TO: Professor Andrea Armstrong
FROM: Remi Miller
RE: "Better Know a Jail" Memo
DATE: April 20, 2026
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Hammond City Jail

Introduction

Jails are intended to hold people awaiting trial ("pretrial detainees") or serving short sentences. However, many jails in Louisiana have become overcrowded and are currently holding people serving long sentences.[1] As a result, local jails play a key role in mass incarceration. To end mass incarceration, change must occur at the local level, as that is where decisions regarding arrest, detention, and release begin.

Hammond City Jail is a municipal jail in rural Tangipahoa Parish that was built in 1962.[2] Unlike parish jails, which are typically operated by a sheriff's office and house a larger population, municipal jails like Hammond City Jail are directly overseen by city police departments, which arrest individuals for offenses committed within the city's jurisdiction. This distinction in management affects the jail's population and its oversight structure.

While some basic operational information is publicly available, data about its oversight, conditions, and accountability mechanisms is limited. This lack of transparency is a cause for concern for those seeking to identify and address the harmful conditions of incarceration.

Jail Characteristics

The Hammond City Jail is located at 303 East Thomas Street, Hammond, Louisiana 70401. According to their website, hammondcityjail.org the Corrections Division of the Hammond Police Department (HPD) directly oversees the operation of Hammond City Jail. This division is responsible for facilitating booking, supervising those in custody, maintaining facility equipment, and managing all inmate records. According to a 2011 masterplan for the City of Hammond, the HPD has 102 officers and 4 civil service clerical and dispatch personnel.[3] The plan also describes the jail as a "24-hr detention facility housed within the [Hammond] Police Department."[4]

The Department states that it is committed to ensuring the safety, health, and well-being of all those in their custody.

This facility is a medium-security city jail, designed to hold people in custody serving short-term sentences of less than a year.[5] People detained at the Hammond City Jail are often

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[1] Vera, *Louisiana Locked Up: A Problem in Every Parish*, VERA INSTITUTE, https://www.vera.org/louisiana-locked-up/parish/Tangipahoa (last visited April 18, 2026).
[2] *Hammond City Jail Inmate Lookup*, HAMMOND CITY JAIL ROSTER, https://hammondcityjail.org/ (last visited April 18, 2026).
[3] *Hammond Comprehensive Master Plan*, (June 1, 2011), https://hammond.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/masterplan.pdf.
[4] *Hammond Comprehensive Master Plan, supra* note 3.

transferred to the larger Tangipahoa Parish Jail in Amite, Louisiana. The jail typically holds individuals charged with misdemeanors or non-violent offenses, and those who do not require long-term incarceration are often eligible for bail.[6] Public information regarding the jail's current capacity is not available, but a 2013 survey from the Prison Policy Initiative indicates that it had sixteen people in custody ("prisoners") at the time.[7] The Vera Institute reports there are 23 beds.[8]

Jail Leadership

The jail's leadership structure is vague. The jail operates under the direction of Chief of Hammond Police Department Edwin Bergeron, Jr. and Warden Captain Terry Lane. Bergeron, Jr. was elected Chief of Police in 2019 and continues to hold that position today.[9] Part of his role is overseeing the Hammond City Jail.[10] Before his appointment as chief, he was a Task Force officer and Sergeant of the Street Crimes Unit.[11] In April 2026, named Police Chief of the Year by Crime Fighters of Louisiana.[12]

Since the jail is more of a temporary holding place before detainees are transferred to the Tangipahoa Parish Jail, it is also under the indirect control of Tangipahoa Parish Sheriff's Office (TPSO). The current TPSO sheriff is Gerald Sticker. He has held this position since July 2024.[13] He started his career in law enforcement, beginning as a patrol officer, after leaving the military.[14] He eventually became Chief of Police and has over 25 years of experience in law enforcement.[15] How Chief Bergeron, Warden Lane, and Sheriff Sticker divide their responsibilities over the jail is currently indeterminable.

Evidence of Oversight

There is no evidence that any national association has accredited Hammond City Jail. In contrast, the Lafourche Parish Sheriff's Office has two correctional facilities with American Correctional Association (ACA) accreditation: Lafourche Parish Correctional Complex (parish jail) and the LPSO Transitional Work Program. [16]

An audit conducted by Kushner Lagraize, LLC showed that for the fiscal year ending on June 30, 2024, the City of Hammond spent nearly $26M on Public Safety, which includes the police (roughly $16M) and fire (roughly $10M) departments.[17] The audit does not identify a

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[6] *Hammond City Jail Inmate Lookup*, *supra* note 2.
[7] Prison Policy Initiative, *Louisiana correctional populations of Census 2020 vintage*, PRISON GERRYMANDERING PROJECT, https://www.prisonersofthecensus.org/data/prisons2020/LA/ (last visited April 20, 2026).
[8] *Louisiana Locked Up: A Problem in Every Parish*, *supra* note 1.
[9] *Edwin Bergeron Jr.*, POLICE HAMMOND, LOUISIANA, https://hammond.org/staff/edwin-bergeron-jr/ (last visited April 18, 2026).
[10] *Edwin Bergeron Jr.*, *supra* note 12.
[11] *Edwin Bergeron Jr.*, *supra* note 12.
[12] Hammond Police Department – Louisiana, *Chief Edwin Bergeron Jr. Named "Police Chief of the Year" by Crime Fighters of Louisiana*, FACEBOOK (April 15, 2026), https://www.facebook.com/HammondPolice/posts/chief-edwin-bergeron-jr-named-police-chief-of-the-year-by-crime-fighters-of-loui/1359023482917674/.
[13] *Meet the Sheriff*, TANGIPAHOA PARISH SHERIFF'S OFFICE, https://www.tpso.org/meet-the-sheriff (last visited April 19, 2026).
[14] *Meet the Sheriff*, *supra* note 13.
[15] *Meet the Sheriff*, *supra* note 13.
[16] *LPSO Correctional Facilities Achieve ACA Accreditation*, LAFOURCHE PARISH SHERIFF'S OFFICE, (Feb. 3, 2021), https://www.lpso.net/2021/02/03/lpso-correctional-facilities-achieve-aca-accreditation/.
[17] *City of Hammond, Louisiana Annual Financial Report*, (June 30, 2024), https://app.lla.la.gov/publicreports.nsf/0/cfad38561942bd8386258c5900592fdc/$file/00007190.pdf.

separate budget/expenditure for the jail itself.[18] The city appears to have subsidized a majority of the expenditure.[19] It is likely that the city jail funding, expenses, and revenue overlap with the Public Safety (Police) funding. The city jail finances likely do not standalone in the city's audit because once a person is booked and processed, they are usually transferred to the Tangipahoa Parish Jail, which has its own separate budget under the Tangipahoa Parish Sheriff's Office (TPSO). Because the jail budget is embedded in the Public Safety (police) budget, there is a lack of transparency regarding its funding for equipment maintenance, infrastructure updates, services, programming, healthcare, food, etc.

An audit conducted by the Louisiana Legislative Auditor (LLA) showed that for the fiscal year ending on December 31, 2024, the TPSO had multiple streams of revenue through reimbursements and prison income, totaling around $26.1M.[20] This revenue figure included the parish jail operations.[21] The audit also revealed that TPSO spent around $28.7M, which included jail operations, and that the parish subsidized jail operations by about $1.6M.[22]

In 2020 the FBI began investigating a 2017 jail beating incident involving current Police Chief Edwin Bergeron in the booking room at Hammond City Jail.[23] Among other items, police discovered a pill bottle in Kentdrick Ratcliff's car, prompting him to be booked at the city jail.[24] During processing, Bergeron and other officers beat Ratcliff, who was detained in handcuffs at the time.[25] The incident was caught on a surveillance camera located inside the booking room.[26] The footage shows Ratcliff calmly sitting on a bench during processing and then standing up to reach for the pill bottle that was placed on a desk next to him.[27] The two officers sitting at the desk then wrestled Ratcliff on top of the desk and began striking him.[28] One officer placed Ratcliff in a guillotine chokehold, while Bergeron repeatedly punched him in the face and kneed him in the stomach.[29] Additional officers joined as Ratcliff was held face-down on the ground and tazed.[30] One officer then kicked Ratcliff in the groin area while another kicked him in the head.[31] After this, another officer stood with his boot on Ratcliff's neck, while a different officer

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[18] *City of Hammond, Louisiana Annual Financial Report*, *supra* note 17.
[19] *City of Hammond, Louisiana Annual Financial Report*, *supra* note 17.
[20] *Tangipahoa Parish Sheriff Financial Report*, (June 30, 2024), https://app.lla.la.gov/publicreports.nsf/0/f89cb850b91ecdf486258c130066788e/$file/00006a40.pdf#:~:text=We%20have%20audited%20the%20accompanying%20financial%20statements,major%20fund%2C%20and%20the%20aggregate%20remaining%20fund.
[21] *Tangipahoa Parish Sheriff Financial Report*, *supra* note 20.
[22] *Tangipahoa Parish Sheriff Financial Report*, *supra* note 20.
[23] Wesley Muller, *Hammond City Council votes to remove police chief seen on tape punching Black suspect*, LOUISIANA ILLUMINATOR, (Sep. 10, 2020, 10:55 AM), https://lailluminator.com/2020/09/10/police-chiefs-beating-of-black-man-was-excessive-and-borderline-criminal/.
[24] Muller, *supra* note 23.
[25] Muller, *supra* note 23.
[26] Wesley Muller, *FBI investigates beating of Black man by White Hammond police*, LOUISIANA ILLUMINATOR, (Sep. 2, 2020, 7:15 PM), https://lailluminator.com/2020/09/02/fbi-investigates-brutality-of-black-man-by-white-hammond-police/.
[27] Muller, *supra* note 26.
[28] Muller, *supra* note 26.
[29] Muller, *supra* note 23.
[30] Muller, *supra* note 23.
[31] Muller, *supra* note 23.

kneeled on him.[32] At the time of the jail beating, Bergeron was a sergeant, but he has since been elected the department's chief.[33] The mayor's appointment of Bergeron itself was unexpected because it allowed a sergeant to bypass several ranks with little to no administrative experience.[34] The City Council discussed the issue at a Public Hearing in 2022, but ultimately motions requesting that the Mayor fire Chief Bergeron were denied.[35]

There are no judicial orders (injunctive) or consent decrees concerning the Hammond City Jail in effect currently or previously within the last five years.

Evidence of Transparency

During the tenure of Chief Edwin Bergeron, the Hammond Police Department requested funding from the Hammond City Council to upgrade the jail's cameras.[36] The proposal included replacing 16 indoor cameras and one outdoor camera, as well as installing four additional indoor cameras.[37] The City Council approved the proposal, which indicates that there is some level of interest in ensuring safety and accountability at the facility.[38]

On May 13, 2025, the City Council considered another proposal to upgrade the Police Department's body cameras.[39] During their discussion, several council members stated the need for greater transparency from the Police Department, and specifically that it needs to regain trust by using the body cameras for their intended purpose. One member emphasized that the Department's policies and procedures regarding the body cameras were not available for viewing on their website.[40] Another member went as far as to say that there should be consequences if the Department neglects to use the body cameras.[41] These concerns resulted in the proposal initially being tabled; however, the proposal was ultimately approved at the next council meeting.[42] This discussion suggests that the local government views transparency within the Hammond Police Department as an issue, and that concerns over accountability remain.

The jail's website details the process of inmate search and jail rosters for people looking to gather information about individuals detained there. Through this process, you can find out the individual's location and charges. Staff members can provide information regarding the individual's status and scheduled court appearances. There are several ways of collecting the information: calling or visiting the Hammond Police Department, checking the Tangipahoa's Parish Sheriff's Office website, and utilizing third-party websites like Inmate Aid and Vinelink.

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[32] Muller, *supra* note 23.
[33] Muller, *supra* note 23.
[34] Muller, *supra* note 23.
[35] *Hammond City Council Public Hearing Minutes*, (Jan. 11, 2022, 5:30 PM), https://hammond.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/MINUTES2022.pdf.
[36] Len Marie, *Proposal to Hammond Police Department for Jail Camera Upgrade Motorola Avigilon Alta Cloud*, https://hammond.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/5-27-2025resolution1.pdf.
[37] Marie, *supra* note 36.
[38] Marie, *supra* note 36.
[39] *Hammond City Council Public Hearing Minutes*, (May 13, 2025, 5:30 PM), https://hammond.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/5-27-2025minutes.pdf.
[40] *Hammond City Council Public Hearing Minutes*, *supra* note 39.
[41] *Hammond City Council Public Hearing Minutes*, *supra* note 39.
[42] *Hammond City Council Public Hearing Minutes*, (May 27, 2025, 5:30 PM), https://hammond.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/6-10-2025minutes.pdf.

The jail roster includes the individual's date of arrest and booking, the timeline of when they were taken into custody, the charges that led to their arrest, their bond amount (if applicable), scheduled court dates and hearings, current housing location (cell block or unit number), and scheduled transfers to other facilities. Individuals are listed on the roster by their full name and booking number.

The jail also maintains arrest records and mugshots for those held there. To access these records, you must contact the Hammond Police Department, mail a formal written request to the department (sometimes includes a processing and copying fee), check the Tangipahoa Parish Clerk of Court's website, or utilize third-party websites like PublicData and BeenVerified. Mugshots are viewable on the Hammond Police Department's website, and third-party websites like Mugshots.com and ArrestFacts.

In-person and video visits are allowed but require advanced scheduling with the jail directly. The jail requires potential visitors to complete a visitation application, submit specific documentation, and usually undergo a background check. Visitors with a criminal record or an outstanding warrant could be subject to additional scrutiny. Individuals in custody who are classified as "high-risk" or held in a segregated unit may have visitation restrictions or only be allowed non-contact visits.

The Vera Institute, a national non-profit advocacy and research organization, reports that almost every parish, including Tangipahoa Parish, has a pretrial incarceration rate above the national average.[43] The Louisiana Department of Public Safety & Corrections (DPS&C) pays local jails to hold more than half of the state's prison population which is mostly comprised of people held pretrial.[44] There is a gap in the data concerning the demographic information at Hammond City Jail; however, the Vera Institute reports that 766 residents age 15-64 were incarcerated in Tangipahoa Parish jails 2024.[45]

Public Records Request & Inmate Mortality

A previous public records request shows one death in custody from 2014-2019, that of William David Jenkins, who sadly passed away on November 13, 2019, in his cell. According to communications with the facility, the FBI investigated Jenkins's death. In the last update from HPD, they claimed that the incident was still under active investigation and that their records of the incident were sealed.[46]

No deaths were reported from 2020-2021. Other public records show Hosie Brown III died in custody in 2022, and Joseph Lamarca died in custody in 2023.

The public records request that I filed on January 19, 2026 via email was answered by Kasey Hymel of the Hammond Police Department (publicrecords@hammond.org) in just a few days. The record stated that no deaths in custody had occurred since August 1, 2024. The staff

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[43] Vera, *Louisiana Locked Up: A Problem in Every Parish*, VERA INSTITUTE, https://www.vera.org/louisiana-locked-up/about-data (last visited April 18, 2026).
[44] *Louisiana Locked Up: A Problem in Every Parish,* supra note 43.

[46] Incarceration Transparency, (Nov. 4, 2020), https://www.incarcerationtransparency.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/David-Jenkins-City-of-Hammond-2019.pdf.

was polite and responsive. There was no fee requirement. No news reports contradicted the record that they supplied.

Notable Cases & Complaints

There are no current cases or complaints occurring within the last five years concerning Hammond City Jail's conditions. However, for the second time the court recently dismissed *Wells v. City of Hammond* in 2024, which concerned a 2001 incident of rape by another person in custody in the city jail. *Wells v. City of Hammond*, 2007-0469 (La. App. 1 Cir. 11/2/07), 966 So. 2d 1246. The case does not address the conditions of the facility over the last five years.