

TO: Professors Andrea Armstrong and Nishi Kumar
FROM: Cheyenne Lawson
RE: “Better Know a Jail” Memo
DATE: December 5, 2023

Kenner City Jail

Introduction

Kenner City Jail is located in Jefferson Parish, Louisiana, in the downtown region of Kenner, Louisiana. Kenner City Jail is one of six prisons and jails in Jefferson Parish, with a combined capacity of 1,349 people between all facilities. Kenner Jail is a high security jail that houses adult inmates who have been arrested for misdemeanor offenses. This facility can house up to 64 inmates.¹ Inmates who are being held in Kenner Jail are usually awaiting trial or sentencing. The majority of inmates reside in this facility for less than a year. Many inmates are only held in this facility for a few days while awaiting bond, release pending trial, or are transferred to another facility that is better equipped for long-term stays. Kenner Police Department also works heavily with Jefferson Parish Sheriff’s Office, Louisiana State Police, Federal Bureau of Investigations, Drug Enforcement Agency, and Louisiana Attorney General Cyber Safety.²

Jail Characteristics

The live jail database for current inmates cannot be found on their website kennerpd.com/kenner-jail. Instead, for friends and family to contact inmates in Kenner Jail, they must visit the Securus website and create an account in order to receive any type of contact from an inmate.³ Inmates at Kenner Jail must be incarcerated for at least seven days before they are able to be approved to receive visitors. Additionally, visitation hours are limited to Wednesdays from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. and are allowed to be scheduled in 30-minute increments.⁴ To schedule a visitation, one must call the jail the Tuesday before they wish to visit. The website does not specify how many visitors an inmate can have during each scheduled visit. The website also does not specify whether minors, including children or family members of those incarcerated, are able to visit their family member.

Public Records Requests and Mortality

Kenner PD’s website does not contain instructions on how to file a public records request with the jail. There is a section labeled “I want to...” and, nowhere in this section, does the website show or inform about how to file a public records request or who to speak to regarding this matter. On the website’s homepage, there is a paragraph from Chief Conley that says “for

¹ <https://kennerpd.com/kenner-jail/>

² <https://kennerpd.com/citizen-resources/>

³ *Id.*

⁴ *Id.*

more information, please write to us at 500 Veterans Boulevard Kenner, LA 70062. If you have a question or concern you'd like to email me about, I can be reached at kpd@kennerpd.com.⁵ This email address is a generic email address in which I never received a response from when I emailed for public records requests. I obtained a contact email for public records requests from prior students who have been in contact with someone from Kenner. I have been in contact with this person for about three months now. Although I submitted a public records requests for the amount of deaths between mid-2018 to December 2022, I have not received any records from Kenner Jail. They sent me an invoice for over \$300 for one inmate who died in 2018, however, we already possess the records for that person's death. After I explained this to Kenner Jail, they no longer replied to my emails. I have requested updates about whether there have been additional deaths about mid-2018 and no one has been able to provide an answer.

Jail Leadership

Kenner City Jail is operated by the Kenner Police Department, led by the Chief of Police Keith A. Conley. Chief Conley was elected in March 2022 by the City of Kenner. Chief Conley is a native of the area, being raised in Metairie, LA. Chief Conley attended De La Salle High School, in New Orleans, LA. He then attended Loyola University and graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice in 1997. From there he attended law school and graduated from Loyola University College of Law in 2002, passing the Louisiana State Bar in 2003. Chief Conley has been involved with municipal criminal justice since 1982, when he served as a Jefferson Parish Sheriff's Deputy until May 2003. He served as a sergeant for the Jefferson Parish Sheriff's Office for 21 years. He was elected to the Kenner City Council from mid-2014 to early 2016. He became the Jefferson Parish's Chief Operating Officer in 2016 and served as COO until 2019. In 2019, Chief Conley was appointed to fulfill a vacancy as a Councilman-at-Large. He resigned shortly after to run for Chief of Police. Conley has focused his career on cracking down on adult bookstores, speeding justice against drug offenders and developing a model domestic violence program. He also promoted transparency by providing detailed information online, eliminating outsourcing and saving taxpayers millions of dollars, which he lists as one of his greatest accomplishments.⁶

Kenner Police Department is also headed by Deputy Chief David Desforges who has been in law enforcement since 1994, when he joined the Kenner Police Department. He was promoted to Deputy Chief in 2022, where he oversees the Field Service Bureau, Criminal Investigations Bureau, Technology Services Unit, Internal Affairs Office, and the Training and Development Office. He is a graduate of the FBI National Academy and is a recipient of the FBI Law Enforcement Executive Development Association Trilogy Award. During his tenure in municipal politics, Desforges was also elected to the Kenner Municipal Fire and Police Civil Service Board.⁷

There are several other officials who are a part of Kenner Police Department's leadership including Field Services Bureau Commander Captain William Sclafini, Investigative Support

⁵ <https://kennerpd.com/>

⁶ <https://kennerpd.com/command-staff-2/>

⁷ *Id.*

and Legal Services Bureau Commander Captain Marc Ortiz, and Commander of Investigations Captain Michael Cunningham.⁸

Jails News Coverage and Transparency

Kenner Jail is located near Louis Armstrong International Airport which means that the majority of those who are arrested at the airport, are transported to and held at Kenner Jail. Kenner Police have also assisted Jefferson Parish Sheriff's Office numerous times with suspects in custody who have escaped. Notably, several NFL Saints football players have been arrested and held at Kenner Jail.

1. In October 2023, New Orleans Saints receiver, Chris Olave, was arrested for driving recklessly and allegedly speeding, driving 70 miles per hour in a 35-mph speed zone. Olave was released shortly after, once paperwork has been processed.⁹
2. In November 2023, Saints player Michael Thomas was arrested for allegedly throwing a brick at a truck and pushing a man. He was charged with simple battery and criminal mischief, which are both misdemeanors. According to news reports, there was a heavy presence of construction workers parked on Thomas' street and had been parking there for weeks. Before the incident occurred, Thomas had threatened the project manager of the site several times, saying that his truck would either get "a brick or a bullet" if the workers' cars were not moved.¹⁰

The Kenner Police website advertises several innovative safety and crime prevention programs available to the community, such as the Citizens' Police Academy, Neighborhood Watch, and a Women's Self Defense course.¹¹

The Citizens Police Academy is a 10-week course of free instruction, taught by trained professionals, that informs citizens how law enforcement operates. Participants are introduced to department staff members and each of their responsibilities. Participants must be 21 years old, without a criminal history, and reside in Kenner. Kenner police encourages the course because they hope that graduates of the Citizens Police Academy use their education to lead the community in improving safety standards, to make better decision, to promote confidence and encourage membership in the Kenner Police Department in helping to reduce crime.¹² The Citizen Police Academy covers several aspects of the Kenner Police Department. These include tours of police headquarters and the jail, introduction to and the responsibility of the command staff, rescue equipment and weapons, crime scene forensics, criminal investigations, computer forensics, drug enforcement, use of police force and self-defense, and much more.

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ <https://nypost.com/2023/10/24/sports/saints-chris-olave-arrested-for-reckless-operation-of-motor-vehicle/>

¹⁰ <https://nypost.com/2023/11/11/sports/saints-michael-thomas-taken-by-police-allegedly-threw-brick-at-truck/>

¹¹ <https://kennerpd.com/>

¹² <https://kennerpd.com/citizens-police-academy/>

Kenner Police Department also offers a Women's Self-Defense course which is a free nationwide program that teaches self-defense options to women to use in the event that they are confronted by an aggressor.¹³ This course is intended to provide options, if used correctly, that help to allow potential victims to escape their attacker. The course consists of 3 4-hour days of class instruction and at least 2 certified police officers are present to assist with on-hand techniques. The course is designed for females, 13 years of age or older. The objective of the course is to conduct group discussions and demonstrations on topics including types of sexual assault, lawful meaning of self-defense, abductions and kidnapping, risk awareness, recognition, reduction and avoidance, and self-defense techniques.¹⁴

The Kenner Police Academy also hosts their occasional drinking lab, where participants, who are 21 years of age or older, are given alcohol in a monitored and secured environment. Each beverage that is consumed and logged and each participant is eventually given a breathalyzer test. Afterwards, the new cadets at Kenner Police Academy conduct sobriety tests on the participants, without knowing their BAC or whether they have consumed alcohol at all. This exercise is to test the cadets' abilities to identify when suspects are intoxicated or have been drinking.

¹³ <https://kennerpd.com/womens-self-defense/>

¹⁴ *Id.*