

IONIA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
Committee-of-the-Whole
October 17, 2017
3:00 p.m.

Vice-Chair Banks called the meeting to order and led with the Pledge of Allegiance. Commissioner Hodges gave the Invocation.

Members present: Scott Wirtz, Georgia Sharp, Brenda Cowling-Cronk, David Hodges and Jim Banks

Members absent: Jack Shattuck, Larry Tiejema

Others present: Bob VanLente, Kim Clark, Carly Quinn, Robert Rose, Charlie Noll, Eric Matwiejczyk, Brian Abraham, Joan Duffy, Mel Haga, Judy Swartz, Scott DeRuisher, Carol Hanulcik, Elizabeth Walden, Karen Constantine, Michael Honeywell, Walter Downes, Stephanie Fox and Janae Cooper

Approval of Agenda

Moved by Cowling-Cronk, supported by Hodges to approve the Agenda as presented. Motion carried by voice vote.

Public Comment

Karen Constantine spoke at length about the proposed Indigent Defense Plan.

New Business

- A. The new Animal Control Manager, Carly Quinn, introduced herself to the Board.
- B. Departmental Reports
 1. Robert Rose, Drain Commissioner, distributed the 2017 Annual Drain Report (on file in the Clerk's Office). Rose reviewed the report with the Board.
 2. Carol Hanulcik, Commission on Aging Director, along with Mel Haga discussed their semi-annual report (on file in the Clerk's Office). Hanulcik reported that the COA just closed their fiscal year. Hanulcik reports a surplus in funding and that the loan from Ionia County has been repaid in full. Hanulcik discussed long term planning, such as an Adult Day Program, with the Board.

3. UnderSheriff Charlie Noll reported on the Sheriff's Office (report on file in the Clerk's Office).
 4. Brian Abraham from i3 Business Solutions reported on the Information Technology Department (report on file in the Clerk's Office. Abraham discussed the upcoming Sheriff's Department Audit, Security Improvements, the LEIN Audit, tickets opened and closed and capital budget items request for 2018.
- C. Vice-Chair Banks introduced the Indigent Defense Compliance Plan (on file in the Clerk's Office). Historically, the County would appoint an attorney for indigent defendants. Representation would be at a reduced rate. The Indigent Defense Compliance Plan would require the County to create a Public Defenders Office and hire staff. Banks opened the discussion up to defense attorneys present at the meeting for comments, concerns, suggestions and/or ideas.

Judy Swartz, Defense Attorney

- Suggested hiring an Indigent Defense Coordinator
- Possible conflict of co-defendants
- Better representation when more attorneys are available
- No last known pay increase for local defense attorneys
- Clients will get less representation
- There are plusses to keeping the local bar involved
- Difficult to fill the job for the pay

Eric Matwiejczyk, Defense Attorney

- Concerns because the State has not allocated the money yet
- Recipe for disaster
- Need experienced attorneys for life offenses and severe felonies
- Proposed budget calls for \$5,000 for expert witnesses; that could be used up with one instance

Karen Constantine, Defense Attorney

- Defense Attorneys do not do it for the pay
- Believes every defendant deserves good representation

Walter Downes, Defense Attorney

- If it's not broke why fix it?
- What Ionia County does happens to work
- Being a court appointed attorney is how young attorneys learn
- Difficult to find a person to take the job for the responsibility vs. the pay
- In agreement with Judy Swartz to hire an Indigent Defense Coordinator

Michael Honeywell, Defense Attorney

- Formerly worked in Kent County Public Defender's Office
- Public Defender system is flawed

- Defense Attorneys do not represent the Indigent for the money, they do it because they took an oath and have a vested interest in what happens in the case
- What if the State pulls the funding?

Vice-Chair Banks stated that he appreciated the comments, concerns, suggestions and/or ideas from the local defense attorneys. Wirtz inquired as to whether or not it would be beneficial to have a meeting.

- D. Physical Plant Director, Scott DeRuisser gave an update on the status of the construction. The front entrance is taking shape and the iron work will be done tomorrow. The roof membranes are currently being worked on. The masons are working on the stone around the windows; brick should be put up shortly. The first floor walls are mostly studded-in. The second floor will have stud walls starting this week. The cement floor will be poured on Monday. Overall, the construction is progressing quickly.

Administrator's Report

County Administrator Stephanie Fox stated that there will be a tour of the construction project immediately following the meeting for any interested commissioners.

Adjourn

Moved by Cowling-Cronk, supported by Wirtz to adjourn the meeting at 5:14 p.m. Motion carried by voice vote.

James L. Banks, Chair

Janae K. Cooper, Clerk

Minutes approved on:
