

TO: Prof. Andrea Armstrong
FROM: Scott Havener
DATE: Nov. 28, 2022
RE: “Better Know a Jail” Memo

.....

Grant Parish and its Detention Facility – General Characteristics

Grant Parish is a small Parish in Central Louisiana; the Parish seat is Colfax.¹ It is populated by an estimated 22,236 individuals² who comprise approximately 7,054 households.³ A little over half its population is categorized as male and, racially, the Parish is overwhelmingly white, with white people making up 80.4% of the total population; 15.8% are Black and 5.5% are Hispanic or Latino.⁴ The median household income is \$51,449 and 18.2% of individuals live in poverty.⁵

The Parish jail for Grant Parish is named Grant Parish Detention Facility (GPDF).⁶ Its physical address is 485 Richardson Drive, Colfax, Louisiana 71417.⁷ Like the Parish in which it resides, it is a small jail, able to house 106 individuals.⁸ GPDF does not maintain a publicly available inmate roster,⁹ the Sheriff’s Office occasionally posts booking information on its Facebook page.¹⁰ People incarcerated in GPDF are mostly pre-trial detainees and people serving short DOC sentences.¹¹ The Sheriff has been on record stating that “[m]ost of the people here [in GPDF] are serving three or four years . . .”¹² Therefore, if the Sheriff’s statement is accurate, GPDF likely mostly houses individuals who are pre-trial or serving Dept. of Corrections sentences that are less than five years.

GPDF is run by the Corrections Division of the Grant Parish Sheriff’s Office (GPSO) and is staffed by forty-one total individuals, comprising sheriff’s deputies, medical personnel, and

¹ *Local Louisiana: Grant Parish Profile*, LOUISIANA.GOV, <https://www.louisiana.gov/local-louisiana/grant-parish> (last visited Nov. 26, 2022).

² *Quickfacts: Grant Parish, Louisiana; Louisiana; United States*, UNITED STATES CENSUS BUREAU, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/grantparishlouisiana,LA,US/PST045221> (last visited Nov. 26, 2022)

³ *Id.*

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ *Corrections*, GRANT PARISH SHERIFF’S OFFICE, <https://www.grantso.org/corrections> (last visited Nov. 26, 2022).

⁷ *Contact an Offender*, GRANT PARISH SHERIFF’S OFFICE, <https://www.grantso.org/contactoffender> (last visited Nov. 26, 2022).

⁸ *Corrections*, GRANT PARISH SHERIFF’S OFFICE, <https://www.grantso.org/corrections> (last visited Nov. 26, 2022). Grant Parish’s LAVINE roster is offline at the time of writing, as well. Check periodically with the LCLE.

⁹ *Contact an Offender*, GRANT PARISH SHERIFF’S OFFICE, <https://www.grantso.org/contactoffender> (last visited Nov. 26, 2022).

¹⁰ <https://www.facebook.com/GrantParishSO/>

¹¹ *Contact an offender*, (“The Grant Parish Detention Facility serves as the parish jail for Grant Parish The facility also houses offenders that are arrested by the Louisiana State Police, Probation & Parole, Wildlife and Fisheries, and various federal law enforcement agencies for crimes that occur in Grant Parish”); *see also infra* note 28 at 2.

¹² Steven Maxwell, *Grant Parish Detention Center gets new inmate chapel with help of local pastors*, KALB, <https://www.kalb.com/content/news/Grant-Parish-Detention-Center-gets-new-inmate-chapel-with-help-of-local-pastors-383368331.html> (June 16, 2016).

administrative staff.¹³ A breakdown of the number of staff working in each position is not available.¹⁴ GPDF is led by Warden James Watkins,¹⁵ who stepped into that position in January 2020.¹⁶ The Assistant Warden is Chance Durand,¹⁷ who began working in that position in 2020 after working as a GPSO correctional officer at GPDF since 2014.¹⁸ The Sheriff of Grant Parish is Steven McCain, who was first elected in 2012 and has previously worked as an investigator for the Grant Parish District Attorney’s Office and a state trooper; he also has a degree in criminal justice.¹⁹

GPDF began operating as the parish jail upon the completion of its construction in November 2005.²⁰ The allocated budget for the jail construction was \$3,308,718,²¹ which was supported by a nineteen-mill ad valorem tax passed by voters in 2000 that expired in 2021.²² It appears that voters have re-approved that tax; it is set to expire in 2040.²³

GPSO’s total expenses for its activities conducted in fiscal year 2020-21 amounted to \$9,359,834.²⁴ GPSO spent \$4,554,399 on personnel services, \$1,140,456 on operating services, \$615,288 on materials and supplies, and \$156,763 on “other expenses.”²⁵ According to documents collected by Incarceration Transparency, GPSO at some point conducted an analysis that found the cost of housing a person at GPDF amounted to \$33.10 per day.²⁶ No other data about expenses specifically incurred by the operation of GPDF is available.

Evidence of Oversight and Litigation

GPDF is not accredited by the American Correctional Association.²⁷ Nor does it appear to be accredited by the National Commission on Correctional Health Care, which does not release a list of accredited facilities (GPSO makes no mention of NCCHC accreditation on its

¹³ *Contact an Offender*, GRANT PARISH SHERIFF’S OFFICE, <https://www.grantso.org/contactoffender> (last visited Nov. 26, 2022).

¹⁴ *See id.*

¹⁵ watkins@grantso.org

¹⁶ *Administration*, GRANT PARISH SHERIFF’S OFFICE, <https://www.grantso.org/administration> (last visited Nov. 26, 2022).

¹⁷ cdurand@grantso.org

¹⁸ *Administration*, GRANT PARISH SHERIFF’S OFFICE, <https://www.grantso.org/administration> (last visited Nov. 26, 2022).

¹⁹ *Id.*

²⁰ PAYNE, MOORE, & HERRINGTON, LLP, INDEPENDENT AUDITOR’S REPORT: GRANT PARISH SHERIFF 6 (2005) [https://app.lla.state.la.us/PublicReports.nsf/DBE69228B8FA6EA4862575D100668C71/\\$FILE/0001099E.pdf](https://app.lla.state.la.us/PublicReports.nsf/DBE69228B8FA6EA4862575D100668C71/$FILE/0001099E.pdf).

²¹ *Id.* at 30.

²² *Id.* at 31.

²³ ROZIER MCKAY & WILLIS, GRANT PARISH SHERIFF: ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2021 18 (2021)

[https://app.lla.state.la.us/PublicReports.nsf/0/D3AC1851B4A7AF45862587B9005AFF56/\\$FILE/00025661.pdf](https://app.lla.state.la.us/PublicReports.nsf/0/D3AC1851B4A7AF45862587B9005AFF56/$FILE/00025661.pdf).

GPSO also levies a 1% sales tax to cover employee salaries and benefits. *Id.*

²⁴ *Id.* at 7.

²⁵ *Id.* at 10.

²⁶ *Grant Parish*, INCARCERATION TRANSPARENCY, https://www.incarcerationtransparency.org/?page_id=287 (last visited Nov. 26, 2022).

²⁷ *Accredited Facilities*, American Correctional Association, https://aca.org/ACA_Member/ACA/ACA_Member/Standards_and_Accreditation/SAC_AccFacHome.aspx?hkey=f53cf206-2285-490e-98b7-66b5ecf4927a (last visited Nov. 26, 2022).

website). The Louisiana Dept of Public Safety and Corrections (DOC) conducts annual audits of parish jails but has never publicly released an audit it conducted of GPDF. According to material authored and released by GPSO, which should only be read with that caveat in mind, “[i]n 2021, the GPDF was commended as a ‘model for facilities’ in Louisiana. The inspector reported that of all the facilities he inspects throughout Louisiana, the GPDF is by far one of the cleanest and nicest facilities inspected.”²⁸ The report where the inspector found such wonderful conditions is not available on the GPSO or LA DOC websites for the public to read. After an exhaustive search, I have yet to find a single audit conducted pursuant to PREA or by any federal or state agency beyond the yearly financial audits of GPSO conducted by Louisiana Legislative Auditor contractors.

GPDF has managed to consistently stay out of the news. Besides a few articles from the local CBS station celebrating the opening of a new chapel for inmates in 2016,²⁹ there is remarkably little reporting about the GPDF, whether it relates to conditions, deaths in custody, or budgetary decisions. A google search of “Grant Parish Detention Facility” leads to one general information page from GPSO, a host of scam websites purporting to offer inmate rosters, and no news articles. A search of the local news site refers only to arrests and articles about the chapel.³⁰

The Grant Parish Police Jury is the governing body of Grant Parish.³¹ It does not have an oversight committee nor any committee that relates directly to the operations of GPSO or GPDF.³² After speaking with the Grant Parish library headquarters branch in Colfax, I learned that the library does not keep meeting minutes from the Police Jury. Next, after speaking with administrative staff for the Police Jury, I learned that the Sheriff’s Office operates as a completely independent entity; it does not report to the Police Jury regarding its operations or its budget.

No litigant has ever sought injunctive relief relating to conditions at GPDF or any other reason. Since 2012, one litigant has brought a § 1983 claim against Sheriff McCain and Warden Watkins for acts that allegedly occurred from June 2015 to January 2016. Gregory Gough alleged that he was kept in solitary confinement from June 22, 2015 to January 2016 despite the fact that GPSO deputies knew of his fragile mental state; he alleged that there were periods when he was not allowed to leave his cell for weeks at a time and when he was deprived of toiletries, assaulted by correctional officers, and confined to a restraint chair.³³ Gough is no longer incarcerated and seeks damages. The case is ongoing.

Transparency and Deaths in Custody

From 2014 to present (November 2022), there has been one (1) death in custody at GPDF. Gregory Brevelle, a thirty-eight year-old man, died by suicide in GPDF on January 26, 2022. According to documentation submitted to the Louisiana Commission on Law Enforcement

²⁸ SHERIFF STEVEN MCCAIN, GRANT PARISH SHERIFF’S UPDATE 2022 EDITION 2 (2022) <https://perma.cc/99N2-SRJZ>

²⁹ See, e.g., *supra* note 12.

³⁰ See <https://www.thetowntalk.com/search/?q=grant+parish+detention+facility>.

³¹ GRANT PARISH POLICE JURY, <https://gppj.org> (last visited Nov. 28, 2022).

³² See generally *id.*

³³ See *Gough v. McCain*, No. 1:19-cv-1183 (W.D. La.).

(LCLE) by GPSO, “deputies had interacted with Brevelle throughout the day. During routine checks, a deputy discovered that Brevelle had hung himself, using a bedsheet.”³⁴ It does not appear that GPSO issued a public statement on the matter.

Beyond the annual reports released on its website,³⁵ there are no regular press releases or public briefings available on operations inside GPDF. Moreover, after searching the published materials from the primary prison and jail advocacy groups in Louisiana—to include Louisianans for Prison Alternatives, ACLU of Louisiana, and Friends and Families of Louisiana’s Incarcerated Children—I did not uncover any investigations or reports on conditions at GPDF.

As mentioned previously, there is no way for the public to access a roster of individuals currently incarcerated at GPDF. However, GPSO does appear to faithfully fulfill its legal obligation to provide information when it is requested pursuant to the Louisiana Public Records Act.³⁶ GPSO does require—probably without a legal basis—that all such requests are made by mail to the records division post office box,³⁷ but its responses to my requests have always been made within the three-day time limitation set forth by statute and have contained the all of the information that I requested. If trying to find more information about GPSO or GPDF, sending the request via mail will get the quickest response.

³⁴ *See supra* note 26.

³⁵ *See supra* note 28.

³⁶ LA. STAT. ANN. § 44:1 *et seq.* (2022).

³⁷ Grant Parish Sheriff’s Office, ATTN: Custodian of Records, P.O. Box 187, Colfax, LA 71417. For more information, *see Request Public Records*, GRANT PARISH SHERIFF’S OFFICE, <https://www.grantso.org/publicrecords> (last visited Nov. 26, 2022).