

Correction Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes

Monday, July 22, 2024

7:00 PM via Zoom and [YouTube Live](#) and [CT-N](#)

The following committee members were present:

Tadhg Dooley, Chair
Marisol Garcia, Chair
Andrew Giering
Ben Howell
Daryl McGraw
Kyisha Velazquez

The following committee members were absent:

John Bowen
Reena Kapoor
Melvin Medina
Scott Semple

I. CONVENE MEETING

The meeting was called to order at 7:17 PM by Chair Dooley.

II. ADOPTION OF JUNE MEETING MINUTES

A motion to adopt the June meeting minutes was made by Mr. Howell, seconded by Chair Garcia. Chair Dooley asked if there was any discussion. Hearing none, the June minutes were approved by voice vote.

III. SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATES

Chair Dooley noted that Mr. Medina, the Funding Subcommittee Chair, was unable to attend the meeting. Mr. Howell reported out for the Visioning Subcommittee. Members requested a timeline of when the Interim Ombuds would be appointed so that they could set some expectations around interactions. Chair Garcia provided an overview of the work bring done by the Governance Subcommittee. Members examined the Permanent Ombuds job description, and consider the requirement to have a college degree to be preferred but not required. They are hoping many of the applicants for this position are people who were formerly incarcerated. Members were also interested in the long term plan for standing up the Office of the Correction Ombuds. Chair Garcia emphasized that hiring a person to lead the office is one step in that process.

IV. UPDATE ON INTERIM OMBUDS

Chair Dooley reached out to the Office of the Governor as well as the Black and Puerto Rican Caucus regarding the appointment of an Interim Ombuds, but acknowledged that there was no news on the matter. He highlighted that a person was to be appointed by July 1, 2024. Chair Garcia had heard that two candidates were interviewed for the position. She noted that Barbara Fair has been a part of the hiring process and may have more insights to share during the Public Comment segment.

V. DISCUSSION OF PERMANENT OMBUDS APPLICATION PROCESS

Chair Dooley circulated a draft job description and requested that members share their thoughts on potential revisions. The primary change made from the last approved draft was to remove the requirement that the applicant hold a bachelor's degree. Mr. Howell asked if members would be voting to approve and submit the job description to the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) during this meeting. Chair Dooley confirmed that was the goal. Members reviewed the draft during the meeting and offered edits along the way.

Chair Dooley wanted to make clear that the Ombuds could take formal legal action on behalf of a person in DOC custody to enforce the mission of the office. He underscored that this language in the job description came directly from statute. Chair Garcia questioned whether this office would need a bigger budget to take on actions such as litigation. Mr. Howell thought inclusion of the language was appropriate to clarify job responsibilities and expectations. He noted that the Governor declined to appoint their top applicant over concerns of being an aggressive litigant.

Chair Garcia expressed her strong support for including previous experience with inmates as a required qualification for the job since the position would be advocating for such a unique population.

Chair Dooley asked if there were any other items to tease out as required, or if members would rely on their own discretion in evaluating candidates. Mr. Howell approached the job description as guidance, not a rubric. He argued to keep all qualifications as preferred as not to preclude any potential applicants. Mr. McGraw also stated concern about excluding applicants by outlining required qualifications, apart from a high school diploma. He cautioned members to think through how the job description was worded and could be perceived. Ms. Velazquez echoed that concern and recommended the language be kept simple and open as not to discourage candidates from applying. She wondered if there was language to allow an applicant to contact the committee with job-specific questions. Chair Dooley confirmed that a such a provision was included at the end of the description, but offered that it could be spotlighted on the DAS jobs posting.

Mr. Howell made a motion to adopt the revised job description, which was seconded by Chair Garcia. Chair Dooley asked if there was any discussion. Hearing none, the revised job description was unanimously approved by voice vote.

Chair Dooley noted that next steps were to submit the job description to DAS and publicize the job application, once posted.

VI. PUBLIC COMMENT

Barbara Fair explained that a lot of people in the community were aware of the Ombuds position from the last round of interviews, so she was hopeful that much of the outreach had already been conducted. She expressed concern over the September 30th deadline for receipt of applications. She would like to see a finalist by the start of the 2025 Legislative Session.

Ms. Fair questioned the inclusion of the language, "with prior experience in Connecticut state government in executive, legislative, or judicial branches" as a preferred qualification for the job. She asked how the experience was relevant to the position. Chair Dooley thought that having experience navigating state government could be a plus, but reiterated that it was not a requirement.

A concerned citizen joined the conversation to learn more about the Correction Ombuds position. He was interested in applying and alarmed at the lack of legal assistance available to inmates. Chair Dooley summarized that committee members previously posted a call for applications, held a round of interviews, and submitted names of potential appointments to the Governor, which were declined. The process is now starting afresh, and committee members were adjusting the job description to maximize the pool of applicants for this job. Mr. McGraw encouraged the concerned citizen to reach out to the committee with any further questions about the position.

Chair Garcia asked Ms. Fair if she had any updates on the appointment of the Interim Ombuds. Ms. Fair stated that they had narrowed the field down to one candidate who was currently undergoing a background check.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was formally adjourned at 8:33 PM.