

Minutes of the Justice Committee

The Justice Committee of the McLean County Board met on Tuesday March 2, 2010 at 4:30 p.m. in Room 400 of the Government Center, 115 E. Washington Street, Bloomington, Illinois.

Members Present: Vice Chairman Rackauskas; Members Wendt, Rankin, Hoselton, and McIntyre

Members Absent: None

Other County Board
Members Present: None

Staff Present: Mr. Terry Lindberg, County Administrator; Mr. Bill Wasson, Assistant County Administrator; and Ms. Judith LaCasse, Assistant to the County Administrator

Department Heads/
Elected Officials
Present: Mr. Bill Yoder, State's Attorney; Sheriff Mike Emery; Ms. Lori McCormick, Director, Court Services; Ms. Cathy Waltz, Superintendent, Juvenile Detention Center; Ms. Judy Renner, Director, Children's Advocacy Center; Mr. Don Everhart, Circuit Clerk

Others Present: None

Vice Chairman Rackauskas called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m.

Vice Chairman Rackauskas presented the minutes from the February 2, 2010 Committee meeting for approval.

Motion by Hoselton/McIntyre to approve the Minutes of the February 2, 2010 Meeting.
Motion carried.

Mr. Bill Yoder, State's Attorney, presented his Monthly Caseload Report and Asset Forfeiture Fund Report. He noted that he had nothing to add to the report.

Vice Chairman Rackauskas asked how the projected 2010 felony and misdemeanor totals are determined. Mr. Yoder replied that the projection is determined by the number of days that have passed and the number of cases that have been charged, and projecting them out for the entire year. As the year goes along, the numbers become more accurate.

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Vice Chairman Rackauskas asked if there were any questions. Hearing none, she thanked Mr. Yoder.

Vice Chairman Rackauskas presented the Public Defender's Monthly Caseload Report as submitted by Ms. Amy Davis, Public Defender. There were no questions on the report.

Mr. Lindberg advised that Ms. Beth Kimmerling, County Coroner, was unable to attend the meeting. He indicated that Ms. Kimmerling reported to him that there are only two deaths from 2009 that are outstanding. There were no questions on the report.

Sheriff Mike Emery reviewed the McLean County Detention Facility population Report for February 2010. He noted that the Jail is experiencing a backlog of mental health inmates. Sheriff Emery indicated that it is impossible to get State beds, so the Jail continues to house mental health inmates in cells in the booking area. Sheriff Emery added that the Jail is working towards having a Mental Health wing.

Vice Chairman Rackauskas asked if the Jail is equipped to support mental health inmates. Sheriff Emery replied that there is a security cell where these inmates can be housed in the Booking area. The cells are on 24 hours a day, seven day a week cameras for observation. Sheriff Emery noted that housing inmates with mental health issues are beginning to drain Jail resources.

Mr. McIntyre asked what the process is of moving these inmates out. Sheriff Emery responded that it is determined on the availability of bed space on the State level. He noted that they were able to transport one of the mental health inmates to the McFarland mental health facility in Springfield.

Sheriff Emery reported that the mental health inmate issue is not unique to McLean County, but is being experienced by all county jails. He added that the need to house inmates out of County is influenced by the need to have cells for the mental health inmates.

Vice Chairman Rackauskas asked if there were any additional questions or comments. Hearing none, she thanked Sheriff Emery.

Ms. Lori McCormick, Director, Court Services, presented a request for approval to apply for a \$250,000 grant through the United States Department of Justice to begin a Mental Health Court. She stated that this grant proposal would address public safety through innovative cross-system collaboration for individuals with mental illness who come in contact with the criminal justice system.

Ms. McCormick advised that for over the past two years, community and agency leaders have been meeting regularly to discuss and develop a more comprehensive and cohesive system to address the needs of criminal justice involved persons with mental illness and co-occurring disorders. She indicated that last year a collaborating group made up of community leaders, the judiciary and County officials applied, with the County's permission, for a \$50,000 planning grant. Ms. McCormick noted that, even though the grant was not received, the group continued to meet with the assistance of the Lilly Corporation and held community conversations that were devoted to sharing data relevant to improving criminal justice outcomes for people with mental illness. She advised that part of the reason the planning grant was denied was because McLean County was further along than other counties in planning a Mental Health Court. The money was given to other counties that were not as far along in their planning.

Ms. McCormick stated that the McLean County Mental Health Court Initiative has been working to improve the current delivery system of mental health services in McLean County to persons involved in the criminal justice system. Community conversations that have been held brought further to light the need for a Mental Health Court in McLean County.

Ms. McCormick reported that this proposal is a collaborative effort including the Judiciary, State's Attorney's Office, Public Defender's Office, Sheriff's Department, Center for Human Services, Chestnut Health Systems and countless other organizations within McLean County that view a need to begin a Mental Health Court.

Ms. McCormick advised that the grant is a two year grant that seeks a 20% match of \$62,500, which can be in-kind contributions. She noted that the total grant would become \$312,000. Ms. McCormick advised that the \$62,500 will not have an adverse impact on the County budget, but will be in-kind contributions. She added that it would be anticipated that part of the grant would seek to hire probation officer(s) to coordinate the efforts of the Mental Health Court Initiative.

Mr. Wendt asked what happens to the employee hired for this project if no more grant money is received at the end of two years. Ms. McCormick replied if the grant is not renewed, the employee will not continue working. She added that the employee is made aware of this stipulation of employment at the beginning. Ms. McCormick added that it is her job to look for Federal grants to continue the project.

Vice Chairman Rackauskas asked what happens to the Mental Health Court if funding is not continued to pay for the necessary employees. Ms. McCormick replied that she is looking at only one position at this time, but she is aware that once the grant ends, the position is eliminated. She stated that she hopes that there will be a way to continue the program.

Mr. Lindberg indicated that, at the end of the grant period, it may be learned that Mental Health Court is a better and more cost effective way to treat the mental health inmates. He noted that the funds saved throughout the judicial system may provide more than enough funds to continue paying the salary for the employee(s) to run this program.

Mr. Rankin asked what the time line is on a fully functional Mental Health Court. Ms. McCormick replied that the Federal Government is requiring a time-line and implementation plan that they approve before the Court would receive the funds. She indicated that the judiciary in McLean County is very forward thinking and meeting every Friday as a team. The team includes State's Attorney Yoder, Sheriff Emery's Office and the Jail, the Public Defender's Office, Chief Judge Robb and other judges, as well as the Normal Police Department. Ms. McCormick reported that they are meeting on a weekly basis to develop as much as possible so that a very small Mental Health Court can begin in the late spring, even without the grant monies.

Motion by McIntyre/Rankin to Recommend Approval to
Apply for a \$250,000 Grant through the United States
Department of Justice to begin a Mental Health Court.
Motion carried.

Ms. McCormick reviewed the Court Services Yearly Statistical Report for 2009 and the Juvenile Detention Center 2009 Annual Report. She stated that if Committee members have any questions regarding Court Services, they can call anytime. Ms. McCormick also extended her invitation to visit Court Services.

Ms. McCormick presented the Court Services Adult/Juvenile Division Statistics for January 2010, as well as the Juvenile Detention Center statistics.

Vice Chairman Rackauskas asked if there were any additional questions or comments. Hearing none, she thanked Ms. McCormick and Ms. Waltz.

Ms. Judy Renner, Director, Children's Advocacy Center (CAC), presented the CAC Monthly Statistical Report and the CASA Report. She noted that she does not yet have the final results of the funds raised at the "Tip A VIP" fund raising event last weekend.

Ms. Renner pointed out that the CAC Monthly statistics are up from last year at this time.

Vice Chairman Rackauskas asked if there were any questions or comments. Hearing none, she thanked Ms. Renner.

Mr. Don Everhart, Circuit Clerk, presented his January 2010 Statistical Report. He noted that he had nothing to add to the reports.

Vice Chairman Rackauskas asked what the status is on the credit card collections. Mr. Everhart replied that the credit card collection is going very well, particularly with traffic ticket payments.

Mr. Lindberg announced that the Circuit Clerk's Office has had recent success with refocusing and redoubling its efforts on working with an outside collection agency. He noted that this focus not only requires a lot of effort on the Circuit Clerk's part, but also a change in the basic procedure from the courts. The courts currently have a system called "pay or appear." After a person is fined, they would pay what they could and if they didn't pay, they were required to appear the next month in court, and so on. Mr. Lindberg stated that the judges were asked if they were satisfied with the "pay or appear" system. Mr. Lindberg indicated that the judges responded that they did not like the system at all. He noted that the judges would prefer that a person who does not pay their fine by a certain date be sent to a collection agency.

Mr. Everhart advised that the "Fail to Pay Administrative Order" became effective February 1, 2010. He noted that there are postings in traffic and criminal courts stating that failure to pay fines can affect credit ratings. He indicated that individuals are given a certain amount of time to pay their fines before they are sent to the collection agency. Mr. Everhart added that after the Order was issued, the Circuit Clerk's Office submitted to Harris & Harris over 9,000 older cases on "failed to pay" traffic fines for collection.

Vice Chairman Rackauskas asked if there were any additional questions or comments. Hearing none, she thanked Mr. Everhart.

Mr. Lindberg stated that there will be a Justice Committee Stand-up Meeting on Tuesday, March 16th to approve a request of a Contract for Consulting Services for the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council. He indicated that the Criminal Justice Coordinating Committee (CJCC) has been meeting regularly for several months. Mr. Lindberg noted that in an effort to give this group some capability without adding staff, a decision was made to contract with the Stevenson Center at Illinois State University to provide statistical analysis on a monthly basis to the CJCC. He noted that funding for this contract will come from Federal funds (SCAAP Funds) the Sheriff's Department receives that are restricted to jail research and jail technology.

Vice Chairman Rackauskas asked what the cost is for the research done by the Stevenson Center. Mr. Lindberg replied that the cost is \$75.00 an hour limited to a maximum of 30 hours per month. He noted he expects the cost will be approximately \$15,000-\$20,000 per year.

Mr. McIntyre asked what is the purpose of the statistical information. Mr. Lindberg replied that one purpose would be to discover ways to alleviate and/or eliminate the need for out-of-County housing of inmates. However, he noted that the statistical information will, hopefully, assist the judiciary in McLean County in many other endeavors.

Vice Chairman Rackauskas presented the February 28, 2010 Justice Committee bills for review and approval as transmitted by the County Auditor. The Justice Committee bills include a Pending Total of \$138,244.30 and a Prepaid Total of \$1,588,487.24 for a Fund Total of \$1,726,731.54.

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Motion by Rankin/Wendt to Recommend Approval of the Justice Committee Bills as of February 28, 2010, as transmitted by the County Auditor.
Motion carried.

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Vice Chairman Rackauskas asked if there was any other business or communication for the Justice Committee. Hearing none, the meeting was adjourned at 5:11 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Judith A. LaCasse
Recording Secretary