

Transparency – A One-Way Street

There have been a minimum of three investigations into Upper Management personnel. One involved PCU Supervisor Sherrie Daigle who was removed from the PCU pending the investigation. One concerned Sherrie Daigle and Dean Williams, which was conducted by the Attorney General's office. Another one dealt with former Deputy Director Caitlin Price and Director Bruce Busby. In one of these cases, the press called ACOA and ACOA had no comment and will still have no comment. The reporters who called stated that they had called the Commissioner for comment/information but had been told that "*it was a personnel matter*" and the DOC does not comment on personnel matters. Yet Officers can have their personnel matters blasted in the press by Dean Williams over and over. Even if you believe that no one did anything wrong in the above mentioned three investigations of Upper Management, remember that neither did a single Correctional Officer, but that did not stop Williams from putting them on front street, risking their lives, with his report and altered videos. One reporter, trying to get us to talk, reminded us that Dean Williams had no problem talking to them (press) about our members personnel matters so why wouldn't we talk about him and his Management team. Good point!!

The following examples demonstrate that while the Commissioner professes "transparency," to the press and to the public, it is only to bolster his image as a crusader. In reality, "transparency" is essentially non-existent in corrections, except when it comes to Correctional Officers.

November 13, 2015, Dean Williams's Alaska Department of Corrections: An Administrative Review

The Review Team was granted wide latitude to discuss facts and perspectives gleaned through the course of this review. We are required to keep some information confidential to protect sources and security procedures, to avoid potential targeting of individuals, to respect the sensitivities of affected families, and to protect the legal and due process rights of state employees. With consideration for these limitations, the Review Team's guiding principle has been to tell the truth as best it can be determined, and to provide perspective on our findings. Where conflict arises between transparency and privilege, we err on the side of disclosure. (Emphasis added)

April 5, 2016 (Updated July 2, 2016), ADN Article "Under fire, new Alaska Corrections chief defends his appointment"

<https://www.adn.com/article/20160405/under-fire-new-alaska-corrections-chief-defends-his-appointment>

The Alaska Correctional Officers Association released what it called a rebuttal to the administrative review that states that Williams' review contained inaccuracies and omissions and was "purposely deceptive in many areas." The 53-page association report, dated Monday, also states that the release of videos showing correctional officers put them and their families at risk.

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Williams told reporters he hadn't seen the union report, but he stands behind the review he and Hanlon did. He said he's about "moving on" -- doing what he can to help the department and be transparent about its problems and not "rehashing history."

January 16, 2018, Commissioner Williams e-mail to ACOA Business Manager, Brad Wilson

“...And to be very clear I’m not going to rehash any of the issues from the Administrative Review.”

January 16, 2018, Brad Wilson E-mail to Commissioner Williams

“...I understand you not wanting to rehash the review, I believe we have the same interests there, though probably for different reasons. That said, there are some extremely upset Officers that have not forgotten what was said about them and/or had their pictures in the press and/or received threats. I am hoping there is a middle ground. I believe the rough draft statement (Sent to DOC from ACOA) was that middle ground, not delving into specific of each incident, keeping the statement broad.

We need to meet tomorrow or Wednesday as I will be at your offices. If you have suggested changes to the statement, that would be great to see then. I need to know if we are close and can move forward or if there is no middle ground to be had.”

January 17, 2018, Commissioner Williams’s E-mail to Brad Wilson

“...I appreciate that you are representing some of the officers in those events, but I am not going to issue statements about those events.”

May 11, 2018, NPR interview with Dean Williams, at about minute 37:00, when he made the following statement about transparency

<https://www.alaskapublic.org/2018/05/11/commissioner-dean-williams-on-alaska-department-of-corrections/>

“I guess one of my other sort of lists, or one of the other things I’ve tried to encourage all my leadership staff is that we’re going to be transparent about what we’re doing right and what goes wrong. We’re going to be open and honest about what goes right and what goes wrong. And I have taken that charge from the Governor very serious over the last little over two years.”

March 22, 2018, James Harvey Assault by Inmate

Brad’s e-mail to Dean Williams, copied to Deputy Commissioner Clare Sullivan, Human Resource Consultant V Kari Johnson, Labor Relations Analyst II John Fechter, and Alaska Attorney General Jahna Lindemuth, asking DOC to secure and preserve a document containing information about a planned inmate assault on Officer Harvey.

“Please secure and preserve this document, and please send a redacted copy to ACOA.”

Commissioner Williams responded by saying, *“The assault on Officer Harvey is a criminal case that is still under investigation by the Professional Conduct Unit. If you have information about this case, especially since it is a criminal matter, I would suggest that you set up an interview with our investigators. Thank you for your interest in the case and we appreciate any future cooperation with our investigators, but we do not release information on criminal matters.”*

Only on September 5, 2018, did Commissioner Williams respond to another request from Brad Wilson on August 27, 2018, asking for an update on the Harvey matter, with a letter saying the inmate pled guilty to assaulting Officer Harvey and the case was closed by the District Court of Palmer on June 6, 2018. (This information is available on Alaska Court View.) Williams also outlined the disciplinary consequences imposed on the inmate at GCCC. He still did not address ACOA's concern that Management knew about the impending "hit" on Harvey but did not inform Harvey or move him or the inmate to a different location.

August 7, 2017, Seaside Center Halfway House in Nome, Commissioner Williams's letter excerpt:

*"When I took over this department a year and a half ago I set the clear expectation that we would be honest at every juncture no matter how painful that might be. The department has had a history of some troubles that we have gone after and I knew from the outset that we needed to be **open and transparent** about our good days and our bad ones. Trust is not just a commodity to us, and while we are imperfect in our application, we believe it is the fruit of openness and honesty."*

June 6, 2016, Juneau Empire article "State says inmate died of suspected drug overdose"

*"DOC is committed to **transparency**, and we want the public to understand the scope of this issue," Allen-Young said Monday. "We do think this is a problem, and we are committed to going after the problem with our partners in law enforcement and this Professional Conduct Unit."*

The Commissioner talks a lot to the press and the public about accountability and transparency. The Commissioner believes in 'transparency' when it comes to falsified and trumped up charges against Correctional Officers but when it comes to him, and his Management team, it's complete secrecy and coverups.