

MOTION BY SUPERVISORS YAROSLAVSKY & RIDLEY-THOMAS August 28, 2012

Camp Kilpatrick, in the Malibu hills, is the only juvenile detention facility in California with a CIF-sanctioned intermural sports program. The camp is scheduled to be torn down within a few months and completely rebuilt with the aid of State funds. During the three- to four-year construction period, camp staff and wards will be dispersed to other Probation Department facilities, and the CIF program will be suspended. The Department has stated its intent to rejoin CIF at the conclusion of construction and continue the intermural sports program as before.

The County Probation Department is under ongoing U.S. Department of Justice scrutiny of the facilities and programming it provides for its young wards. The U.S. DOJ requires that the county offer “evidence-based integrated treatment programs.” While such activities as group therapy sessions and mental health counseling have been proven through rigorous study to help the plight of these teenagers and reduce recidivism, intermural sports programs have not been similarly studied. There is apparently no “evidence” to show that participation in team sports can play a positive role in rehabilitating these young people.

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Recent history, however, suggests otherwise. The 2006 film “Gridiron Gang” portrayed real-life Camp Kilpatrick wards learning to play football and win together despite coming from rival gangs. In 2010, the Camp Kilpatrick basketball team made the state play-offs, failed to advance to the championship game but nonetheless won its league Sportsmanship Award. In 2011, a team from neighboring Camp David Gonzalez competed successfully in an intermural contest to design, build and race a solar-powered boat. While these small triumphs may not speak to long-term therapeutic advancement or reductions in recidivism, they do seem to provide concrete “evidence” of pro-social behavior among these troubled youth.

The County should obtain the assistance of social scientists to study the relationship between recidivism among former wards and the participation of those wards in intermural team sports while confined to a juvenile detention facility. Assuming the relationship is shown to be positive, this would facilitate the inclusion of intermural sports in the ultimate program at Camp Kilpatrick as another “evidence-based treatment program.”

The needs of our juvenile wards have changed over the years. More and more of these youthful offenders have serious mental health and emotional problems to which group and individual therapy sessions may be the best response. However, it may also be that traditional sports programs still have much to offer. It is astounding to learn that no academic studies have been performed on this subject.

WE, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Chief Probation Officer, with the assistance of the Chief Executive Officer, be directed to commission a study to evaluate the merits of intermural sports activities as programming for incarcerated youth; and

WE FURTHER MOVE that the CEO be directed to fund this study.

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