

Col. Robert Boucher, commanding officer of Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, held a town hall meeting Feb. 11, 2016, to address station residents on changes that are to come in the near future. The purpose of these meetings is to address any issues unseen to the command in order to appropriately provide a solution. The following is a transcribed portion of the Q&A that followed the commander's brief on upcoming changes. Some answers have been updated to address changes between when the meeting took place and when this document was posted.

Q: Will there be enough housing for civilians looking for work on the air station?

A: (CO) We have to prioritize our service members over the civilians because they are under orders to come here. We can't control the off base housing, but we have talked to the chamber of commerce about this issue.

(Housing Director) We've made contact with Yania and are looking into getting contracts out there. We will continue to search for more housing opportunities.

Q: Regarding traffic on base, there is a backup at the gates. Is there any way to change the traffic lanes to accommodate personnel who are staying on base?

A: (PMO) There is a plan in place to widen the main drive through a DPRI project (fall of 2018). Facilities has also requested a traffic study be conducted in order to justify any type of military construction projects. Until then, roads will remain the same.

Q: Are there going to be rules made for those using skateboards and hover boards on sidewalks to ensure their safety as well as those walking?

A: (PMO) There's too much traffic on the streets as it is, so we'd like to keep them on the sidewalks. New traffic rules are posted to the station website. The new rules include things such as the hoover boards and skateboards.

Q: How do you know the schools will be staffed enough to handle the surge of students?

A: (Elementary School Principal) We've developed an extensive roster of those inbound with everything from the number of students to their age. We're staffing accordingly.

Q: Is it possible for the CDC to charge for half days rather than full days only?

A: (Chief of Marine & Family Programs, MCCA) Our first priority is to provide full day care for single and dual military families. First, we need to ensure that there is always space available for them. As per MCO 1710.30, we can and do offer full day, part day, and hourly care. Part-day and hourly care is offered when our current staffing allows for it. Patrons can always use hourly care or one of the part day options as needed. We are unable to offer customized part-day programs for individual patrons due to staffing and costs.

Q: There's a safety concern where there is only a light switch at the bottom of the stairs and a motion sensor at the top in the new housing. Can we just get a light switch up stairs as well?

A: (CO) That is a problem with an easy solution. So, yes we will get that fixed.

Q: Can we get better high chairs at the crossroads?

A: (MCCA Chief of Business) Yes. We are already working on it. We've just ordered new furniture for areas like the cross roads and high chairs will be replaced.

Q: Can we get more than one play area at the community room in tower 657?

A: (Housing Director) Yes, ma'am. We have 589 that's coming out of renovations and the plan is to have another play room just like 657.

Q: Where else on base is there going to be a facility similar to the chapel where you will not be charged to hold events?

A: (CO) We're building a sports complex and community building for that purpose as well as for engagements with the locals and the on base community, but that is a long-term solution that we'll see at the end of '17. For the short term, there's not a whole lot we can do. I will say don't let the first "no" be where you stop. Keep trying.

(Ops O) I recommend you reach out to private organizations on base to sponsor your event.

Q: What is being done to expedite the employment process for a NAF position?

A: (Acting Chief of NAF HR, MCCA) The Talent Acquisition Team within NAF HRO has recently re-assessed its hiring processes and is transitioning to a more efficient, streamlined approach to

hiring and onboarding. In addition, NAF HRO will hire and train a new Talent Acquisition Specialist in the near future. These new efforts should soon yield transparency and expediency to the NAF hiring process.

Q: What can I do to help with the recycling effort on/off base?

A: (Facilities) For those who live on base, if you sort your trash when the contractors come to your house, they will continue to separate your trash at a more methodical level. For those off base, we encourage you not to bring your trash on base because the Japanese have an outstanding recycling system.

Q: Can we get new bike racks to help with housing's storage issue a designated trash collection unit to prevent each house hold's individual trash can from falling with the wind?

A: (Housing Director) For the storage problem, currently there is a project to install new storage units. We do have a request in the system and it's being surveyed right now for locations.

We're looking into the trash as well. This future project will have to be run through Headquarters and Marine Corps Installations Command to get the funding, and then go through the entire process of design, approval, and finally the actual construction of those units.

Q: Can we get water on the seawall?

A: (CO) In previous years, MWSS-171 provided/maintained a water buffalo on the seawall adjacent to Penny Lake. It was removed because of construction being performed on the seawall at the time. MCCS will contact 171 and see if it would be viable for them to support. Bear in mind though, that the next phase of seawall construction is beginning now and will last up to a year.

Q: Can the command see if I can use the post office to ship items from my personal business?

A: (CO) The requirements for the post office come from the U.S government. Bottom line - we are not allowed to use PO boxes for business overseas at all.

Q: With combustible items, do we separate those in separate bags? Cardboard, papers, plastic bags and house hold cans or what?

A: (CO) In our household, we keep cardboard and newspaper separate from the rest of our combustible materials so they do not get contaminated. If you keep those completely separate then we'll be able to recycle those and that helps us bring money back to the base.

Q: When issues arise at the new dog park, who do we call?

A: (CO) It's going to go through Family Housing.

Q: How are we going to keep trespassers (children, etc.) from transiting through the SNCO and Officers' barracks?

A: (Housing Director) For concerns like yours, you can call Bachelor Housing.

Q: Can the commissary be open seven days a week?

A: (CO) That's not under the command's control. After our population increases, we can go through DECA to see if we fit the requirements for more hours and products, but as of right now, we're too small of an installation.

Q: Being a retiree, I am having trouble being seen by specialists, being that I don't get a referral when they do arrive after waiting 3-4 months for a consult. Then I have to wait another 3-4 months to potentially get seen. I think, if we retirees got referrals right off the bat, it would help us out.

A: (Medical Officer) Our specialty care is going to go first to our active duty members then their families they are our priority patients. For our non-Tricare clients and other health insurance patients, we are looking into bypassing visiting specialist and having them go straight to the out-in-town folks.

Q: As a supervisor, my concern is translation service for my employees and their families. We (being non-Tricare clients and other health insurance patients) are left on our own to receive translation services or some kind of support when we go out into the community.

A: (Medical Officer) In the past, we have been able to provide translators to any patient we saw. But as the base population continues to increase, our number of translators remain the same, making it difficult to provide services to everyone at one time. Again, translators assist our uniformed personnel and their families. As space is available, translators then assist with our civilian and retiree patients. We're trying to mitigate this by working with CHRO for all the major employers on base to know how to get a hold of translation services, because in the end, it is the responsibility of the employers to make translation services available to civilian employees. We are at four and a half translators and our services are bumping up to eight total. Will this fix the problem? No. But, the best we can tell you now is we are trying our best to help all of our patients.

Q: Is there a reason why DoDEA won't let middle school kids do sports?

A: DoDEA doesn't have a middle school sports program. They have clubs that we're in the process of getting together, so our students can compete with Japanese schools.

Q: Are there plans to address the limited parking spaces on the air station?

A: (CO) When the new post office and commissary open up, that will generate more parking spaces. The existing commissary will be torn down and a new exchange will take its place. The old exchange will then be torn down and turned into still more parking spaces. Also, another parking structure has been added near the clubs as well. We're looking at a few other solutions. Parking is tough right now and is only going to get worse as our population grows, so we're looking at more potential areas from which to create more parking. As a community, we need to try to break our ways of driving everywhere. Unless we do, parking will continue to be an issue into the future.

Q: What is going to be done about the current salon and their limited services to African-Americans?

A: (Chief of Retail & Services, MCCA) MCCA is working toward soliciting a new contract to continue offering beauty shop operations on the air station. Part of this process will require the new concessionaire/service provider to provide African American hair care services to ensure everyone in the community has the services available to meet their needs.

Q: Are the businesses opening up on base going to eliminate the spouses who provide services such as haircuts and what not?

A: (CO) Not at the moment. We're talking about a contract that MCCA is trying to get to get more employees. The only way to get rid of the spouses who provide those services is if those spouses decide they want to do what they are already doing, but for MCCA.

Q: Can anyone rent out a slot or booth to provided services, but not under MCCA? (*This question relates to the previous one.)

A: (MCCA Chief or Retail Services) Unfortunately, the federal government requires the employer to pay a federal wage and for taxes and specific guidelines that wouldn't allow us to let those who provide these services to rent these facilities.

Q: Our home is currently not renovated, but is scheduled to be. How can I find out when it will be renovated or moved?

A: (CO) We have a schedule for the homes and you can just go to family housing and they will let you know all the information you need.

Q: Can I remove the heavy door in-between the kitchen and living area in the towers? I feel it may be a safety issue for my children.

A: (Housing Director) Maintenance cannot remove it, but you may remove it yourself.

Q: Will stricter seat belt and car seat rules be put in place for younger children as the station's population continues to grow?

A: (CO) The Red Cross was going to take this on and send someone to train us. I do not know why this did not happen. Nevertheless, we will approach them again and the local office is willing, but they need to get approval from their headquarters. They've sent an inquiry to their headquarters and are awaiting a reply. They are going to notify me as soon as they hear something.

Q: Will there be a 24/7 translation service available and do the new civilians who are coming know that this service is currently unavailable?

A: CHRO will not be providing translation services, however, we'll communicate to potential hires and new hires the conditions of receiving medical services. Most importantly, CHRO will work closely with the command to find an alternative solution.

