

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF CORRECTION

December 17, 1975

A regular meeting of the Board of Correction was held on Tuesday, December 17, 1975 at Mr. Tufo's residence, 164 East 72nd Street, New York, New York.

Present were Mr. Tufo, Mr. Jackson, Mr. Kirby, Father Rios, Mrs. Singer, and Mr. Schulte. Also present by invitation of the Board were Marc Rosen, Executive Director; Michael D. Cleary, Executive Secretary/Fiscal Officer; Barbara J. Armstrong, Acting Director, Clergy Volunteer Program; Greg Harris, Deputy Director, Clergy Volunteer Program; Stephen Fisher, Staff Assistant; Arden Culver, Administrative Secretary; David Jones, Law Intern; and Jeff Buss, Anita Foster and Joe Smith, Student Internes.

Present from the Legal Aid Society Prisoner Rights Project was Joel Berger.

The meeting was called to order at 4:15 p.m.

Mr. Tufo served as Chairman and Mr. Fisher as Secretary of the meeting.

The Chairman read a draft press release that is to be issued from the Mayor's office on steps scheduled to be taken by the City to improve the situation at the House of Detention for Men on Rikers Island (HDM). The Chairman solicited Board members comments on the press release.

A discussion ensued on the letter that the Board wrote to Judge Lasker regarding the emergency use of the Manhattan House of Detention (Tombs). The Chairman noted that the Legal Aid Society opposed the reopening of the Tombs. They were invited to this meeting to explain why. It was noted that Judge Lasker looks to the Board for support on this matter, and he is giving serious consideration to the Board's recommendation in its letter.

At 4:35 p.m., Mr. Berger entered the meeting.

Mr. Berger stated that the Department of Correction has not yet set a date to begin contact visits at HDM or at the Tombs if it should be reopened. In addition, he noted that the Department does not want to apply the 30 day double-occupancy limit to present HDM inmates but only to those newly admitted to the facility.

Mr. Berger stated that he was very disturbed by the actions the City took in asking the Board to take a position in the pending lawsuit. Mr. Berger noted that the City has to make certain changes at the Tombs before it can be reopened and the Court of Appeals has affirmed this. In addition, he also questioned the necessity of reopening the Tombs at all. He stated that the Department is asking for the reopening of the Tombs as a response to recent court orders on overcrowding rather than releasing inmates or help solve the problems of the bail system. He noted that if the Tombs is to be in operation then some changes in its physical and environmental structure are needed i.e., noise levels, lack of recreation, lack of contact visits.

It was stated that the Board has recommended that the Tombs be reopened only with the provision of contact visits.

It was suggested that if the Adolescent Detention Center were reopened and the Bronx House of Detention kept open, there would be a substantial reduction in the overcrowding at the House of Detention for Men.

Mr. Berger noted that the City has the power to reduce its own jail population and has consistently refused to use that power. He stated that Judge Judd's court order gave the Commissioner of Correction and the Wardens of the Brooklyn and Queens Houses of Detention authority to release inmates if they cannot be housed one man to a cell.

A discussion ensued comparing HDM and the Tombs.

Upon motion duly made by Mr. Tufo and seconded by Mrs. Singer the meeting was adjourned at 5:18 p.m.