

LAW & COURTS COMMITTEE
June 14, 2018
Minutes

Members Present: Crenshaw, Anthony (left at 6:51 p.m.), Celentino, Banas (arrived at 6:01 p.m.), Hope, Schafer, and Maiville

Members Absent: None

Others Present: Teresa Carter, Ben Stewart, Lauren Yunker, Erin Ebright, Trissa McClinchey, Katie Stewart, Caitlin Budzinski, Matt Nordsfjord, Rick Terrill, John Dinon, Darrin Southwell, Teri Morton, Lindsey LaForte, and others

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Crenshaw at 6:00 p.m. in Personnel Conference Room D & E of the Human Services Building, 5303 S. Cedar Street, Lansing, Michigan.

Approval of the May 31, 2018 Minutes

MOVED BY COMM. SCHAFFER, SUPPORTED BY COMM. CELENTINO, TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MAY 31, 2018 LAW AND COURTS COMMITTEE MEETING.

THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY. Absent: Commissioner Banas.

Additions to the Agenda

4. Animal Control
 - b. Changing the Hours of Operation of the Ingham County Animal Shelter (discussion item)

Chairperson Crenshaw stated that the following resolution would now be considered Agenda Item 4(a).

4. Animal Control - Resolution Honoring Officer Jodi Lebombard on the Occasion of her Resignation

Commissioner Banas arrived at 6:01 p.m.

Limited Public Comment

Teresa Carter, Ingham County Animal Shelter (ICAS) Office Coordinator, UAW Recording Secretary and Union Stewart, stated that she was before the Committee to speak on the possible change in the animal shelter hours and would be available if anyone had questions.

MOVED BY COMM. MAIVILLE, SUPPORTED BY COMM. ANTHONY, TO APPROVE A CONSENT AGENDA CONSISTING OF THE FOLLOWING ITEMS:

1. Sheriff's Office
 - a. Resolution to Authorize a Reorganization of the Sheriff's Office Field Services Division
 - b. Resolution to Authorize a Contract to Lease the Ingham County Jail Kitchen for Modernized Food Preparation, Packaging, and Delivery
2. Circuit Court – Juvenile Division – Resolution to Authorize a Reorganization in the Juvenile Division
3. Facilities – Resolution to Authorize an Agreement to Evaluate and Present a Scope of Work for 9-1-1 Center Mechanical Sound Reduction
4. Animal Control
 - a. Resolution Honoring Officer Jodi Lebombard on the Occasion of her Resignation
5. 9-1-1 Dispatch Center – Resolution to Honor Emergency Telecommunicator Kathy Murray-Rice of the Ingham County 9-1-1 Central Dispatch

THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE ITEMS ON THE CONSENT AGENDA CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

4. Animal Control
 - b. Changing the Hours of Operation of the Ingham County Animal Shelter (discussion item)

John Dinon, ICAC Director, stated that before the Animal Control Millage was adopted the shelter was closed on Sunday and Monday. He further stated that the millage was vague but stated that services would be enhanced, so they changed to being open seven days a week.

Mr. Dinon stated that the staff believes that Sunday hours were no longer needed because there was less business and calls, it was difficult to process adoptions because it was difficult to contact veterinarians or landlords, and it was a hardship for staff. He further stated that operating a seven day a week schedule was causing a decline in morale, and an increase in compassion fatigue.

Mr. Dinon stated that there was more traffic on Mondays than Sundays so it made more sense to remain open on Monday.

Commissioner Celentino stated that he looked at the statistics provided in advance and appreciated having them ahead of time. He further stated that although Sunday may not be the busiest day, it was still busier than other days, such as Thursday.

Commissioner Celentino stated that his constituents had responded well to the idea of Sunday hours and that was one of the reasons why they supported the millage. He further stated that he would like to hear from the employees about their reasons for wanting to reduce the shelter hours.

Commissioner Celentino stated he had a difficulty in supporting this because he felt increased shelter hours had been promised as part of the millage. He asked about a recent change in staffing for the ICAC that the Board of Commissioners had approved.

Mr. Dinon stated that when the millage had been approved the ICAC hired one and a half animal care positions, one and a half clerks, and a manager; however, after the proposed budget cuts they had a position cut. He further stated that recently they had asked for restoration of a position that had been cut.

Teri Morton, Deputy Controller, stated that it was not creating a new position but restoring a position that had been cut.

Commissioner Celentino stated that he had hoped that a restored position would have helped alleviate some of the difficulties in staffing weekend shifts.

Ms. Morton stated that one of the arguments made toward restoring that position was that the shelter was open seven days a week.

Commissioner Anthony stated that the numbers were not drastically different on Sunday versus the other days of the week. She asked what the costs savings would be by having the shelter closed on Sundays compared to having it open.

Commissioner Anthony asked if the need for the millage would be less if ICAS was not open on Sunday and would that be able to be returned to the taxpayers.

Mr. Dinon stated that the numbers were not the only thing that was important because part of the concern was the quality of life and staff morale. He further stated that he did not see any possible reduction in cost with this change unless a position was eliminated and he did not support that.

Mr. Dinon stated that when the new shelter was completed there would be even more need for staff, so it did not make sense to reduce staffing numbers.

Commissioner Anthony asked how much marketing was done to let the public know about Sunday hours.

Mr. Dinon stated that it was on the website, Facebook, and on the doors to the shelter. He further stated that Sunday was not always the slowest day, but there are other factors to consider.

Mr. Dinon stated that staff worked hard in a difficult environment and they needed time to decompress.

Chairperson Crenshaw asked Ms. Carter to join the discussion and provide the employee's view.

Ms. Carter asked if the number of adoptions that Mr. Dinon had provided to the Committee had included the number of adoptions officially processed on Sunday after a Saturday mobile adoption event.

Mr. Dinon stated that they had removed those adoptions from the figures.

Discussion.

Ms. Carter stated that the efficiency and productivity was down on Sunday because the staff did not have enough work to do. She further stated that there were safety concerns on Sunday which was partially due to fatigue from being open seven days a week.

Ms. Carter stated that there was a lot of effort that went into getting ready for the public and the animal care staff had to focus on that every day versus having a day off to truly focus on the animals.

Mr. Dinon stated that being closed one day a week was standard for shelters. He further stated that there were advantages to being able to work to deep clean and perform other tasks when the public was not around.

Mr. Dinon stated that the Animal Control Officers (ACOs) are not patrolling on Sundays because of being short staffed. He further stated that there are six positions for ACOs but only three are filled at this time.

Commissioner Schafer asked if they had any dollar figure to show any savings for closing on Sundays.

Mr. Dinon stated that there was not one available.

Commissioner Schafer asked what percentage of the staff wanted to be closed on Sunday.

Mr. Dinon stated that 100% of ICAC employees wanted the shelter to be closed on Sundays.

Ms. Morton stated that the animal care staff had always worked seven days a week,

Commissioner Schafer stated that the animal control millage was for a new shelter and had some language encouraging expanded services. He further stated that he would look for feedback from the Animal Control Advisory Board as he did with the 9-1-1 issues and the 9-1-1 Advisory Board.

Commissioner Schafer stated that he would like to look at this as to what was best for the County based on facts even though many people bring a lot of emotional arguments to anything concerning animals.

He further stated that the ICAC was originally supposed to provide enforcement of laws and not operate as a shelter, which was an issue that he had discussed previously.

Mr. Dinon stated that he had not been prepared for all the emotion that came into play concerning the shelter, but many people feel very strongly about it.

Chairperson Crenshaw stated that he had spoken with former Commissioner Penelope Tsernoglou who had also suggested speaking with the Animal Control Advisory Board on this issue.

Commissioner Banas asked if there had been a survey of the public concerning this change. She further stated that one of the benefits that had been discussed was that the public could come to the shelter on the weekends when the average person was not working.

Mr. Dinon stated that there had not been any survey and anecdotally some people mention liking the option of weekend hours.

Commissioner Banas stated that the staff did not work seven days a week, they work only five. She further asked if staff rotated the schedule to cover the weekends.

Mr. Dinon stated that the schedule was not a rotation, but it was done by seniority. He further stated that he supported a rotating schedule but staff was not supportive of the idea.

Commissioner Maiville asked if the bargaining unit supported not being open on Sunday.

Ms. Carter stated that they did support not being open on Sunday.

Chairperson Crenshaw stated that this issue would go back to the Animal Control Advisory Committee and then, if a recommendation was made, this issue may return to the Committee in September.

6. Law & Courts Committee – November Ballot Question – Supplemental Millage/Surcharge for New Public Safety Radio System (*Discussion*)

Ms. Morton stated that there had been limited discussions of this in the past. She further stated that it would be helpful to discuss whether to seek a surcharge or millage.

Commissioner Banas asked about how the surcharge was applied to homes and businesses.

Ms. Morton stated that it would apply to a service user, which was defined in State law, as a single service unit, such as a home phone. She further stated that they would charge the surcharge on each access point up to ten access points for a multiline user and then one for each of the next ten.

Discussion

Commissioner Schafer stated that he supported the surcharge. He further stated that Eaton County had a \$1.85 surcharge but that he did not know the maximum allowable surcharge.

Ms. Morton stated that the maximum was a \$3 surcharge with voter approval, currently the County was currently collecting the maximum surcharge without a vote which was \$0.42.

Commissioner Schafer stated the would like to seek the amount needed fully fund the purchase and maintenance of the best public safety radio system

Chairperson Crenshaw asked how many units were in the County.

Ms. Morton stated that she was not sure but had the figure in her file.

Commissioner Maiville stated that he supported the surcharge also.

Ms. Morton stated that there would be a sunset date under the State law which allowed surcharges to be charged.

Matt Nordsfjord, County Attorney, stated that the sunset was currently going to happen on December 31, 2021 but that the sunset had been extended twice and may be done again. He further stated that if the Committee did not act now that the funding option may go away.

Commissioner Banas asked if there was a certain period of time this surcharge would be collected.

Ms. Morton stated that this would go on until the Board of Commissioners decided to stop collecting in or when the State law sunsets.

Commissioner Banas stated that she supported the surcharge because she did not want the residents to become fatigued with so many millages and she thought it was the fairest way of implementing this.

Ms. Morton stated that the County has about 220,000 service users.

Commissioner Celentino stated that he supported the surcharge.

Commissioner Schafer asked if the proposed \$1.80 surcharge was enough to purchase and maintain the system.

Ms. Morton stated that the \$30 million seemed to be a conservative figure for the cost of the system, so even less may be needed.

Commissioner Schafer asked when this would be before the Committee for a vote.

Chairperson Crenshaw stated that it would be taken up at the July meeting in order to have it on the ballot for November.

Discussion.

Announcements

Chairperson Crenshaw stated that the Shelter Ground Breaking was held on Monday and it was a great event. He further stated that Commissioners Koenig, Banas, Celentino, and Louney were also in attendance.

Public Comment

Matt Stewart, former ACO, stated that as a single parent it was difficult to work on weekends because it was the only time he had with his children and he ultimately left his position because he could not balance work and family. He further stated that when the call volume was lower, they do license sweeps which cause people to get angry with them, especially on Sundays when people did not want to be disturbed.

Mr. Stewart stated that safety was an issue when going door-to-door especially. He further stated that ACOs also need more training.

Mr. Stewart stated that during the summer, it may be a bit busier, but it was more difficult to maintain a full staff in the summer also. He further stated that he had been a night officer solo and it was not safe because there was not any back up.

Mr. Stewart stated that the staff morale was very low and went down when the public was not happy with them either.

Lauren Yunker, Animal Control Clerk, stated that she worked Thursday through Monday. She further stated that on Mondays more people came in than on Sundays, so if the public knew that it the schedule had changed to be open on Mondays, they should also know about Sunday's hours.

Ms. Yunker stated that as a mother-of-four, she was missing out on time with her family and husband. She stated that she was a shelter volunteer for a year and a half before being hired and that time there was not Sunday hours.

Ms. Yunker stated that there was more time to care for the animals when the shelter was closed two days a week. She further stated that if ACOs are not coming into the shelter on Sundays, the office lacked the back up they provided.

Ms. Yunker stated that if someone had an animal to recover from the shelter they needed to speak with an ACO first, and none were on duty on Sundays. She further stated that this caused people to become upset because they wanted their animal back and did not want to incur fees for another day at the shelter.

Ms. Yunker stated that they often have to deny adoptions on Sunday because of rental offices and veterinarian offices being closed. She further stated that she invited the Committee members to spend a Sunday at the shelter to see what it was like.

Erin Ebright, Animal Control Dispatch, stated that she had worked at ICAC for four years. She further stated that Sundays are very, very slow.

Ms. Ebright stated that the call volume may look similar during a Sunday, but the validity was not as great. She further stated that compassion fatigue was growing and the animals are not getting as much one-on-one attention due to the Sunday hours the shelter needed to be open.

Ms. Ebright stated that other counties will bring their animals because ICAC was open and the other counties' shelters were not. She further stated that it was concerning as a dispatcher to know that there was only one ACO out on Saturdays because they had no back up.

Ms. Ebright stated that a six day-a-week schedule worked well, and being open on Mondays was an advantage to the public and had a higher call volume.

Tristin McClichy, Animal Control Adoption Coordinator, stated that she had worked every Sunday since last June. She further stated that the numbers that had been provided to the Committee were different than the ones that she had calculated her numbers to the Committee.

Ms. McClinchy stated that they would get a lot of out-of-county strays and would have to turn them away which made people upset. She stated that people reuniting with their dogs would have to wait until the ACOs were in and often were angry about that.

Ms. McClinchy stated that she had worked at ICAC for two-and-a-half years and it was difficult to see so many employees leaving because of lowered staff morale.

Katie Stewart, Animal Control Clerk, stated that she had worked at ICAC for three years. She stated that from January 1, 2018 – May 28, 2018 only 39 physical adoptions happened on Sundays at the shelters.

Ms. Stewart stated that the number provided in the report to the Committee was 99 adoptions for the same time period, but she is certain that it was only 39. She further stated that she was unsure why there was such a variation in numbers.

Ms. Stewart stated that Saturdays are very busy. She further stated that managers rotate their schedules on weekends and sometimes that creates a problem.

Ms. Stewart stated that some people come in very upset and sometimes the managers were not able to handle the customers in a timely manner and some managers were not accustomed to working with the public.

Commissioner Anthony left the meeting at 6:51 p.m.

Ms. Stewart stated that they often needed to call the Mason Police Department because clients became so upset.

Officer Caitin Budzinski, Animal Control Officer, stated that she had been working at ICAC for four years. She stated that over the last year the care for the animals had become worse.

Officer Budzinski stated that working so many days and being so short staffed had caused a great hardship. She further stated that four officers or trainees had recently left the ICAC.

Officer Budzinski stated that animal care staff had increased shift hours, overtime, and staffing issues also. She further stated that the call volume on Sundays, especially Sunday morning, was reduced and people do not want to deal with ACOs at their doors, particularly on Sundays. .

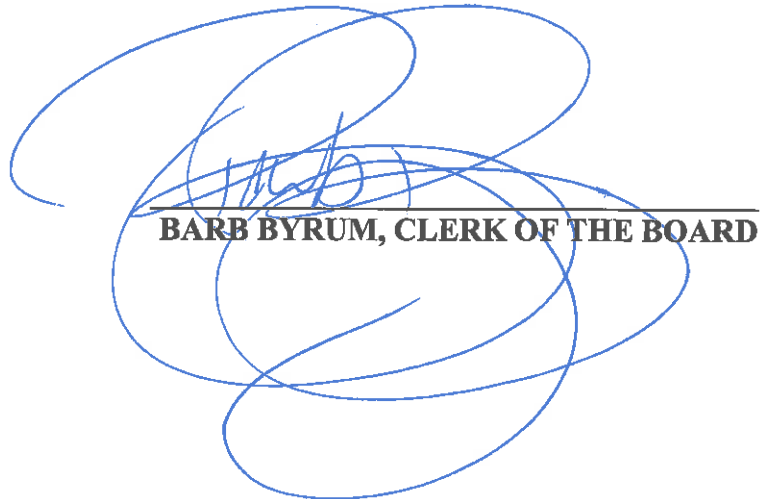
Officer Budzinski stated that late evening hours on Mondays and Tuesdays were when people needed ACOs but they were currently off during those times to cover their Sunday shifts. She further stated that having only one officer on Saturdays was very dangerous.

Officer Budzinski stated that the ACOs do not have side arms and rely heavily on other ACOs for back up. She further stated that aggressive animals are very difficult to handle when alone.

Officer Budzinski stated that the ICAC was stretched very thin, especially with only three active ACOs. She further stated that bite calls were not being addressed in a timely manner due to this shortage of staff.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6:59 p.m.



BARB BYRUM, CLERK OF THE BOARD

