

BERRIEN COUNTY ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE
Minutes of January 20, 2022

Roll Call Present: Jim Curran, Chairperson
Don Meeks Sr.
David Vollrath, Vice Chair
Julie Wuerfel

Absent:

Scheduled: Brian Dissette, County Administrator
Teri Freehling, BOC Vice Chairwoman
Paul Jancha, Jr., Public Defender

Others:

Call to Order

Meeting called to order at 9:20 am.

Public Defender's Update – Paul Jancha Jr.

Jancha distributed a memo with quarterly updates. The Chief Assistant Public Defender has stepped down from her supervisory role to focus on her clients. He has a couple internal candidates that would do an excellent job and he anticipates filling the position quickly. He reported he is fully staffed with attorneys and social workers. He reviewed all the social worker case referrals, which totaled 66 for the quarter. He is still looking for a legal assistant and will fill that position soon. He discussed transportation issues the clients have had and he has met with a local Catholic church to solve those issues. He reviewed the MIDC Standard 5 and its implementation, which included his office screening individuals for appointed attorneys instead of the Court. There were a few suggestions by the court and he was able to implement them. Curran asked about the budget impact for the two additional attorneys. Jancha reported the local share was \$569,000 and the State share was approximately \$3.5M. He also noted the State will cover any overage if it is a direct result of indigent defense. There will be 3 additional Standards to implement, but most of the items are already happening, so the impact should be minor. Jancha reviewed the case data and noted there was a significant drop in new cases being arraigned. However, the caseload of investigators, social workers and expert witness assistance has remained stable as they are back to in-person meetings with clients.

Q & A – Dissette & Freehling

Dissette discussed the management of the Public Defender's office. He discussed the building analysis of Berrien General Hospital and the demolition is estimated to be \$2M, which does not include sanitary sewer or drinking water. Loren Hamel will discuss this with his Board and Dissette is anticipating a 50/50 split. He should know by the end of February the amount Spectrum will commit to. He will work with Robert Ray and staff at the Juvenile Center to develop a back-up plan should something happen. Discussions ensued regarding ARPA funding. Freehling suggested learning from the Mercy Center demolition and possibly using the Land Bank Authority and Brownfield Redevelopment Authority as options. Dissette discussed the Three Oaks building, which the Village has expressed an interest in owning. He will meet with Corporate Counsel. It is a historical building that requires a lot of maintenance. Discussions ensued regarding the expenses of the Health Department in the administering of Covid shots.

Approval of Minutes

Motion by Meeks, supported by Vollrath, to approve the minutes of the January 13, 2022 meeting. Motion Carried.

Resolutions

The following Resolutions were moved forward to the full Board:

A2201178 – Apply for annual Marine Safety Grant

A2201180 – Authorize retired K9 to be sold to handler

A2201184 – 911 Maintenance Service Agreement Renewal

A2201186 – Accept the Coronavirus supplemental funds for Courts

Miscellaneous

Curran discussed RED (Racial and Ethnic Disparity), which will be addressed next week. He also discussed the implementation of the Road Department Policy handbook with the County Policy handbook.

Public Comments

Tony Benhart, Sodus Township – It would make sense to move the Eau Claire Road Department to the hospital site. He understands why they want to move to Niles, but to get to the south area, there's too much doubling back. The hospital location would have better access. Also, with Niles, there's the possibility of stored salt and chemicals contaminating the creek.

Meeting adjourned the meeting at 10:10 am.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jarent

Jennifer Arent
Recording Secretary