

**Tennessee Community Resource Board  
Riverbend Maximum Security Institute  
July 19, 2019**

**TCRB Representatives:**

Rev. Michael Rickenbaker, Chairman / West TN Representative (P)  
Mario Allen, Vice Chairman / West TN Representative (A)  
Vinessa J. Brown, Member / West TN Representative (P)  
Paul Hensley, Member / West TN Representative (P)  
Thurston S. Smith, Member / West TN Representative (P)  
J.R. Davis, Member / Middle TN Representative (A)  
Joan Evrist, Secretary / Middle TN Representative (P)  
Tom Hallquist, Treasurer / Middle TN Representative (A)  
Ronda Waters, Member / Middle TN Representative (P)  
Tommy Mathis, Member / Middle TN Representative (A)  
Sean Driscoll, Member / East TN Representative (A)  
Raeanne Hance, Member / East TN Representative (P)  
Lee Ragsdale, Member / East TN Representative (A)  
Brian Bishop, Member / East TN Representative (P)

**TDOC Representatives:**

Vicki Freeman, Director of Re-Entry and Women's Service (P)  
Cindy Sword, Assistant to Religious & Volunteer Services Director (P)  
Ed Welch, Assistant Commissioner of Rehabilitation Services (A)

**Guests:**

Warden Tony Mays, RMSI

**Call To Order (9:07 a.m.)** – Michael Rickenbaker

**Prayer** – Michael Rickenbaker

**Welcome & Introductions** – Michael Rickenbaker

TCRB Membership

TDOC

Guests

**Review and Approve Minutes of Previous Meeting**

- Motion made by Thurston Smith.
- Seconded motion Raeanne Hance.
- All approve.

**Purpose Driven Education**

- Michael Rickenbaker – We do expect Tom to be here, so we will revisit Purpose Driven Education when he arrives.

## Grand Division Reports – East TN / Middle TN/ West TN Grand Divisions

- West TN
  - Vinessa Brown – Women’s prison in Henning had a programs fair to introduce the ladies to what they have available. Take One could be better our area. Having a hard time getting churches to embrace Take One. We had a great meeting with Lifeline to Success asking the men in the foundation if they would go ahead and start being mentors. I don’t know if people understand how important mentoring is. We have men who have returned to the community mentoring other men who are returning to the community. Henning will have Winter Wonderland this Christmas – year 15. It’s a time when family can bring children in and shop for their kids, kids come in and are given their gifts – working with Women Empowered to Be Self-Sufficient (WEBS). We have two groups of pastors trying to do justice reform. We’re going to keep fighting for Take One.
  - Thurston Smith – Vocational training, support services, etc. Hoping that we can get together soon in Memphis with Mr. Collins to talk more.
  - Paul Hensley – Chaplain Gross passed away as we all know. He was serving in the prison for many years. He was one of the most knowledgeable on policy. I learned a lot from him on what to do and what not to do. Now that he’s gone there’s a lot of confusion because there’s a lot others didn’t know. So, we’re trying to find out how to remedy those things. I haven’t been doing a whole lot with the inmates themselves, but most of my work has been with management. Dealing with volunteers and their frustrations. Going to parole hearings as moral support. Also dealing with a lot of cultural situations that are different and I’m getting more accustomed to them. Also dealing with the court systems regularly. I’m there for ministry – trying to keep them out of the fire.
  - Michael Rickenbaker – I commend Paul for embracing what Asst. Commissioner Welch instructed us to do where no inmate would go to the parole board without a representative from the community to support them.
  - Michael Rickenbaker – Center House – Looking for balance in the lives of inmates. It’s a true discipling house. Three phases of a person’s life – clinical (Celebrate Recovery), spiritual (worship service of choice) and social (job readiness, relationship development skills, etc.). A lot of personal discipling and mentoring going on. It’s been available for years. Thankful for this ministry. They work with approx. ten people at a time and as they transfer out they help them find their own homes, etc. They’ve never sought public funding. Churches support them.
    - Raeanne Hance – Is there an application process for people to get in?
  - Michael Rickenbaker – Yes, there’s an application process. Also, I learned from the facility in Hardeman County that the Core Civic Chaplain did resign and at that time the former chaplain who is still employed there had been asked to fill that interim role as an acting chaplain, awaiting a time when a new chaplain can be hired there. We’ve raised the issue before about the turnover and the changes within the system, but that’s been challenging. Change is going to be constant and we can embrace it, but our goal is to see TDOC work together with Core Civic and help us to help them. We are working to make a difference in helping to return inmates to the community to become successful citizens.
    - Raeanne Hance – How many Core Civic facilities do we have in Tennessee?
      - Vicki Freeman – We have four.
        - Trousdale

- Hardeman
    - South Central
    - Whiteville
  - Cindy Sword – Core Civic has begun working with CTTC. In Take One we haven't had huge numbers, but they've been decent. For example, The Connect Church takes a group of Take One mentees and have had some good success stories. Teresa Turns is over all of that in east TN. I'm sure if someone from the committee were to approach her, they would be willing to go west also. Chaplain Gross wasn't just a chaplain in NWCX – all of the chaplains depended on Chaplain Gross. I've had so many chaplains call and ask what we're going to do in his absence. I could connect Vinessa Brown up with Teresa Turns and what she's doing in the east with Take One. Also, with the training of volunteers, please feel free to call me if you have a particular group of volunteers and things you want volunteers to do and I'll see what I can do. Would you like for me to share the names of those who are having success with Take One?
    - Michael Rickenbaker – Yes, that would be great. Please go ahead and send that information through to the officers of TCRB
      - Michael Rickenbaker – Chairman
      - Mario Allen – Vice Chairman
      - Tom Hallquist – Treasurer
      - Joan Evrist – Secretary
  - Cindy Sword – Do you have copies of the travel regulations?
    - Michael Rickenbaker – Yes, thank you.
  - Cindy Sword – Travel reimbursement needs to be submitted within five days. If you travel within the same day (no overnight), you cannot reimburse meals.
- Middle TN
    - Joan Evrist – Lots going on at TPFW. Getting ready for Christmas and all the things we do around that time of year. Several recertifications. We've started to do a prayer walk around the prison. We have a lot of volunteers and religious services that are involved at TPFW. We have transition that happens regularly and can be difficult. Lipscomb is awesome and has been a tremendous blessing. We've seen lots of women who are able to continue to get consistency in discipleship and training. We've had several Take One women coming out and getting involved in churches. There's a lot of willingness and availability with our volunteers.
    - Ronda Waters – I echo what Joan shared, but also that our recent TPFW recertification meeting was well attended and it was refreshing to have fresh vision cast for what it is that we are to do as volunteers. Our Domestic Violence Recovery class is going strong. And gearing up for preparations for the holidays.
    - Warden Mays – Thank you for choosing Riverbend for your meeting. I have a two-fold purpose – get inmates back to society and keep them out of the fire. I'm going to make a point with the Associate Warden of Treatment to communicate when we are on lock-down and give everyone as much of a heads up before arriving. With Take One – I'm a firm believer of Take One. Two chaplains have passed away since I've been here. I'm a firm believer that the chaplains are a part of our strength in the facility. They have a vital role within the facility. Not just trying to keep recidivism rate low but helping them to

keep their minds and hearts straight. Thank you for being here. If there's anything I can do, please let me know.

- East TN
  - Raeanne Hance – I attend the community meetings at Morgan Correctional Institution. Chaplain Cantrell has retired. Chaplain Cathy is interim. I have said I'm happy to assist however needed. Program and volunteers are going well. Chaplain Cantrell is coming back as Volunteer Service Coordinator. Morgan has their monthly birthday parties – inmates love it and come in for several servings of cake and ice cream. Open to the entire population. We had a great family reconciliation event at Christmas-time and that has continued on.
  - Brian Bishop – First want to thank Vicki Freeman. We've had some men who have come out and have found jobs, churches, etc. Things are progressing well. It's been a blessing – short term success stories of men returning to the community. A lot is going on at Northwest. Looking toward working with the state. We're trying to work with them to renew some of our materials (Take One) and get those available.

### **TDOC Presentations**

- Vicki Freeman
  - We have high expectations to have a new Director of Volunteer and Religious Services by August 1.
  - We appreciate all that our volunteers do. If we had one volunteer for each inmate it still wouldn't be enough, but what our volunteers are doing is affecting them and then the community they return to.
  - We appreciate everything that this board does, and we want to facilitate you coming in to continue to do what you do so well. And, so appreciate Mario Allen who helps with his personal understanding with returning citizens.
- Michael Rickenbaker – At TPFW we had a couple of ladies who have been out, got bachelor's degrees, back with their families, etc., who are volunteering. They have been cleared for ministry in local facilities, but have had difficulty getting back to state facilities. So, if we want to see people like this come back and give back, we need to help them get into the state facilities.
  - Vinessa Brown – Our experience has been that it really depends on the warden.
  - Michael Rickenbaker – One of the things that's been easy is to write the letters and go through the wardens of the Core Civic facilities, but this isn't the case with the state facilities.
  - Paul Hensley – I've dealt with 4-5 different wardens, and one thing I've always tried to do is have a good relationship with the wardens. Seeing you be committed to your word and following the rules, this gives favor.
  - Cindy Sword – The legislature appointed Senator Brenda Gilmore as the representative from the Senate. Mr. William Lambert is no longer the House representative. Representative Curico is the new House representative.

### **Mentorship/Take One Update and Discussion**

- Michael Rickenbaker – Assistant Commissioner Welch mentioned in our last meeting that there would be a possible change in the Take One leadership and possible name change. At this point we have heavily relied on JR who has been working closely with that initiative. Is

there any additional information from the administration regarding the mentorship program?

- Vicki Freeman – Still in process.

#### Mentor Training Resource Development

- Michael Rickenbaker – After the last meeting we received from Lee Ragsdale the mentoring materials that he had used. I received a packet of the mentoring materials that I had helped development many years ago (“Mentoring Manual”) – not just a book for the volunteers but for the mentee. Helping them understand what the ingredients are for a healthy mentoring relationship. We want to offer these types of materials to help fast track what we have going on with Take One. There is great value in the people resources we have even just on the board. We’ve been given the commission by the legislature to offer our assistance to the TDOC. So, help us to help you. I’d like us to come together. JR has been working at putting something together that we can all utilize.
  - Raeanne Hance – I have also developed mentor training that I want to offer if you want to bring it all together and develop something new.
  - Brian Bishop – What is the best path forward?
  - Michael Rickenbaker – Pull together a committee to put together all of the resources from this board to create a concise training resource manual. I’d like to entertain a motion that we put together a committee to complete our material for mentorship (working with TDOC). I’m recommending the committee include Brian Bishop, Lee Ragsdale, Raeanne Hance, JR Davis, and Michael Rickenbaker, and bring in Vicki Helgesen as a guest, and in addition I welcome Vicki Freeman to be a part.
    - Motion made by Paul Hensley.
    - Seconded by Brian Bishop.
    - All approved.
  - Joan Evrist – We have to have processes and we’ve talked about this for a long time. If we have resources, let’s use them, and let’s all get on the same page.
  - Raeanne Hance – Looking at publishing it and putting it into hard copies is an outdated way because of the cost that has to be incurred, the world is changing, and we need to make it available electronically. We can always print off what’s needed. I would like to offer my services to be a part of the subcommittee. Doing curriculum is part of my training and what I’ve done through the years.

#### Community Corrections – Field Services – Re-Entry – Day Reporting Centers

- Michael Rickenbaker – It raises a concern that nobody is here to represent Community Corrections, Field Services, and Day Reporting Centers. They haven’t been here to represent in quite some time, and that makes it difficult for us to help with what they are doing when we don’t have the information from them at these meetings.

#### TDOC Offenders’ Tax Assistance Update

- Michael Rickenbaker – About a year ago we as a board were asked to provide and help with attaining offender tax assistance. Once the TDOC presented and asked for that assistance we were told we would be given further information on what those guidelines were so we would know how to obtain those resources and what the expectations were. Every meeting since that date we haven’t heard anything more. And I’ve been asked not to bring that up again in this board meeting by the TDOC. But it is an item that has been addressed and

brought to the board asking us for assistance, so this is why I'm bringing it up. Is there an update from TDOC?

- Cindy Sword – Can someone go back and get me the minutes from the meeting you're referring to?
- Michael Rickenbaker – Yes, we will do that. (October 19, 2018 Minutes)
- Raeanne Hance – We were all set and ready to do that at Morgan, but then told that it wasn't needed. So, I don't know what happened in the in between. The training was labor intensive.
- Michael Rickenbaker – Thurston Smith is an Advisory for the Treasurer Dept's Tax Advocacy Department.
- Thurston Smith – Part of our role is to ensure that tax payers have opportunities to express their concerns through both formal and informal communication. And also, that tax payers have an opportunity to grieve any complaints they may have and provided an adequate opportunity to resolve any discrepancies. If there's something I can do to help in that vein, I will send a direct communication – just tell me what you need me to do. I don't have the full scope of what happened.
- Michael Rickenbaker – We didn't get the full scope. We had the presentation from TDOC asking for our help, but then it went away.

#### **TCRB/TDOC Contact Representatives**

- Michael Rickenbaker – This board has been commissioned by the legislature. An asset to TDOC – to assist in the rehabilitation of inmates. To bring resources and concerns we have in the field working with the LCRBs and volunteers regarding what can be done to better the experience within the volunteer system. The communication with the TDOC is critical. Change may be constant, but communication is critical. As an example, we have not received communication regarding Chaplain Rocha stepping down from his interim role and that there has not been a director put in place. I want us to ensure that moving forward there are clear channels of communication with the TDOC. We are here to help you. My question is, please help us to help you do what we are called to do as a TCRB.
  - Cindy Sword – If you would contact me to schedule the meeting each time, we will make sure things are set up.
- Michael Rickenbaker – Also for clarity with for the board's sake. I want to commend Joan and Ronda in taking the directives from me to the board. We are all members of the board, but somewhere there has to be someone who is responsible for communication, and that should be from the Chairman via the Secretary.
- Thurston Smith – I strongly recommend that we send an email to our legislative representatives. We clearly have our marching orders from the legislature.
- Vicki Freeman – I want to reassure you that I will do everything I can to open up the lines of communication with the TCRB. I will give everyone my contact information before we leave today.
  - Also, if you have any safety concerns, I want to know about that.

#### **TCRB Retreat / Faith in Corrections Conference / Committee Report– Mario Allen**

- Michael Rickenbaker – Mario Allen had been given responsibility regarding a subcommittee in regard to our annual TCRB Retreat. He has presented information that I'd hoped he would be here today to cover, but he wasn't able to be here today. I did converse with him this morning,

so at our next meeting we will project the date for our TCRB Retreat that we are looking to do October 2020.

- Michael Rickenbaker – Our October 18, 2019 meeting will be the annual meeting of this board. If you look back at the bylaws, you'll see there are several things that take place in the October meeting – elections, etc. We will be requesting a sincere effort on the part of every board member to be a part of that meeting. We will notify you as soon as possible of the location. We have held those meetings in different locations throughout the years – RMSI, TPFW, Harpeth Hills church, etc. RMSI has been a good location for us, but we will notify you once we've been approved to meet at another location. We will make you aware of that soon.
  - Cindy Sword – Are you moving all of the meetings away from RMSI?
  - Michael Rickenbaker – No, just the October meeting.

### **Public Affairs Committee Report – Thurston Smith**

- Michael Rickenbaker – I want to affirm all that Thurston Smith has been a part of and acknowledge that he is now running for City Council. He is a part of our sub-committee for Public Affairs. Our goal is to report and make the public aware of what we are doing with TCRB and TDOC.
- Thurston Smith – Thank you Mr. Chairman, that's very kind. I'm proud to be serving with everyone here. I was born in Brooklyn, NY. My father was a NY City corrections and law enforcement officer. We moved to South Carolina when I was 18 – that's where my career in public service began. From there I was in DC, Alabama, Memphis. I've been in Tennessee for 12 years – long history with volunteerism. It has skyrocketed my career in multiple areas – it's far exceeded what I could be paid monetarily. I am currently serving in some capacity at every level of government in TN. I was looking at the appointment details of the TCRB on the TDOC website and we've been given permission to do what we've been talking about today.
- Thurston Smith – When the Chairman was talking about a public affairs committee, there were a few who were a bit ambivalent about that. But, even on the website where it has our mission, right below it there are links to social media. There are no issues of confidentiality that we need to be worried about with putting the TCRB on social media. Our counterparts throughout the country under very similar appointment authorities and oversight have social media sites. Since we only meet quarterly and are scattered throughout the state, having a communication portal would be invaluable. We can put our bylaws there, limit who has access, etc. There's no need for us to fear being in the public eye – our minutes are already a publicly available document. One of the most counterproductive phrases we've all heard is, "We've always done it this way." So, let me set up a Facebook page for us to communicate in real time, let each other know what we're doing, etc. It will be a help to us as a board.

### **TCRB Membership Positions & Officers**

- Michael Rickenbaker – When appointments become vacant, we will look at those appointments and make recommendations. When there are appointments up for reinstatement we will talk as a board and go through the chaplain to have those appointments approved before they expire. We sent a letter, recommendation and unanimous vote from the board through the TDOC chaplain and interim chaplain. It hasn't been acted upon, so we still don't know if those have been approved. All three of those who were up for reinstatement wrote letters and never heard anything back from TDOC. That was in January 2019, and we still haven't received any information about renewing those positions.

- Vicki Freeman – Cindy Sword and I will go back and look at that information.
- Thurston Smith – I would also recommend that the new appointees receive appointment certificates.
- Cindy Sword – I found the TCRB bylaws but want to know if it's updated.
- Michael Rickenbaker – The last revision of the bylaws was revised on July 7, 2016 and were discussed at the April 21, 2017 TCRB meeting, but were awaiting approval from TDOC. I don't know if those recommended revisions were ever approved by TDOC. I'd like to work with Vicki Freeman on the proposed revisions from back in 2016 since we never heard back if they were approved.
- Michael Rickenbaker – I'd like to entertain a motion that we look to at our bylaws every two years to consider if revisions are needed.
  - Motion made by Vinessa Brown.
  - Seconded by Joan Evrist.
  - All approved.

**Meeting Adjourned (12:13 p.m.)** – Michael Rickenbaker

- Motion to adjourn by Thurston Smith.
- Seconded by Vinessa Brown.
- All approved.

**Next Meeting:** Friday, October 18, 2019 at 9:00 a.m. – Location: TBD