

## MINUTES

### BOARD OF BENTON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Special Board Meeting  
Thursday, April 2, 2020 – 1:30 p.m.

*Meeting provided by Video/Telephonic Live-Broadcast*

**Present:** Chairman James Beaver  
Commissioner Shon Small (via/teleconference)  
Commissioner Jerome Delvin (via/teleconference)  
County Administrator Jerrod MacPherson  
Clerk of the Board Cami McKenzie

**Benton County Employees Present During All or a Portion of the Meeting:** Deputy County Administrator Matt Rasmussen; DPA Ryan Brown; IT Manager Robert Heard; Robert Blain, Director of Operations/Capital Assets; Shyanne Palmus, Communications Coordinator; Scott Souza, Chief of Corrections; DPA Stephen Hallstrom.

**Pursuant to the Governor’s Proclamation, there is no physical location for this meeting.**

#### **Discussion – Need for Locker Room Facilities for Correction Officers in Response to the Corona Virus Pandemic and Consideration and Decision to Provide Such Facilities on a Timely Basis**

Jerrod MacPherson said after the Board authorized the letter to the Sheriff regarding locker room access and installation of temporary security measures, Facilities’ staff were met by Sheriff’s deputies and directed to cease and desist.

Chief of Corrections Scott Souza said they continued to make every effort to protect their staff and they needed for staff to be able to change clothes and take a shower, if needed. Chief Souza then outlined the measures and steps they had taken since March 3 in response to the Corona Virus pandemic. He reiterated they needed locker rooms, in light of the dangers of Covid-19, so they could change clothes or shower so they did not go home in the same clothes after being on a 12-hour shift in the jail, for the safety of themselves and their families.

There was a discussion about employees changing in the parking lot, restrictions on daily inmate intakes, and medical screening. Chief Souza stated that everybody that came into the jail, inmates and staff alike, were screened by medical staff.

Robert Blain stated that he got involved in the project in December and put out an RFP for an architect for design of locker rooms for the Corrections Department. Additionally, an MOU was put together regarding access and sent to the Sheriff; conversations with the Sheriff about this MOU had not been able to move forward.

Mr. MacPherson presented a resolution temporarily re-assigning control of the locker rooms from the Sheriff to the Corrections Department. It would add an entry point outside so the employees

did not have to go through the Sheriff's office to gain access. Additionally, it would authorize staff to take all steps necessary to make the changes.

The Board heard briefly, telephonically, from union representatives, including Jesus Alvarez and Scott Runge and an attorney, Alan Harvey, regarding their concerns about access to a locker room for the safety of the officers, their families and community and other issues.

Commissioner Delvin said he wanted to add language to the resolution to give authority for the County Administrator have authority to initiate legal action if the Sheriff interfered again. He requested the Board recess so staff could make the necessary changes to the resolution.

Mr. MacPherson reiterated this was a temporary solution, and would be a new entrance outside the wall, to be used by both the Sheriff's Office employees and Corrections employees. Additionally, they looked at the extra locker rooms and determined they would not meet the needs of the Corrections officers.

The Board indicated it was not negotiating with the guilds right now and other issues could be brought up later.

The Board recessed, reconvening at 2:15 pm.

The proposed resolution added language for the County Administrator to be authorized to take all steps necessary, including but not limited to requesting that the Prosecuting Attorney appoint a special deputy prosecutor to initiate legal action against the Sheriff if he interfered with the implementation of this resolution.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Delvin move to approve the resolution temporarily re-assigning control of certain locker rooms within the space occupied by the Benton County Sheriff's office to the Benton County Corrections Department, as modified. Commissioner Small seconded.

#### Discussion

Commissioner Delvin said this was a temporary reassignment and once the declaration of emergency was over, the Board would revisit this issue.

Upon vote, the motion carried unanimously.

**Resolution No. 2020-273:** Temporarily Re-Assigning Control of Certain Locker Rooms Within the Space Occupied by the Sheriff's Office to the Benton County Corrections Department

There being no further business before the Board, the meeting adjourned at approximately 2:18 p.m.

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Clerk of the Board

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Chairman