

To: Professors Erika Navalance and Nishi Kumar

From: Jessica Munson

Re: Facility Memo

Date: December 13, 2024

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Eunice City Jail

Introduction

St. Landry Parish is one of sixty-four (64) parishes in Louisiana.¹ The parish encompasses 939 square miles and has a population of over 82,540.² The Parish comprises the Opelousas, LA Statistical Area, which is also included in the Lafayette-Opelousas-Morgan City, LA Combined Statistical Area. Eunice was incorporated as a city on June 4, 1895.³ The Eunice City Jail's most recent building was constructed in 1979 as a means to temporarily detain inmates awaiting trial, sentencing, or both.⁴ The jail is managed by the Eunice Police Department. The police department is currently under the supervision of the Chief of Police Kyle LeBouef. The jail primarily houses individuals who have been arrested in the Eunice area.

Jail Characteristics

The Eunice City Jail is a medium-security facility located on 300 S Second Street in Eunice, LA 70535.⁵ Its primary purpose is to detain individuals for misdemeanor offenses, those pending arraignment, or to temporarily hold inmates before they are transported to other facilities.⁶ The jail's capacity is relatively small, with a stated inmate capacity of 39.⁷ The facility houses both male and female offenders, with an average 35 male inmates and 4 female inmates at any given time.⁸ Prisoners are housed in separate areas depending on the crimes they committed, their risk assessments, and their behavior.⁹ The jail contains 33 adult cells, 2 juvenile cells, and 3

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<https://www.louisiana.gov/local-louisiana/#:~:text=The%20state%20of%20Louisiana%20is,learn%20more%20about%20each%20parish>

² https://data.census.gov/profile/St._Landry_Parish,_Louisiana?g=050XX00US22097

³ <https://inmateroster.org/louisiana/eunice-city-jail-inmate-search>

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ https://www.insideprison.com/county_jails_details.asp?ID=1192#google_vignette

⁶ <https://www.inmateaid.com/prisons/eunice-la-city-jail>

⁷ https://www.insideprison.com/county_jails_details.asp?ID=1192

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ *Id.*

holding cells for adults.¹⁰ Offenders are there no longer than 48-72 hours.¹¹ The jail lacks an official webpage, and no detailed information is available on the St. Landry Parish website, making the demographics of the 40 inmates currently housed at Eunice City Jail unknown.

Visitation hours are generally by appointment only, and appointments can be scheduled by calling (337) 457-2626.¹² Visitors must complete an online application, and once approved, receive instructions on how to visit an inmate.¹³ Visitors undergo thorough searches before entering the premises, with personal belongings, including cell phones, strictly prohibited.¹⁴

The jail employs advanced security measures, including surveillance systems, guard posts, and customized fencing.¹⁵ Protective custody measures include state-of-the-art lighting, alarm systems, and a patrolling unit.¹⁶ The facility processes inmates through detailed booking procedures, capturing their mugshots, charges, and incarceration dates.¹⁷ It also offers some rehabilitation programs, such as substance abuse counseling or religious programs to help enforce helpful values. The facility also offers skill-building workshops, to aid inmates in earning an income or contributing to the community.¹⁸

Public Records Request and Inmate Mortality

In order to submit a public records request at the Eunice City Jail, I called the jail's phone number at (337) 457-2626. Once on the phone, I asked to confirm the contact information for the person or department responsible for handling public records requests at their facility. I was then transferred to the records department where I was told I must come in person to acquire the records I was requesting. I inquired if it was possible to do it by email or fax. The person working in the records department replied that they were unsure of how to do that but would be able to help me in person. After speaking with my professors to ensure that this was correct, I once again tried calling the facility at other times to see if someone else was working in the records department that could help me. Each time I called, I was told to leave a message, and someone would get back to me. Each time I left a message, I did not receive any follow up. Finally, I called again once more and was given the email to the Eunice Police Department's Records Division, records@eunicepd.com, where I sent my request On September 30th, 2024, and promptly received an official Zero Deaths Letter back on October 2nd, 2024.

I received a Zero Deaths Letter (ZDL), which means that the facility did not encounter any deaths in custody for the requested years. Based on the zero deaths letter, after a thorough

¹⁰ <https://polkncsheriff.com/louisiana/city-jail/eunice-city-jail/>

¹¹ <https://www.inmateaid.com/prisons/eunice-la-city-jail>

¹² <https://eunicecityjail.org/>

¹³ *Id.*

¹⁴ *Id.*

¹⁵ <https://polkncsheriff.com/louisiana/city-jail/eunice-city-jail/>

¹⁶ *Id.*

¹⁷ *Id.*

¹⁸ *Id.*

search of their files, it was determined that the Eunice Police Department has no records of in custody deaths reported to the Bureau of Justice during the period of January 1, 2020, through the present.

Jail Leadership

The Eunice police department oversees the Eunice City Jail, ensuring compliance with laws and safety standards.¹⁹ In 2020, the department employed four record clerks, including an information technology director and a records supervisor.²⁰ The department also employed five jailers, one of whom was a supervisor.²¹

In 2015, of the department's sworn officers, 65% were white and 35% were black; and 75% were male.²² According to the department's official website, it's mission is to provide "excellent service and protection through leadership and partnership with the community."²³ The website also lists Randy Fontenot as the Chief of Police and Richard Daigle as the Deputy Chief.²⁴ However, my public records request indicated that Kyle Lebouef is the current Chief of Police along with Jeremy Ivory serving as the Deputy Chief of Police.

Kyle LeBouef, elected in 2022, has over 38 years of professional law enforcement experience.²⁵ He aims to leverage his law enforcement experience and training to lead the police department in making Eunice a safer and better place to live and work.²⁶ Jeremy Ivory was recently recognized as one of St. Landry Parish Crime Stoppers Officers of the year.²⁷ However, Ivory's record includes a 2009 charge for simple battery involving an incident where he allegedly struck a man in custody.²⁸ Additionally, a 2010 lawsuit a plaintiff filed suit against Jeremy alleged excessive force during an arrest.²⁹

¹⁹ <https://www.jaildata.com/prison/eunice-la-city-jail>

²⁰ <https://archive.eunicetoday.com/local/eunice-police-pay-resurfaces-issue>

²¹ *Id.*

²² *Id.*

²³ <http://www.eunicepd.com/>

²⁴ *Id.*

²⁵

<https://www.klfy.com/your-local-election-hq/kyle-lebouef-elected-eunice-chief-of-police-in-nov-8-election/>

²⁶ *Id.*

²⁷ <https://www.stlandrynow.com/community/local-news/slp-crime-stoppers-officers-of-the-year/>

²⁸ <https://archive.acadiaparishtoday.com/two-present-one-former-eunice-police-officer-indicted>

²⁹

<https://cases.justia.com/louisiana/third-circuit-court-of-appeal/2013-ca-13-0921.pdf?ts=1406880453>)

Jail News Coverage and Transparency

This year the St. Landry Parish President, Jessie Bellard, raised concerns about the jail's expenses.³⁰ Bellard noted that the parish government currently pays all inmate expenses at the parish jail, including the costs of inmates sent outside the parish.³¹ With those expenses adding up, the President wants to know if the sheriff's office could take over some of that financial responsibility.³² Bellard said they cannot afford to keep paying to house inmates across the street and the sheriff receive all the state funding.³³ The sheriff and President are collectively bringing the case to a judge to determine who the liability belongs to.³⁴

In 2021, The American Civil Liberties Union of Louisiana filed a lawsuit against former Chief of Police Randy Fontenot after a whistleblower exposed corruption within the police department.³⁵ The lawsuit alleged that Lt. Michael Dunn reported widespread misconduct, including excessive use of force, neglect of inmates' medical needs, mishandling of evidence, and misuse of departmental funds—which the department failed to rectify.³⁶

Lt. Dunn alleged that Chief Fontenot endangered lives by releasing critically injured inmates to avoid incurring medical expenses.³⁷ In one instance, in August 2018, Fontenot allegedly ordered Lt. Dunn to release an inmate who had swallowed broken glass in the jail, rather than having the jail staff take the individual to the hospital for treatment.³⁸ While Lt. Dunn refused to comply, another officer followed Chief Fontenot's directive and released the inmate.³⁹ Dunn also reported observing the abuse of the confidential informant process by Eunice's police officers.⁴⁰ One officer would routinely detained arrestees in jail or his office for extended periods to coerce them into becoming confidential informants.⁴¹

Additionally, Lt. Dunn accused Chief Fontenot of selectively enforcing the law by shielding friends, family members, and political allies from criminal charges while ignoring misconduct by favored officers.⁴² He further alleged that Fontenot exploited the disciplinary to

³⁰ <https://www.klfy.com/local/st-landry-parish/st-landry-parish-president-questions-jail-expenses/>

³¹ *Id.*

³² *Id.*

³³ *Id.*

³⁴ *Id.*

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<https://www.aclu.org/press-releases/aclu-louisianas-justice-lab-sues-city-eunice-police-chief-after-whistleblower-exposes>

³⁶ *Id.*

³⁷ https://www.laaclu.org/sites/default/files/filed_dunn.pdf

³⁸ *Id.*

³⁹ *Id.*

⁴⁰ *Id.*

⁴¹ *Id.*

⁴²

<https://www.aclu.org/press-releases/aclu-louisianas-justice-lab-sues-city-eunice-police-chief-after-whistleblower-exposes>

target specific employees within the department who were not on his “good side” or would refuse to do his bidding.⁴³ When Chief Fontenot became aware of Lt. Dunn’s intention to report these allegations, he and other officers retaliated by cutting Dunn’s hours and pay while spreading false rumors about him within the department.⁴⁴ Dunn also faced threats of physical harm and disciplinary action in an attempt to pressure him into resigning.⁴⁵ His lawsuit aims to address policy failures within the Eunice Police Department and the City of Eunice. A jury trial for the case is scheduled for May 6, 2024.⁴⁶

Two other recent lawsuits involved inmate deaths while in custody. In *Guilbeaux v. Eunice*, Chief Fontenot and Officer Kathy Miller were accused of refusing medical assistance to an inmate, despite his repeated requests for help.⁴⁷ The parties settled the case out of court in October 2017.⁴⁸ In *Faul v. Fontenot*, the estate of John Paul Davis alleged that he committed suicide while in custody at the Eunice City Jail after announcing that he intended to kill himself.⁴⁹

Regarding the jail’s overall transparency, information about the jail’s characteristics is limited. It is very difficult to find out any information regarding the facility’s physical or internal characteristics. The jail lacks an official website, and the police department’s website is outdated. The facility does not seem to be nationally accredited. Information about the jail’s budget is sparse, aside from disputes over fund allocation. Transparency relies heavily on the accessibility of inmate records, and obtaining public records was challenging due to a small staff. Overall, there appears to be little recent media coverage of Eunice City Jail, suggesting the facility keeps a low profile to avoid any more public controversies or major incidents.

⁴³ *Id.*

⁴⁴ https://www.laclu.org/sites/default/files/filed_dunn.pdf

⁴⁵ *Id.*

⁴⁶ <https://www.aclujusticelab.org/case/case-12-dunn-v-fontenot-et-al/>

⁴⁷ https://www.laclu.org/sites/default/files/filed_dunn.pdf

⁴⁸ *Id.*

⁴⁹ *Id.*