

Management Council Meeting Minutes



Management Council Meeting
March 14, 2018
Annapolis, MD

Attending: Senator Gail Bates, Joseph Evans, Delegate William Folden, Melvin Forbes, John Gontrum, David Jenkins, Ashley Lohr, Fred Mason, Sarah Myers, Steve Shiloh, Joe Sommerville, Jack Weber, Alice Wirth and Nikki Zaahir

Meeting called to order by David Jenkins at 9:12 AM

David Jenkins – Welcome members and guests

Ashley Lohr – Legislative Update

- A few bills with potential impact:
 - HB1552 – MCE will provide informational testimony this afternoon; bill may limit continued partnerships with subcontractors in regards to delivery, installation, etc. John Gontrum requested additional information and was referred to Rachel Sessa, Director of Government Affairs.
 - HB628 – Requires reporting information regarding inmate wages and classifications.
 - HB1075 – Would include MCE in Preferred Provider Pricing Committee; MCE currently reports to DGS
 - SB12 – Single Plate bill; received unfavorable report
 - HB11 – Unfortunately withdrawn; thank you to Delegate Folden for submission.

Senator Gail Bates – Senate Update

- Almost at crossover – things are moving! Budget bill is on the floor. Committee has heard numerous bills regarding education, environment, alcohol laws and commemorative days.
- We are presenting two bills today concerning a robotics club and aide to farmers.

Steve Shiloh - CEO Update

- FY18 Sales are at \$33.2 million – down \$3.5 million/ 9.6% from last year. Three business units seeing a decline are our furniture production, tag and graphics shop respectively due to delayed capital projects, decline from last year's MD Proud Plate production, and general sales decline. (in contrast our Quick Copy Shop is up 50%).
- Open Orders are down \$2.2 million from last year
- Inmate employment is down to 1,743 due to MCIH downsizing and recruitment difficulty. Our priority remains to keep staff safe especially in light of tragedy in North Carolina. We will not meet our MFR goal.
- MCE once again ranked among the top ten correctional industries – 8th in revenues and 6th in inmate employment. Thanks to staff and supporters for helping us achieve this goal.
- Several Upcoming Audits:

- NIC Safety and Security Audit – We have been conducting self-audits in preparation
- ITC D Asset Audit – No response received
- DGS Fixed Asset Audit – No response received
- OLA – Due any day
- Inventory/ Annual SB & Co. Audit
- ACA Accreditation Audit
- ERP – No movement
- Brock Bridge Road – Complete! We will begin moving in next week and possibly hold our next meeting there.

Delegate Folden – House Update

- Withdrew HB11 per request of administration. Would like to resubmit with more background information.
- HB1075 was withdrawn; however, Delegate Folden intends to work with Delegate Wilson regarding bill language over the summer.
- Collaboration of Management Council is a benefit.

Steve Shiloh - CEO Update Continued

- Staff shortages remain a concern with a 26% vacancy rate
 - WCI Laundry closed, CARES on hold, Design temporarily idled, Recycling will close by end of year
- Annapolis Showcase went well
- Budget testimony went well – no issues. We received a question about maintaining revenues and expressed that \$60 million will not be maintained due to decreased capital projects, etc.
- We hope to maintain our \$50 million MFR goal and are looking at a \$53 - \$54 million year. Retained earnings are at 10%, but most likely overstated. We do have restricted cash for special projects, equipment, etc.

Dave Jenkins – Financial Planning Update

- Financial Planning was scheduled to start last week at MCIW, but delayed one week to shop staffing/ availability.
- Class will run for nine sessions at MCIW– very high interest. We will try to run 2-3 classes per year.
- Working with our Chief Administrative Officer to investigate enhancing personal finances. We will be in contact with our subgroup and have been working with the National Correctional Industries Association for Guidance.
 - Jack Weber is supportive of the idea; housing and employment are major issues
 - Nikki Zaahir noted that many returning citizens struggle with basic socialization
 - Melvin Forbes noted that many returning suffer from PTSD and cannot receive the assistance they need. We should do all we can to continue to support reentry efforts.

- Dave Jenkins noted that MCE and DLLR continue to bring in normalization, community and business standards.
- Fred Mason asked if production was being cut back due to safety or lack in production. Steve Shiloh noted that we want to have a safe civilian to inmate ratio. Due to safety concerns; we cannot allow inmates to work in supervisory capacities.

Dave Jenkins – Inmate Concerns Survey

- As in the past, the survey will be based on a ten percent sample, with a minimum of five inmates surveyed per shop.
- I review all incoming surveys for security issues and submit concerns to our Chief Operating Officer.
 - Joe noted that an inmate with hearing impairment requested safety signs for equipment and the need was addressed immediately.
- Plants are receiving mainly positive comments with a total of 17 plant submissions collected.
- Mailing and Distribution will be handling scoring this year, with the exception of their plant and the MCIW sewing plant.
- So far the patterns of inmate responses are similar to previous years.

Ashley Lohr – Manufacturing in Maryland Update

- Please review Customer Council notes in folder
- Per our mandate, we annually review impact on Maryland manufacturing.
- Last available survey was completed in 2016 and shows MCE having an overall .14% share of MD manufacturing.
- Assuming a 1.7% growth rate from 2013 to 2016 for individual Maryland Manufacturing sectors, MCE has only a .32% market share for food, textiles, printing, furniture and miscellaneous manufacturing. Actual statistics after 2013 are not available.
- Steve noted that based on our findings, MCE does not have a negative impact on manufacturing in Maryland.

Management Council Member Reports

- Alice Wirth – DLLR
 - Hoping to start barbering program at MCIW by July 1st
 - Correctional Educational Council Meeting next week; I will be attending conference regarding technology behind the fence. There is a concern that national testing is now done all online.
 - Working on a three year project regarding licensing and certification barrier removal.
- Sarah Myers – GOCCP
 - Notice of funding will be released; this was slightly delayed this year
- Jack Weber – Uptown Press

- CARES program participant is going through a marriage preparation class
- Vehicle for Change Partnership has been beneficial for returning citizens
- Greater Baltimore Community – we are reaching out to explain the benefits of hiring a former offender
- Holding a presentation at BCCC
- Melvin Forbes noted that MCE is taking on additional work due to difficulties in implementing an ERP.
- Fred Mason – MSDE
 - Ongoing efforts to increase educational funds
 - Maryland is in need of construction workers, can MCE provide training?
 - Steve noted that there are strict limitations in our involvement with construction.
 - Dave asked if we could inquire on company policies regarding the hiring of former offenders.
 - Alice Wirth noted DLLR offers training in several business trades.
- Nikki Zaahir – Vehicles for Change
 - Expanding into Overlea location to be offered to returning citizens
 - 80 men and 3 women have graduated the program; only one has returned to prison. Unfortunately three graduates overdosed within a sixty day timeframe. It was a shock to program and employers.
 - Two individuals are pending hiring at MTA. We are still working on bringing that partnership to fruition.
- John Gontrum – Comptroller’s Officer
 - No Report
- Joe Evans – USM
 - Initially a bill was requested to raise the limit to purchase items without requesting procurement through MCE. After research was conducted, this bill proved to be unnecessary. Joe noted that MCE provides waivers promptly when applicable.
- Melvin Forbes – Wilkerson Sports Enterprise
 - We acquired an organization focused on water. The current Administration wants to use our model to create 300,000 jobs. Implementation will be modeled after our telecommunication template.

Meeting Adjourned: 10:45 AM

Management Council Meeting
September 12, 2018
Jessup, MD

Attending: Senator Bates, Judge Brown, Melvin Forbes, John Gontrum, Wayne Hill, David Jenkins, Ashley Lohr, Fred Mason, Sarah Myers, Mark Rowley, Steve Shiloh, Joe Sommerville, Nikki Zaahir and Jack Weber

Meeting called to order by David Jenkins at 9:07 AM

David Jenkins – Welcome

- Introduction of new members
- Folder review

Steve Shiloh - CEO Update

- FY18 Sales - \$55 million; 11th consecutive year achieving over \$50 million
- Top Ten Customers include:
 - DPSCS
 - MDOT
 - USM (Colleges Combined similar to DPSCS)
- Open Orders \$10.7 million
- 1,719 – Inmate Employment; down to downsizing and changes in staffing ratios
- NIC Security Assessment
 - Completed at MCIH in Hagerstown
 - Review of safety policy and procedure, searches, cameras, radios, security system checks, escapes, fires, etc.
 - Favorable collaboration with MCIH institutional staff
 - We did very well and are drafting a corrective action plan regarding recommendations
 - Wayne Hill noted that Maryland did a fantastic job; disconnect between custody and industries staff nationwide. This is not the case in Maryland; we are ahead of the game. We wanted to ensure we were following safety standards to prevent an incident similar to what happened in North Carolina. The purpose was to start a conversation regarding what the National standard should be.
 - Dave Jenkins noted that the report stressed the importance of Case Management decisions.
- Current Financial Audit underway; it will be completed by October 1st. It is going well.
 - Mark Rowley noted that there have been no major findings; some items may affect the bottom line.
 - Valuation of ending inventory may have an impact as well
 - Bottom line is healthy; we have been following accepted practices
 - Jack Weber asked what the retained earnings were for this fiscal year; Mark will hold this information until we receive final approval from the accounting firm.

- The state as a whole will decide if any revenues will be transferred to the General Fund
- Jack Weber suggested inviting the editorial writer from the UMCP *Diamondback* in to see a tour of industries; Melvin Forbes agreed. Judge Brown recommended writing a retort rather than inviting the student into a tour since it is an isolated editorial. Steve noted that this is not the first time the student body has expressed concerns with prison industries. The last tour we conducted for the student body was successful and the students left in support of MCE. Senator Bates noted that the skill building is one of the best components of MCE; the author of the article fails to see the whole picture.
- Melvin Forbes asked what prompted this – there was a nationwide prison strike in which Maryland was not involved. The documentary *The Thirteenth* has also brought attention and misconceptions to prison industries.
- Judge Brown recommended continuing monitoring the *Diamondback*, but holding off on a response. Jack Weber recommended issuing a type of response.
- Fred Mason asked if the facts about MCE were easily researchable; if they are, a response should not be a priority. If the facts are not readily available, we should focus on making sure they are.
- MCE will continue to monitor relevant articles.

David Jenkins – Financial Literacy Update and Evaluation

- This was the third cohort completed at MCIW
- Another session will begin in the fall
- The MCIW Warden encourages opening inmate savings accounts and developing a budget; Warden Chippendale has been helpful in coordinating the savings challenge
- Some participants noted that they were financially supporting other inmates and could not complete the challenge, but most were willing to try
- MCIW offers several pre-release program options, perhaps we should focus on women who have not received similar training
- Several women have complained about commissary prices
- We are searching for outside speakers to participate
- We have 8-10 participants that attend approximately ten hours of training

Ashley Lohr – Annual Report Review

- Annual Report reviewed by the Council; Judge Brown motioned to approve and Melvin Forbes seconds the recommendation. All in favor
- Dave recommends condensing the Concerns Survey in future years.

Management Council Member Reports:

- Judge Brown – A new circuit court building is being constructed; MCE should reach out for furnishing possibilities
- Jack Weber – The reentry house has been extended to 18 men; housing available for 18 months. We have added mentors to help the men adjust. Returning to society brings many

obstacles we may not necessarily consider. The men are often institutionalized; the transition is critical. We have hired over 100 returning citizens at our company. Many men have joined a construction apprenticeship program.

- Senator Bates asked if there was a stronger partnership developing with Parole and Probation; there have been no noticeable changes at this time. The Agent check-ins are also in the middle of the day, this is difficult for the employee and the employer. Nikki Zaahir expressed the same concern. Senator Bates recommended forming meetings with Parole and Probation to see what could be done to rectify issues.
- Nikki Zaahir – 96 men in training; new facility and entry level training for community members. Program is busy and going well. Only one individual that has been re-incarcerated. Average hourly salary is \$19.18. 2-3 men are diesel technicians with MTA. We are working for full funding in PG County to open a program.
- John Gontrum – No report
- Wayne Hill – Current population of 19,000. Continuing problem in hiring correctional officers; interest is there, but vetting process eliminates several candidates. We continue to downsize facilities to ensure we have sufficient staff to manage the population. DRCF will be a full force in the next few months. Hearing impaired inmates are housed at MCIJ; we are making necessary accommodations. Accommodations are also being made at RCI for visually impaired inmates. We are trying to update and modify housing assignments and facilities to match ADA requirements. DOC is doing well overall. As a result of fentanyl scares in other states, we implemented a lockdown to secure procedures and ensure safety of staff. We will work on becoming diligent in preventing fentanyl entering the facilities. We are still operating at a high capacity, but the prison population is declining. Incarceration rates are lowering and we are seeing the effects of this.
 - Dr. Dave noted that the reentry program was still on hold
 - Our aging population is growing and becoming a greater concern; a geriatric inmate is considered to be 48 and over. We are working to proactively resolve issues with our aging population, but challenges continue.
- Fred Mason III – Increased emphasis on school safety; we are looking into what will help in an emergency situation. We are seeing a change in social and emotional trainings to prevent crisis.
- Sarah Myers – Expanding tablet program in the institution; DLLR will be able to expand on the content and institutions participating. We are expanding our role to victim services including victim restitution.
- Melvin Forbes – We discussed importance of technology at the last meeting, but it is important for inmates to see that the world has changed. We need to address what can be done to bring the modern world into the institutions to assist with reentry. It is important to properly educate the population; we need to be creative in getting access to the incarcerated population. We should highlight what we are doing well. How can we be proactive to our good work?
 - Wayne Hill noted that we are looking to ways to modernize DPSCS and providing a continuum of care.

- Dave noted that CARES does provide some computer literacy training.
- Senator Bates – No report

Council Recommendations, Comments, Concerns:

- We have the MCE Business Luncheon coming up at the end of the month; the next meeting will be held in December.
- John Gontrum requested an ERP update; this is a critical system holding MCE back. What can be done to prioritize this procurement? Can we develop a plan or request for action for the Council for the next meeting? The Council should draft a letter to the Secretary requesting a priority be put on procuring this system.
 - Mark Rowley indicated that it has been a difficult process since 2009. It has gone out to bid twice with no responses. The decision to upgrade the current system was reversed; in the next few weeks we will be selecting a new project manager to procure a new ERP system. We have to go through DPSCS and DoIT procurement; this has been a challenge. Most likely, we need someone focused on the procurement of this system fulltime.
 - Sarah Myers recommended hiring a contractual resource to draft a RFP; MCE has tried this, but it was not successful.
 - Senator Bates would like to make this a priority.

Meeting Adjourned: 11:00 AM

Management Council Meeting
December 12, 2018
Jessup, MD

Attending: Senator Bates, Judge Brown, Nicole Copeland, Joseph Evans, Melvin Forbes, John Gontrum, Wayne Hill, David Jenkins, Ashley Lohr, Fred Mason, Sarah Myers, Mark Rowley, Steve Shiloh, Joe Sommerville, Jack Weber and Alice Wirth.

Meeting called to order by David Jenkins at 9:05 AM

David Jenkins – Welcome

- Welcome Nicole Copeland, MCE Director of Marketing

Steve Shiloh - CEO Update

- YTD \$20.2 million; down \$1.1 million (5.3%) from last year
- Open Orders - \$11 million; down 12.2% from last year
- Inmate Employment – 1,564; down 240 from last year due to recruitment difficulties and maintenance of safety ratio
- ACA, Asset, and annual financial audit all went well. No major negative findings.
 - MCE received 100% ACA Accreditation for the fourth consecutive time
 - DGS asked that we make them aware when new inventory / ERP system being utilized
 - SB and Company found all financial statements to be in compliance; \$3.8 million bottom line. No GAP recommendations sited. Mark Rowley noted that a new Accountant Supervisor had been brought on board.
- ERP Update – DPSCS and DoIT hiring project manager to develop a new RFP
- Brock Bridge Warehouse will open when we have sufficient staffing. We look forward to holding a 2019 meeting there.
- Staff shortages are at 27% and remain a concern with several staff leaving at the end of the year.
- MCE again participated in the Bea Gaddy Thanksgiving Dinner – a thirty year tradition for us.
- Ashley Lohr was selected for the NCIA National Staff Award.

David Jenkins – Financial Planning Update and Evaluation

- In the midst of training at MCIW, despite staffing and logistical issues it is going well.
- Commissary challenge is underway.
- Warden Chippendale has made a connection with a local bank that allows women to open outside savings accounts.
- We have printed a formal textbook for the training.
- Senator Bates asked if there was an incentive to complete the program – we provide a certificate and small MCE gift.
- We continue to do our best to promote post-release financial literacy.

David Jenkins and Mark Rowley – Education and Training Update

- We have discussed several training and education options with other correctional industries.
- We are investigating beginning a CDL training program for returning citizens. We are exploring the opportunity to provide training and a job with MCE post-release.

Ashley Lohr – Reentry Update

- CARES program still on hold. We have a candidate in background and hope to bring a fulltime staff member on board at the beginning of the year.

Management Council Member Reports, Recommendations, Comments and Concerns:

- Judge Brown
 - Recently attended a Justice Partner Meeting. Meetings are held twice a year and include representatives from the State Police, Parole and Probation, Community Service, judges, Howard County Police, Sherriff, and Detention Center. Topics discussed included the new Mental Health Unit, Restorative Justice, and a pending Firearms Transfer Bill.
 - Howard County is building a new courthouse; we will meet with MCE to see what products can be offered.
- Melvin Forbes
 - Current jobs are becoming obsolete; MCE will need to investigate where job trends are going.
 - Kudos for MCE for all you do; your work impacts people’s lives.
- Jack Weber
 - We are expanding our transitional house. We have some CARES graduates participating in the program; some men are making \$50,000 a year, but having difficulties saving any money.
 - Civic Works has implemented a Green Jobs Training Program which may expand to 800 students.
 - Interconnectivity between agencies is key to successful reentry.
 - Thank you to MCE for all you do; grateful that Steve is the CEO.
- Alice Wirth
 - DLLR received funding to begin a hospitality program at MCIW for women within three years of release. We continue to participate in the National Licensing and Certification Committee to investigate eliminating nationwide barriers on certifications. We are currently creating action plans and hope to develop several interstate agreements. In Maryland, offenders can obtain a barbering license on a case by case basis; the state usually approves requests. Fred Mason recommended contacting the National Council of Architectural Standards Board to discuss opportunities to standardize occupational requirements.
- Acting Commissioner Hill
 - Commissioner of Correction position is currently being recruited.

- Several Wardens have been appointed and Assistant Wardens will be appointed shortly.
- There are plans to close Brock Bridge Correctional Facility.
- Starting in January, there will be renovations at WCI, RCI and MCTC. MCE operations will likely be impacted.
- OSTC numbers are down; we are looking for solutions to solve this issue.
 - Jack Weber noted that we are continuously trying to engage employers to work with these programs. A decline in the programming may become problematic.
- Reentry is important and a vital piece of what we do.
- Joe Evans
 - Several staff turnovers in USM procurement; we would like to invite MCE to host a tour and provide a presentation.
- Sarah Myers
 - No Report
- John Gontrum
 - Thank you for your efforts in financial literacy.
- Fred Mason
 - Construction is preparing to vote for school funding recommendations. We welcome the opportunity for MCE to speak to schools on their offerings.
- Mark Rowley
 - Thank you to the Council for your support; have a safe and happy holiday.
- Senator Bates
 - I have enjoyed being on the Council. If we can't redeem people; we fail. Thank you for all you do. If there is anything I can do in the future, let me know.
 - The Council thanked Senator Bates for being a strong member and supporter.
- David Jenkins
 - Dates for 2019 will be finalized and sent out shortly. We may look at moving meetings to Tuesdays.
- Steve Shiloh
 - Thank you for all you do for MCE; Happy Holidays!

Meeting Adjourned: 10:45 AM

Management Council Meeting

March 12, 2019

Jessup, MD

Attending: Judge Brown, John Gontrum, David Jenkins, Ashley Lohr, Fred Mason, Sarah Myers, Mark Rowley, Steve Shiloh, Joe Sommerville, Jack Weber, Alice Wirth and Nikki Zaahir.

Meeting called to order by David Jenkins at 9:05 AM

David Jenkins – Welcome

Steve Shiloh - CEO Update

- Sales through the end of February are at \$32.1 million; down \$1.45 million/ 4.3% from last year
- Open Orders - \$11.7 million; this may be inflated due to slowdowns in production
- 2.94% bottom line, close to our MFR goal
- Inmate Employment – 1,518
- 27.4% vacancy rate
- Budget Hearings were held at the end of February, we were included in the DPSCS hearings, no questions arose out of hearings
 - Prior to we were asked to give an explanation on the impact of the decreased prison population and if we would be able to achieve inmate employment levels of 2,100. Our response outlined decreases in productions and new anticipated inmate employment levels of 1,700.
- I attended a hearing yesterday for HB1265 which would mandate minimum wage payment for offenders. We opposed due to estimated increased expenditures of \$25 million which would bankrupt MCE. The Delegate stated in her testimony that she wanted to “start a conversation regarding inmate wages”
- Judge Brown recommended that MCE invite sponsors of the bill for a tour of our business units, specifically Howard County Delegation
- ERP Update
 - Mark Rowley explained that a Request for Resources was submitted to DoIT by DPSCS in order to hire a project manager; this should be on the street any day and we hope to have a subject matter expert by June
- DPSCS has asked MCE to revisit the quartermaster operation
- Wayne Hill has been appointed as the Commissioner of Correction

David Jenkins – Financial Planning Update and Evaluation

- We have incorporated a textbook in the training
- MCIW classes moved to the Administrative Building; the setting was beneficial, but we had logistical difficulties

- Michelle Singletary has volunteered to assist with the program; we are working through that process.
- Overall the women found the class helpful and most women were able to develop a post release budget and reduce their spending by 10%. The majority of women indicated that they planned to request their credit reports and open a community based savings account.

David Jenkins – Inmate Concerns Survey

- Process was similar to previous years
- A full report will be generated over the next few weeks
- Joe responds to health and safety concerns immediately; only one reported and found to be false
- Results seem to mirror previous years with our lowest scores pertaining to promotional opportunities and salaries
- We will distribute a summary to inmates as we did in previous years
- If the Council has any questions to add to next year's survey, we are happy to include that

Ashley Lohr – Manufacturing in Maryland Update

- No new survey was available for 2017 or 2018; using statistics from 2016 it seems that MCE has no negative impact on state manufacturing
- Jack Weber noted that concerns regarding MCE in the print industry have gone away; MCE is low on everyone's radar. He noted that any sales to units outside of the state government may cause an increased concern.

Management Council Member Reports, Recommendations, Comments and Concerns:

- Judge Brown
 - The Howard County Detention center continues to work on reentry initiatives such as transitional housing
 - Working with Joe and Steve on the new Circuit Court building
 - I will help facilitate tours with the legislature when needed; we should push for Council representation; Council motioned to draft a request for representation
- Nikki Zaahir – Vehicles for Change
 - We are still working on getting a location in PG County
 - We are now working with federal inmates
 - We are having difficulty recruiting participants within DPSCS that will be released within a year
 - WYPR is interview some CARES and Vehicles for Change graduates today
- Jack Weber
 - Our transition house has increased to eighteen participants; we will have an open house in April
 - 150 men have gone through our programming so far
- Alice Wirth

- Technology continues to be a struggle; we will need to convert to online testing in the immediate future
 - Steve and Dave thanked Alice for her hard work and dedication to the council; we wish her a happy, healthy retirement
- Sarah Myers
 - JRA was fully implemented in June 2017; in its first year there was a realized savings of \$3.7 million. This will be reinvested into grant opportunities
 - State prison population is down 1.8% and the local detention center populations are down 10%
- John Gontrum
 - No report
- Fred Mason
 - No report; lots of activity within MSDE
- Ashley Lohr
 - Our new CARES director has started; we hope to have the class back up in April
- Steve Shiloh
 - Thank you for your continued support

Meeting Adjourned: 10:05 AM

MCE MANAGEMENT COUNCIL MEETING

JUNE 10, 2019 9 AM

Via Conference Call

The quarterly management council meeting was held via conference call from MCE Headquarters, Jessup, Maryland. Those participating in the call were: Steve Shiloh, Joe Sommerville, Nicole Copeland, Ashley Lohr, David Jenkins, Jeff Hughes, Melvin Forbes, Jack Weber, John Gontrum, Sarah Myers and Jack Cunning. David Jenkins called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone to the conference call.

Steve Shiloh provided the CEO update- Steve announced that Mr. Robert Green had been appointed as new DPSCS Secretary. He said Mr. Green was a well-respected correctional professional and would be very good for DPSCS and for MCE. Steve reviewed YTD sales thru May (\$44.8m) and indicated that our annual goal of \$50m in sales could be achieved but it would be close. May open orders (\$15.8 m) were high which he attributed to construction delays and short-staffing issues which in turn restricted our inmate worker staffing. Inmate employment was at 1,522 down by 11% from same period as last year. Again, these numbers were related to staff vacancies and the need to maintain our 20 to 1 staff ratio. Steve reported that in his discussion with newly appointed Secretary Green that MCE's number one priority was filling staff vacancies. Secretary Green indicated that filling vacancies was a top priority of his administration. MCE currently has 47 of 182 positions (25.8 %) vacant. One response to the staffing situation will be the use of an outside contractor to staff vacancies to verify our inventory counts. Jack Weber asked if MCE could use these outside vendors to bar code our products thus achieving a two for one benefit from the outside contractors. Both Steve and Joe Sommerville indicated that this is a good idea; however, MCE could not be ready for such a process given the number of our products and the lack of time to prepare for such an activity. Timing may be better for implementing this idea next year.

Jeff Hughes asked Steve's view of the cause of our staffing issues. Steve responded that the policies of the previous administration on such issues as centralized hiring and background checks may have contributed to the problem. Additionally, the hiring of correctional officers has been the priority. Academy training is more of an issue for industries than other correctional staff such as correctional officers who tend to be significantly younger and thus more likely to complete the physical requirements of the academy.

The agenda item on reentry was provided by Ashley Lohr. She indicated that the CARES reentry program now has six participants. MCE is investigating the establishment of a CARES program in Hagerstown in partnership with local reentry organizations. As in the Jessup area, participants would continue MCE employment while they completed the Employment Readiness and "Thinking for A Change" reentry classes. Additionally, the expansion of the CARES program to workers at MCI-W is being investigated as well.

David Jenkins provided an update on the recently completed Financial Literacy class at MCI-W. Michelle Singletary, financial writer for the Washington Post, has expressed her willingness to deliver her

Financial Literacy program to our workers at MCI-W as soon as her pre-service volunteer orientation is completed.

The agenda item on the annual concerns survey was provided by David Jenkins. The report has been approved by the Management Council members and has been submitted to the Commissioner. The final step in this annual process is the posting of a summary of findings in each plant. A graphic summary of the results focusing on the scores for each of the four concerns has been prepared for posting. This new graphic summary will be provided to Council members for their review.

Nicole Copeland gave a detailed report on the status of our catalog indicating that the project has been delayed pending the approval of DGS. The delays are the result of the number of products we produce and the lack of adequate staff at DGS to conduct the required market study pricing reviews. David asked if valid comparisons between our products and those available from other sources are possible given the wide range of quality, prices, warranty, and related services such as assembly and set up. Clearly direct comparisons are difficult.

Nicole provided a detailed report on the results of the annual customer survey covering 12 questions such as: MCE funding, staffing, quality, economic impact, prices and MCE staff. With 130 respondents, the overall results are positive with more positive than last year's responses. In nearly every category, MCE was rated as "good" or better.

The next agenda item was reports by Council members on developments in their organization or agency. Most members did not have anything to report. Jeff Hughes reported on a union project to survey staff vacancies on an institution by institution basis; this is a critical issue for correctional officers. John Gontrum reported on the upcoming review of the existing commissary contract for a one year extension as well as centralized procurement by the General Services department. Both of these actions are of considerable interest to MCE.

In adjournment of the meeting, David Jenkins reminded members of upcoming quarterly meetings and our annual business meeting. Our September meeting will be held at our new warehouse/showroom- everyone one is encouraged to attend.

The meeting adjourned at 10:10 AM.

Note. These minutes were taken by David Jenkins. If you notice any errors or omissions please contact me at Harold.Jenkins@Maryland.Gov so I can correct the error.