



**COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES  
PROBATION COMMISSION**  
9150 EAST IMPERIAL HIGHWAY – DOWNEY – CALIFORNIA 90242  
**(562) 940-2754**



**MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING OF JANUARY 28, 2016**

The regular meeting of the County of Los Angeles Probation Commission was held on Thursday, January 28, 2016, Room 830, Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration, 500 West Temple Street, Los Angeles, California.

I. President Gardner called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m.

The following Commissioners were present:

1<sup>st</sup> Vice President Levine  
2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President Hollopeter  
3<sup>rd</sup> Vice President Seaver  
Commissioner Caster  
Commissioner Hoover  
Commissioner Kaplan  
Commissioner Shutan  
Commissioner Yamashiro

The following Commissioners were excused:

Commissioner Holt  
Commissioner Jones  
Commissioner Martinez  
Commissioner Meredith  
Commissioner Mitchell

The following staff and guests were present:

Carlos Leon, Local 685  
Diane Murua, Probation Department  
Patricia Rodriguez, Secretary, Probation Department

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**Commissioners**

Joe Gardner - President, Jan Levine - First Vice President, Clay Hollopeter - Second Vice President, Daniel Seaver - Third Vice President, Lt. Don Meredith, Cyn Yamashiro, Fitzgerald Jones, Gabriella Holt, R.N., E.J.D., Jo K. Kaplan, Esq., , Olivia E. Mitchell, Peter Shutan, Azael Martinez Sonoqui, Zachary Hoover, Jacqueline Caster, Esq., Betsy Butler

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## **II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

### **December 9, 2015**

Commissioner Shutan moved to accept the minutes for December 9, 2015. His motion was seconded by Commissioner Yamashiro; minutes were approved.

### **January 14, 2016**

The minutes of January 14, 2016 were not approved and are tabled until the next meeting.

## **III. DISCUSS RE-ORGANIZATION OF COMMISSION**

President Gardner stated, the January 14, 2016 Probation Commission meeting was very productive. He further stated that this meeting would be an extension from the previous meeting would continue the discussion at the Probation Commission meeting in February. The Commission will get back to regular business with the presence of the Probation Department.

President Gardner announced the Board of Supervisors is conducting a review of all Los Angeles County Commissions of their insight and responsibilities. The Board of Supervisors has recognized that there are redundancies in Commissions duties. Each Supervisor has named an individual to the working task force, created by the Probation Department. The motion was given by Supervisor Sheila Kuehl and Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas

President Gardner reminded the Commission the changes in the coming weeks to make an effort in meeting with the various Justice Deputies and discuss with them the core functions of the Probation Commission.

President Gardner's understanding by the motion that the Board of Supervisors do not know how long ago the Probation Commission has been established and what their functions are. The motion states the Probation Commission was established in 2005. President Gardner states the Probation Commission is one of the oldest Commissions in Los Angeles County.

President Gardner indicated that each Commissioner could better influence the Board of Supervisors by meeting with the Justice Deputy on a regular basis.

President Gardner discussed the chartering of the Probation Commission and announced that it would not be necessary. The Board of Supervisor's can create an ordinance and if the Commission is chartered, the charter would have to go to the voter's, which is an initiative that would be encumbersome and an expensive process.

President Gardner's Justice Deputy stated it will take (6) six months or more for the taskforce to conclude its work.

### **DISCUSS RE-ORGANIZATION OF COMMISSION (cont.)**

President Gardner encouraged all Commissioners to make a diligent effort to meet with their Justice Deputies at least once a month and provide highlights of what each Commissioner has been doing as far as inspections and also familiarize them of when the Probation Commission was first established. By doing so each Justice Deputies can then relay the information over to the Board of Supervisor's which will give them a broader look as to how the Probation Commission really works and how they perform their duties, and perhaps ordinance by the Board of Supervisor's the Probation Commission can achieve the majority of their goals.

Commissioner Levine discussed her meeting with Justice Deputy Derric Johnson. Mr. Johnson indicated to her that there are so many unanswered questions about how the County keeps track of what the Probation Department is doing, and where the funds are being spent. Commissioner Levine stated the Board of Supervisors wants to get a handle on some of those issues.

Commissioner Levine inquired of Derric Johnson whether the Probation Commission should try and move forward with an ordinance empowering the Commission as an advisory Commission to the Board of Supervisors. Mr. Johnson advised her to hold off on this request.

Commissioner Levine stated Derric Johnson feels that the function of inspection is really important and the Commissioners should continue the inspections. He also stated the Board of Supervisor's want to know; what each Commissioner learns from their visits to the facilities these inspections contain information the BOS needs to have in order to understand how things are working within the Probation Department facilities.

Commissioner Levine commended Commissioner Martinez's inspection reports on the different field offices; she stated they were really informative. Commissioner Levine stated that having a sense of transition from detention back to the community which was not working very well was worn out in his reports in a very concrete way and believes that's the type of information that can be very useful. He further stated that is the type of information each Commissioner needs to relate to their Justice Deputies every month. By giving them an overview of what's transpired, and what type of things have come to light because of their findings and efforts.

President Gardner stated, each Commissioner is the eyes and ears of the Board of Supervisors. If information is not exchanged between the Probation Commission and the Board of Supervisors; they will only make assumptions of what the Commission's duties are.

Commissioner Hollopeter discussed his meeting with the Justice Deputy in his District and Commissioner Jones. During their discussion Supervisor Don Knabe joined them. They discussed the role of the Probation Commission. Supervisor Knabe suggested the Probation Commission request more than what is currently being requested.

## **DISCUSS RE-ORGANIZATION OF COMMISSION (cont.)**

Commissioner Hollopeter stated, Supervisor Knabe supports the Probation Commission and believes that they should be involved in a more powerful way and be recognized as a true Commission.

President Gardner discussed the work that Commissioner Levine has been doing, he expressed appreciation in the effort that she has been putting into the document. Commissioner Levine has been putting together some concepts to answer some of the problems that the Commission already views, Commissioner Gardner believes once the document is finished it will be a good document that all the Commissioners can present to their various Justice Deputies

Commissioner Levine stated she looked into the statutory origin of the Probation Commission and a path to put it on the same footing with other County advisory Commissions. She believes this would result in greater accountability on the part of the Probation Department to the Commission.

Commissioner Caster does not believe there needs to be a paid Commission. She stated if the Probation Commission had access to experts the Commission can authorize audits and have the resources to pay for that. The Probation Commission would be able to authorize investigations, have researchers to conduct studies like the one she was in the process of conducting regarding the grievance process with Professor Jorja Leap from the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA). Commissioner Caster stated, if the Probation Commission had a budget for those types of matters the Commission and the Department would have more transparency.

Commissioner Seaver stated he believes inspections are important and continuing to talk to the youth is also important. The Board of Supervisors will not relinquish any of their powers over the Probation Department, however maybe the advice can be that a budget comes before the Commission so that Commissioners can look at the spending priorities of the Probation Department. Having advisement of what the Mission of the Probation Department is. He believes the Commission should have a role on advisement on the Chief of Probation. He feels if the Commission had an official review capacity for example the Commission can say the Chief is doing a good job, and maybe vote once a year. Commissioner Seaver feels that this would send a powerful message and maybe then the Chief would come to the Probation Commission meetings, present to the Commissioners on an annual basis.

President Gardner stated that the Commission would have to put together a list of items: the issues that the Commission would like to see parity in resources. The Commission needs going forward; an explanation of what the Commission hopes to do with those resources. He requested a draft document by the next Probation Commission meeting to distribute to all Commissioners to vote on, cross out or add items and finalize the document to send to the Board of Supervisors.

Commissioner Levine suggested all Commissioners email her their vision; how they see the Probation Commission in terms what authority the Commissioners would like to have. Commissioner Levine will create a list in one document.

### **DISCUSS RE-ORGANIZATION OF COMMISSION (cont.)**

Commissioner Levine is not attending the next Probation Commission meeting but will forward the document once completed to all Commissioners.

President Gardner discussed the implementation of training with Commissioner Holloper and Commissioner Holt as trainers. President Gardner would like to implement a short segment, and incorporate trainings at every meeting, 10-15 minutes on inspections, what does a Commissioner do when they walk into the Special Handling Unit (SHU), and what to be on the lookout for.

President Gardner went over his expectations on how to conduct the Probation Commission meetings when Presentations are scheduled. He advised all Commissioners to stay focused, let the presenters get through their topics and hold questions until the end. He also directed that there be a limit to the number of questions being asked.

President Gardner expressed the importance of notifying Patricia Rodriguez in advance, if a Commissioner will not be available to attend the Probation Commission meeting. A record of attendance will be kept.

President Gardner said it is essential for the Commission to have an annual report and noted that it is the responsibility of the current President to submit it. He emphasized the importance that this item is when taking the responsibilities of President of the Commission. It should be an item the President would need to work on for the Board of Supervisors.

### **IV. NEW BUSINESS**

Commissioner Yamashiro discussed attending a meeting and was alerted of a serious problem within the Probation Department. He stated that there are AB109 funds that have gone unused. These funds are different than what the Commission has discussed before.

Commissioner Yamashiro stated AB109 and the realignment mandated that youth are being released from the Department of Juvenile Justice (prison system for youth's in California). The funds are to be used upon their release to help these youth get back into society.

Commissioner Yamashiro indicated that the Probation Department has the largest number of youth from the Department of Criminal Justice and noted that a good number of these youth come out of Los Angeles County. The youth in some instances are being released from the Department of Juvenile Justice, are being supervised by the Probation Department, and are basically just given bus tokens and are being sent to homeless shelters. Commissioner Yamashiro stated that this is happening simultaneously while the Probation Department has in its budget untouched \$15.8 million dollars that has been transferred from the State to the Probation Department's budget, for the purpose of re-entry resources for these youth. To his understanding the

## **NEW BUSINES (cont.)**

Probation Department has staffed up and have hired (2) two individuals to handle these youth. There are youth being released every day and are not receiving the resources they need.

Commissioner Levine stated that part of the Board motion discussed is looking at dividing the Probation Department into juvenile and adult, uncertain if there would be (2) two Departments or (2) two separate units within Probation.

Commissioner Hoover discussed the \$161 million dollars from SB678 that the Department has been sitting on for the last (2) two years. The funds are designated to be used by the Probation Department to invest in best practice services for individuals completing Probation and help them become successful. The funds can be used through contracts and/or directly through programs within the Probation Department.

President Gardner noted and reminded the Commissioners that in the last meeting much of what the work the Commission does, needs to be efficient for the Committee work. President Gardner feels there may be a need for a Committee to look into this issue. He believes that this issue needs to be addressed or these items would be remised. He urges Commissioners who are interested in this issue to work together and set something up for the next Commission meeting. The Commission can then present to the Probation Department for discussion, and for answers.

President Gardner advised Commissioner Yamashiro, Commissioner Hoover, Commissioner Meredith, and Commissioner Caster to work on this matter. The topic would be agendized for the 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting in February.

Commissioner Seaver would like to invite Michelle Neal who works for one of the Board of Supervisors and oversees the redesign of Camp Vernon Kilpatrick (CVK). Michelle Neal can brief the Commission on the vision of CVK as underlining that vision is a plan for the department. President Gardner has requested to agenize the presentation for the 1<sup>st</sup> meeting in March.

Commissioner Levine would also like to invite Interim Chief Cal Remington to attend one of the next Commission meetings and get his opinion on the vision for the Commission and to discuss the vision of the Probation Department.

Commissioner Hoover discussed president Obama's announcement to get rid of solitary confinement for juveniles. Commissioner Hoover is unsure if the Commission is thinking about this as an opportunity, as he believes it can connect more the camps and detention centers with a much clearer goal as to why the Department still has solitary confinement. Commissioner Hoover would like to make (2) two goals for the year: 1) Oversight on the money that the Probation Department is withholding, 2) End this year with no more Special Handling Unit (SHU).

Commissioner Kaplan would like to make a motion that the Probation Department follow President Obama's lead and get rid of the SHU. She finds it offensive that the

### **NEW BUSINESS (cont.)**

Department has just changed the name of the SHU. Commissioner Kaplan noted that CVK is not going to have isolation units.

President Gardner stated due to the constraint of time, Commissioner Kaplan's motion be tabled for the next meeting.

### **V. COMMISSION/COMMITTEE INSPECTION REPORTS**

Commissioner Hollopeter provided the Commission with the Tentative 2016 Schedule of Camps and Hall Inspections.

President Gardner stated that it was his mission to visit all the camps at one point. It will be his way to familiarize himself how the facilities are laid out, get a perspective on how the camps change from one place to another, and view how the youth are treated.

Commissioner Kaplan discussed the Dorothy Kirby Center (DKC) and stated that she feels that the Commission ignores DKC. She indicated that the most disturbed youth are the youth with are the mental health youth. Commissioner Kaplan stated that she would like to begin visiting DKC. Commissioner Kaplan stated that one of the problems with this Commission is that the Board of Supervisor's believes that inspections is all they do and often times what the Commissioners do is a result of their inspections.

Commissioner Hollopeter discussed the Challenger Memorial Youth Center (CMYC) and stated, is certainly a challenge. It currently has between (5) five to (7) camps. Each of them are different, each serve different populations, all of the camps have problems. Some of the problems are structural, none of the camps have running water, and others have limited utilization of the athletic field.

Commissioner Hollopeter discussed the inspection he conducted at Camp Ellis Onizuka (CEO) on January 24, 2016. CEO is designed for "High need/High Risk" youth. Commissioner Hollopeter report states the 2015-2016 application for the Youth Offender Block Grant (YOBG) states that CEO will offer enhanced services including increased mental health services, substance abuse treatment, Aggression Replacement Training (ART), Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), enhanced case management, vocation training and transition planning.

Commissioner Hollopeter states on the day of his visit there were 37 youth and (9) Probation Staff. The Ratio of Staff to Youth is the lowest it has been and that staff were focused on supervision, making it impossible for youth to get the counseling they need to address their mental or emotional issues. There were no activities or programs for the youth on Sunday's other than about an hour or so of free-play, outdoor recreation, (3) three meals and about 10 ½ hours of unstructured indoor activity. Commissioner Hollopeter provided the Commission with the schedule on his inspection report.

## **COMMISSION/COMMITTEE INSPECTION REPORTS**

Commissioner Hollopeter reported the dormitory's lacks reasonable degree of recreation or education equipment. He believes this camp should offer the youth much more programs and activities on Sunday's.

## **VI. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

President Gardner announced that the next meetings and the meetings there after will be held on the First floor Room 140A.

## **VII. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Carlos Leon mentioned he has been attending the Probation Commission meetings for the last (4) years. Mr. Leon commends the Probation Commission on a job well done. He has witnessed the Commissioners dedication and commitment to the youth.

Mr. Leon mentioned that each facility has a daily schedule that they have to follow. He further stated there are times he would like to take the youth outside when there is nothing to do but if it's not in the schedule, they are not allowed too. They are limited to the things they can do. Some staff would like to be more creative.

Mr. Leon expressed concern regarding parents who are not able to drive and are only able to take the bus to visit or to appear in court with their youth. He believes that rerouting some of the bus lines would help parents, if there was a route going to some of Probation's facilities. The nearest bus stop to one of the Juvenile Hall's is about a mile away. Mr. Leon stated that this is not just a matter of inconvenience but it's a security issue as well.

Mr. Leon is hopeful that this is an issue that the Commission can help with by expanding bus services, which would make it easier for parents to visit their youth.

## **XII. ADJOURNMENT**

Commissioner Seaver moved to adjourn the meeting. Her motion was seconded by Commissioner Shutan, the motion was approved and the meeting was adjourned at 11:58 a.m.