

Berrien County Administration Committee
Minutes of September 19, 2019

Present: Jim Curran
Michael Majerek
Don Meeks
Chris Heugel

Appointments Scheduled: Mike Sepic, Prosecutor
Mac Elliott
Bill Wolf
Dan Fette

Meeting called to order at 9:24 a.m.

Prosecutor Update - Mike Sepic

Mike provided his quarterly report. He reviewed the main training options available for the Prosecuting Attorneys, mostly through the Prosecuting Attorney Association of Michigan. The National District Attorneys Association also provides some great training options and resources, however, with budget cuts we have not been able to attend those in a few years. They do put on some internal trainings with the Sheriff's Department. He noted that with the staff turnover they have encountered recently they have 6 new Prosecuting Attorneys in the last 2 years and getting in training while doing the day to day job duties is much more strained. He noted the value of having 2 Prosecuting Attorneys that focus mainly on appeals, they are able to provide some training and assist in that area.

Mike spoke in appreciation for recording instruments and the drone that the Board has approved. He said the transition to Equivant for the Prosecuting software is going well.

He reviewed the cases being handled that are Juvenile life cases without parole. Anyone convicted of first degree murder under 18, in 2012, the US Supreme Court changed it giving the Judge the discretion to sentence that to an individual - instead of it being mandatory. Berrien County has 12 of these cases (360 state wide). Four were given term of years served, we have 8 left. One just this week went to a Judge to decide following the hearing, 7 more are awaiting hearings, should happen in 2020. The oldest one, was a 1967 murder, Bobby Griffin, then 17, broke into the home of an elderly woman, raped and murdered her. He had served 50 years. We agreed to a term of years, 25-40, maximum 60, agreed to a 40 year minimum.

Administrator/Chairman Q & A

Dan Fette stated that he has been working with John Engelhoff of Southwest Michigan Planning on expanding broadband in rural areas in Berrien County. They have identified a company that wants to apply for federal and or state funding that may be available for that, however, they need specific data to apply for that funding. Advanced Communications and Data Corporation (ACD) would like to survey Berrien County residents to obtain the data needed to show that they are unserved. Dan was seeking consensus from the Committee to authorize the Chairman to send a letter to them expressing Berrien County's support of this effort. The Committee was ok with Mac signing a letter of support.

Administrator Bill Wolf spoke to the Financial Services presentation that was given today in the Committee of the Whole. He noted that the Board has been provided that presentation in paper form and he encouraged them to bring it to the budget hearings scheduled for Friday, September 20 and Monday, September 23.

Minutes Approval

Motion by Commissioner Meeks, with support from Commissioner Majerek to approve the minutes of the September 12 meeting. Motion carried.

Resolution Approval

A1909291 - Accept donation from DC Cook for a K-9. The resolution was signed by all present.

Public Comments -

Jerry Sirk, Benton Charter Township - Spoke about internet options in the County.

Tony Benhart, Sodus Township - Spoke about the company doing the internet service survey.

Darrin Schaer, Pipestone Township - Spoke about internet options in the County.

Mike Haskins, Pipestone Township - Spoke about internet options in the County.

Commissioner Curran stated that he has been a part of the discussions on broadband from the beginning. He noted that this is the first step in the process and there are many steps as the County tries to make sure that all residents have access to high speed internet.

Meeting adjourned 10:19 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Annette Christie

Executive Assistant to the Administrator