



PORTAGE COUNTY

MEETING MINUTES

JUDICIAL/GENERAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE

PORTAGE COUNTY ANNEX
CONFERENCE ROOM 5
1462 STRONGS AVENUE
STEVENS POINT, WI 54481

Monday, August 28, 2023

5:30 PM

REMOTE ATTENDANCE & COMMENT

To attend this meeting by telephone : dial 1-872-242-7813 , after dialing the number you will then be asked to enter in a meeting number. Use the following meeting number: 221 419 164 933, then press #

To attend this meeting by video:

[Click here to join the meeting](#)

CALL TO ORDER

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Judicial/General Government Committee meeting was called to order at 5:30 PM.

Members Present:

Attending in Person: Chair, Suzanne Oehlke, Matt Jacowski, Pat Keller and Andrew Rockman

Attending on-line: Mark Hemmrich

Staff Attending: Justice Programs Director Starr, Register of Deeds Wisinski, Clerk of Courts Roth, Veterans Service Director Clements, District Attorney Cousin, County Board Chair Haga, County Executive Pavelski, Jane Iwanski and Bill Hlavac.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Members of the public who wish to address the Committee on specific agenda items must register their request at this time, with such comments subject to the reasonable control of the Committee Chair as set forth in Robert's Rules of Order.

No one from the public was present.

CORRESPONDENCE

None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES 4/24/2023

A motion was made by P Keller to approve the April 24, 2023 minutes as presented. Seconded by A Rockman. Motion to approve carried by voice vote, with no negative votes.

REPORTS

3. Vendor Invoice Lists

Vendor invoice lists were provided to the committee for review.

DISCUSSION/POSSIBLE ACTION

4. Discussion/Possible Action Re: Special Meeting Attendance (Portage County Ordinance 3.1.47 & 3.1.48)

- Request for special meeting attendance
- Approval of attendance of special meetings
- Special meeting attendance reports

No items were presented.

5. Justice Programs
 - a. Office and Budget Update 2023
 - b. 2024 Budget review

Justice Programs Department update - Andrea Starr, Director:

As of today's date, Justice Programs expended 63% of its allotted budget. The TAD quarterly report was completed in July 2023. The TAD Pre-application is due August 31, 2023. Director Starr presented recommendations to the Justice Coalition Executive Committee regarding the PSA and other assessments for pretrial individuals. The members did not make a decision on those assessments; however, would like to revisit it at the next meeting in September. Director Starr continues to have meetings with Equivant/Northpointe to discuss software for the Public Safety Assessment (PSA).

6. District Attorney
 - a. Office and Budget Update 2023
 - b. 2024 Budget review
 - c. Resolution RE: Revision of Portage County Code of Ordinances Section 3.1.24 and 3.1.16 Resulting in the Transfer of Legislative Oversight for the District Attorney Office from the Judicial/General Government Committee to the Public Safety/Emergency Management Committee.
 - d. New position request-Victim/Witness position

a. The District Attorney, Cass Cousins, provides the following report on the District Attorney's office and its budget update. We are on track for budget but are close to exceeding certain line items, specifically expert witness fees and transcripts. This is due to a trial this summer involving significant expense for each. However, we have not adjusted the line item amounts because of the unique circumstances. Additionally, we have greatly increased revenue from diversion payment and expect that amount to be greater next year. There are no major office updates. Our diversion coordinator has been on the job for three months and is doing great.

b. Working on the 2024 budget

c. Resolution RE: Revision of Portage County Code of Ordinances Section 3.1.24 and 3.1.16 resulting in the Transfer of Legislative Oversight for the District Attorney's Office from the Judicial/General Government Committee to the Public Safety/Emergency Management Committee.

A Motion was made by M. Jacowski to approve the resolution as presented. Seconded by P Keller. The motion to approve was carried by voice vote, with no negative votes.

d. Request for additional victim/witness position. Providing timely, responsive, and informative services to crime victims and to witnesses is an essential function of the Portage County District Attorney's Office. Presently the office has one full-time victim-witness (VW) coordinator and a hybrid position consisting of .6 legal associate (LA) duties and .4 VW duties. However, the need for victim and witness services continues to increase. This is partially due to the greater scope of victim rights under Marsy's Law, enacted in Wisconsin in 2020. It is also due to internal policy changes within the DA's Office enacted to increase victim contact and improve responsiveness. This increased need has created a situation where 1.4 VW staff is insufficient to meet my office's obligations. Additionally, the hybrid position is an imperfect solution to meet increased VW needs and creates a potential for miscommunication, duplication of work, and unclear chain of command. These flaws are inherent in the hybrid nature of the current position but would be solved through a combined new position and reclassification that would result in two, co-equal VW coordinators in the office, and four fulltime LAs. Therefore, I am requesting a new full time VW position and a reclassification of the hybrid position back to a full time LA.

A motion to approve the position as requested was made by M. Jacowski. Seconded by A Rockman. The motion to approve was carried by voice vote, with no negative votes.

7. Veterans Services
 - a. Office and Budget Update 2023
 - b. 2024 Budget review

Director Clements reported the following: The 2023 budget is on-track as forecast and currently only 55.2% of the budget has been expended for 2023. The Portage County Veterans Service Department has received an ARPA grant from the Governor of the State of Wisconsin for 2023. The grant must be spent by the end of 2024. This grant is passed through the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs in the amount of \$17,528. \$5,000 of the grant is dedicated to public media advertising about Veterans benefits. \$5,000 will be spent before the end of 2023. \$12,528 remains to be spent during 2024. The remaining \$12,528 is dedicated in 2024 to provide economic assistance to needy Veterans and their families as required by Wisconsin statute 45.86.

The Veterans Service Department has a balance of approximately \$70,000 from public donations in the non-lapsing budget line item for the statutorily mandated aid to needy Veterans Relief Fund 45.86.

The Department has proposed an increase of only one (1) line item for 2024. That line item is intended to account for the increase in overnight hotel accommodations while attending mandatory training (CEU's). This proposed increase is \$150.00.

A projected increase in the total 2024 Veterans Service Department's budget occurs in the budget line items for salary/benefits/IT

costs etc. that are calculated by the PC Finance Department. The projected budget for 2024 is \$212,297. The original estimate for 2023 was \$186,055.

8. Clerk of Courts
 - a. Office and Budget Update 2023
 - b. 2024 Budget review

Clerk of Courts Roth explained the current budget expenses are at 62%. Roth continued to explain that the relationship with JusticeWorks Family Law Information Center (FLIC) has ended as their Board of Directors voted unanimously to cease operation of the Family Law Information Center (FLIC) effective August 17th. FLIC provided forms assistance to parties filing for divorce or post-judgment issues; parties that had no assistance from counsel. The county contracted with JusticeWorks at a cost of \$10,000 per year; user fees were paid to the County Treasurer's office and disbursed out to JusticeWorks monthly. We are in current negotiations with Judicare that provides a similar program in Lincoln and Taylor counties. Finance has been informed to leave the \$10,000 in the court budget for the replacement program. A proposed Memorandum of Understanding is being formed. Roth met with Finance representatives and the County Executive on August 10th to discuss her 2024 budget. She handed out copies to the committee members and discussed the highlights.

9. Register of Deeds
 - a. Office and Budget Update 2023
 - b. 2024 Budget review

Register of Deeds Wisinski explained that the interest rates and low number of houses for sale are the reasons for the lag in revenue for transfer fees and recording fees. This is a common scenario throughout the state. Personal Property has been eliminated for 2024. Wisinski was appointed to a committee by DOR to work on a solution to handle the personal property parcels that need to be converted to real estate, assessed and taxed. The first year will be a learning curve for all parties involved. Wisinski discussed the 2024 budget and explained that it was still being tweaked. There is a need for a replication service through our software company to assist with the back up of files. If the budget is approved by the county board as is, it will be placed in the 2024 budget.

NEXT MEETING DATE November 27, 2023 at 5:30 in Conference Room 5 of the Portage County Annex Building.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn by A Rockman. Seconded by P Keller. Motion to approve carried by voice vote, with no negative votes.