

JUSTICE COMMITTEE MEETING
May 23, 2019 @ 3:00 P.M.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Debra Kraft – Vice Chair
Jim Gresham
Lloyd Holman
Bill Oliver

MEMBERS ABSENT

Greg Mattingley
Verzell Taylor
Dave Drobisch

COUNTY PERSONNEL PRESENT

David Ellison, Public Defender
Mike Baggett, State’s Attorney’ Office
Pat Berter, Probation
Sherry Doty, Circuit Clerk’s Office
Sheriff Antonio Brown
Lt. Jon Butts, Sheriff’s Dept
Aly Crist, State’s Attorney Office
Judge Webber
Jon Perona, DPBC

Jeannie Durham, County Board Office

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PRIOR MEETING

Mr. Gresham made a motion to approve the minutes from the 4/25/19 Macon County Board Justice Committee meeting, seconded by Mr. Holman and the motion carried 4-0.

CLAIMS

Mr. Gresham made a motion to approve the claims as presented, seconded by Mr. Oliver and the motion carried 4-0.

REPORTS

Circuit Clerk –

Ms. Doty reported they are one month ahead of time on the transition to the new Tyler Technologies computer system. She explained that Mr. Berter, Mr. Ellison, the Courts and the Circuit Clerk’s office have all been working with them and it is possible that they will go live 1 month earlier because the girls are doing great at the configurations.

Jeannie Burger, the current Jury Manager is retiring tomorrow. There will be a reception tomorrow from 1 to 3 p.m. in the jury room if anybody would like to come and wish her well. Chelsea Morgan will be taking over that position starting next week.

Circuit Court –

Judge Webber added to the Circuit Clerk report saying that yes, they are in the midst of a year long conversion to a new operating system which should integrate not only the courts, but the Clerk’s office, Probation, Sheriff, State’s Attorney – everybody. This is the biggest change that has happened in record keeping for the courts since electronic record keeping for the dockets. This is no small undertaking. Their reps have been meeting with a lot of the departments recently and they say they’re just a bunch of little ole software salesmen from Texas. He says that’s kind of like Amazon’s little mailing places in Seattle. He said he just wanted to caution everyone as the process goes on that we need to make sure that they do not force us into their template because they are a national company and they like to brag that they have 40% of the court systems, sheriff’s offices, etc. There is a tendency to say here is what we have that works other places, you

fit yours to it. Part of the course is our record keeping and that is a public record of the court's operations and that is available to everyone. It is very important that we continue to keep court records accessible to litigants and the public in a form that is understandable to them. We put a lot of detail into our docket entries and record keeping so that, hopefully, people can read it and understand it. We do know that the parties involved in the cases do go online and read about their cases. Judge Webber said he does not want this to be in some sort of code, almost like our friends at the federal court system have.

This month a program of volunteer lawyers counseling persons on civil matters in the Law Library was started. This was originally started as what was called the Public Interest Law Initiative from Chicago. They organized it, gave us some ideas, a little seed money, but it is driven by Decatur lawyers volunteering their time to come to our self-help center and meet with self represented litigants, persons without attorneys, to point them in the right direction in non-criminal cases. In a criminal case, people do have the Public Defender. But, in civil cases, you are on your own unless you have your own lawyer. These are lawyers who are helping individuals on an appointment basis with non-criminal matters. In the past, our self-help navigator, Sundi Barrett could only show people where the forms were and point them to websites, but they had to figure it out on their own. This is very helpful to us as judges because pro se litigants are very difficult to deal with. You want to let them present their cases, but you cannot be an advocate for their side. This will help. Judge Webber said he is pleased that the Bar Association has stepped forward and that we have lawyers willing to give their time for nothing to do this. Vice Chair Kraft expressed appreciation as well. Mr. Oliver asked how people go about getting assistance. Judge Webber explained that the clinic is at the self-help center in the Law Library on the 3rd floor of the courthouse and it is done on an appointment. They should call the Law Librarian / self-help navigator, Sundi Barrett to make an appointment.

Coroner – no report

Court Services / Probation –

Macon County Board Resolution Entering into an Agreement with Champaign County for the Sale of Juvenile Detention Bed Space

Mr. Berter explained that if Peoria County was full and we needed to house some of our kids somewhere else, Champaign County has been gracious enough to enter into an agreement with us. The cost is \$115 per day per kid. The department is very fortunate to work with the Sheriff's Department. He said they do hire-backs with them to where they would take care of the transportation. Probation would actually take them to court. But, with Peoria County, they provide the transportation. Currently, for overflow, we have McLean and Vermillion Counties. The email was sent to Mr. Baggett to take a look at, but Champaign County has just opened this up to our circuit, so we are pretty fortunate for this opportunity.

Mr. Gresham made a motion to forward the resolution on to the Finance Committee with recommendation to approve, seconded by Mr. Oliver, and the motion carried 4-0.

Mr. Berter went on to report that there are currently 5 kids in detention. A spike has been seen through the months. There could be a possibility in August or September that he might have to

come back to the committee and request more money in that line. That is the only line in the budget that cannot be controlled. There is approximately \$100,000 in the line currently. Whether it lasts or not just depends on if there is a spike in juvenile crime.

Emergency Management Agency – no report

Public Building Commission – no report

Public Defender's Office –

Mr. Ellison reported that the office is now back to full strength and things are back to normal and running smoothly. At the end of this month, they will be at about 800 felony filings this year which is pretty much online with where we were last year. There seem to be more and more jury trials, but the trend seems to be that when trials are set for jury trials, there are very few that are kicked over to the next one. They are either tried or taken care of one way or the other. So, from the Public Defender's perspective, things are running pretty smoothly.

Sheriff's Department –

Macon County Board Resolution Approving an Agreement with Community Health Improvement Center D/B/A Crossing Healthcare for Inmate Health Services at the Macon County Jail for the Term of May 1, 2019 through April 30, 2020

Lt. Butts explained that this is the current health care provider. They've been doing a very good job for the last year. The sum is \$635,564 per year. This is the same as the past year for the services. The Sheriff has been very impressed and appreciates the work they've been doing, not only through medical services, but also through their mental health screening and evaluations. The FY19 budget has the money appropriated to cover these costs.

Mr. Oliver made a motion to forward the resolution on to the Finance Committee with recommendation to approve, seconded by Mr. Holman, and the motion carried 4-0.

Mr. Gresham asked about why the 3rd whereas statement about Decatur Memorial Hospital providing the services through April 30, 2018 was included on the resolution. It seems unnecessary. Lt. Butts agreed that it could be removed. Mr. Baggett advised that it had probably just been left on because it was on last year's and is just a carry-over. It can be removed.

Macon County Board Resolution Approving In-Kind Donations from the Howard G. Buffett Foundation of Office Furniture, Vehicle Equipment, Radio Equipment, Computer Equipment, Cell Phones, and Miscellaneous Equipment

Lt. Butts explained that the total is \$82,927.43. When Sheriff Buffett was in office, he brought some of these items in and they are within the office now. He has seen a need to save the county a great deal of money by providing the equipment for the Drug Recognition Expert and some other equipment.

Mr. Oliver asked about the uniform budget line and if officers are required to purchase their own uniforms. Lt. Butts said no, they are not required to buy their own. The County has always

purchased uniforms for officers when they start. It used to be a summer uniform and a fall. Now they have an informal, khaki pant and polo shirt that Sheriff Buffett purchased so they'd be a little cooler in the summer. Now they have uniforms that they wear in the winter that are more conducive to winter weather. These are uniforms that went through the office and got more feedback from the officers as to what they like and then Sheriff Buffett provided them. Mr. Oliver asked if this is a one time thing. Lt. Butts said every officer got 3 shirts and 2 pants and while he cannot speak for the Buffett Foundation, he thought probably. Mr. Oliver questioned if the County would have to pay for replacements. Lt. Butts said they budget for uniforms every year. When they wear them, they get worn so much, they get worn out, but they do their best to make sure they are needed before purchasing. They do wear them every day and they are very grateful that Mr. Buffett has been able to provide them and save the county and the taxpayers money.

Mr. Gresham made a motion to forward the resolution on to the Finance Committee with recommendation to approve, seconded by Mr. Holman, and the motion carried 4-0.

Sheriff Brown reported that they are in process and have just completed the interviews for Court Security. There are some promising candidates on the list so that in the event that someone leaves or retires, they have ready replacements.

State's Attorney's Office –

Mr. Baggett reported that the office is currently down one attorney due to someone just having to go on an extended leave. In the interim, there are 4 Assistant States Attorneys that have agreed to take on additional work. They are getting a little extra money out of the budget that would pay for the person who is on unpaid leave. A little money is being saved, but not nearly as much as it might have been. But, these 4 ASA's are taking on a cross section of cases from domestic violence, DUI's, traffic as well as the assistant's courtroom time which is fairly substantial. They've agreed to take it on indefinitely at this point.

Mr. Baggett introduced Aly Crist who was hired pursuant to an agreement reached with Animal Control thanks to the Chairman's efforts. She is an administrative assistant assigned to the Civil Division. He explained that she has been there about 3 months, is making his life much easier and has already proven her value more than once. He said they are hitting the ground running and he is hopeful that there are not as many people waiting on him as in the past.

Mr. Baggett explained that he had realized just yesterday that the department's status of vehicles for the investigators has changed and has caused a necessity to bring a resolution before the County Board. He said that he would like to advise this committee and ask to take it straight to Finance. The department has gone from 4 investigators to 2 and as a result, there are two Impalas that are getting older and have been decommissioned. There is also one Tahoe which was purchased with a grant from the Buffett Foundation when the Elder Victims Crime Unit was started. That vehicle was purchased used and now has some mechanical issues which are becoming more and more aggressive. Investigator, Roger Craig has been working with Miles Chevrolet to reach an agreement where we will trade in the two Impalas and the Tahoe in exchange for a new vehicle. The goal is to do this at little or no expense to the county. This requires County Board action since disposal of County property is involved. Committee members were in agreement to taking the resolution straight to the Finance Committee for consideration.

Vice Chair Kraft asked if the number of investigators would remain at 2. Mr. Baggett said that as of now, there are no plans to increase the number. From a budgetary perspective, increasing it would be problematic. He said they are making do with what they have right now. In the event that things come about which necessitate a change, it would have to be addressed with the Board when and if that day comes. He said they are doing the best they can with what they currently have.

Mr. Holman asked about how many vehicles the department has. Mr. Baggett explained that they have a total of 4 vehicles; two Tahoes and two Impalas. The Impalas have been decommissioned. One investigator is driving around the Tahoe that is experiencing mechanical problems. That is the Tahoe that will be replaced leaving the department with two vehicles; one for each of the investigators.

CITIZEN REMARKS – PUBLIC COMMENT –None

Old Business None

New Business - None

Closed Session – none needed

NEXT MEETING Thursday, June 27, 2019

Mr. Holman made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Gresham and the motion carried 4-0 and the meeting was adjourned at 3:20 p.m.

Minutes submitted by Jeannie Durham, Macon County Board Office