

Alex Raphael
Incarceration
Professor Armstrong
Assignment 3 – “Better Know a Jail Memo”

Background

Pointe Coupee Parish Detention Center is located at 8809 LA-891, New Roads, LA 70760. Pointe Coupee Parish Detention Center is a medium-security county jail that houses detainees of 18 years or older indicted for violations of Louisiana law. Warden Brent Plauche runs the jail. The Detention Center is of medium security with 167-bed office that house pre-preliminary inmates. Rene Thibodeaux is the current sheriff for Pointe Coupee Parish since he took office in 2020. Before becoming the sheriff, Thibodeaux was a sergeant for the Pointe Coupee Sheriff's Office.

Inmates Deaths and Notable Case

Pointe Coupee Parish Detention Center has a capacity of 150 inmates and currently houses 135 inmates. In response to my public record request, Pointe Coupee Parish Detention Center has had zero deaths from the year 2014-2022. Warden Brent Plauche swiftly responded to my filing of a public records request via email. In *Leonard ex rel. Campbell v. Torres*, NO. 2016 CW 1484 R, 2 (La. Ct. App. Sep. 26, 2017), Mr. Campbell was at his home on active warrants for burglary and simple criminal damage to property. Mr. Campbell was transported to the Pointe Coupee Parish Detention Center where he was questioned for approximately two hour", an inmate a detainee committed suicide in the detention center; his wife brought an action for damages, individually on the detainee's behalf, against Sheriff Beauregard Torres, in his capacity as Sheriff of Pointe Coupee Parish, and Warden Michael Hebert, individually, and his capacity as Warden of the Pointe Coupee Parish Detention Center. On July 23, 2012, around 4:00 pm. Mr. John Benjamin Campbell was arrested at his home on active warrants for burglary and simple criminal damage to property. Mr. Campbell was brought to the Pointe Coupee Parish detention center, where he was questioned for approximately two hours by detectives. Two hours after being placed in a holding cell Mr. Campbell did not answer when called. Deputy Martin and Sergeant Lewis entered the holding cell, where they discovered Mr. Campbell hanging by his shoelaces.

The court analyzed this tort action by stating that prison authorities owe a duty to use reasonable care to protect inmates from harm and that this duty extends to protecting inmates from self-inflicted injury. The court evaluated the action of the detention center personnel in light of the circumstances that existed at the time of the alleged negligence.

The court stated that while prison officials must exercise reasonable care to protect inmates from harm, including harm from suicide or other self-inflicted injuries, to show that a duty arose on the part of the prison officials, the evidence must establish the prison authorities either knew or should have known of an inmate's suicidal tendencies.

To prove strict liability or negligence for the conditions of the jail, the plaintiff must prove 1) the thing that caused the damage was in the custody of the defendant; 2) the thing contained a defect, and 3) the defective condition of the thing cause the plaintiff's injuries.

The administrative assistant at the Pointe Coupee Parish Detention Center produced an affidavit stating that she was present following Mr. Campbell's arrest and has at least

two verbal interactions with him. She stated that during her interaction with Mr. Campbell, he never stated he was suicidal or contemplating suicide, and there was no reason to believe he was suicidal or contemplating harm. Warden Hebert, in his affidavit, stated that he has no interactions with Campbell on the day of his arrest and requested the Louisiana State Police to investigate the suicide.

The Louisiana State Police's investigation concluded that there was no evidence that John Campbell displayed any signs or made any statements to anyone that would have indicated that he may intend to harm himself or commit suicide.

The burden shifted for the plaintiff to present evidence that would establish that the sheriff's office employees either know or should have known of Mr. Campbell's suicidal tendencies.

The court held, given the fact that there was no evidence that anyone at the detention center was or should have been aware of Mr. Campbell's suicidal tendencies and that Mr. Campbell's act was one of deliberately inflicting harm upon himself, Mr. Campbell's suicide was neither foreseeable nor easily associated with any duty that was allegedly breached. Therefore, the plaintiff did not produce factual support sufficient to satisfy her evidentiary burden of proving a duty arose on behalf of the sheriff's office to provide reasonable care necessary to prevent Mr. Campbell from committing suicide.

Available Information and Transparency

Pointe Coupee Parish does not have a website. The website which once existed seems to have been taken down. The website link provided to the public belongs to the county in general. The website does not have a tab available to locate a detainee. The only information the public can access related to the Pointe Coupee Parish Detention Center is the General Fund Budget for the fiscal year.

Pointe Coupee has had some changes within the budget of the 2022-2023 fiscal year compared to 2021-2022. In 2011-2022 the budget for Part-Time Pay went from \$20,000, revised to \$12,000, and \$7,500 for 2022-2023. Although the amount is small, the Detention Center has a budget of Business Meals for \$500. The budget for Inmate physical and medical is \$0.00. The regular physical and medical budget is \$5,000 and has not changed since the 2021-2022 fiscal year. For the kitchen of the detention center, 2021-2022 account for the amount of \$5,000 in overtime pay but in 2021-2022, there was a revision to \$30,000. The Food Products budget for the 2021-2022 fiscal year was \$100,000, and 2022-2023 is \$75,000; this means the Food Products budget had a \$15,000 decrease. Physical and Medical for the kitchen in the detention center are accounted at the steady amount of \$1,000 from 2021-2023. The food budget for the department of correction inmates was \$50,000 in 2021-2022 and is now \$40,000 in 2022-2024.

Public Briefings

It was recently reported that Pointe Coupee is set to start a renovation that costs between \$3-5 million and is to be completed by January 2023. Warden Brent Plauche stated there is a lot of rust, broken locks and doors, and outdated camera systems. Warden Plauche told the press that his biggest concern is security. He added, "when inmates can manipulate

a lock because it's old, that's an issue; when somebody on capital murder who can manipulate a lock, that's a security issue." It has been reported that inmates have propped open doors using paper and plastic.

In 2016, an internal investigation led to five guards being terminated or jailed. One of the five guard is Darnell VanBuren who was fired and arrested for having improper contact with a female inmate. An unknown female guard was fired because of a friendship she maintained with an inmate which is a violation of the jail policy; the female guard also knew that the inmate had drugs in his possession and never confiscated them. The remaining three officers resigned after allegations of misconduct with inmates and smuggling contraband.