

Subj: Follow-Up Complaint To Freeholder Committee

January 25, 2013

Hon. Rufus I. Johnson, Freeholder & Chairman
Freeholder Public Safety/Penal Committee
Essex County Board of Chosen Freeholders
Essex County Hall of Records
465 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd
Room 507
Newark NJ 07102

Via Hand Delivery & Email

Dear Sir:

Thank you for your response to my earlier communication and I am looking forward to achieving closure on the issues brought forth thus far, but please accept this as a continuation of my January 15, 2013 letter regarding overall jail operations and my request for your intervention/investigation.

It's no secret and some may say that it should be a source of pride that we operate the largest county jail in NJ with the largest inmate population, the largest staff and we bring in **record numbers of outside revenue.**

We are basically more than just a jail and in fact, we are a **Money Machine** to use a slang term.

Be it a Money Machine, whether that term is slang or not, we are a Money Machine that **depends upon, and profits from the buying, selling and trading of incarcerated human beings.**

Nonetheless, the jail is probably the **largest revenue source in the history of Essex County.**

As you also know, the fact that **we profit from incarcerated human beings** is also **the most "controversial political issue" in the history of Essex County.**

Normally, we as a union would have no reason to weigh in on the controversy and we should probably just sit back while the activists argue with the politicians, but as you will read,... **the PBA is being forced to weigh in** and **especially when our**

officers are being treated worse than the “controversial inmates” that we are expected to care for.

One may think that since **we make our money in this “politically controversial manner”**, the last thing the county or even jail management needs, is unnecessary negative attention by a rank and file union rep, but what choice do I have if the county wants us to provide this **“controversial service”**, but then **cuts our throats** in plain English by nickel and diming us to the point where our **most basic non-federal jail operations suffer and are depleted to dangerously low levels?**

Jail operations, staffing, basic services and necessary equipment have never been 100% on point or sufficient since the jail opened in 2004 and sporadic operational cuts have come and gone, but I’ve asked this question many times in prior communications and have yet to receive an answer...

How is it that we ran a more secure and better staffed jail before the federal contract began to rain money on us and now that **we are rolling in profit and surplus... why do jail operations continue to move backwards?*

The last numbers I recall reading last week or so, was that we brought in **53 million dollars of revenue county wide** just last year alone and we currently have a **31 million dollar budget “SURPLUS” going into 2013.**

It’s time to celebrate one may think, but rank and file officers and supervisors running the jail have absolutely nothing to cheer about.

Did you know that the jail has been unable to provide us with such simple items as **Drinking Water** and such simple services as adequate Bathroom Janitorial Services?

There are empty hand sanitizers throughout the jail, broken or empty paper towel dispensers in the officer bathrooms where dirty water and used soap puddles soak the rolls of paper towels that are left on the counter, two locked bathrooms near the officers dining room that we are barred from and which are only opened at inspection time, overflowing garbage pales and I would venture to say that the bathrooms at the meadowlands look better after being used by 10s of thousands of drunken football fans than ours look by the middle of the day.

The more money that came in since the Federal Inmates began to arrive to further complicate jail operations with their endless list of special wants & needs, the less manpower and resources we have had despite these revenue windfalls that **I keep reading about in the media.**

**We took in 2 outside federal agencies in return for 10s of millions of dollars and WE CANT EVEN FILL OUR WATER COOLERS NOR PROVIDE DRY PAPER TOWELS IN THE BATHROOMS?*

In the same way we lost janitorial services for the bathrooms we also lost these services in the Officers Dining Room and while I am on the subject of health and cleanliness...were the freeholders made aware that our kitchen and ODR is infested with roaches?

We had roaches at the Old Jail Annex too and we learned to live with them, but the Old Jail Annex was built in the 1870's and was the subject of a federal indictment against the county which forced this new **Wonderjail** to be built and **we didn't offer the broken down Jail Annex to 2 outside agencies who pay us millions** nor **were we seeking ACA Accreditation at the Old Jail Annex.**

Even years before the feds arrival when we began to cut costs by **misusing** the two supposed Rehab Facilities such as Delaney & Logan Hall as less expensive inmate housing extensions of our county jail...why didn't those millions of dollars in saving **according to recent media accounts** ever give jail operations some necessary breathing room and give jail staff their most basic necessities, which is simply **full staffing on all shifts on all posts and other operational resources like safe, secure, hygienic equipment/supplies, updated vehicles, updated emergency response equipment, etc.**

As you know for many years from my **fly-on-the-wall perspective** as opposed to politically self-serving fluff pieces put into the media by our county executive and/or his appointees, I've always offered a challenge to the freeholder board, which is to believe what I tell you **for free** regarding the truth in jail operations or keep paying hundreds of thousands of dollars for administrators and consultants who create the false facades, which in turn allow the county executive to brag in the media about things that are actually **nothing to brag about**? TRUST ME!!!!

Let me ask my biggest questions, which some may think is a rhetorical attempt as sarcasm, but even though I don't truly expect an answer, I would hope that you at least answer these questions in your mind and keep them in your mind for this and future narratives as they continue, because through state law and through some very carefully worded and binding departmental disciplinary and operational policies... correction officers are held to high personal and job related standards...

How do I preach the importance of honesty, integrity, accountability, reliability, culpability, and responsibility etc. to my members as **“must have core values” in an effort to survive in this job if the very people who are holding them to these core values, **lack them**?*

How do I continue to tell that officer, suspended or written up for even a minor charge like **tardiness as an example, because his or her tardiness caused an **operational deficiency**, while **management fueled operational deficiencies** stare us in the face at every turn in the jail?*

How do I continue to tell that officer who may leave his or her post uncovered and inmates unattended that they can be suspended for **causing a security breach, when the director **purposely cuts posts, forces officers to leave inmates unattended and in fact creates several security breaches in one way or another on all shifts, Every Single Day?**
Because He’s The Boss?*

I certainly hope that’s not the answer that I would be offered because as **“THE BOSS” with 30+ years of administrative experience**, he of all people should know that **honesty, integrity and accountability begin with him!!!**

**Is he here and being paid to run a jail at its highest level of safety security and staffing 24/7 or is he paid just to make it look that way when the jail inspectors are present or when the media is asking questions?*

Do we have an Onsite Jail Consultant here to **“make sure” that the Director is running the jail to its fullest and most secure potential and that jail management reflects the highest levels of those **must have core values mentioned above**, or is our jail consultant just another **political buffer** here to help the director spin webs, create false facades, provide the county executive with media fodder and only care about jail operations running at full capacity at inspection times?*

I can tell you quite frankly that if the Freeholders are expecting **100% honesty and accountability** for the administrative salaries and consulting contracts that they approve for the running of this jail...you’re getting robbed!!!

On the other hand, if all our governing body expects is to spend top dollar so things look good on paper regardless of the truth...it’s been money well spent.

Up to this point, I may be accused of being too one sided and that when I quoted the budget numbers above, It may seem that I expect that all available county

money be dumped into the jail, but I am well aware that the fruits of the federal contract and other jail driven revenue boosters are meant to assist the entire county, but here is one major concern that we simply can't ignore.

If a parks worker position isn't filled, grass may grow longer than originally intended and leaves may build up longer than intended, **but no one's lives are in danger.**

I can't tolerate one more slanted political fluff piece in the media about our Wonderjail, how it operates like a well-oiled machine and how we generate revenue, free of problems and corruption. Furthermore, we mention the revenue as if it's a magical achievement or as if it just ends up at our door with less than no mention of the rank and file who work to ensure the revenue flows in.

I can't tolerate one more meeting or negotiation session where I get my head patted, my intelligence insulted, where I'm lied to, or where I have my own personal integrity compromised in the eyes of my members when I go forward to my members with what's been promised and negotiated in these meetings just to have the issue **stalled or ignored for months if not years.**

I can no longer tolerate the interference of politically or managerially protected individuals into our negotiated agreements when that interference is meant to **promote favoritism and officer exclusion.**

I can no longer tolerate the **obvious double standard** between federal jail operations and county jail operations, in which county operations and those officers assigned there, have been treated like **second class correction officers** and where we have lost county manpower to federal jobs, which was never replaced.

I want to talk about the real jail that's hidden from the public & media and the price that correction officers pay each and every day and are barely recognized while our top bosses spend the entirety of their time **cultivating this false image** of our jail as to impress those who don't need to be impressed, but rather, **need to be told the cold hard truth that the jail is a sinking ship.**

I was going to simply provide the numbers of recent incidents and officer assaults that have occurred, but it would be in your better interest to ask for reports and ask to view video tapes, like one particular recent occurrence that shows an officer being attacked, wrestling with the attacker and holding his own in fact, but than being kicked by another inmate and being surrounded by several more who luckily stood back.

I want you to see for yourself how much time went by before help came from other parts of the jail, which keep in mind is nearly 900,000 square feet just to give you an idea of how far away help might be and this officer rolled around on the ground with absolutely no personal protection equipment that we all carried in the old jails but aren't permitted to carry in the new jail, which under the **failed theory of Direct Supervision**... coddles inmates and gives them the upper hand.

I want the freeholders to see the never-ending mountain of paperwork that officers need to fill out to show accountability, because as I stated earlier... **it's more important to management to show a piece of paper that says the job was done as opposed to the job actually being done.**

They worry more about cleaning supplies being secure and accounted for then they care about officer safety. Securing cleaning supplies is important, but let's make the officers secure first.

They lock the inmates down and put one officer in charge of two units and while the officer is running back and forth all day running two units... GOD FORBID A MOP OR A SPRAY BOTTLE FULL OF CLEANER IS LAYING AROUND FOR TWO MINUTES!!!!

I firmly believe that management refuses to address or acknowledge these issues and concerns and have **allowed our relationship to deteriorate to my described level of mistrust and lost confidence** due to their unwillingness to see beyond our federal inmate contract and our initiative to become accredited by the ACA , The American Correctional Association.

Since the inception of the federal contract and the subsequent demand of the federal government that we achieve this **worthless ACA accreditation** as a condition of the federal contract, management has gone down a very dangerous road, which is to be so absorbed with these initiatives, which they see as ways to bolster their own employment, that they have forgotten about the **core operations** of the jail and what is clearly the **backbone** of any jail, which is **INMATE CUSTODY IN THE CELL BLOCKS & OTHER INMATE CONTROL POSITIONS**, such as Intake, floor/building control booths, transportation, relief/emergency response, etc.

Reminder: *Staffing shortages and other specifics are not being offered in this narrative due to this narrative being shared on the Internet and will be addressed in person.*

If it's not a Federal or ACA issue (*a feather in managements cap*) it doesn't matter and as I said in my earlier letter...I've brought issues that put lives in danger and issues that involve misappropriation of public funds through the manipulation of our overtime allotment policy and I get lip service and promises of corrective actions **that never materialize.**

I would also like to clarify, that in the above referenced circumstances and the many other questionable operational and personnel issues, which many times involve officers and the way in which one group of officers may be shown preferential treatment, **I don't blame the officers in the least.**

You may say that as the representative for uniformed personnel, I'm obviously taking the easy way out by throwing attention away from my membership, but to use some **slang terms** for just a moment...when officers are being assigned to jobs, shifts or extra earning potential under questionable circumstances, **getting over, getting hooked up, being permitted to skate, and being trained to believe that it's OK to jump ahead of others or to gain special favors ahead of others in a slanted manner,** you will come to the conclusion that **they can't do it alone or without some sort of higher influence that allows it and opens the door.**

You will realize that it's some boss somewhere or some sort of confidante of a jail boss or political appointee who are setting these **low, weak and damaging standards.**

You will also find, believe it or not, that the slanted hookups and perks being doled out, sometimes doesn't even involve a person of authority and can come from a person no higher than an office clerk.

That may sound impossible, but when we have office clerks permitted to act unchecked and unchallenged **after upper management was warned,** you will be surprised at what can happen.

It's all about who has the ability to cause interference with legitimate and fair jail operations and initiatives and who promotes **favoritism and calculated exclusion** rather than fair and all inclusive career and earning opportunity and **jail managements inability to eradicate such corruption.**

I sincerely hope that you can see by now, that I was not born a non-conformist whistleblower and unfortunately, I've become one with good reason.

I don't publicize jail deficiencies until they are ignored and I don't throw rocks at the federal contract or the ACA or criticize management just because it sounds like fun to go against the grain and there is nothing I would love more than to get behind these initiatives if they were **applied properly, didn't cause us to lose all sense of priority, didn't come with damage to other parts of jail operations** and **didn't keep county custody officers at a constant loss.**

The Federal Inmates and the ACA Accreditation, worthless or not, **should be part of our jail** and **not what overpowers our jail** to the point where **county inmate concerns and overall jail safety concerns are put further and further on the back burner to a point of danger** and as much as I would love to go into written detail, the best way to point out these issues will be through our discussed one on one meetings and a one on one jail tour where each area of the jail on each shift is explained in its entirety.

As for my opinion and damaged relationship with upper management, I stand behind by opinion and description of the facts involved and if that sounds disrespectful, so be it.

Respect works both ways, it isn't built into administrative job titles, years of service doesn't buy you the respect of your subordinates, respect is earned through proper and honest actions, you get what you give and as long as we have this level of disrespect flowing from the top down and uniformed staff being told to shut up and accept these **deceptive operational practices**, I see no end in sight.

Management can begin the process of gaining our trust and support and can begin showing some respect and concern for their subordinates, **by simply being HONEST from this point on that the jail will not survive in its current "Borrowing-From-Peter-To-Pay-Paul Operational Form"**, let alone win any **ACA WHITE GLOVE AWARDS** until someone upstairs can be honest with the administration that we either do what's necessary to maintain the Federal Contract and achieve ACA Accreditation **or please stop wasting our time with these slanted paper tricks and making the entire jail staff miserable.**

You don't offer **Filet Mignon Services** to the Federal Government when you know darn well that you are operating on a **Chop Meat Budget.**

When our top administrators cut posts, place staff in danger, refuse to provide any and all resources, it sends a clear message that they don't care about the men and woman who depend on their leadership.

When that changes and when management can make their decisions, set staffing and provide protective and operational resources based on the REAL NEEDS of the jail and look at staff as human beings rather than numbers on a budget sheet, our jail operations will begin to take shape.

Until then, I can predict quite clearly that any **Jail Contracts and subsequent requirements for a contract to succeed**, which is put under the control of **our top administrators** *who fail to act on corruption, cause officers to be separated into two classes of importance, allows favoritism, exclusion and discrimination perceived or otherwise to go unchecked, creates false facades and gambles with the safety of their staff by purposely not providing what's needed and necessary for the entire jail 24/7 in regard to staffing and resources... **THOSE CONTRACTS & SUBSEQUENT ACA REQUIREMENTS WILL FAIL!!!***

As always, thank you for your time and attention and in the next bulletin I will be addressing **even further dishonesty** regarding the recent flood and the continued misuse of Delaney & Logan Hall.

Respectfully,
Joe Amato, President
PBA Local 382