

TO: Professor Andrea Armstrong and Professor Nishi Kumar
FROM: Kenly Flanigan
RE: “Better Know a Jail” Memo
DATE: November 29, 2022

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Catahoula Parish Jail

Introduction

Catahoula Parish is the 7th district of the 64 districts in Louisiana. Located in a central part of the state, it is approximately 708 square miles and very rural.¹ The parish was formed in 1808 and named after the Catahoula Lake, which is believed to mean “beautiful clear water.” It is home to four main communities: Harrisonburg, Sicily Island, Jonesville Enterprise and Larto.² In 2020, the population of Catahoula Parish was approximately 9,586 people. The population is 65% white (non-hispanic), 30% black and 3.7% hispanic.³ The 7th judicial district court has two presiding judges whom have original jurisdiction over both criminal and civil matters.⁴ The Catahoula Parish Jail was established in 1991 and is located at the local sheriff’s office. Currently, the jail is under the administration of Warden David Scarbrough and under the governorship of Louisiana Sheriff Toney Edwards.⁵

Jail Characteristics

The Catahoula Parish Jail holds approximately 32 beds to house incarcerated people who are pre-trial and DOC. While the facility is mainly only for adults, they will house a limited number of adjudicated offenders.⁶ Inside the facility, the housing is split up into four two-man cells, a bull pin which consists of twelve beds, and two dorms with eight beds each. It is a minimum-security facility which houses both males and females. The jail is located at 301 Bushley Street, Harrisonburg, LA 71340, which is the same address as the local sheriff’s office. According to a phone conversation with the Sherriff, while the jail generally always operates near its capacity, it usually hovers around holding twenty incarceration people at a time. On average, Catahoula Parish Jail books around 288 individuals per month and is supervised by 88 staff members.⁷

Information about the Catahoula Parish Jail is on the Catahoula Sheriff’s Office website (<https://catahoulaso.com/>). At the top, there is a “Divisions” tab. When the user clicks on this, the drop down includes the ability to click on “Catahoula Parish Jail.” This site offers information regarding who the warden is, when the jail was established, the facilities mission statement, function, implementation of comprehensive rehabilitative programs and its operational capabilities. The bottom of the page provides the Sheriff’s office address, phone number and fax

¹ <https://halifaxsheriff.com/louisiana/county-jail/catahoula-parish-jail/>

² <http://www.discovercatahoula.com/>

³ <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/catahoula-parish-la/>

⁴ <http://www.discovercatahoula.com/services/courts>

⁵ <https://catahoulaso.com/corrections/>

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ <https://madisoncounty-sheriff.com/louisiana/county-jail/catahoula-parish-jail/>

plus information for a separate facility, the Catahoula Correctional Center. Additionally, there are three links at the bottom right corner for the user to be taken to the 7th JDC District Attorney's office website, Catahoula Clerk of Court website, and OffenderWatch.⁸

As of November 20, 2022, sixty-seven individuals who have been arrested are listed on the Catahoula Parish Sheriff's Jail Roster. While there is a tab labeled "Arrests" at the top of the Catahoula Sheriff's Office page, it does not link to anything, so using the jail roster is the best way to determine who has been arrested and when. Out of the 67 arrested, 61 are male and 6 are female. Of those 61 males, about half are white and half are black. Of those six females, five are white and one is black.⁹ Catahoula Parish Jail mostly holds misdemeanors requiring up to twelve months of jail time.¹⁰

The jail allows families and friends to visit from Tuesdays to Sundays between 8am and 8pm. Generally, visitation reservations are not required, but are recommended. The jail permits only one visit per scheduled visiting day with a maximum of five people at a time. Attorneys and members of the clergy are permitted to visit at any time and any day of the week.¹¹

Jail Leadership

Sheriff Tony Edwards first assumed office in 2016 for a four-year term and has recently been re-elected. Sheriff Edwards received his law enforcement training at the P.O.S.T 1990 Alexandria Regional Academy, has a certification from S.R.T Baton Rouge and has training from the Louisiana Sheriff's Institute.¹² In addition to performing traditional law enforcement duties, he is required to serve as the ex-officio tax collector for Catahoula Parish.¹³ Sheriff Edwards oversees both the Catahoula Parish Jail and the Catahoula Correctional Center. The majority of the complaints and scrutiny against Sheriff Edwards is due to the lack of medical and mental health care provided by the Catahoula Correctional Center.¹⁴

In 2020, the Sheriff's Department had a total revenue of around \$20 million. Of that, \$16 million came from prison reimbursement revenue sources. In 2021, however, the prison reimbursement revenue dropped to around \$3 million dollars. Additionally, the expenditures line item for "prison/prisoner expense" was roughly \$18 million dollars in 2020, which dropped down to \$6 million dollars in 2021. Furthermore, in 2021, roughly \$13 million was spent on correctional safety, however, this line item does not provide details as to what that includes.¹⁵ It is unclear as to why there was such a drastic change in budget. The Department of Corrections pays \$24.39 per day per incarcerated individual to the jail.

⁸ <https://catahoulaso.com/corrections/>

⁹ <http://www.catahoula.lavns.org/roster.aspx>

¹⁰ <https://isantisheriff.com/louisiana/county-jail/catahoula-parish-jail/#:~:text=Generally%2C%20Catahoula%20Parish%20Jail%20allows%20inmates%20to%20receive,Parish%20Jail%20does%20not%20require%20any%20visitation%20reservations.>

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² <https://www.lsa.org/catahoula-parish>

¹³ <http://www.discovercatahoula.com/elected-officials/sheriff>

¹⁴ <https://truthout.org/articles/in-an-ominous-pattern-people-are-dying-once-transferred-to-louisiana-prison/>

¹⁵ [https://app.lla.state.la.us/publicreports.nsf/0/284114fb7b6a304d862587ea006e7991/\\$file/00025f19.pdf?openement&.7773098](https://app.lla.state.la.us/publicreports.nsf/0/284114fb7b6a304d862587ea006e7991/$file/00025f19.pdf?openement&.7773098)

Public Records Requests and Recorded Deaths

To obtain the right public records request form, it takes a little digging through the websites. First, the main Catahoula Sheriff's Office website does not have the form listed. The user can scroll down to the bottom and click on the "Catahoula Clerk of Court" link.¹⁶ This website has a few tabs at the top, one of which includes "Fees/Forms" and another called "Links."¹⁷ Unfortunately, the Fees/Forms tab does not include the public records request form. However, the user can click on the Links tab and click on "UCC Filing".¹⁸ This will take you to the Secretary of State website. At the bottom of the site, under "Our Office" is "Make a Public Records Request." This will provide the contact information to make a public records request.¹⁹

Another method that has worked for the class is to mail a public records request to the Custodian of Records at the jail address. This was the method most recently used which resulted in a phone call response from Warden David Scarbrough. Warden Scarbrough is very friendly and responsive.

From 2014-2020, there have only been two recorded deaths at the Catahoula Parish Jail. Bobby Buras and Joshua Dewayne Scott both passed away behind bars, however, the jail does not have their death records as the investigations were conducted by the Louisiana State Police.

Oversight

Two auditors for Catahoula Parish are the Bosch and Statham Certified Public Accountants and The Vercher Group. Bosch and Statham has independently audited the Catahoula Parish Police Jury on their financial statements of government activities. Per the 2020 audit, no material weaknesses or significant deficiencies were found on internal control over financial reporting and compliance.²⁰ The Vercher Group audited the Catahoula Parish Sheriff's office in 2021. They are an independent corporation auditing the financial statements of government activities by the Sheriff's office. In 2021, they found significant deficiencies on internal control and compliance material to the financial statements. Some of the deficiencies include inadequate financial records and data storage, violating the Budget Act by not providing the budget for public inspection, outstanding checks of more than twelve months old, and inadequate concession over inmate funds.²¹ Sheriff Tony Edwards has been provided with correction actions necessary to fix these deficiencies.

¹⁶ <https://catahoulaso.com/corrections/>

¹⁷ <https://catahoulaclerk.com/>

¹⁸ <https://catahoulaclerk.com/links>

¹⁹ <https://coraweb.sos.la.gov/Contact/ContactForm.aspx?recipient=Public%20Records%20Request&subject=Public%20Records%20Request%20Inquiry&returnto=/pages/default.aspx>

²⁰ [https://app.lla.state.la.us/publicreports.nsf/0/bb2598c5eba2f197862587b20065bd37/\\$file/000255e0.pdf?openelement&.7773098](https://app.lla.state.la.us/publicreports.nsf/0/bb2598c5eba2f197862587b20065bd37/$file/000255e0.pdf?openelement&.7773098)

²¹ [https://app.lla.state.la.us/publicreports.nsf/0/284114fb7b6a304d862587ea006e7991/\\$file/00025f19.pdf?openelement&.7773098](https://app.lla.state.la.us/publicreports.nsf/0/284114fb7b6a304d862587ea006e7991/$file/00025f19.pdf?openelement&.7773098)

Note about the facility

One note to make is that there is a lot of mixed information about the difference between the Catahoula Parish jail and the Catahoula Correctional Center. In a majority of google searches, the information about the facilities are mixed to make it seem as though they are the same place. However, the Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections lists out different address and wardens associated with each facility.²² Additionally, the Catahoula Correctional Center is a medium- security facility that can house up to 800 incarcerated individuals.²³ Furthermore, the Catahoula Correctional Center is privately operated by LaSalle, where as, the Catahoula Parish Jail is operated by Louisiana Department of Corrections.²⁴

²² <https://doc.louisiana.gov/about-the-dpsc/facility-locations/>

²³ <https://www.countyoffice.org/catahoula-correctional-center-harrisonburg-la-be9/#:~:text=The%20Catahoula%20Correctional%20Center%2C%20located%20in%20Harrisonburg%2C%20LA%2C,a%20sentence%20after%20being%20convicted%20of%20a%20crime.>

²⁴ <https://lasallecorrections.com/>