



MDOC DIRECTOR ANSWERS QUESTIONS FROM NEW LEGISLATORS

On Thursday, MDOC Director Dan Heyns appeared before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Corrections.

It was the first meeting of the subcommittee this legislative session and was used as an opportunity for the Department to discuss goals and a mission plan for the upcoming year.

Lawmakers shared their concerns, including the aging inmate population, Aramark and the training academy.

“It was my hope we could transition to the model used by law enforcement agencies where community colleges train and educate people. (I) believe it gives you a high-caliber individual with investment ...” Heyns said.

Heyns said the department is hir-

ing rapidly as nearly 1,000 officers are needed. A large number of COs hired in the 1980s are reaching retirement age. Heyns iterated that he hopes to revert back to community college training once the current staffing crisis is resolved via state run academies.

Also regarding staffing, Heyns said 10 percent of MDOC staff has been trimmed since he came on board. He didn’t specify whether cuts were due to attrition or layoffs, but the food service restructuring in 2013 was included in the assessment.

Surprisingly, Heyns said he thinks it’s time to turn monitoring of the Aramark contract back over to MDOC.

Independent monitor Ed Buss left under mysterious circumstances after just

five months on the job. Heyns admitted Aramark still needs to make improvements. Aramark will allegedly save the Department \$16 million this year.

Meanwhile, MDOC expects to begin spending much more on inmate health care. According to Heyns, of the 43,000 inmates in Michigan prisons, about 8,000 are over 50 years old. That means increased medical costs.

Heyns mentioned criminal justice reform bills introduced last session. Two bills that called for presumptive parole and probation changes did not pass, in large part due to opposition from law enforcement groups and the attorney general.

Lawmakers start work this month on the 2016 fiscal year budget.

AROUND THE STATE: SECURITY INCREASED ONE YEAR AFTER ESCAPE; BUSINESS AS USUAL AFTER CO ASSAULTED AT LRF; DRUGS THROWN OVER FENCE AT MTF

Security measures were stepped up at facilities around the state last weekend – the one-year anniversary of Michael Elliot’s escape from Ionia Correctional Facility.

At ICF, the PSVs made constant rounds and the sally port tower was manned. Movement was limited during hours of darkness. At several facilities around the state, gun towers were manned and PSVs made constant rounds. Officers also conducted extra counts at some prisons.

These actions seem to indicate the Department administration knows PSVs and staffed gun towers prevent escapes. Why aren’t we doing these things every day?

A Brooks officer says movement continued as normal in a Level IV unit after an inmate assaulted a CO Wednesday.

The CO was punched three times in

the face and was taken to a hospital. He suffered chipped teeth and cuts on his face. The attack happened at about 5:20 p.m.

Dublin unit was not locked down; movement continued as usual. Volunteers were even allowed in the unit after the assault. Officers are questioning why Brooks units are frequently locked down after an assault on an inmate, but not on an officer. What message does that send?

A West Shoreline prisoner was caught retrieving contraband thrown over the fence behind Evanston unit Jan. 29.

Marijuana, cocaine, scales, cell phones, chargers, lighters and a screwdriver were packaged in pop bottles and apparently tossed over the fence. An inmate wrapped himself in white towels to blend in with the snow and walked out to get them at about 5:30 p.m. – in broad daylight.

MTF is a Level I facility.

Officers pushed for perimeter security changes at a labor management meeting this week.

The prison administration agreed to create a larger buffer zone around the perimeter fence in the back 40 yard by putting up an orange snow fence. An officer said COs can easily see if an inmate crossed the orange fence.

A warning shot was fired to break up a fight in a Level V unit Jan. 30 at Marquette.

The post officer ordered the inmates to stop fighting. They didn’t quit until a warning shot was fired into the bullet trap. The inmates were taken to seg.

The warning shot ended the fight this time. But an MBP officer said warning shots are becoming so frequent, he thinks inmates and officers are becoming desensitized to them.