

Ingham County Board of Commissioners Joint Republican and Democratic Caucus Meeting
March 13, 2018
Draft Minutes

Members Present: Crenshaw, Celentino, Grebner, Naeyaert, Hope, Maiville, Koenig (arrived at 5:37 pm), Sebolt (arrived at 5:37 pm), Schafer, and Banas (arrived at 5:33 pm).

Members Absent: Anthony Nolan, Tennis, and Louney

Others Present: Sheriff Scott Wrigglesworth, Treasure Eric Schertzing, Dave Stoker, Teri Morton, Tim Dolehanty, Becky Bennett, Lindsey LaForte and Liz Kane

Call to Order

Chairperson Crenshaw called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

Limited Public Comment

None.

1. Discussion Regarding Education Materials for the Proposed Justice Complex Millage

Chairperson Crenshaw introduced Dave Stoker, County Attorney, to review materials (see attached).

Dave Stoker, County Attorney, referred to materials and highlighted language that could be used for the millage. He further stated that there are a number of safe harbors that allowed elected and appointed officials to promote the millage but it is prohibited to use county materials to do so.

Commissioner Schafer asked if Sheriff staff were able to publically support the millage.

Mr. Stoker stated that county staff can hand out factual information and use county resources for that. He further stated that the expressed advocacy rule stated that materials needed to be factual, not necessarily balanced as long as it does not advocate for or against the millage.

Mr. Stoker stated that county staff cannot do targeted mail.

Commissioner Hope asked if mail could be sent out to likely voters.

Mr. Stoker stated that it has not been tested yet, but as long as it is not advocating, it may be allowed. He further stated that some smaller communities use their regular newsletters and add factual information, not advocacy information, into the newsletter and that has been allowed.

Mr. Stoker stated that it can be put on the county website as long as it is purely factual.

Commissioner Maiville asked if it would be allowed to send a mailing limited to likely voters.

Mr. Stoker stated that if you are limiting the mailing, then it may be not allowed. He further stated that staff can only work on advocacy when off-duty was often trickier with salaried employees.

Mr. Stoker stated that appointed or elected officials are allowed to publicly advocate without an issue, and the Sheriff or Undersheriff are considered appointed official. He further stated that a resolution supporting the millage is allowed if it is disseminated that same as every other resolution.

Mr. Stoker stated that it would be wise for everyone, particularly staff, to point out that support is personal, "I am personally in support of..." rather than a blanket "Support this..." He further stated that a county room open to the public could be used for millage support.

Commissioner Crenshaw asked if the Sheriff could continue providing tours of the jail.

Mr. Stoker stated it is fine to show the jail and even to point out issues that need to be addressed, but staff cannot advocate for support of the millage.

Commissioner Naeyaert asked if a resolution offered support for the millage could be passed out at tours.

Mr. Stoker stated that it would not be proper.

Commissioner Maiville stated that the Sheriff and Undersheriff could promote some advocacy during a tour but employees should not state support at that time.

Mr. Stoker stated that he agreed.

Chairperson Crenshaw stated that the Sheriff, Teri Morton, and he met to form a game plan to get this message out, but would also like the Board's ideas.

Commissioner Grebner stated that the ballot language should be enough to use for messaging. He further stated that he was not in support of mailings.

Chairperson Crenshaw asked if they should send out a FAQ information sheet to local government clerks.

Commissioner Banas supported that idea.

Commissioner Naeyaert supported that idea.

Commissioner Sebolt stated that the Board of Commissioners should be proactive and send it out beyond the local clerks.

Commissioner Banas asked if any other millages would be on this year's ballot.

Chairperson Crenshaw asked Clerk's staff if any were planned.

Liz Noel, Election Clerk Coordinator, stated none are filed at this time.

Commissioner Banas stated that she had heard of one local millage.

Teri Morton, Deputy Controller, stated that the Law and Courts had a committee working on strategy to get the public information about this millage.

Chairperson Crenshaw asked staff to put together an FAQ sheet.

Commissioner Banas asked the Sheriff if there are FAQs already being asked.

Sheriff Wigglesworth stated that there are some questions that they are more frequently asked.

Commissioner Schafer stated that a study was done in 1996 stating the needs and nothing was done, so the situation has grown more urgent.

Commissioner Grebner stated that we should give more information beyond the current FAQs and make a strong argument of the need for this millage. He further stated that using photos to show the deterioration of this facility would make a good case for supporting the millage.

Mr. Stoker stated that you can always use “with adequate funding” language to show how certain updates would be done without saying support the millage that funds this.

Commissioner Sebolt stated that the Headlee override vote was a bit close for comfort, he encouraged others to push this when at doors and out in the public as this is a do or die situation.

Chairperson Crenshaw asked to set the next meeting for 5:15 pm April 24, 2018 for another joint session.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 5:57 p.m.