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FROM: Benji Newman
RE: “Get to Know a Louisiana Jail” Memo
DATE: November 3, 2024

Raymond Laborde Correctional Center

Introduction

Raymond Laborde Correctional Center is located at 1630 Prison Rd Cottonport, Louisiana. The prison is located in Avoyelles Parish which has a size of 866 square miles.¹ The cities of Marysville, Cottonport, and Mansura is the major cities in this parish. Raymond Laborde Correctional Center opened in 1989 and is on roughly 1,187 acres and has been under numerous renovations over the years to increase the capacity of the prisoners to 1,564.² The correctional center belongs to the corrections division of Avoyelles Parish Sheriff’s Office and it is under the supervision of Warden Marcus Myers.³

Jail Characteristics

Raymond Laborde Correctional Center is a Louisiana state prison located at 1630 Prison Rd Cottonport, Louisiana 71327. In 1989, the original plan was to send over 600 state prisoners who were incarcerated in nearby parishes jails to state prisons such as Angola and Raymond.⁴ The first person that was brought to Raymond to be imprisoned was on June 19, 1989.⁵ The original design capacity at Raymond was 610 inmates, but over the year there has been constructions and improvements to allow the prison to have a capacity to 1,564.⁶ As of 2024, Raymond Laborde Correctional Center has a staff of 326 employees and an operating budget of \$24.5 million dollars.⁷ Throughout the years Raymond Laborde Correctional Center has received it’s accreditation by the American Correctional Association’s Commission on Accreditation first it being in 1992.⁸ Also, it has since been reaccredited in 1995, 1998, 2001, 2004, 2007, 2010 and 2013.⁹

¹ <https://doc.louisiana.gov/location/raymond-laborde-correctional-center/>

² *Id.*

³ *Id.*

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ *Id.*

The website of Raymond Laborde Correctional Center is at <https://doc.louisiana.gov/location/raymond-laborde-correctional-center/>.¹⁰ There is not much information on the main website besides the main subjects such as: contact information, mission, goals, directions, visitation information, educational programming, other programs such as services, human resources, training, and history of the facility. With that being said, all of the information is available on the left hand side of the web browser. In addition, the Avoyelle's Parish Sheriff's office website is at <https://lsa.org/directory/avoyelles-parish/>.¹¹ There you would be able to find the information on the Sheriff David Dauzat who is over the Raymond Laborde Correctional Center. Once you enter the website of the Avoyelle's Parish Sheriff Office you would find the jail contact information and other info at the bottom of the site.¹² Furthermore, to access the jail roster of Avoyelles Parish is located at <http://www.avoyelles.lavns.org/roster.aspx>.¹³ There you would be able to see the number of people who are in custody down to a breakdown of the inmates ethnicity.

As of Friday, November 8, 2024, at 5:12 pm (CST), the Detention Center has 394 people in custody. Of those 394, one hundred twenty one were female. Of those one hundred twenty one females, eighty-seven were white. There are currently two hundred twenty-three males in custody. Of those two hundred twenty-three men, one hundred four of them are black.¹⁴

Visitation is allowed from 8 am to 3:30 pm on Saturday and Sunday and each approved visitor is allowed two visits per month.¹⁵ In addition, if a visitor is approved to visit at Raymond Laborde Correctional Center, then they would be required to provide positive identification each time they visit.¹⁶ Visits may last three hours, but however "the warden retains the right to determine the amount of time that a visitor may visit the imprisoned person."¹⁷ All persons over the age of eighteen years of age must be on the imprisoned "persons list" and on the other hand if a visitor is under eighteen years of age, then there must be an approval to visit from parent or guardian and they must fill out a questionnaire.¹⁸

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ <https://lsa.org/directory/avoyelles-parish/>

¹² *Id.*

¹³ <http://www.avoyelles.lavns.org/roster.aspx>

¹⁴ *Id.*

¹⁵ <https://doc.louisiana.gov/location/raymond-laborde-correctional-center/>

¹⁶ *Id.*

¹⁷ *Id.*

¹⁸ *Id.*

Public Records Request and Inmate Mortality

In this case for a public records request from Raymond Laborde Correctional Center I emailed "docpublicrecords@la.gov" to request the number of deaths from Raymond Laborde Correctional Center from January 2021 to present. I was in a back and forth email chain with the DOC public record staff from about two months. I was first given a "public acknowledgement" letter stating that "it will take at least 3-4 weeks for us to gather the requested information and respond to your request." Consequently, I sent another email about 3 weeks after with the same public records request and I was given the same public acknowledgment letter from the DOC public record staff. Further, I received a email that there was "another death in custody" but without the proper letterhead. I made sure to clarify what the DOC public record staff was trying to state and made them put it in writing with the accurate number of deaths that have occurred at Raymond Laborde Correctional Center from January 2021 to present. And instantly I was given an accurate number that there has been 22 deaths from January 2021 to present. Furthermore, I thanked them from the email and if they were able to put that information in a letter to confirm it. To that end, shortly I received the official letter of the number of deaths at Raymond Laborde Correctional Center, which has been 22 deaths.

This process of obtaining a public records request from Raymond was relevantly simple. I did not once go on the website of Raymond Laborde Correction Center to receive the public record search nor called anyone at the correction center. All in all, I use the email address that was provided in the google spreadsheet that was given to us at the start of the semester and maintained a professional throughout the process of waiting to obtain the public record request from Raymond Laborde Correction Center.

Jail Leadership

David Dauzat is the Avoyelles Parish Sheriff. He came into office in 2020 by defeating the previous Sheriff Doug Anderson in a runoff election. David Dauzat is part of the Republican Party and is a man of faith. Prior to sheriff he served as Louisiana State trooper for nearly 20 years.¹⁹ When David Dauzat first got elected he mentioned, "progress has been made includes improvements with jails, more vehicles on the road for patrol men, and community as a whole has improved."²⁰ David Dauzat has been sheriff since 2020 and he was just selected as sheriff of Avoyelles Parish on October 14, 2023.²¹ Also, David Dauzat salary from Avoyelles Parish Sheriff office is \$197,621 including benefits.²² Further, I could not find much information on Warden

¹⁹ <https://www.kalb.com/2020/07/08/avoyelles-parish-welcomes-new-sheriff-david-dauzat/>

²⁰ *Id.*

²¹ <https://www.kalb.com/video/2023/10/15/david-dauzat-re-elected-avoyelles-parish-sheriff/>

²² [https://app.lla.la.gov/publicreports.nsf/0/0337d6c16b010076862587c100567fc6/\\$file/000256eb.pdf](https://app.lla.la.gov/publicreports.nsf/0/0337d6c16b010076862587c100567fc6/$file/000256eb.pdf)

Marcus Myers besides him becoming the new warden of Raymond Laborde Correction Center in August of 2020.²³

Jail News Coverage and Transparency

On the other hand, I was able to do some research on Raymond Laborde Correction Center and with a simple google search I found the following:

1. In September 2023, Jerome Stevenson, a black man, was booked for a purse snatching and simple battery, into jail in Marksville, Louisiana which is located within the Avoyelles Parish.²⁴ Without any details he was beaten and hospitalized and later airlifted to a second hospital.²⁵ Oddly the news about Jerome Stevenson death didn't hit the fan with making it to the public. Further, on December 29, 2023 David Dauzat and his sheriff officer describes Jerome Stevenson death as an "offender-on-offender crime of violence."²⁶ What is more, in February 2024 there as an announcement of the arrest of another incarcerated person that was linked to Jerome Stevenson death.²⁷ Avoyelles Parish Sheriff David Dauzat did not return an interview to the public, but did give a written response about "an investigation is ongoing."²⁸
2. On October 4, 2023, around 8 am, eleven inmates at Avoyelles Parish DC-1 jail attempted an escape, in addition, they were able to force their way through a cell door, subsequently passing by a correction's deputy.²⁹ However, despite the attempt the inmates were still confined in a lockdown cell, by the attempt to overpower the door, they were unable to exit the rebuilding.³⁰ As a result, the element inmates were changed by the Avoyelles Parish District Attorney Office with a simple "escape charge."³¹ Along with the charge David Dauzat made a public statement following the attempted escape commending the law

²³ <https://www.kalb.com/2020/08/21/marcus-myers-named-new-warden-of-raymond-laborde-correctional-center/>

²⁴ <https://www.wwno.org/law/2024-05-29/after-their-son-died-in-a-louisiana-jail-a-family-struggles-for-answers>

²⁵ *Id.*

²⁶ *Id.*

²⁷ *Id.*

²⁸ *Id.*

²⁹ <https://www.wkrg.com/news/11-inmates-charged-with-attempted-escape-from-avoyelles-parish-jail/amp/>

³⁰ *Id.*

³¹ *Id.*

enforcement officers, “their swift training, professionalism, and commit to public safety paid off today.”³²

3. In September 2023, Markus Lanieux, was found dead while in state custody at Raymond Laborde Correctional Center.³³ The prison officials told the family that Mr. Lanieux killed himself, but did not provide any further details related to his death.³⁴ Further, when Markus Lanieux body was transferred to the funeral home, there was an “evidence” bag found with his body.³⁵ Apparently, it was the evidence of “sheet modified into a rope” that Mr. Lanieux supposedly hung himself with.³⁶ After the finding of this evidence bag with Mr. Lanieux body, they casted doubt about the real reason of how Markus Lanieux died.³⁷ In addition, the family members stated that there was a lack of communication from Raymond Laborde.³⁸ Moreover, after numerous attempts to get information regarding the cause of death the prison had cut off all communication and referred future communications to their general counsel.³⁹ The Department of Corrections acknowledged that the evidence should not have been sent to the funeral home with Markus Lanieux body.⁴⁰ Consequently, the family of Lanieux had to deal with the confusion and lack of respect with the system.

All the more reason the community has believed that there is a lack of transparency with the information that they receive from the Avoyelles Parish Sheriff office and Raymond Laborde Correctional Center. Moreover, loved ones have mentioned that they are repeatedly left with “anguished questions.”⁴¹ Further, all of a sudden things terribly wrong when Avoyelles Parish law enforcement is in charged of these people loved ones who are incarcerated. Michele Deitch, who is the director of UT Austin’s Prison and Jail Innovation Lab mentioned, “families typically can’t find out why their loved one died, or what’s happening in investigation, or they may not

³² *Id.*

³³ <https://lailluminator.com/2023/10/01/evidence-body-bag/>

³⁴ *Id.*

³⁵ *Id.*

³⁶ *Id.*

³⁷ *Id.*

³⁸ *Id.*

³⁹ *Id.*

⁴⁰ *Id.*

⁴¹ <https://www.wwno.org/law/2024-05-29/after-their-son-died-in-a-louisiana-jail-a-family-struggles-for-answers>

even be notified about it.”⁴² What is more, families often feel like “nobody knows what's going on and that nobody’s taking responsibility.”⁴³

What is more, in a sixty-one day timeframe, September and October of 2023, the Avoyelles Parish Sheriff Office and Raymond Laborde Correctional Center, consequently of the death of Markus Lanieux Jr., Jerome Stevenson, and the attempted prison escape, appeared on KALB’s website six times.⁴⁴ Further, Raymond Laborde Correctional Center was included on the Avoyelles Todays two times on their website.⁴⁵ Notwithstanding the numerous news coverage from the attempted prison escape and the death of Jerome Stevenson, Marcus Lanieux Jr was only mentioned in the news one time and that was on the Louisiana Illuminator.⁴⁶ However, he was spotlighted on social media such as Instagram, after his death and during the investigation of the finding of evidence bag at his funeral.⁴⁷

In consequence, the Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections operates Raymond Laborde Correctional Center because it is a state run prison in Louisiana. Also the Bureau of Justice who is apart of the United States government, Department of Justice obliges Raymond Laborde Correctional Center to surrender all their death report on inmates under jail jurisdiction (form CJ-9) once a year.⁴⁸ Moreover, once the Bureau of Justice receives this sensitive information they are compelled to release the statistics and evaluations of the state and local jails.⁴⁹

⁴² *Id.*

⁴³ *Id.*

⁴⁴ <https://www.kalb.com/2023/09/19/caddo-parish-inmate-escapes-alexandria-apd-searching-jackie-brown/>

⁴⁵ <https://www.avoyellestoday.com/news/escapees-dc-1-jail-facility-marksville-re-captured>

⁴⁶ <https://lailluminator.com/2023/10/01/evidence-body-bag/>

⁴⁷ https://www.instagram.com/veritenewsnola/p/Cy4Dm_6O0L_/

⁴⁸ <https://bjs.ojp.gov/about>

⁴⁹ *Id.*