



**NEW YORK CITY
BOARD OF CORRECTION**

July 8, 2025

Public Meeting Minutes

ATTENDEES:

MEMBERS PRESENT

Dwayne C. Sampson, Chair
Robert L. Cohen, M.D., Member
Hon. Barry A. Cozier (Ret.), Member
Jacqueline Pitts, Member
Lauren Stossel, M.D., Member
Jude Torchenaud, Member

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION (DOC)

Francis Torres, First Deputy Commissioner
Fritz Frage, Senior Deputy Commissioner
James Conroy, Deputy Commissioner of Legal Matters/General Counsel
Patrick Gallahue, Deputy Commissioner of Public Information
James Walsh, Deputy Commissioner of Security Operations
James Boyd, Deputy Commissioner of Strategic Operations
James Saunders, Deputy Commissioner of Health Affairs
Mark Pauley, Deputy Director of Strategic Partnerships
Kathleen Zadzora, Assistant Commissioner of Health Affairs
Jenelle Bazil-Charles, Director of Strategic Partnerships of Intergovernmental Affairs

Chelsea Chard, Senior Advisor

NYC HEALTH + HOSPITALS – CORRECTIONAL HEALTH SERVICES (CHS)

Patsy Yang, Dr. PH, Senior Vice President

Nancy Arias, RN, Chief Nursing Officer/Deputy Executive Director

Zachary Rosner, Chief of Medical Service

Nicole Levy, Director, Communications & Intergovernmental Affairs

Joseph Otonichar – Chief of Service, Mental Health

Clarence Muir – Senior Director, Health Service Administration

Jeanette Merrill, Sr. Assistant Vice President, Communications & External Affairs

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE

Gwen Saffran, OPA

Cecilia Zuniga, OPA

Nathaniel Evans, OPA

Chaplain Dr. Victoria A. Phillips, Visionary V Ministries and JAC

Fran Geteles, HALT

Tessa Spear, Freedom Agenda

Jennifer Parish, Urban Justice Center

Casey Dalporto, NYCDS

Roya Touran, NYCDS

Christopher Boyle, NYCDS

Natalie Fiorenzo, NYCDS

Khari Jenkins, NYCDS

Damon Gilbert, NYLPI

Courtney Gross, NY1 News

Dr. Divine Pryor, PPA

Riley Doyle Evans, Legal Aid

Maddy deLone

Alex Krales, THE CITY NY

Justyna Rzewinski

Marissa Rodriguez

Approval of July 8, 2025 meeting agenda

Chair Dwayne Sampson called the meeting to order with a quorum of members present. Board Member Felipe Franco was unable to attend this meeting, Vice Chair Helen Skipper joined remotely for the first portion, and Board Member Lauren Stossel joined and participated remotely for the entire session.

Board Member Cohen motioned to amend the agenda to include a farewell address following his resignation from the Board after the approval of the June 10, 2025 public meeting minutes agenda item. Board Member Stossel seconded the motion. The motion passed, and Board Member Cohen's farewell address was added to the agenda. All present Board Members except for Chair Sampson voted in the affirmative.

Upon being moved and seconded, the amended July 8, 2025 meeting agenda was approved. [See this portion of the video here.](#)

Approval of the June 10, 2025 public meeting minutes

Chair Sampson requested a motion to approve the draft public meeting minutes of the Board's June 10, 2025 meeting. Upon being moved and seconded, the minutes were unanimously approved. [See this portion of the video here.](#)

Board Member Cohen's farewell address

Board Member Cohen announced his resignation from the Board of Correction. He expressed his honor at being able to serve both the Board and those incarcerated at Rikers Island for 16 years, sharing thanks with numerous individuals and agencies. Board Member Cohen shared his concerns regarding the current mayoral administration and heeded caution against ongoing solitary confinement housing and overcrowding at Rikers Island. Board Member Cohen also spoke in favor of the Borough Based Jails approach and decarceration generally, highlighting concerns on Rikers Island that Board Member Cohen sees as life-threatening. [See this portion of the video here.](#)

Public comment period – People in Custody

Seven comments from people in custody were played. [See this portion of the video here.](#)

Statement from Public Advocate

Public Advocate Jumaane Williams shared his deepest condolences with the families of Benjamin Kelly and James Maldonado who both died in DOC custody on June 20, 2025. Public Advocate Williams also spoke about the Department's overcrowding variance renewal request that would be voted on later this meeting, stressing how the overcrowding at Rikers Island is failing both Department staff and people in custody. He stated that he hoped to hear a plan from DOC to alleviate the overcrowding and avoid continuously asking for variances.

Public Advocate Williams also stated that the SMU and RESH-Annex feel like forced isolation to him, addressing changes to Local Law 42 and highlighting the need for extensive staff training and PIC programming in these restrictive units.

[See this portion of the video here.](#)

Executive Director update

Executive Director Jasmine Georges-Yilla shared condolences with the families and loved ones of Benjamin Kelly and James Maldonado, two individuals that died in DOC custody since the last Board meeting.

Mr. Kelly, age 37, died in EMTC on June 20, 2025. Mr. Kelly was found unresponsive in his cell by DOC staff at approximately 2:59 pm. Mr. Maldonado, age 56, died en route to Rikers Island from Richmond County Criminal Court on June 20, 2025. Both causes of death are currently pending confirmation from the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner. As with all deaths in custody, the Board is actively investigating and will issue a public report on its finding

Executive Director Georges-Yilla also shared condolences with the families of Department staff who have passed since the Board's June meeting.

As of July 7, 2025, the approximate total census of people in custody is 7,694, a 0.64% increase since June 9th. As of July 7th, the census numbers by facility were as follows: BHPW (52), EHPW (9), EMTC (1,753), GRVC (1,033), NIC (296), OBCC (1,628), RESH-ESH (147), RESH non-ESH (366), RMSC (431), RNDC (1,162), and WF (819).

[See this portion of the video here.](#)

Executive Director Georges-Yilla also shared updates about the Board's reporting. The Board issued its report titled *Assessment of NYC Department of Correction's Lock-In and Lock-out Procedures* on June 23, 2025, which included many recommendations that DOC plans to respond to later this meeting. [You can read the full report here.](#)

Additionally, Executive Director Georges-Yilla shared observations from Board staff regarding the SMU. Board staff noted that transfers into the unit lack clear and recent justifications, while individuals are removed from SMU without consistent reason or placement reviews. Additionally, there continues to be a high number of emergency lock-ins and inconsistent management that substantially disrupts out-of-cell time and access to services. Finally, DOC does not document sick-call requests, so there is no way for the Board to track access to sick-call.

[See this portion of the video here.](#)

Ad Hoc 6A Work Release Program Review Committee update

Board Member, and Chair of the 6A Work Release Program Review Committee, Lauren Stossel presented the Committee's final report and recommendations to DOC. The Committee then submitted four recommendations for the Board's consideration and approval. These recommendations are centered on applying time limitations to four criteria the Department considers when determining admission to the work release program. [You can read the committee report and recommendations here.](#) Board Member Stossel stated that if approved, the Board plans to submit these recommendations to the Department. [See this portion of the video here.](#)

The Board moved and seconded Board Member Stossel's motion for a vote to approve the recommendations for submission to DOC, but DOC's General Counsel James Conroy stated that DOC had not seen this report or had time to respond, so he did not feel it was appropriate for the Board to vote today. Board Member Stossel responded that this vote was only to organize Board efforts, but she pulled her motion as a friendly consideration to the Department. [See this portion of the video here.](#)

Minimum Standards Review Committee updates

Board Member, and Chair of the Minimum Standard Review Committee, Barry Cozier provided a brief update on the Committee's early efforts, identifying areas in need of modernization or clarification, including the sick-call provisions, and establishing a framework for a comprehensive, inclusive review process. Board Member Cozier shared that the Committee will work in phases, prioritizing transparency and public engagement.

Board Member Cohen then stressed his earlier warning that the Board will have issues creating changes under the current mayoral administration. [See this portion of the video here.](#)

Request for limited four-month variance from BOC Minimum Standard § 1-04(c)(2), 1-04(c)(3), and 1-04(c)(5)(i)(regarding overcrowding at OBCC, EMTC, AND WF Annex)

Chair Sampon requested an emergency meeting later this month to address a potential mail variance.

DOC's Senior Deputy Commissioner Fritz Frage then presented the Department's four-month overcrowding renewal request, stressing the increased numbers of sentenced individuals awaiting state transfer as the primary cause of the overcrowding. Senior Deputy Commissioner Frage stated that the safety of both staff and people-in-custody remains the highest priority for the Department. [See this portion of the video here.](#)

Board members directed questions to Department staff present. Board Member Cohen asked what the Department's plan was to address

overcrowding to avoid having this variance requested again in four months. Board members and Department staff discussed New York State's role in this issue, with disagreement over what DOC can do to remedy overcrowding. Board Member Pitts asked for more information about dialogues and timeframes between the State and DOC. [See this portion of the video here.](#)

The Board then heard in-person public comments. [See this portion of the video here.](#) During these comments, Christopher Boyle, Director of Data Research and Policy at the New York County Defender Services, gave testimony about DOC's legal obligations and how parole can be greater utilized. Board members expressed interest in hearing more about these possibilities after the meeting. [See this portion of the video here.](#)

Board Member Torchenaud moved to vote on the variance renewal request and Board Member Cozier seconded. Board members then moved and seconded the previously accepted conditions to this variance request. Board Member Pitts' condition that the Department make the Board aware of its efforts with State partners was also accepted and added to this variance request. [See this portion of the video here.](#)

Board members then voted on the variance. Board members Torchenaud, Pitts, Cozier, and Chair Sampson voted in the affirmative. Board members Cohen and Stossel abstained. Four votes in the affirmative are not enough to pass a variance request, so the variance did not pass. [See this portion of the video here.](#)

DOC response to BOC assessment and recommendations regarding lock-in and lock-out procedures

DOC's Senior Deputy Commissioner Fritz Frage shared the Department's response to the Board's report on lock-in and lock-out procedures. Senior Deputy Commissioner Frage stated that the term "deadlocking" is not a recognized term by DOC; rather, he recommended that the term "unauthorized individualized lock-in" be used instead. He also reiterated that the Department does not allow unauthorized individualized lock-ins. Senior Deputy Commissioner Frage also stated that there is an ongoing investigation regarding

unauthorized individualized lock-ins that limits what the Department can share at this time. [See this portion of the video here.](#)

Board members then asked the Department questions. [See this portion of the video here.](#)

Status updates regarding restrictive housing units

First Deputy Commissioner Francis Torres provided an update on mandated services provided at RESH, RESH-Annex, and the SMU. She reiterated, however, that the Department does not view the RESH-Annex or SMU as restrictive housing units. First Deputy Commissioner Torres acknowledged some initial delays in services to the women housed at RMSC but stated that DOC continues to adjust as needed. [See this portion of the video here.](#)

Board Member Cohen stressed that RESH-Annex and SMU should be labeled restrictive housing units because the out-of-cell time is less than 14 hours. [See this portion of the video here.](#)

Status update regarding amendments to Directive 3376R-A concerning grievance procedures for persons in custody

Deputy Commissioner of Strategic Operations James Boyd stated that the Department is making updates to their directive regarding grievance procedures to ensure that it is fair, accessible, and responsive to the needs of people in custody. He shared that, as more updates are made, they will be shared with the Board. [See this portion of the video here.](#)

Status update regarding immediate compliance with sick-call requirements (BOC Minimum Standard § 3-02(c)(5))

Deputy Commissioner of Health Affairs James Saunders shared that the Board had the opportunity to see a prototype of the clinic production dashboard. He stated that the operation is still in the technical phase and is still on track to launch by the end of the year. [See this portion of the video here.](#)

Request for limited six-month variance from BOC Minimum Standard § 2-05(b)(2)(i-ii) (regarding psychotropic medication)

CHS' Chief of Mental Health Service Joseph Otonichar presented the variance renewal request, stating that this variance has been granted for 19 years in accordance with community standards. [See this portion of the video here.](#)

Chair Sampson recommended that CHS speak with the Minimum Standards Review Committee to amend the Minimum Standards to reflect the community standard. [See this portion of the video here.](#)

Upon being moved and seconded, the Board unanimously voted in favor of the variance. Therefore, the variance passed. [See this portion of the video here.](#)

Status update regarding CHS' health services provided to individuals in restrictive housing units and individuals on suicide watch

CHS' Senior Vice President Patsy Yang stated that care is provided on an individualized basis to individuals housed in restrictive housing units based on their needs. She stated that this standard also applies to individuals on suicide watch, stating that individuals on suicide watch also receive suicide watch checks twice every 24 hours. [See this portion of the video here.](#)

Board Member Cohen asked a question about CHS' operations in the SMU. [See this portion of the video here.](#)

Public Comment

The Board heard in-person public comments from Justyna Rzewinski, Riley Doyle Evans, Christopher Boyle, Fran Geteles, and Chaplain Dr. Victoria A. Phillips. [See this portion of the video here.](#)

Chair Sampson also made closing remarks thanking Board Member Cohen for his service to the Board. [See this portion of the video here.](#)

The next public meeting is scheduled for September 9, 2025. There will also be an emergency meeting later this month with date and time pending confirmation.