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December 7, 2021
Constitutional Law Seminar: Incarceration
Prof. Armstrong

Better Know a Jail: St. John the Baptist Sherman Walker Correctional Center

St. John the Baptist Sherman Walker Correctional Center opened in February 1997 and has since served as the parish prison for St. John the Baptist Parish in southeastern Louisiana.¹ The St. John the Baptist Correctional Center is located at 100 Deputy Barton Granier Dr. LaPlace, LA 70068.² This 300-bed facility handles the daily operations of transporting, feeding, medical care, adult education, and custody of both St. James the Baptist Parish and Louisiana state inmates.³ As of December 6, 2021, the St. John the Baptist Sherman Walker Correctional had sixty-six (66) inmates in custody.⁴ Of those inmates one (1) was classified as Asian, thirty-five (35) were Black or African American, and thirty (30) were White.⁵ Additionally, all the inmates held at the St. John the Baptist Correctional Center were classified as male.⁶ From 2014 through the present, this facility has reported zero inmate deaths.

The current sheriff of St. John the Baptist Parish is Sheriff Mike Tregre.⁷ On February 1, 1988, Tregre began his career with St. John Sheriff's Office as a jailor.⁸ In 1990, Tregree began his time as a patrolman and undercover narcotics officer.⁹ In February 1991, Sheriff Johnson promoted Mike Tregre to Detective, and he earned the rank of Sergeant.¹⁰ On July 1, 1996, after the election of Sheriff Wayne L. Jones, Tregre was promoted to Lieutenant and became the departments first ever Director of Internal Management, a position created to investigate complaints against officers and maintain public relations.¹¹ Less than a year later he was given the additional duty of being Public Information officer, which earned him the title of "spokesperson" for SJSO.¹² On August 17, 1999, Tregre was promoted to the rank of Captain. He completed the training at the FBI National Academy, in Quantico, Virginia.¹³ After successfully completing the 3-month curriculum of administrative class work and physical training, Tregre graduated from the 219th Session of the FBINA on December 10, 2004 and was promoted to the rank of Major on December 17, 2004.¹⁴

On January 12, 2008, Tregre was assigned to work under newly elected District Attorney, Tom Daley.¹⁵ He assisted the DA in the implementation of a new program to track misdemeanor

¹ <https://stjohnsheriff.org/crime-arrests/parish-prison/>.

² *Id.*

³ *Id.*

⁴ <https://stjohn-so-la.zuercherportal.com/#/inmates>.

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ <https://stjohnsheriff.org/about-us/sheriff-michael-tregre/>.

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² *Id.*

¹³ *Id.*

¹⁴ *Id.*

¹⁵ *Id.*

crimes and lead the suspects through the system of repaying money to victims, the courts and finally completing any community service sentence imposed by the court system.¹⁶ He was named the DA's Misdemeanor Probation Officer.¹⁷ In the election of October 2011, Tregre was elected Sheriff of St. John Parish by 63% of the voters.¹⁸ He was re-elected in November of 2015 for a second term.¹⁹

The most recent available financial information for the St. John the Baptist Correctional Center comes from the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report published by the St. John Parish government in 2019.²⁰ According to the information provided in this report, in the 2019 fiscal year the original budget for the sheriff's office was \$719,000.²¹ However, after removing "commissions - O.L." from the original budget, the final budget for 2019 was \$518,537.²² The breakdown for the budget included \$410,439 for feeding prisoners, \$56,170 for the medical needs of prisoners, \$41,530 for transport, \$10,100 for court attendance, and \$298 for IT expenses.²³ This was a decrease from the 2018 budget which was \$767,476.²⁴ The breakdown for the 2018 budget included \$372,592 for feeding prisoners, \$81,313 for medical needs, \$50,923 for transporting, \$8,575 for court attendance, and \$254,073 for commissions - O.L.²⁵

The St. John the Baptist Sherman Walker Correctional Center is not accredited by the American Correction Association (ACA).²⁶ Additionally, there is no information from the St. John Correctional Center indicated that they are accredited by any other national association. The St. John Sheriffs Office website states that the Sherman Walker Correctional Facility passed an audit and inspection conducted by the Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections in 2017.²⁷ The unannounced audit and inspection commenced in May 2017 and certified the Sherman Walker Correctional Facility's continued compliance with basic jail guidelines and standards.²⁸ Among the standards reviewed during the audit were management, personnel training, records, inmate safety, medical and health care, education, food, work programs, and facility site.²⁹ According to the sheriff's website, the St. John jail received several excellent ratings for exceeding jail standards.³⁰ Audits are held annually, and audits with inspection are held every three years for continued certification, however, I was unable to access an audit report on either the sheriff's or the Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections website.

¹⁶ *Id.*

¹⁷ *Id.*

¹⁸ *Id.*

¹⁹ *Id.*

²⁰ <https://www.sjbparish.gov/files/sharedassets/public/departments/documents/financial-statements-audits/st.-john-final-audit-report-2019.pdf>.

²¹ *Id.*

²² *Id.*

²³ *Id.*

²⁴ <https://www.sjbparish.gov/files/sharedassets/public/departments/documents/financial-statements-audits/cafr-2018.pdf>.

²⁵ *Id.*

²⁶

https://www.aca.org/ACA_Member/Standards_Accreditation/About_Us/ACA/ACA_Member/Standards_and_Accreditation/SAC_AboutUs.aspx?hkey=bdf577fe-be9e-4c22-aa60-dc30dfa3adcb.

²⁷ https://stjohnsheriff.org/2017/09/28/st-john-jail-staff-earns-continued-certification_2017-09-28/.

²⁸ *Id.*

²⁹ *Id.*

³⁰ *Id.*

Overall, the St. John the Baptist Sherman Walker Correctional Center appears to be transparent. The website has a news category which provides information on events as well as arrests per date.³¹ Once in the “new & info” category, on the right side of the screen user can click to view the arrest info for recent dates.³² For example, I selected “arrests of December 2, 2021” and was able to see that a man by the name of Norman M. Duhe, age 37, was arrested at 320 Little Hope Street, Garyville on the charges of entering/remaining after being forbidden, possession of crack cocaine less than 28 grams (felony), resisting officer by flight (misdemeanor), and resisting officer by refusing identity (misdemeanor).³³ Additionally, by clicking on “parish prison” and then “parish prison inmates” on the left of the screen, one can be redirected to the inmate directory.³⁴ The inmate directory is user-friendly in that it is easy to navigate and has several filter options.³⁵ User can filter inmate results by name, race, sex, arrest date, and in custody date.³⁶ Moreover, the inmate results provide detailed information on each inmate including their mugshot, name, age, race, sex, cell block, arrest date, held for agency, release date, and a brief description of their charges and case information.³⁷

Furthermore, my personal experience in filing a public records request with the St. John the Baptist Sherman Walker Correctional Center was a positive experience. Public records requests are managed by Butler Law Firm which provides legal representation for St. John the Baptist Sheriff’s Office. Butler Law Firm is located at 2400 Veteran Blvd. Suite 485, Kenner, LA 70062, and can be contacted by phone at (504) 305-4118.³⁸ The law firm was quick in responding to my request and responsive to my communications. They have also been compliant in previous years.

In April 2018, the case of *Duhe v. St. John the Baptist Parish Sheriff’s Dep’t* was decided by the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals.³⁹ This case involved a complaint filed against the St. John the Baptist Parish Sheriff’s Department and Sheriff Mike Tregre alleging that arrestee Kevin Duhe was not provided with his anti-seizure medication while booked at parish jail and suffered a seizure, resulting in a fall and an injury to his head.⁴⁰ Mr. Duhe asserted that he sustained severe personal injuries as a result of the seizure, which he claimed was caused by the Department’s negligence in failing to provide the necessary medical treatment and medications.⁴¹ On March 24, 2017, the trial court issued a judgment, along with reasons, dismissing Mr. Duhe’s lawsuit without prejudice on the grounds that it lacked subject matter jurisdiction to hear the case or review any claim or grievance.⁴² Mr. Duhe filed a Motion for New Trial, which was denied by the trial court on April 20, 2017. Mr. Duhe then appealed to the Fifth Circuit.⁴³

³¹ <https://stjohnsheriff.org/category/news/>.

³² *Id.*

³³ <https://stjohnsheriff.org/2021/12/03/arrests-of-december-2-2021/>.

³⁴ <https://stjohn-so-la.zuercherportal.com/#/inmates>.

³⁵ *Id.*

³⁶ *Id.*

³⁷ *Id.*

³⁸ <https://www.butlerlawllc.com>.

³⁹ *Duhe v. St. John the Baptist Parish Sheriff’s Dep’t*, 245 So. 3d 1244 (5th Cir. 2018).

⁴⁰ *Id.* at 1245.

⁴¹ *Id.*

⁴² *Id.*

⁴³ *Id.*

On appeal, Mr. Duhe asserted that the trial court erred in determining that the Louisiana Corrections Administrative Remedy Procedure (CARP)⁴⁴ divested the trial court of original jurisdiction over his tort suit. He argued that in *Pope v. State*⁴⁵, CARP was deemed unconstitutional insofar as it divested district courts of original jurisdiction over tort claims.⁴⁶ Defendants responded that the limited issue with CARP that was identified as problematic in *Pope*, had been cured since that ruling, and that the provisions of CARP require dismissal of this case for failure to exhaust administrative remedies.⁴⁷

The Fifth Circuit ultimately concluded that the record was devoid of any evidence that Mr. Duhe pursued administrative remedies prior to filing his lawsuit in the trial court.⁴⁸ Because Mr. Duhe failed to exhaust his administrative remedies prior to filing suit, the trial court lacked subject matter jurisdiction to consider his claims.⁴⁹ Accordingly, the Fifth Circuit found that the trial court correctly dismissed Mr. Duhe's lawsuit on the grounds of lack of subject matter jurisdiction, and affirmed the trial court's judgment.⁵⁰

⁴⁴ La. R.S. 15:1171.

⁴⁵ *Pope v. State*, 792 So.2d 713 (La. 2001).

⁴⁶ *Duhe*, 245 So. 3d at 1245.

⁴⁷ *Id.*

⁴⁸ *Id.* at 1247.

⁴⁹ *Id.*

⁵⁰ *Id.* at 1248.