

MINUTES

BOARD OF BENTON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Special Board Meeting
Wednesday, June 26, 2013, 9:00 a.m.
Commissioners' Conference Room
Benton County Justice Center, Kennewick, WA

Present: Chairman Shon Small
Commissioner James Beaver
Commissioner Jerome Delvin
County Administrator David Sparks
Clerk of the Board Cami McKenzie

Benton County Employees Present During All or a Portion of the Meeting: Adam Fyall, Sustainable Development; DPA Ryan Brown; Deputy Administrator Loretta Smith Kelty; Finance Manager Keith Mercer; Sheriff Steve Keane; and Undersheriff Jerry Hatcher.

Sheriff's Office Operations & Jail Update

Sheriff Keane said his primary responsibility was safety to the officers, inmates and the public. He stated that due to recent events, they have reviewed their policies and practices to see what could be done differently to reduce liability. Additionally, they had to consider the impacts from the State budget to the local level. Jails were transitioning to a public health function, not just housing inmates. They were now dealing with substance abuse, mental health and behavioral issues and they were asking Corrections Officers to take care of individuals that were beyond their capabilities and training.

Mental Health Activity

Sheriff Keane said as the State cut back and Eastern Mental Hospital did less, it was taxing the County Jail to perform more of these services. He discussed the suicide attempts and jail standards and practices and how they established protocol for those at risk individuals. He indicated they were not physically set up for this type of continuous watch and established a relationship with Crisis Response to assist with the treatment and watch of these individuals, to prescribe psychotropic medications, and properly evaluate the individuals. They were also planning a remodel of one of the rooms to assist with the physical set up in the jail. He said if they could identify individuals who had no business being in the facility it would be a benefit to all.

Commissioner Beaver commented they had authorized Human Services to move forward to try and address some of these issues and were using available resources. He said the Board recognized there were problems and were trying to address it.

Medical Issues

Sheriff Keane indicated one of the things that assisted in managing the inmate population was medications and they didn't have coverage for that after 11:00 p.m. because there was not medical staff on board. He said they had to decide if they needed to be transported to the

hospital and they had 147% increase in hospital transports with the majority occurring in the middle of the night. He said they were requesting the addition of two nursing positions so they could provide 24-hour nursing care.

Commissioner Beaver suggested they look at the manpower that was currently in the jail and decide if there was too many of one kind and not enough of another.

Undersheriff Hatcher said they were looking at configuring the personnel to fit what was needed and reallocating funds; they were also working on a new pharmaceutical process and already seeing savings.

Commissioner Beaver discussed the size of the Sheriff's budget and said if they could make this adjustment without affecting Current Expense, he would be in favor of that. Undersheriff Hatcher commented he didn't think they would be able to do it at 100%.

Chairman Small asked how much the Sheriff's office could come up with for this proposal and Undersheriff said he wanted to work with David Sparks on the numbers to come up with a proposal.

Sheriff Keane said there was potential for inmates to not be safe and it was ultimately his responsibility. He was asking the Board to work with administration to come up with a solution.

Commissioner Delvin also discussed whether this could be included in the potential sales tax initiative that was being considered by the Citizens' Advisory Board.

Commissioner Beaver said the amount being requested was less than 1% of their budget and although he appreciated the sensitive issue and the report, the Board needed to look at declining revenue and he thought this should be absorbed within the budget.

Sheriff Keane said they could try to come up with the funds within the budget, but he couldn't foresee what might happen in the future and he was ultimately responsible for any issues that happened in the jail.

The Board agreed he could work with David Sparks and encouraged him to find creative solutions.

There being no further business before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 9:50 a.m.

Clerk of the Board

Chairman