

CLERK OF SUPERIOR, STATE
AND JUVENILE COURT
FILED FOR RECORD

2014 JAN 17 AM 10:06

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF RICHMOND COUNTY

ELAINE C. JOHNSON, CLERK
RICHMOND COUNTY, GA.

STATE OF GEORGIA

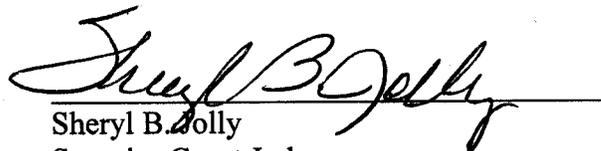
IN RE: GRAND JURY PRESENTMENT FOR THE NOVEMBER TERM 2013

The Grand Jury having returned the attached general presentment for the November Term 2013, and the same having been reviewed and accepted by the Court on January 17, 2014, it is now,

ORDERED that the said presentment shall be filed in the Office of the Clerk of Superior Court for Richmond County, and that it shall be published once in the *Augusta Chronicle*, the legal gazette for said County; and

FURTHER ORDERED that the said general presentment shall be posted by the Director of Information Technology on the Augusta-Richmond County website for public access through the Internet (World Wide Web).

It is so ORDERED this 17th day of January 2014.



Sheryl B. Jolly
Superior Court Judge
Augusta Judicial Circuit

TO: The Honorable Sheryl B. Jolly
Judge, Superior Court

FROM: Richmond County Grand Jury
November Term 2013

DATE: January 17, 2014

RE: Grand Jury Presentment

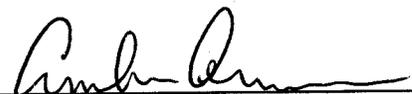
We, the members of the Augusta-Richmond County Grand Jury for the November Term 2013, having been duly sworn by the Honorable Daniel J. Craig on the 18th day of November 2013, submit our presentment on the 17th day of November 2013, our last day as an official body of the Grand Jury.

To discharge our sworn duties, as prescribed by the laws of the State of Georgia, we met on eight (8) dates during our term and acted upon Bills of Indictments presented to us by the District Attorney's Office.

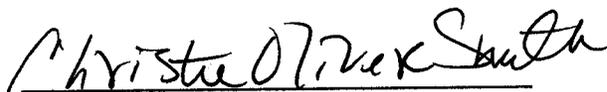
Sub-Committees were formed to inspect the Charles B. Webster Detention Center and the Sheriff's Office; reports are attached.

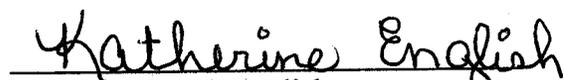
In addition to our assigned duties, this Grand Jury appointed three individuals as members to the Board of Equalization. The report is attached.

The Grand Jury respectfully submits this presentment on the 17th day of January 2014 and requests that it is published.


Amber Wagoner Armour, Foreperson

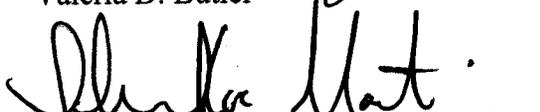
Shane Alan Ide, Assistant Foreperson


Christie Oliver Smith, Secretary

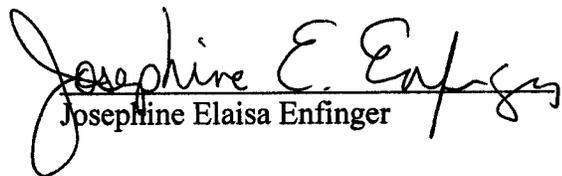

Katherine Lamb English


Valeria D. Butler


Chastady Monique Bynes


Ikekoe Brackeray Martin


William Bowers Bates III


Josephine Elaisa Enfinger

Amber Lauren Kelton


Michelle M. Bovian


Cassandra Denise Davis

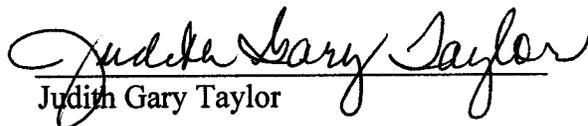

Rosalie Sue Shepard

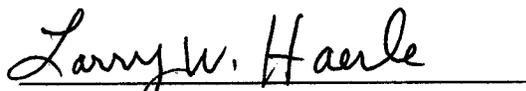

Carol Regina Cain

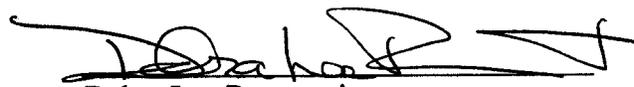
Laura Hennessey

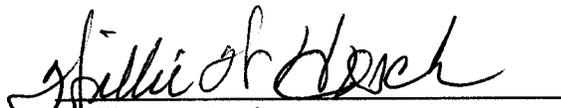

Katherine E. Noah

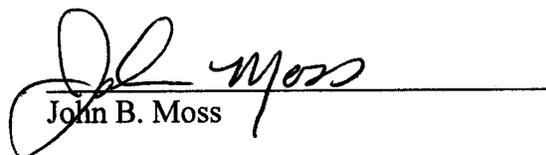

Hassie Alexander

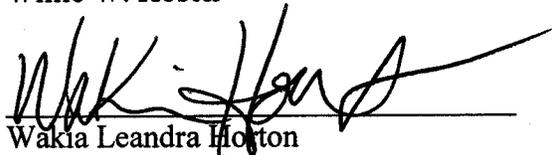

Judith Gary Taylor


Larry W. Haerle


Debra Lee Rosenquist


Willie W. Hosch


John B. Moss


Wakia Leandra Horton

SUB-COMMITTEE OF THE NOVEMBER 2013 GRAND JURY TERM
REPORT ON THE CHARLES B. WEBSTER DETENTION CENTER

On December 10, 2013, a Sub-Committee of the November 2013 Grand Jury Term toured the Charles B. Webster Detention Center located at 1941 Phinizy Road in Augusta, Georgia. Captain Huffman met the Sub-Committee Members in the front lobby and served as tour guide for the afternoon. Captain Huffman informed us that Major Gene Johnson typically accompanies him on tours, but he was called away for budget meetings.

Construction Efforts

The Detention Center was under construction at the time of our visit in order to create a new booking area, on-site courtroom and trustee dormitory. The new booking area has since opened and replaces the activities previously done by the Richmond County Jail located at 401 Walton Way. By consolidating the booking center within the Detention Center, significant cost savings are being realized by way of forgone inmate transportation costs, not to mention increased security because inmate movement is contained within the facility. It is still unclear if the Richmond County Jail on 401 Walton Way will be repurposed or demolished.

Even though the Detention Center was under construction, sufficient safeguards appeared to be in place, to include exit doors off the main hallway being boarded up from floor-to-ceiling and outward-facing windows being covered. When asked about the paper taped to the windows, Captain Huffman stated that it was for facility and inmate security and to prevent inmates from viewing the construction site. Captain Huffman made a point to show Sub-Committee Members the outside construction site which was well organized.

As previously stated, a new on-site courtroom was also part of the renovations. This on-site courtroom will provide a space for hearings to be held without inmates leaving the Detention Center, thus increasing security and saving taxpayers money in inmate transportation costs. The on-site courtroom can accommodate judicial oversight in-person or via video-conferencing equipment.

An additional improvement was the creation of a trustee dormitory. Trustees are inmates who are given the privilege of working in certain areas of the Detention Center. These positions are highly sought after and perks, such as increased meal portions for inmates working in the kitchen area, are granted. Providing a separate dormitory for these trustees will ease the effort involved in transporting them from the cell blocks to their respective work areas and increase facility morale.

Food Service

Shortly after arriving at the Detention Center, Captain Huffman guided Sub-Committee Members to the employee dining area for lunch. The employee dining area is adjacent to the kitchens and was clean and well organized. While most Sub-Committee Members were skeptical of the food's quality and quantity, those concerns quickly faded away. The meal, served buffet-style to us by a trustee, was excellent and included several meat, vegetable, dessert and drink options. Captain Huffman informed us that the Detention Center's food service is outsourced to a private firm and significant cost savings have been realized since the contract was put in place. Sub-Committee Members were surprised to learn the cost to provide a full meal averaged less than \$0.84 each. The trustee who served our food was extremely polite and accommodating and we appreciated the opportunity to interact with him even if it was in a limited, highly-controlled capacity.

Captain Huffman also made sure to assuage concerns by stating employee meals, including the food we consumed, are prepared by the contract employees, not trustees/inmates. Inmate meals, prepared three times daily by trustees, are plated onto individual trays and delivered to each cell block. By delivering food trays to inmates in each cell block, the staff is able to maintain a higher level of security.

In addition to the provided meals, inmates can purchase items from the commissary using funds deposited into each inmate's account. The Detention Center receives 30% of the revenue from these sales.

Cell Blocks

There are separate housing facilities for male and female inmates and special accommodations are afforded to inmates with special needs. These needs can be related to health issues or physical and/or mental impairments. Each block had a central control room that allows officers to oversee the activity within and remotely control all aspects of the cell block. There were at least two solitary confinement cells available in each block for inmates requiring such special treatment for any reason. Technology improvements have been implemented and include the use of an electronic communication system. Kiosks are available for inmate use to submit requests to Detention Center personnel and make changes to their commissary accounts. Requests vary from complaints about treatment to requests for medical attention and requests to speak to legal counsel. A telephone bank is also available in each cell block for inmate use. Sub-Committee Members also noticed video monitors in each cell block enabling inmates to "visit" with people that come to the visitation center. The visitation center is a separate building located just outside the main facility entrance where friends, family and legal counsel can communicate with inmates in a virtual face-to-face manner. Captain Huffman stated the use of video-conferencing equipment actually affords the inmates and their visitors a better opportunity to interact with each other, allowing for better audio quality and an increased potential for privacy.

Medical Treatment Area

Separated from the cell blocks, the medical treatment area was clean and well organized. After a cursory glance, this area looks like any other medical clinic. The most notable difference would be the lack of a traditional waiting room as no need exists since inmates are brought to the medical area as space allows. There were a few holding cells along the wall near the entrance for the containment of inmates awaiting treatment.

On the Sub-Committee's tour day, an outbreak of bedbugs was discovered after medical personnel noticed several similar complaints coming from inmates in a single cell block. Upon notification, Captain Huffman ordered all bedding removed from the affected cell block and burned. While this outbreak resulted in much more activity than normal, we would never have known such a containment effort was underway if we hadn't been informed of it. All actions were handled seamlessly and without additional complications.

Observations and Recommendations

During lunch, a Sub-Committee Member asked Captain Huffman if any training or educational opportunities are offered to the inmates. He stated other than the availability of a small selection of fiction novels, no educational opportunities are present. Captain Huffman explained the length of time each inmate is incarcerated varies widely and inmates could be released at any given time making the logistics of offering continuing education programs difficult. While the Sub-Committee acknowledges these difficulties, we feel some effort could be made at a minimal cost to the budget.

In regard to resources, the Detention Center appears to have been awarded a great deal of funds for expansion and improvements. Captain Huffman stated their satisfaction with the additions and they are gratified with the amount of funding being set aside for costs. He did state, however, the dire need of additional funds for personnel costs. Captain Huffman compared the significant cost of training and equipping corrections officers with low retention rates. He further stated starting salaries are much too low for entry-level personnel and there are very few opportunities within the system for advancement. The Sub-Committee, as several Sub-Committees have also previously made, requests that salaries for Detention Center personnel be reevaluated for the possibility of across-the-board salary increases. The Sub-Committee feels these officers deal with potentially hazardous conditions daily with insignificant compensation. Despite the inequitable pay, all officers encountered were friendly and professional.

Sub-Committee Members

Hassie Alexander
Amber Wagoner Armour
Michelle M. Bovian
Chastady Monique Bynes
Cassandra Denise Davis
Josephine Elaisa Enfinger

Katherine Lamb English
Amber Lauren Kelton
Ikekoe Brackeray Martin
John B. Moss
Debra Lee Rosenquist

SUB-COMMITTEE OF THE NOVEMBER 2013 GRAND JURY TERM
REPORT ON THE RICHMOND COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

On December 17, 2013, a Sub-Committee of the November 2013 Grand Jury Term toured the Richmond County Sheriff's Office. Sheriff Richard Roundtree started our tour by providing an in-depth history of how the role and title of sheriff evolved into the crucial position it is today. It was very informative and showed the passion Sheriff Roundtree has for his office.

During our discussions in the conference room, Sheriff Roundtree provided great statistics on the department's success as a result of less crime, including the fact that murder cases have decreased more than 50% from 2012 to 2013. The Sheriff has enacted a strategic plan to ensure manpower is available where crime is happening and officers are more familiar with their "beats." The Sheriff wants to be very proactive in community involvement and offers awareness programs, such as summer youth camps, to positively influence and help deter youth from committing criminal actions later. There are also programs to promote safety, such as gun training for qualified citizens and child safety-seat inspections.

The division heads took over the tours in their respective areas. Sub-Committee Members were able to walk through the offices, the fraud department and the forensic area. It was particularly interesting to see how evidence that was presented to us was handled in the forensics lab. Special care was taken to describe how each piece of equipment was used to perform daily tasks. The layout of the entire facility seemed well planned and was clean and professional.

The main factor influencing our decision to tour the facility was a desire to meet with Sheriff Roundtree to express our appreciation for the dedication that each member of his staff exhibits. We encountered a wide variety of individuals who served as witnesses for the Grand Jury presentments and were very impressed with the professionalism and dedication that is clearly evident in the performance of their duties. In our discussion with Sheriff Roundtree, several additional words were used to describe the Sheriff's Office staff, i.e. motivated, great attitudes, very well trained, precise in their jobs.

It takes a unique individual to pursue a career in law enforcement, to encounter constant risk, work all hours in all-weather with their lives on the line. Despite such risks, the Sheriff's Office staff is confident they can make a difference in the community and feel empowered to do so. Several comments were made that departmental morale has increased due to positive changes being made by Sheriff Roundtree and others. One change the officers were very appreciative of was the increased availability of technology and equipment to assist them in the performance of their duties.

Additional Observations and Recommendations

As with most publicly-funded positions, salaries are not up to the levels needed to properly compensate the employees. Starting salaries for officers is around \$30,000, with little leeway regarding raises and promotions. To further complicate this issue, salary inequities were present when the city police force merged with the county. Well known throughout the department, these inequities were never corrected and cause unnecessary tensions. It seems wasteful to invest over \$100,000.00 in equipment and training to put a deputy on the street and then lose him after a few years due to insufficient salary. Most officers are forced to take on "specials" to make ends meet.

Furthermore, it was brought to our attention that officers are paid a flat rate, meaning that no additional pay is available for overtime, working on holidays, pulling double shifts, etc. This is unacceptable and should be rectified immediately. Also, we were told that Sheriff's Office staff is treated the same as other county staff with regard to raises, i.e. a flat 2% raise each year. This practice doesn't acknowledge the additional commitment and effort Sheriff's Office staff put forth and the Sub-Committee recommends further consideration be given to compensate officers more fairly based on the increased danger they encounter on a daily basis.

A definitive plan should be established and funded to rectify the inequities and help bring starting salaries up to market levels. Also, more autonomy should be given to Sheriff Roundtree in regard to where departmental funds should be used.

While the staff is appreciative of the new equipment they have been given, the Sub-Committee feels more is needed. Mobile fingerprint scanners are now available, but only enough for the shift supervisors. Some officers wear personal video capture devices, but not all. If more equipment is purchased and is more widely available, better evidence can be gathered and, therefore, used toward bringing charges forward for successful prosecution.

We very much enjoyed the tour of the Sheriff's Office and look forward to the improvements Sheriff Roundtree will continue to make. He and his staff were all courteous and more than willing to answer our questions.

Sub-Committee Members:

Hassie Alexander
William Bowers Bates III
Chastady Monique Bynes
Josephine Elaisa Enfinger
Katherine Lamb English
Larry W. Haerle
John B. Moss
Debra Lee Rosenquist
Christie Oliver Smith
Ikekoe Brackeray Martin