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Van, body scanner discussed at Fayette prison board

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The Fayette County Prison Board discussed the need for a new van and a long-awaited body scanner.

During Wednesday's regular meeting, Warden Jeffrey Myers told the board that the prison's transport van no longer runs effectively, and prison officials have been using vans from the sheriff's department whenever they are available.

Myers asked for permission to begin looking for a reliable, used van for the prison.

Board member Commissioner Angela Zimmerlink voiced her concern that a van was not budgeted and questioned where the money would come from.

Myers said they've budgeted approximately \$20,000 for a body scanner that's used to detect contraband on anyone entering the prison, but the body scanner he found was too big to fit in the prison.

He said he has contacted another body-scanner manufacturer that may have a smaller model that could be used and is awaiting the information.

Zimmerlink suggested that Myers begin searching for the van on programs like Costars or other prisons and get back to the board of his findings. She said the body scanner is something the board has been discussing as far back as 2017 to have inmates take part in inmate work programs and inmate release programs more regularly.

Following the meeting, Zimmerlink said those programs haven't been used as much as they should be, because of concerns inmates would bring back contraband. A body scanner would help eliminate those concerns.

Zimmerlink said she wants to see the scanner purchased, and money could be placed in the 2020 budget for a van. She also suggested Myers could work with the county budget staff to see if there are unused funds that could go toward the van purchase.

In other business, Myers said they've been giving a stronger effort to cleaning at the prison in the past couple of weeks as well as painting and replacing motors in cells with motors from the shuttered State Correctional Institute at Greensburg, which has been closed since 2013.

County Solicitor Jack Purcell said he's been coming to the prison since the 1980s, and said the difference between then and now with atmosphere, cleanliness and smell is amazing.

"You and your staff are to be commended," Purcell said.

The board also:

n Heard Myers give the current population numbers at 164 men, 36 women and three men housed in Greene and Indiana counties, bringing the total to 203.

n Heard from a prison employee who asked why the agenda was not on the county website on the morning of the meeting. The board discussed having the person who puts together the agenda be the one to post it as soon as it's done.

Purcell said while it's not a legal requirement to have the agendas posted online prior to the meetings, it is something that is the right thing to do.

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