

IONIA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
September 24, 2019
Regular Meeting
7:00 p.m.

The Chair called the meeting to order and led with the Pledge of Allegiance. Commissioner Sharp gave the Invocation.

Members present: Georgia Sharp, Chris Bredice, Larry Tiejema, Scott Wirtz, Jim Banks and David Hodges

Members absent: Jack Shattuck

Others present: Jack Elliott, Elisabeth Walden, Evan Sasiela, Ed Noyola, Ruth Ross, Jeff Montgomery, Gordon Fyan, Dan Thomas, Wendy Thomas, Chris Perry, Morgan Prescott, Janet Olson, Ken Olson, Diane Adams, Richard Pohl, Nick Bowerman, Kevin Wadkins, Joe Krueger, Tanner Roe, Bud White, Alison Batchelder, Scott Clark, Walt Downes, Dorothy Pohl, Patty Loosemore, Antar Miller, Judith A. Clark, Bill Hendrian, Jill Renucci, Jerry Renucci, Stephanie Fox and Janae Cooper

Approval of the Agenda

Moved by Bredice, supported by Wirtz to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried by voice vote.

Public Comment

Jack Elliott commented on the Clerk's request for staffing and the reaction of the commissioners.

Action on Consent Calendar

- A. Approve minutes of the previous meeting(s)
- B. Approve per diem and mileage
- C. Approve payment of General Fund payroll and accounts payable for the month of August 2019 - \$353,287.77
- D. Approve payment of Health Fund bills for August 2019 - \$127,324.56

Moved by Tiejema, supported by Bredice to add Commissioner Sharp's per diem and mileage to the Consent Calendar. Motion carried by voice vote.

As per the direction of County Attorney Gordon Love, moved by Banks, supported by Wirtz to amend the heading of the September 17, 2019 minutes to read Public Hearing pursuant to MCL 4611s and MCL 2246(7)(9). Motion carried by voice vote.

Unfinished Business

A. Approval of PA 116's

1. 19-007 FA
2. 19-008 FA
3. 19-009 FA

Moved by Tiejema, supported by Banks to approve the aforementioned PA 116's. Motion carried by voice vote.

B. Appointments

1. Moved by Tiejema, supported by Wirtz to appoint Mel Haga and Cheryl Irish to the Commission on Aging Board. Motion carried by voice vote.
2. Moved by Sharp, supported by Bredice to appoint Rollie Self as the Republican representative to the Board of Canvassers. Moved by Tiejema, supported by Sharp to appoint Norrie Slater as the Democratic representative to the Board of Canvassers. Motions carried by voice vote.
3. Moved by Tiejema, supported by Wirtz, to appoint Deb Thalison to the Substance Use Disorder Oversight Policy Board and to appoint Cori Anderson as the alternate. Motion carried by voice vote.

New Business

- A. Moved by Banks, supported by Wirtz to enter in to a Road Commission Public Hearing. Motion carried by voice vote.

Dorothy Pohl stated that she is concerned about the process and questioned as to what the Board of Commissioners is doing. Pohl brought members from the insurance pool for Road Commissioners and the County Road Association with her to speak.

The Road Commission for all 83 counties was created by a vote of the people. The process was talked about by the Representative from the County Road Association. Bredice asked him how his agency is funded; the Representative stated that they are funded by dues.

The Chief Litigation Counsel who represents the Road Commissioners in Michigan spoke, stating that if the County "takes over" that the Road Commission would lose representation and the benefits they currently have.

Bredice inquired as to how many other states have Road Commissions. The answer was "not many." Some have state DOTs.

Gail Pratt, Administrator of the Insurance Pool commented that they are able to focus and develop expertise on the Road Commission.

Jack Elliott asked if there is anything that the Board of Commissioners (BOCs) can do to change things and asked how is it going to work?

Chair Hodges stated that he thinks the Road Commission is doing a good job, but the BOCs are concerned financially.

Jack Elliott said to put it up to a vote of the people. New eyes looking at the same problem can find solutions.

Morgan Prescott stated that at one of the other meetings she overheard that the BOCs are raising the retirement age and trimming the fat. The Road Commission are not getting answers, just the run-around. What is the excess you are referring to, she inquired to the Board.

Chair Hodges commented that this is a Federal issue as well; those are two of the twelve steps as to why pensions are failing nationally.

Bredice asked the Road Commission Board if they have any suggestions.

Bota stated that they have been dealing with this and feels a plan is in place.

Bredice asked Bota if she believes in the plan; Bota said yes.

An unidentified person stated that this is a statewide problem; Road Commissions in Michigan are underfunded; there is not a short-term fix.

Bredice stated the Ionia County Road Commission is in bad shape.

Fyan asked if there is a take-over, how many lawsuits will fall back onto the County? Will the money come from the pension fund?

An unidentified person stated that the County wants to take pensions away from 20+ year employees.

Bredice stated that the BOC does not intend to take the pensions away.

Wirtz said that the BOC is trying to save the pension.

Fyan stated that he would like to see the pension preserved but not hurt the new guys.

Bredice stated that no one wants to take the pension away.

Sharp stated that she is concerned about the health care funding. Prior commissioners had tried to deal with this. The BOCs do not want to take-over.

The BOCs are trying to uphold an ethical obligation and financial obligation to the people of Ionia-transparency. Sharp stated that she has asked for the Road Commissioner by-laws and there are none. How did they get their own authority? No one knows. This is a responsibility to our citizens and that's what I was elected for.

Ken Olson stated the minimum has been paid. Don't blame MERS or the stock market; the problem is internally. This should not be put on the backs of the taxpayers.

Chair Hodges said the problem is at the Federal Level and throwing money at it is not going to save pensions.

K. Olson said if you don't make a change, expect the same results.

Gasper said he thought the Board had a plan.

Pratt stated they have worked with other counties. This meeting is frustrating. Put together committees so when there are questions they could digest them with an expert. She hopes the BOCs can give the Road Commission some sense of security.

Tiejema stated the Road Commission funding is flat. Materials needed are going up about 5% or more per year. Projections were too rosy. Do not fault Dorothy or the Road Commission for what has happened; not a bad job it is just what occurred. Tiejema said he is not in favor of taking over, but meetings are needed so the County Commissioners can speak intelligently. The crowd applauded.

Blood stated if we don't own roads we shouldn't be funding them.

An unidentified person stated that Road Commission manpower is reduced 30-50%.

Chair Hodges mentioned that Michigan has the highest fuel tax in the country.

Sharp asked Chair Hodges if we have received a timeline from the state. She does not want the state coming in and telling us what to do. We need checks and balances; transparency.

An unidentified person stated that the Treasury has approved the plan. Pohl has received a waiver so she doesn't have to do a plan. Best practices are followed. The Road Commission is making more payments as they are getting more revenue. He doesn't know what she (Pohl) could have done differently to make things better. She was led down a primrose path.

Sharp asked Pohl how did the Road Commission become autonomous?

An unidentified person said it was statute defined; County Road Law 283 of 1909. The law was passed because 83 counties could do it better than 1400 townships.

Elliott stated that the BOCs is not a constitutional Board.

Clark commented that the Road Commission is autonomous. The County Treasurer still handles the money. Pohl has been proactive in asking Clark how the Road Commission could get more interest income. Clark invests more daily, just like with the County's money. Pohl makes an effort. Interest income is very well this year.

Banks stated that someone needs to be in charge of the situation; maybe hire an extra person?

Chair Hodges expressed an apology to the person who overheard the conversation; there are twelve steps at the Federal level regarding pensions. He has no intention to attack Pohl or the Road Commission Board. Six road commission employees have talked to him and he didn't realize how bad the funding is. He is not out to take pensions away.

Pohl stated she is happy seeing the road fixed.

Chair Hodges said the BOCs are in no rush to decide.

Moved by Banks, supported by Tiejema to move out of the Public Hearing. Motion carried by voice vote.

The Chair called for a five-minute recess at 8:17 p.m.

Back in open session at 8:29 p.m.

- B. County Administrator, Stephanie Fox presented the Mid-State Health Network SUD Agreement in Health Officer Ken Bowen's absence. Tiejema stated that he would abstain from voting as the Agreement was unclear. The matter was tabled to the last agenda item (G.) under New Business while Fox attempted to text Bowen for clarification.
- C. Moved by Tiejema, supported by Banks to approve the Michigan Indigent Defense Grant Contract Amendment. Motion carried by voice vote.
- D. Moved by Tiejema, supported by Banks to ratify the signature on the Resolution for Diane Adams, Ionia County Register of Deeds 2019

Register of the Year. The Resolution was adopted by the following roll call vote: yes – all. The Resolution is as follows:

RESOLUTION

Resolution of the Ionia County Board of Commissioners at a meeting of said Board held on the 27th day of August, 2019, at the Administration Building,

Ionia, Michigan.

We gather here to pay tribute to

Diane Adams, Ionia County Register of Deeds

Ionia County 2019 Register of the Year

for her professional achievements, and her service to the citizens of the County of Ionia.

WHEREAS, Diane Adams was elected Register of Deeds in 1988; and

WHEREAS, Diane Adams has successfully initiated dramatic improvements in the Register of Deeds Office; and

WHEREAS, Diane Adams continues to implement changes to enhance services in the Register of Deeds Office; and

WHEREAS, Diane Adams served as District Chair for the Register of Deeds Association and has served in various capacities on numerous other boards, committees, and associations; and

WHEREAS, Diane Adams has served as a role model for women who wish to serve the citizens of Ionia County; and

WHEREAS, Diane Adams was named Ionia County's Business Woman of the Year in 2007 by the Ionia Area Chamber of Commerce; and

WHEREAS, Diane Adams was selected by former Governor Rick Snyder to serve on the Electronic Recording Commission; and

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Ionia County Board of Commissioners, by way of this Resolution, honors Diane Adams for being named 2019 Register of the Year

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this Resolution be entered into the records of the Ionia County Board of Commissioners and that a copy be forwarded to Diane Adams.

Signed and Sealed by Order of the Ionia County Board of Commissioners.

- E. Moved by Banks, supported by Wirtz to approve the Resource Recovery Services Agreement between the County of Ionia and the Ionia County

Conservation District for resource recovery services for a three-year period at a cost of \$20,000 annually, and authorize the signature of the Chairman on the agreement. Motion carried by voice vote.

- F. 2020 Budget Discussion - Banks commented that the Budget is just a guess on someone's part and they are always amended.
 - 1. Public Defender - the Public Defender, Walt Downes discussed a salary increase with the Board. Downes had submitted to proposals. Accommodations for the Prosecutor were discussed as well.

Chair Hodges commented that the Board can't do for one and not the other. The pay scale for the Prosecutors office is low and non-union employees are only getting a 1% raise.

Bredice stated that the County's pay scale is not keeping up with the rate of inflation. It is not right to "cherry-pick" and give them a raise.

Tiejema commented on giving the Public Defender's experience credit. The Public Defenders are currently at Grade 14, Step 4.

Downes commented that these pay raises would put Ionia County in compliance with the State of Michigan and the Prosecutor's Office. Most other Public Defenders get paid more than the Prosecutor, which is the case in Montcalm County.

Hodges inquired as to who deals with more cases?

Downes and Butler confirmed that the Prosecutor's Office deals with more cases, however the Prosecutor has a bigger staff.

Fox stated that the only way to do something for everyone means less people.

Tiejema commented that he has little respect for the bureaucracy of the State government.

Bredice said the he had not problem with raising Downes' salary but he does have a problem with raising the assistants.

Chair Hodges stated that it's still taxpayer money.

Downes informed the Board the other option is to hire an administrator with a roster of attorneys paid at a rate of \$100 - \$125 per hour. Downes stated the Public Defender's office gives better representation due to being specialized. Montcalm does not have a Public Defender and their budget is \$100,000 more than Ionia's.

Downes stated that the State approved the grant.

Bredice commented that Downes is asking for two steps higher than Butler.

Tiejema noted that the Prosecutor's office is underpaid.

Bredice commented that is a slap in the face to all other employees.

Moved by Tiejema to set the two Assistant Defender's pay at a Grade 16, Step 4 and to set Downes pay at Grade 22, Step 4, Bredice amends motion to set Downes pay at Grade 22, a Chief Prosecutor at Grade 18 and an Assistant Public Defender at Grade 14. Sharp offered support for the motion. Sharp inquired to Downes as to how he will decide between the two Public Defenders as they have been equitable up until now. Downes said he will have to make a decision. Motion carries 4-1 with Wirtz voting no. (Banks was absent during the vote).

2. Moved by Tiejema, supported by Bredice, an increase of \$5,916 to Amber Brown in District Court for additional duties performed. Motion carries by voice vote.
3. Moved by Bredice, supported by Wirtz to approve the request from the MSU Extension office, keeping the bookkeepers hours intact, Motion carried by voice vote.
4. Cooper discussed at length the need to increase one part-time Deputy Clerk to full-time with the pending election year coming up. Moved by Tiejema, supported by Wirtz to approve the Part-time Deputy Clerk/File Clerk position to full-time through 2020. Motion carried by voice vote.
5. The request for all Circuit Court employees to be increased to a Grade 9 was tabled. All other positions were tabled due to being worked on. Fox stated three line items did not get a 1% increase.

G. The Board revisited Item B. under New Business, which was tabled earlier in the meeting. Upon a text message clarification from Bowen to Fox, the Mid-State Health Network SUD Agreement contains “boilerplate language”. Moved by Tiejema, supported by Wirtz to approve the FY 19/20 Prevention Services Contractual Agreement between Mid-State Health Network and Ionia County Health Department and authorize the signature of Ken Bowen, Health Officer. Motion carried by voice vote.

Chairperson’s Report

Chair Hodges stated that he attended the West Michigan Regional Planning Commission meeting. There was a representative from the DNR at the meeting and he stated that there are a lot of grants/money available. Chair Hodges asked the Board to review the Resolution regarding County Commissioner’s party designation being on the ballot and the possibility of electing Commissioners to four-year terms.

County Administrator’s Report

Fox thanked everyone for their work on the budget and stated that there will be a public hearing at the October 8th meeting regarding the budget. Fox also stated that a Personnel Committee meeting will be scheduled soon.

Public Comment

Jack Elliott commented that the Board gave the Clerk a hard time regarding her positon request.

Adjournment

Moved by Wirtz, supported by Bredice to adjourn the meeting at 9:45 p.m. Motion carried by voice vote.

David Hodges, Chair

Janae K. Cooper, Clerk

Minutes approved on: