual for pro bono practitioners. Stephanie Lane-Weber and Joe Tetrault will work with Wendy to develop a collaboration with the U.S. District Court.

Good of the Order

Walter Lomax reported on a screening of his documentary “Zoul Zurvivor,” and there was discussion about the possibility of arranging a screening for the Council and/or Section.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned.