



Portage County Board of Commissioners
Meeting Minutes

449 South Meridian Street
Ravenna, OH 44266
<http://www.co.portage.oh.us>

Amy Hutchinson, Clerk
330-297-3600

Tuesday, March 9, 2021

9:00 AM

Commissioners' Board Room

*The Commissioners' meeting minutes are summarized; Audio recordings and backup material are available.
Please contact the Commissioners' Office for specific details.*

The Portage County Board of Commissioners' meeting came to order with the following members present.

Attendee Name	Title	Status
Sabrina Christian-Bennett	President	Present
Anthony J. Badalamenti	Vice President	Present
Vicki A. Kline	Board Member	Present

Also Present: Barb Tittle, Marion Yeagler, Record Courier Reporter Diane Smith, Ed Dean and Brian Ames

INTERNAL SERVICES

Present: JoAnn Townend and Department of Budget and Financial Management Director Todd Bragg

Discussion

1. Board of Elections Generator

The estimate for the generator for the Board of Elections is just shy of \$90,000. The department's need for generated power is temporary and not intended to run the office for an extended period of time so renting a generator is still a consideration. The Maintenance staff will investigate the old Emergency area to see if it's still on the County's generator. Director Townend will contact Director Shackelford at the Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Management because the County inherited a generator with the merger of Mantua Village water. The Administration building has its own generator, but when the Board of Elections area was renovated, it wasn't a thought to add them and there's no additional room on the existing generator.

Commissioner Badalamenti has spoken to the Board of Elections about the temporary generator and he was told it needs to be in operation a month and a half prior and a month and a half after the primary election due to state regulations.

Director Bragg noted the County is in its Continuing of Operation Plan (COOP) and this should be part of the discussion.

Commissioner Christian-Bennett noted there's a lot of space on the first floor and any empty rooms with generator connectivity could be utilized and they are identified with red outlet covers.

Director Townend recommends the County look within itself before moving forward with any purchase and the Board agreed.

The Board will start looking at the COOP plan and what is outlined for the Board of Elections, Director Townend will work with Director Shackelford at the Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Management to investigate the generator issue and she will also contact the Board of Elections to advise the Board is looking at other options.

2. Video Recording – Request For Proposal (RFP)

The Information Technology Department (IT) put together a synopsis for replacement of the Commissioners' video recordings. The specifications called for an amount not to exceed \$25,000 just in terms of placing a limit on the budget. The specifications include language that the new system cannot interfere with the current FTR recording software the Clerk uses, but the Board agreed the specifications could incorporate a total package solution as the FTR Recorder is older technology.

3. WiFi

Director Townend noted the entire Administration building should be wired for WiFi so if other departments move around, they will still have access, so the IT Department will change the specifications for bid. Commissioner Christian-Bennett would like to have quotes for WiFi at the Riddle Block and Courthouse, but Director Townend suggests the Board decide what's going on with Riddle Block first and in the meantime she will talk with the IT staff that works for Judge Smith, Adult Probation and the Public Defender.

Commissioner Christian-Bennett noted Job and Family Services has connection through the state and the priority should be the Administration Building.

BUDGET & FINANCE

Present: Todd Bragg

Discussion

1. Sheriff's Office – Vehicle Request

There are two asks before the Board today

(A) The Sheriff's request to increase the fleet.

- It would take the annual expenditures from \$200,000-\$250,000 annually closer to \$500,000-\$550,000, almost a \$300,000 increase annually.

(B) The Sheriff request to turn vehicles over more quickly.

Director Bragg continues to recommend the Board proceed with the current plan in place for this year and bring the remaining proposals back for consideration during the 2022 budget process because \$300,000 to the budget is a significant change and we are already one quarter through 2021.

- The Sheriff's Office had \$250,000 budgeted and spent \$46,000 for the Sheriff's F-250 and \$201,000 is budgeted as a placeholder.
- The Sheriff's request is for the Board to sign a contract over the next 3 years and the entire \$560,000 will be encumbered.
- Next year, the Board will have another \$460,000 encumbrance and the year after that is another \$460,000 encumbrance if leasing, but if the County is buying it would be more

money because leasing incorporates an extra \$2,048.52 a year per vehicle with the finance charge.

- The County saves money by using Enterprise and it has a combination of purchased and leased vehicles.
- The County has a cash balance, but the County doesn't have continued funding going into the next few years. There's a shortfall of \$800,000 for this year and almost \$500,000-\$1 million next year.
- Commissioner Christian-Bennett noted the Sheriff's Office leased 15 vehicles at once back in 2012 and they all came due at the same time and created an issue.
- The current rotation is based on the fact that we do not have take-home vehicles, which is what the new Sheriff is proposing.
- The current rotation is 4/5, 4/5, 4/5 and that replaces 23 vehicles every 3-5 years and that's roughly what's needed for road patrol.
- Vehicle rotation is different for the Detective and Canine vehicles.
- Mileage has been reduced on the vehicles with the average mileage still being over 100,000, but the list of repairs indicates the vast majority are brakes tires and oil changes.
- There is some capacity within the fleet to pull a full vehicle if repair costs are too high.
- Commissioner Christian-Bennett mentioned it was alluded that a car was on the road 24/7 and there's never more than 3-4 Deputies on duty at a time and there's over 20 vehicles. Director Bragg explained there are 4 Road Patrol vehicles and if there's an emergency, it's possible other vehicles go out, as well.
- There are 4-5 vehicles that get 30,000-40,000 miles per year and some vehicles get 7,000-8,000 a year depending how they are assigned.
- One goal the new administration mentioned is watching/rotating vehicles for a more even usage across all vehicles.
- Commissioner Badalamenti pointed out some of the vehicles run 2 shifts.
- Commissioner Badalamenti has a hard time with the difference in opinion from Director Bragg, Enterprise, and the Chief Deputy because the costs are polar opposites. Director Bragg reported the County's maintenance won't reduce much because it isn't outrageous considering the age of the fleet, Enterprise's data is obtained from national averages and the County has saved a considerable amount of money utilizing them, and there are extremely good mechanics in Portage County that take care of the fleet.
- The County has saved over \$200,000 by switching to Enterprise.
- In order to participate with Enterprise, a certain portion of vehicles had to be leased. The County is testing the waters and it may engage further.
- The key between leasing and buying versus turning vehicles in early is that the County could trade vehicles in right now through Enterprise whether they are purchased or leased, but it hasn't been worth it to go after the value compared to purchasing more and that will be true 5 years from now.
- The only change with this decision is how many vehicles we maintain in the fleet. If we go from 23 to around 40, it takes us from an annual expenditure of \$200,000-\$250,000 every other year up to around \$450,000-\$550,000 if leasing or \$550,000-\$700,000 to purchase outright.
- The proposed rotation is 3 years and the County currently does 4.

- There are positives and negatives to take home vehicles, including cleaner vehicles, but the other side could be increased costs for minor maintenance.
- The bottom line is whether the Board wants to increase the annual expenditures on the Sheriff's vehicles in order to increase the number of vehicles in the fleet. Director Bragg is recommending the Board proceed with this year's plan and have this information be part of the 2022 budget discussion.
- Director Bragg explained it would be nice for the Board to know what the benefits are to take home vehicles so it can decide whether the \$300,000 is worth the expense as compared to putting the same funding towards some other operation of the County.
- Commissioner Badalamenti asked if the former Sheriff received his vehicles last year and Director Bragg explained they have never not received Road Patrol vehicles. The Detective vehicles need looked at, but a decision about Road Patrol is needed to determine how much money is left over – such as the Building Department's request for a truck, the Veteran Services request for a van, the County Auditor's request to replace the Weights and Measurers car, Detective vehicles, and Canine vehicle.
- Commissioner Badalamenti pointed out the benefit he's noticed with other Counties is the awareness that's brought to the community when a patrol vehicle is parked in someone's driveways or stops at the grocery store.
- Audience member Barb Tittle asked how many Portage County Deputies live outside of the County and Director Bragg noted it's irrelevant to the policy.
- Commissioner Kline asked if we need more cars because we're hiring more Road Patrol Deputies or are the take home vehicles the only reason we need more and Director Bragg indicated take-home is the only reason the Sheriff's Office proposed and we have not increased the allocation for Road Patrol staff, but it's a visible service he provides to the community.
- Commissioner Christian-Bennett remarked last year, the Board kept an extra million dollars in the Sheriff's budget that he needs to absorb through attrition because the sales tax ended in December 2020 and how is this adding to the expenses? Director Bragg noted last year, the Board needed to decide whether it should cut the Sheriff's budget almost \$700,000 outright and he noted it wasn't accurately communicated to the new Sheriff that he needed to make those cut, so the Board decided to fund the extra \$700,000 through 2021. In December, it was decided that the Board would sit down with the Sheriff and explain the 2022 budget will not continue to contain the amount.
- Commissioner Badalamenti asked if funding was returned after the jail renovation ended and Director Bragg reported the jail came in on budget at \$20 million. The sales tax was put on for \$25 million with \$5 million dollars' worth of programs to assist with the opioid epidemic, including \$400,000 to Road Patrol and \$200,000 to Adult Probation. The logic behind the Probation increase was due to the overcrowding but since the new pod opened, Adult Probation has not decreased.
- Commissioner Badalamenti noted the Sheriff's Office continues to come back to the Board for additional funding and if they continue to ask, they are not being provided enough to run the department. Director Bragg doesn't know of many counties where the Sheriff's Office doesn't ask for more funding. The Board needs not look at the ask, but look at the other metrics – call response times and crime statistics are below average for the State and when looking at Portage County, we don't suffer a crime problem and we could be spending the

correct amount for what the citizens want. He advocates for putting the sales tax on the ballot and informing the public on what it will receive.

- Commissioner Badalamenti asked how many Deputies are stationed at the Courts and Director Bragg pointed out Courthouse security is a mandate and the State's view is that communities like Nelson and Rootstown should put a levy on the ballot to pay for the additional patrolling or offer that money to the Sheriff's Office.
- Commissioner Badalamenti suggests a permanent $\frac{1}{4}\%$ sales tax imposed by the Commissioners specifically earmarked for safety.
- Audience member Brian Ames stated the original 5 year period was by statute and limited to 5 years because it was adopted as an emergency measure. If it's done as an emergency measure, you can't earmark but if it's put on the ballot, you now have 10% intervals.
- Commissioner Christian-Bennett will not vote to impose the tax, but would vote to put it on the ballot and if the public wants additional patrol, they will support it.
- Commissioner Christian-Bennett noted if it goes on the ballot the Board needs to discuss what the money is going to be used for and in order to be on the November ballot, the Board needs to decide by July.
- Commissioner Christian-Bennett would like to stick with the original plan to keep the current budget and present the additional sales tax for the citizens to decide whether they want an additional sales tax and if they don't the people have spoken.
- Commissioner Badalamenti would like to see the Sheriff's Office receive the 12 additional vehicles this year for the lease and he would like to see the Resolution on the Board's agenda for consideration Thursday.
- Commissioner Kline is still upset about the telephone bill and Director Bragg stated they are checking into it. Back in 2015, the phone system was bid and the County received the absolute lowest possible price at that moment in time. It was more expensive than the system that was in place and costs have risen. Last year had the largest spike and what specifically happened and whether it's coming down are still being investigated.
- Commissioner Kline is concerned that if the Board moves forward with additional funding for the Sheriff, it needs to take the Prosecutor's Office and the Public Defender's Office into consideration for additional funding.
- Commissioner Christian-Bennett pointed out if the Board is moving forward with a possible sales tax increase, the additional cars should be included.
- Commissioner Christian-Bennett also mentioned the Sheriff's Office needs to come in with a comprehensive plan and a priority list of what they want to achieve, the impact, and the rate of return.
- Commissioner Badalamenti reported at the Sheriff's NEOMED meeting, they presented a very concise business plan and did comparisons with other Cities, Townships and Counties and Commissioner Christian-Bennett remarked that the proper venue is for the Sheriff to come before the Board in session.
- Director Bragg asked if the Board wanted to schedule the Sheriff and Enterprise to discuss the vehicles and Commissioner Christian-Bennett said the Board's already heard from the Sheriff's Office and understands the numbers which aren't necessarily the accurate numbers in the proposal.
- The Board agreed it would like the Sheriff's Office to come in to present its business plan.

- Director Bragg explained the original plan for this year is for the County to buy 6 new vehicles and pull 6 from service. The Sheriff's already received the F-250 (so a vehicle would be pulled), and the Solid Waste's Environmental Compliance Officer program vehicle went to the Sheriff's Office. The alternate plan is to go with the purchase of 15.
- Commissioner Kline would like to stick to the original plan of 6 vehicles and ask the Sheriff for his priorities.
- In regard to putting the sales tax levy on the ballot, Commissioner Christian-Bennett would like to hear from the Sheriff first.

Director Bragg will get figures on Courthouse security and he will proceed with a resolution to purchase 6 vehicles on Thursday and the Clerk will schedule a meeting with the Sheriff for the presentation of the business plan. After the meeting with the Sheriff, the Board will discuss the possibility of placing a sales tax levy on the ballot.

* * * * *

Recess: 10:12 AM
Reconvened: 10:14 AM

10:15 AM In accordance with the Ohio Rev. Code Ann. 121.22(G)(4), it was moved by Commissioner Christian-Bennett, seconded by Commissioner Kline that the Board of Commissioners move into executive session preparing for bargaining sessions with public employees concerning compensation terms and conditions of their employment. Also Present: Human Resources Department Director Janet Kovick and Department of Budget and Financial Management Director Todd Bragg. Roll call vote: Commissioner Christian-Bennett, Yea; Commissioner Kline, Yea; Commissioner Badalamenti, Yea;

10:34 AM Upon conclusion of the above referenced discussion, it was moved by Commissioner Christian-Bennett, seconded by Commissioner Kline that the Board of Commissioners move out of executive session. Roll call vote: Commissioner Christian-Bennett, Yea; Commissioner Kline, Yea; Commissioner Badalamenti, Yea;

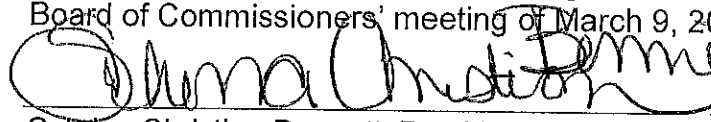
After exiting executive session, the Board took no action.


Motion: by Commissioner Christian-Bennett, seconded by Commissioner Kline that the Board adjourn the Meeting of March 9, 2021 at **10:34 AM**.

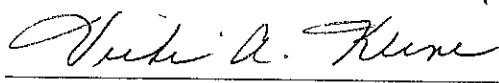
All in Favor: Commissioner Christian-Bennett, Yea; Commissioner Kline, Yea; Commissioner Badalamenti, Yea;


Motion Carries

We do hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and correct record of the Portage County Board of Commissioners' meeting of March 9, 2021.


Sabrina Christian-Bennett, President


Anthony J. Badalamenti, Vice President


Vicki A. Kline, Board Member


Amy Hutchinson, Clerk