

## **MAYOR NAMES CYNTHIA BRANN CORRECTION COMMISSIONER**



**Mayor Bill de Blasio & Correction Commissioner Cynthia Brann.**

**Mayor Bill de Blasio on Tuesday, Oct. 3, 2017 named veteran penologist Cynthia Brann as Commissioner of the Department of Correction which she had headed as Acting Commissioner following Joseph Ponte's retirement that he announced May 12.**

**Having been appointed Acting First Deputy earlier in May, Ms. Brann took command of the Department as Acting Commissioner upon Mr. Ponte's retirement taking effect in June.**

**Not only her take-charge performances in her two "Acting" roles at the helm of the agency during the three-month interim, but also her work since her joining DOC as Deputy Commissioner of Quality Assurance and Integrity in August 2015 made a positive impression on the city administration.**

**City Hall officials were reported as citing her effectiveness in making organizational changes and implementing use-of-force policy.**

**“The offer was made to acting Commissioner Brann because as we evaluated her work, and talked through with her, her vision, I became convinced she was the right person for the job,” the New York Times quoted the mayor as commenting. “We thought she combined alignment on vision with real experience in making the changes and reforms needed. She knew the job, she knew the system, she knew the people. And I liked her approach to leadership.”**

**Experience she surely has: 33 years of it -- in corrections and public safety, including 26 years at Maine Department of Corrections. Four of those years were spent as the Associate Commissioner providing strategic planning, leading cultural and organizational change, implementing evidence-based practices as well as integrating the work of the facilities and community divisions.**

**Ms. Brann effectively restructured Maine's adult probation services resulting in operational efficiencies, the reduction of caseloads and increased positive offender outcomes. She is credited with reforming the juvenile detention decision processes and risk assessment tools, thereby reducing secure detention admissions without increased public safety risk.**

**From 2001 to 2011, Ms. Brann was a Regional Correctional Administrator overseeing all operations within a nine county division. From 1996 to 2001, she served as a Regional Resource Coordinator managing all offender program contracts and fiscal operations within a four county division. From 1989-1996 she performed the duties of a Probation and a Parole Officer supervising juvenile, adult and Intensive Supervision caseloads.**

**The new Correction Commissioner became the 35th or the 36th or the 43rd or the 44th person to be recognized and function as such since the NYC Department of Correction began operating as a separate agency Jan. 1, 1896.**

**It all depends how the count is done. If all Acting Commissioners are excluded, even those who served months heading the agency, the number could be 35 persons upon whom the title NYC Correction Commissioner has been conferred. But it could also be 36 as the number of times that title has been conferred.**

**That's because Francis J. Lantry served two non-consecutive terms; once at the turn of the 19th Century into the 20th and later in the 20th's first decade.**

**If as this web site believes and practices, the count ought rightly include all those who fully managed DOC as Acting Commissioners when a vacancy existed in the Commissioner post, then the number increases by eight (8) to 43 if Lantry's tenures are considered a single Commissionership. Or the number increases to 44 if his non-consecutive Commissionerships are counted individually.**

**Prior to Jan. 1, 1896, NYC Correction had been part of a dual agency, the Department of Public Charities and Correction. The men and women whose names and thumbnail images appear on this page, their having served as NYC Correction Commissioners, reflect the diverse and rich history of the City and this Department. They include:**

- **a businessman (Robert J. Wright),**
- **a union head (Francis J. Lantry),**
- **a suffragist leader (Katharine Bement Davis),**
- **a medical doctor (Peter F. Amoroso),**
- **a leader in charitable services (Thomas W. Hynes)**
- **a U.S. and Israeli military hero (Col. David "Mickey" Marcus),**
- **a former judge (Anna M. Kross), and**
- **a number who rose through the ranks to the top spot (William J. Fraser, Jacqueline McMickens, Gerald Mitchell, James Hunter, George R. Vierno). Cranston also began as a C.O.**

**Robert J. Wright was the first to head the agency when it emerged after the dual Dept. of Public Charity and Correction was split (1895/6). He was a member of fusion reform Mayor Walter Strong's cabinet that also included Teddy Roosevelt as Police Commissioner.**

**Lantry was the first to served as DOC Commissioner when New York became a five-borough City (1898). Lantry also has the distinction of being the only Commissioner to serve twice as head of DOC. He even served once as Fire Commissioner.**

**Others who saw service directing other NYC agencies include Benjamin Ward and Bernard B. Kerik, each of whom later also served as NYPD head; Katharine Bement Davis, who afterward led the City Parole Commission, and Catherine Abate, Michael P. Jacobson and Martin F. Horn, each of whom had headed Probation before coming to Correction.**

**Both Commissioners Frederick A. Wallis and Albert Williams served as NYPD Deputy Commissioners before heading DOC.**

**Some on the list served as Commissioners --**

- **Joseph D'Elia,**
- **Peter Seitchik,**
- **James Hunter,**
- **George R. Vierno,**
- **Gerald Mitchell,**
- **Gary M. Lanigan**
- **John J. Antonelli and**
- **Mark Cranston.**

**-- for interim periods.**

**Among the eight Interim Commissioners, Seitchik served about two and a half weeks, Vierno and Hunter each served a little more than a month, Antonelli and D'Elia about two months plus, Mitchell about two and a half months, Cranston and Lanigan about three months total.**

**The most commissioners to serve in any one year has been three.**

**In 1933, Robert L. Tudor, William J. Cahill and Wilbur T. Wright headed DOC.**

**In 1990, James Hunter, George R. Vierno and Allyn Seilaff served.**

**By contrast, the commissioner serving the most years was Anna M. Kross.**

**She headed the agency about a dozen years -- from the start of 1954 through early 1966.**

**Because Mrs. Kross served so many years, at such a pivotal juncture in the Department's development, and because she left such an enduring legacy at a time when few woman exercised such lasting influence in the public arena, many assume AMK was the Department's first woman Commissioner.**

**Mrs. Kross wasn't; she was the second. The first was Katharine Bement Davis, Bedford Hills Reformatory superintendent appointed NYC DOC Commissioner in 1914 before women had the right to vote.**

**The DOC appointment of Dr. Davis -- she had a Ph. D in political economy from the University of Chicago, a first -- also made her the first woman to run any major agency of municipal government in NYC history and any city uniformed force in the country.**

**The third was Jacqueline McMickens, who rose through the ranks to Commissionership in 1984.**

**The fourth was Catherine M. Abate named to the DOC post in 1992. She had been Probation Commissioner.**

The fifth was Dora Schriro. appointed Sept. 9, 2009. She had been Special Advisor to Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano on Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Detention and Removal, and was the founding Director of the Office of Detention Policy and Planning for that department. Ms. Schriro, in 1985 - 1989, was NYC DOC Assistant Commissioner For Special Programs. After leaving NYC DOC as Commissioner Feb. 1, 2014, she became Commissioner of the Connecticut Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection.

The sixth was former Commissioner Cynthia Brann, veteran penologist, appointed DOC Commissioner by Mayor Bill de Blasio on Oct. 3, 2017 which she had headed as Acting Commissioner following Joseph Ponte's retirement that he announced May 12. Having been appointed Acting First Deputy earlier in May, Ms. Brann took command of the Department as Acting Commissioner upon Mr. Ponte's retirement taking effect in June. Not only her take-charge performances in her two "Acting" roles at the helm of the agency during the three-month interim, but also her work since her joining DOC as Deputy Commissioner of Quality Assurance and Integrity in August 2015 made a positive impression on the city administration.

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