



**FELMERS O. CHANEY CORRECTIONAL CENTER
COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD
August, 2008**

***CHANEY ADVISORY BOARD: AN ABBREVIATED HISTORY
(Working Document)***

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Numerous off-site re-integration mechanisms have been eliminated since the 6/19/00 commencement of operations at the Chaney Center.
2. Retrenchments in the provision of re-integration programming began to occur by the end of the second year (circa) of the Center's operation, suggesting the possibility that DOC never took Chaney's stated mission seriously.
3. Much of the retrenchment in programming has involved non-revenue generating programming.
4. DOC has responded to FCAB complaints about the retrenchment in services by instituting measures, either all or virtually all of which have been on-site mechanisms.
5. DOC/FCCC possibly has sought to frustrate FCAB efforts by progressively diminishing FCCC staff involvement with FCAB.
6. Disagreements within the Board have made the Board a stronger organization but also have delayed efficiency of Board operations.
7. DOC's promised selection process targeting only those inmates most likely to re-integrate has given way to less desirable inmates (poorer risks for re-integration) being placed at Chaney.
8. DOC's reduction in inmates' length of stay at Chaney has diminished the Center's ability to foster inmates' internalization of re-integration programming, perhaps corresponding to DOC's 1/16/08 announcement to FCAB that FCCC is no longer a pre-release facility.
9. FCAB, in the view of some, constitutes an organization worthy of being a national model for the field of corrections.
10. FCAB, as an organization, given its obstacles, has experienced considerable evolutionary progress and growth.

CHANEY ADVISORY BOARD: AN ABBREVIATED HISTORY

(Working Document)

CHRONOLOGY

- June 19, 2000 Full operation of Milwaukee Men's Correctional Center commences. [Facility is recorded and documented (via its occupancy permit) with the City of Milwaukee as a "pre-release" center.]
- August 21, 2000 "The purpose of the Board will be established in support of effective re-integration of offenders back into the communities from which they came. The Board will work in collaboration with the Men's Correctional Center to address the interests and concerns of the community and facility. It will further serve as a contact point between the facility and the community at large to share information and respond to issues that are brought to their attention." (Correspondence signed by Gary W. Davis on DOC stationery soliciting board members from Sherman Park Community Association, dated 8/21/2000).
- October 4, 2000 First board meeting. Center's Superintendent is Gary W. Davis. Meetings scheduled to occur from 7 p.m. – 9 p.m. Board is comprised, principally, of members affiliated with DOC, DOC employees, and indigenous neighborhood residents. Minutes of meetings taken by Jan Brown, FCCC secretary.
- April 4, 2001 Third meeting of Felmers O. Chaney Correctional Center Community Advisory Board. Board is chaired by Pastor Ron Ballew. Agreement reached with Lena's Food Market for inmates to purchase canteen items from an immediate community vendor. "Thousands of inmate dollars, earned from their jobs, will go back into the communities from which they came with the purchase of these canteen items." (4/4/01 minutes). Pastor Ballew has secured five churches to provide spiritual support for Center inmates. R.L. McNeely requests Board to review Center's mission statement. Board has met three times in six months but later (per recollection) meets only twice per year.
- 2001 McNeely drafted by Board to become co-chair. (Month uncertain).
- April 10, 2002 Board meeting. Tom Vanden Boom is now the Center's Superintendent. Steve O'Connell urges Center to work with 30th St. Corridor group in behalf of hiring inmates. Reward system for inmate performance recommended by Mary Ann Hack. FCCC staff, Tommy Hobson, Wayne Hibbler, Chris Awe, Colleen Frey, Tom Vanden Boom and Jan Brown are present. Bernadette Williams attends as a guest. Next meeting scheduled for 9/11/02 at 5:00 p.m.
- Sept. 24, 2003 FCAB member James Koneanzy again raises issues regarding "obstructionist" DOC policies including, but not limited to, the following:
1. Inability of inmates to receive winter coats from family members;
 2. Retrenchment in educational opportunities (e.g., disallowed inmate access to monitored enrollment into 1-6 credit hrs. at MATC, UWM, Marquette, etc., per semester); and
 3. Retrenchment in community transitioning (e.g., disallowed off-site church attendance).
- FCCC is now authorized as to inmates performing community service for nonprofits. An email roster of all Board members was approved. Agreement reached as to the need for a policy to record board meeting minutes.

Last recorded attendance at FCAB meetings of social worker, Colleen Frey (who previously had been attending regularly) until attendance resumes when Floyd Mitchell becomes new superintendent (on 2/26/06). Following Vanden Boom's 11/16/05 announced retirement, Frey indicates she now will resume attending each FCAB meeting, as noted in 2/10/06 McNeely email memo.

- November 5, 2003 McNeely drafted by Board to become chair. Robust discussion continues about winter coat issue. Mary Ann Hack raises issues about inmates not being allowed to work and go to school at same time. Education and Self-Improvement subcommittee formed. Reggie Birt agrees to coordinate a recognition dinner for inmates involved in community clean-up projects. FCAB meetings are commencing at 6:00 p.m.
- January 14, 2004 Secretary Matthew Frank attends FCAB meeting per FCAB invitation. Issues discussed included, but were not limited to:
1. Inmates unable to accept winter coats from family members forces them to purchase new coats, thereby incurring debt even before inmates secure jobs.
 2. Inmates unable to attend off-ground GED coursework and worship services.
 3. Hispanic inmates need proper (bi-lingual) representation and advocates
- Frank encouraged FCAB to contact him or his executive assistant (Deidre Morgan) if the Board had any suggestions and informed FCAB of his wish to be apprised of any FCAB concerns, such that same might be taken into consideration by his office. Frank emphasized that his office would take FCAB's suggestions seriously.
- March 24, 2004 FCAB, rather than FCCC, begins drafting and setting FCAB meeting agendas.
- March 24, 2004 Supt. Ron Malone and Dr. Rickie Lovell become members of the Board. Their membership occurs within the context of disagreement, spanning months, having arisen within the Board in reference to how to address what was referred to as DOC's "obstructionist" policies. This disagreement had unleashed discussion as to whether the Board should function as a guild or as an advocacy organization seeking to ensure DOC's adherence to the Center's mission. The specific point of contention revolved around whether the Board should send a letter to Warden Mickey McCash regarding the "obstructionist policies" and, if so, what should be the tone of the correspondence. A vote taken at the 3/24/04 meeting ended the disagreement with a majority agreeing that the Board should function as an advocacy organization. Seven FCCC staff members were periodically attending Board meetings at the time.
- Letter sent to McCash protesting "obstructionist" policies.
- May 26, 2004 By-laws approved. The By-laws were conceived to provide purposive structure to what had been a motley miscellany in respect to board goals and process.
- May – Nov., 2004 Robust discussions revolving around issue of FCAB being misperceived as a policy-making/rule-making body of DOC. Issues resolved via research by, principally, Ed Borda and Chris Dee.
- June 17, 2004 Warden McCash and Wayne Mixdorf meet with FCAB's Executive Committee. McCash verbally agrees to points to be recorded later into a FCAB/DOC Memorandum of Understanding as proposed by FCAB member, Dr. Rick Lovell.

- June 19, 2004 Procedural safeguards for off-site barbershop visits are drafted by FCAB in response to McCash's 6/17/04 agreement to resurrect off-site visits if appropriate safeguards are in place.
- July 21, 2004 Memorandum of Understanding drafted, thereby setting forth internal concerns within FCAB about FCAB being perceived as a DOC policy maker.
- July 21, 2004 Regular FCAB attendee, Capt. Tommy Hobson, is transferred to Women's Center (along with non-regular attendee Captain George Rainer).
- September 19, 2004 FCAB's news article, *Reporter's "Spin" Confuses Prison's Real Purpose*, distributed.
- March 16, 2005 FCAB, rather than FCCC, begins recording the minutes of its meetings.
- July 20, 2005 FCAB's Memorandum of Understanding, "Principles, Goals and Objectives" statement, and By-laws, as revised per recommendations of Hold Harmless subcommittee, are approved by FCAB. McCash does not sign Memorandum of Understanding. Efforts to achieve responses to FCAB's inquiries do not elicit responses from McCash's office. It was reported later that McCash had been ill.
- Continuing discussion about standing committees not meeting. Non-attendance of social workers noted.
- Ed Borda suggests that a representative from the D.A.'s office should provide an orientation regarding ramifications of walking away.
- September 21, 2005 Continuing discussion about inactivity of committees. Non-attendance of social workers at FCAB meetings questioned. Questions unanswered as to whether the Center has a budget for inmate educational purposes. Vanden Boom announces that the Board may become a national model and that the prominence of the board may be escalating faster than FCAB realizes.
- November 16, 2005 Supt. VandenBoom retires. Floyd Mitchell is later (2/26/06) named as new superintendent.
- Dr. Blinka suggests inviting Secretary Frank to a FCAB meeting. Supt. Malone agrees to phone Frank to alert him to the coming invitation.
- Announcement made of new transportation policy requiring inmates to be transported to and from worksites by a van rather than by public transport.
- Ed Borda notes that there has been a gradual elimination of off-site activities available to inmates (church services, school, barbering services, and on-site holiday meals with families). Additionally, he pointed out that all activities which do not generate revenue have been taken away. Suggests that an investigation be conducted to examine why activities have been eliminated such that FCAB can work to restore them.
- November 18, 2005 Secretary Frank invited to attend 1/18/06 FCAB meeting. Warden McCash also invited to attend by separate letter.
- December 28, 2005 McNeely appears on *Black Nouveau* discussing community problems.

January 18, 2006

Secretary Frank meets with FCAB. Specific issues to have been discussed included:

- Does Governor Doyle's budget provide new resources for contracted reintegration services?
- Does Governor Doyle's announced goal of enhancing rehabilitation efforts "by bringing offenders closer to their families" refer to family-bonding policies (that serve to relieve inmate isolation from members of their families)?
- Why are Chaney Center inmates no longer allowed to attend worship services off the grounds of the Chaney Center? What precludes re-establishing this positive re-entry practice?
- Chaney Center inmates no longer are allowed to get haircuts at neighborhood barbershops. What precludes re-establishing this practice?
- Chaney Center inmates are no longer allowed to attend Milwaukee's three major colleges, MATC, UWM, and Marquette. We would like to know your position on the possibility of DOC initiating advocacy efforts in behalf or restoring off-grounds schooling opportunities.
- Chaney Center inmates are not allowed to attend PTA meetings involving their children. What precludes establishing this practice?
- Family members of Chaney inmates once were allowed to bring food to inmates on major holidays. What precludes re-establishing this practice?
- Family members of Chaney inmates used to be allowed to provide winter coats, of choice, to Chaney inmates. This practice was replaced by inmates being provided stigmatizing prison-issued green coats. The provision of coats by family members was regarded as an effective family bonding mechanism. What precludes re-establishing this practice?

Unfortunately, the meeting digressed into a discussion that did not focus precisely on Frank's responses to these questions. Jim Koneazny, Caesar Stinson, and Ed Borda, particularly, were searching in terms of various issues. The tone of the discussion can be illustrated best by the following statement, recorded in the 1/18/06 minutes, focusing on Ed Borda's remarks:

Ed Borda began by thanking the Secretary for keeping his promise to be open and communicate with the Board. He then expressed the opinion that no real integration is occurring except for some jobs which are motivated by the need to pay restitution which must be done before leaving the Center. He expressed the opinion that real integration is more than jobs; it is developing connections to the community. At this point grooming, haircuts, and clothing were mentioned. Ed pointed out that if being part of the community upon release is an advantage, it is not happening now. He pointed out that volunteer groups do not have the resources to fill the gaps. Ed stated that the goal or ideal of integration does not jive with what really exists right now. He pointed to the narrowing of reintegration that has been occurring. Ed opined that if Felmers Chaney is the Cadillac of the system, then there are real problems.

Secretary Frank states he feels the Center can be a model for other Centers. Supt. Malone also noted FCAB can be a national model if everyone works together. (Gary Davis also has stated on two occasions his conviction that FCAB is worthy of *60 Minutes* coverage and should be construed as a national model.)

March 14, 2006

Education and Self-Improvement Committee conceptualizes and drafts procedural safeguards for mentoring, employment, counseling, off-site educational opportunities, and family stability programming but, as was the case with 6/19/04 safeguards, no off-site programs are ever resurrected.

March 15, 2006

Borda, Blinka and McNeely appear on *Black Nouveau* discussing re-integration.

- March 16, 2006 Supt. Mitchell, seeking to be responsive to Board concerns, offered the following examples to the Board of how the Center now is making minimum security “minimum”:
- Town hall meetings
 - Word of Hope
 - Black History Month Program
 - Use of Outside Professionals
 - Church Services
 - Monday Wednesday Ministerial Counseling Program
 - Inmate Peer Groups
- Russ Maticsek put forth his idea that the Board should start with initiatives that are less politically challenging, then to move forward building on success. He suggested that we get input as to what is controversial to DOC and factor that in to our decision making process.
- Ed Borda believes that promises were broken and the community was duped.
- May 9, 2006 Dan Blinka and R.L. McNeely appear on 1290’s *Breakfast Club* radio program discussing the Chaney Center.
- May 17, 2006 Supt. Mitchell, seeking to be responsive to Board concerns, announces FCCC changes including: expanded services and programming, job skills, AODA programming, and off-site opportunities.
- July, 2006 Dan Blinka and Barry Givens meet with Warden McCash and Community Corrections Director, Jan Cummings, to discuss re-integration issues. Issues included: Community Corrections decision-making authority; public transportation for inmates; utilization of community volunteers; inmate jobs; inmate driver’s licenses; need for wrap-around approach (family, community and parole) for community re-integration; midnight releases; continuation of Floyd Mitchell’s programs (given Mitchell’s recent promotion).
- July 19, 2006 FCAB recommends to DOC to adopt Nurturing Father’s Program (six-week component) on no-cost pre-trial basis. Subsequently, program is approved by DOC and administered to inmates.
- FCCC Interim Supt. David Andraska announces that FCAB social worker Colleen Frey has been transferred.
- September 20, 2006 Introduction of new superintendent, Michael Cockroft. Warden McCash in attendance. Coté’s suggests possible need for FCAB to meet monthly. Blinka suggests that Marquette students could be recruited to re-open driver’s license cases and help clear suspensions.
- November 15, 2006 Supt. Cockroft, seeking to respond to Board concerns, announced he is: (1) working to expand religious services, (2) considering expanding volunteer utilization; (3) revamping offsite employment; (4) utilizing Town Hall meetings with inmates; (5) allowing families to send coats and other clothing to inmates; and (6) utilizing guest speakers.
- January 17, 2007 Last date of periodic attendance at FCAB meetings by remaining FCCC attendee (Christine Stone).

- July 18, 2007 Dan Blinka reports consultation with retired judge Jim Grambling in reference to MATC's driver's license program (commencing 9/1/07) in which DOC has agreed to fund one case manager providing services with Chaney being this program's principal beneficiary, including Blinka's statement: "Finally, let's give credit where credit is due... The fact that Chaney is at the center (of this) and that DOC allotted additional funds for a case manager to make this happen bespeaks the role of Michael Cockroft in getting this initiative moving."
- September 19, 2007 Warden McCash meets with FCAB regarding FCAB's proposed "Superintendent's Reporting Form." Resolution of DOC opposition occurs per Blinka's suggestion that information be provided to FCAB by Superintendent Cockroft absent use of a new form. The issue was raised that when the Board meets it always has questions for the work release coordinator and social workers, and that we need a dialogue on how to get them to attend meetings.
- November 28, 2007 Ed Borda suggests that FCAB fundraising should occur through another organization such as SPCA. Non-attendance of social workers noted by chair.
- January 11, 2008 McNeely discusses with Cockroft non-attendance of social workers. Cockroft indicates that Union has informed staff not to attend, unless paid, except Frey had expressed her intention to attend regularly, regardless of pay, after Vanden Boom's retirement.
- January 16, 2008 Announcement that DOC no longer refers to Chaney Center as a Pre-Release Center. It is now deemed to be a minimum security facility.
- Superintendent notes that Center is now getting "unrealistic candidates."
- Mr. Chaney expressed his dismay and concern over the fact that he had agreed to his name being used on a pre-release center and not a prison.
- Gary Davis suggested that FCAB should encourage DOC to change its position.
- Bernadette Williams presented information regarding a FCAB web site design. Information regarding funding and possible use of students to do site development and maintenance provided.
- March 19, 2008 FCAB's "*The Prison in our Midst*" article has been drafted and later appears in the May issue of Sherman Park Today.
- FCAB's "*A PROPOSAL FOR THE PLANFUL RE-INTEGRATION OF EX-OFFENDERS INTO THEIR FAMILIES AND COMMUNITY*" is circulated.
- July 16, 2008 Larry Coté agrees to provide coordination to *Black Nouveau* as it seeks to produce a program on FCAB and the Chaney Center. The program may need to focus on FCAB if DOC fails to authorize FCCC participation.
- Noted that regular attendance at FCAB meetings by most FCCC staff, excluding Supt., ceased considerably prior to Cockroft's appointment as superintendent.
- August 5, 2008 Rep. Tamara Grigsby, Barry Givens, and R.L. McNeely, appear on 1290's *Breakfast Club* discussing retrenchment in re-integration services at Chaney.