

*Minutes are Subject to Correction and Approval*

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The Marquette County Board of Commissioners met as a Committee of the Whole on Thursday, September 18, 2008, at 3:30 P.M., in Room 231 of the Henry A. Skewis Annex, 234 W. Baraga Avenue, Marquette, Michigan.

Present: Comm. Cihak, Comm. Heikkila, Comm. Wallace and Chairperson Corkin.

Also present: Tim McGuire, Executive Director, Michigan Association of Counties, Steve Powers, County Administrator, Pat Manley, Register of Deeds, Joe Van Oosterhout, Central Dispatch Manager, Harley Andrews, Civil Counsel and Undersheriff Jack Schneider.

There was no quorum at this meeting. No action will be taken. The purpose of this meeting is to meet with Time McGuire, Executive Director, Michigan Association of Counties, to discuss Legislative Issues concerning Marquette County.

The items discussed were: 9-1-1 Funding, Children’s Rights Lawsuit Settlement, Mandates, State Corrections Policy and Revenue Sharing.

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9-1-1 Funding

Under the old legislation, county commissions could levy up to 80 cents per month on landlines by resolution of the board, and up to \$4.00 per month by vote of eh people. Millage and general fund were also acceptable. Cell phone and VOIP owners paid nothing in local surcharge.

Under the current act, county commissions can levy an amount by any means (resolution, vote of the people, or combination), and the surcharge applies to all devices. Millage and general fund is also acceptable. The surcharge amounts for the current year were set by the PSC, but that authority has now expired. The current legislation expires on Feb.28, 2009, and if it isn’t reauthorized, 911 surcharges will expire and the system would be at risk of collapse.

County Public Safety Plan for 911:

A cap on county commission resolution surcharge derived as follows: the year with the highest number of landlines in a county multiplied by 80 cents per month, divided by the billable lines today. Then add a COLA adjustment beginning in July of 2009 using Detroit CPI.

- This maintains the ability of a county to provide for the public safety with the same purchasing power in the future as it had in the past, even though the technologically-heavy costs of 911 operations and equipment have increased exponentially.
- This provides the ability for a county to achieve a baseline of public safety response in counties that can not pass voter-approved funding mechanisms.

No Cap on voter approved surcharge over and above the commission surcharge cap.

- If the voters want a more robust system, we should trust their decision.

Preserve local autonomy of county surcharges.

- Locally elected officials should not be second-guessed by Lansing.
- Local needs are understood best at the local level.

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Grandfather those currently above the commission resolution surcharge cap.

- If the PSC set the current surcharge above where the new commission resolution surcharge cap happens to fall, the old surcharge needs to be protected in statute to avoid litigation, or complicated ballot timing issues.
- Anything above the grandfathered amount would have to go to a ballot.

Go back to monthly payments from telcos, rather than quarterly.

- Telecom companies are earning interest from the surcharge payments of Michigan's citizens, and that interest ought to be used to help defray the cost of 911, making the system cheaper.

Allow county commissions to change the surcharge rate at any time, or failing that, a June 1 notification date for implementation on July 1.

- In order for the mechanics of the surcharge rate to work, while allowing for ballot questions on surcharges as well, the notification date needs to be moved back, or eliminated.

Sunset of 2013

- 5 years was the original sunset date of last year's legislation, and we still support 5 years.

Set the commission resolution surcharge cap for those counties that do not have one at the average of all the others.

- There is no way to calculate landline counts in counties that do not have surcharge, so the most equitable way to calculate the cap for commission resolution approved surcharge is to average the other county caps together.

The County Public Safety Plan is Right for Michigan:

This plan best provides for the public safety.

- By allowing the commission to set an amount by resolution, we guarantee that a minimum standard may be provided for the public safety.
- By allowing the people to vote an increased amount, we guarantee that the people get a system as robust as makes them comfortable.
- By protecting local control, we guarantee a system that works for the people, and the unique public safety challenges of that county.

Our plan is conservative

- In fact, by only asking for an inflation adjustment in the future on the commission cap, we are asking for less than the county would have been due based on historical inflation.
- Above the commission cap, we are leaving the decision up to the people.
- This plan asks for no more than we were at one time authorized to raise, and reinstates the people as the decision-makers above the commission cap.
- 911 has grown very technologically dependent, and the equipment cost have increased exponentially, but the caps have remained the same.
  - All of this technology decreases response time, increases efficiency, and aids in locating the victim.
  - All we ask is inflation going forward into the future, so our purchasing power remains the same.

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Children’s Rights Lawsuit Settlement

Implementation of the settlement of Children’s Rights lawsuit against state? Impact could be millions of dollars. Hearing in October. To meet case loads required by the settlement, DHS may be privatizing care. Costs then shift to counties because 50% is county responsibility. When DHS staffers provide the care, state funds 100%.

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Mandates

The combination of less state revenue (\$1.4 million less in 2009 than 2003) and never-ending (if not increasing through accreditation, performance standards) mandates is a significant public policy issue. Marquette County is funding state-imposed services and delivering those services in ways and methods that are required by state agencies. Local services are under funded as a result.

Type II Water Supplies. Only one-third of the cost of the state-required program is funded by the Michigan Department of Environmental Health.

Michigan Department of Community Health requires Health Department to employ a full-time emergency preparedness coordinator and specifies \$100,000 of the state allocation to Health Departments be used to fund the program. Without the mandate, this funding could be used to help meet locally-determined public health needs.

How the work is performed is often mandated. Marquette County Health Department’s practice of allowing verbal approval of well and septic projects was disallowed by DEQ, increasing the inconvenience and time (cost) to contractors and the Health Department.

Mandates in counties relations with its employees through binding arbitration for corrections officers.

**COMMISSIONERS COMMENTS, STAFF COMMENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Chairperson Corkin thanked Tim McGuire, Executive Director, Michigan Association of Counties. He also thanked Ben Bodkin, Legislative Coordinator, Michigan Association of Counties.

There being no further discussion, the meeting adjourned at approximately 4:30 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Linda K. Talsma  
Deputy County Clerk