

BERRIEN COUNTY ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE
Minutes of July 25, 2019

Present: Jim Curran, Chair
Michael Majerek, Vice Chair
Chris Heugel
Don Meeks Sr.

Absent:

Scheduled: Chief Judge Bruce, Trial Court
Carrie Smietanka-Haney, Trial Court
Bill Wolf, County Administration
Mac Elliott, BOC Chair

Others: Melissa Clapper, Public
Tony Benhart, Public
Mike Haskins, Public

Call to Order

Meeting called to order at 9:22 am.

Approval of Minutes

Motion by Meeks, supported by Majerek, to approve the minutes of the July 18, 2019 meetings.
Motion Carried.

Trial Court Update

Smietanka-Haney reported phase 1 of Equivant is planned to go live in April 2020, with most of the data conversion taking place now. She reported they will be changing from paper dockets on courtroom doors to monitors placed throughout the building with real-time information. Judge Bruce discussed their strategic plans including a Facebook page, which is active now, and online dispute resolution options. They are working to change mindsets that the courthouse isn't a place, but a process. Discussions ensued regarding employee appreciation and recognizing said employees during a BOC meeting. Judge Bruce reviewed the fee schedule changes that will take place beginning August 1st with the court's participation in the MAACS appeals process. There will be higher fees, but the Trial Court employees will not have to do as much work in regards to ordering transcripts.

Judge Bruce reported that Berrien County had been sharing Mental Health Court with Cass County as part of the regionalization. However, due to both the distance of Cass' Courthouse and the differences in services, it will be de-regionalized beginning October 1st. He also reported the State conducted its site visit last week to continue funding of the Drug Treatment Court.

Judge Bruce discussed the Justice for All Task Force and stated Judge Mayfield reset the way bonds are set. In regards to the Trial Court Funding Commission Study, their plan discusses the recommendation of the State to take over funding and proposes all court employees would be State employees. Smietanka-Haney discussed the implications of this. The report is available online at <https://www.michiganradio.org/sites/michigan/files/201904/TCFC-Interim-Report-FINAL-VERSION-FOR-CONTENT.pdf>

Q & A with Bill Wolf and BOC Chair Elliott

Discussions ensued regarding the Trial Court Funding Commission Study.

Resolutions

The following resolution was approved and signed:

A1908277 – Accept grant award for alcohol and safety belt enforcement patrols from the Drive Michigan Safety Task Force.

Public Comment

Melissa Clapper, St. Joseph Charter Township – Would like to express thanks for allowing extra time for the updates from Judge Bruce and Carrie. She is intrigued by the court and always impressed by them. She appreciates everyone involved, including victims and employees.

Tony Benhart, Sodus Township – Last Saturday, passed by the Road Department on Napier and the garage door was open and the front loader was gone. He contacted Bill Wolf and was told they were dispatched to clear a tree. He went to the site and took pictures. He believes it was a branch that was pushed into the drainage ditch. Nothing in the department has changed from when it was the Commission.

Mike Haskins, Pipestone Township – Tony contacted him and he went to look also. If he hadn't been told where it was, he wouldn't have been able to see it. The tree is dead and could easily have been cut down.

Curran replied to Benhart and Haskins, stating it is a judgment call and they need to speak with Wolf and Latham. Meeks noted the area has been hit hard by storms.

Miscellaneous

Curran reported that Chickering has requested the Administration Committee to come up with 3 top goals for Strategic Planning.

Meeks stated he enjoyed reading the positive email from the Sheriff regarding the Safety Day event at Blossom Acres. He congratulated all involved for their positive interaction with the residents.

Meeting adjourned at 10:29 am.

Respectfully Submitted,



Jennifer Arent