

Criminal Justice Committee Meeting

Douglas County, Nebraska

Thursday, March 22, 2018

The meeting convened at 1:04 P.M. in Room 903 of the Omaha-Douglas Civic Center, 1819 Farnam Street, Omaha, NE 68183. A copy of the Open Meetings Act is located on the wall near the entrance of the room. A notice of the meeting was published in the March 12, 2018, issue of *The Daily Record*. County Commissioners present at the meeting were Clare Duda, P.J. Morgan, Chris Rodgers, Mary Ann Borgeson, Jim Cavanaugh, Mike Boyle, and Marc Kraft. Others present at the meeting were Joe Lorenz, Patrick Bloomingdale, Marcos San Martin, and Diane Carlson, County Administration; Paul Johnson and Whitney Shipley, Emergency Management; Mark Foxall, Corrections; David Sleeter, 911 Communications; Karen Buche, Carol Donnelly, and Matt Oberle, Human Resources; Dan Esch and Constance Mierendorf, Douglas County Clerk/Comptroller's Office. Mike Boyle chairs the Committee.

A video recording of the meeting is available on the Douglas County Website:

<http://commissioners.douglascounty-ne.gov/board-meetings/videos>.

Review of Medical Services at Corrections

- Mark Foxall said the contract for medical services at the Corrections Center will not be extended to the current provider, Correct Care Solutions (CCS). Corrections would like to rebid services and look for a new provider such as UNMC, Charles Drew, or One World. Many inmates access these providers when they are not incarcerated. The Medical Center and CHI might also be possible bidders.
- The budget for the contract is \$5 million and the timeline is 7 months from the Request for Proposal (RFP) until the contract begins.
- Dr. Foxall responded to questions about the critical need for psychiatric care at Corrections. He has been advised not to bifurcate medical and psychiatric service providers. The approach to addressing the psychiatric needs of the Center should be to tighten the language in the RFP to make certain those needs are met.
- Commissioner Borgeson said telemedicine services should also be explored in the RFP.
- Dr. Foxall said telemedicine has evolved over the last five years and could free up medical staff to deal with inmates who require more acute care.
- Corrections is also preparing for the increase in opioid related problems. There have been 2-3 NARCAN incidents in the last couple of weeks at the Corrections. Some mentally ill inmates are self-medicating with methamphetamines.
- Commissioner Borgeson said the RFP for the Psychiatric Emergency Facility from Region 6 should be ready soon.
- Commissioner Boyle requested that Commissioner Borgeson be included in drafting the RFP.

Update on Hiring at Corrections

- Karen Buche presented the results of surveys of other corrections facilities about their hiring practices, treatment of overtime, retirement plans, recruitment, etc. (See Attachment A).
- Correctional agencies have various recruitment and hiring schedules. In the Sheriff's office, the recruitment process takes 5-6 months; the Omaha Police Department takes 10 months; Lancaster County takes 2-3 months. Recruitment and selection at the Douglas County Corrections Center takes approximately 12 weeks. Many agencies recruit only once a year.
- Dr. Foxall said the Corrections Center has been considering cancelling the written exam for applicants for some time in order to expedite the recruiting and selection process. In discussions with Human Resources, Dr. Foxall has decided to eliminate the written exam and evaluate the effectiveness of the process to see whether the numbers of applicants increase and whether training is quicker.
- Commissioner Borgeson suggested that Corrections might work with Metropolitan Community College to explore a Corrections Academy to help train and recruit potential employees. This could also be done for 911 Communications workers.
- Commissioner Rodgers said a collaboration with Heartland Workforce Solutions could create a cohort for a training class.
- David Sleeter said that one area high school has a basic telecommunications course for dispatchers. The Association of Public Communications Officers (APCO) offers a 40-hour online course and the Communications Center has a trainer who will collaborate with the high school. It is important for young recruits to get some exposure to the job before they pursue careers in the field.
- Commissioner Rodgers asked if it was possible to use part-time or on-call employees at the Corrections Center.
- Patrick Bloomingdale said the union would have to approve of those positions. The issue for the union is the training of corrections officers and the safety and security of all.
- Dr. Foxall said it is not possible to mix sworn and non-sworn personnel in the Corrections Center. They have different pay scales and different cultures.
- Commissioner Boyle asked Ms. Buche to get information about the length of time it takes from hiring until an employee is on the job at the Corrections facilities she contacted.
- Ms. Buche, having served as the head of Human Resources in Sarpy County, said the Sarpy facility is run by law enforcement. There is a very different population in the Sarpy Corrections Center—a different level of crime and a different demographic. Sarpy County does not require mandatory overtime. There is no comparison between Sarpy and Douglas County Corrections facilities.
- Ms. Buche recommended eliminating the written exam for now and letting the Corrections medical contractor take care of the applicants physical demands testing instead of sending them to one CHI provider, which could possibly speed up the hiring process.
- Dr. Foxall said the next class of officers begins on Monday, March 26, and should last about 5 weeks. Another class will begin in May.

- Ms. Buche said positions have been advertised on Facebook and Twitter for the past 9 months.
- Dr. Foxall said the Corrections Center is still short between 46-49 positions. That is down from 53, but still considerable.
- Mr. Bloomingdale said the Administration will meet with the union next Thursday to discuss proposals.

Emergency Preparedness

- Paul Johnson said the evacuation authority (the person who is responsible for ordering an emergency evacuation), is the chief elected official in the area. For Omaha, that person is the mayor; for outlying County districts, it is the board chair.
- The difference between a voluntary and a mandatory evacuation is that the jurisdiction is responsible for the property of a resident if an evacuation is mandatory. Mr. Johnson said Sarpy County charges residents for 911 calls resulting in rescue if an evacuation is voluntary.
- Commissioner Borgeson said the County's emergency preparedness plan is updated each year.
- Mr. Johnson said FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) requires an updated Empowerment Plan every 5 years, which means a plan that outlines who is responsible for decisions in an emergency event. The next update is set for 2020. New planning software is becoming available in the near future.
- Commissioner Morgan said Board members should visit the Emergency Management office. If the department has needs, it should come forward with a request.
- Commissioner Rodgers said the Board should have a tabletop emergency exercise soon.
- Mr. Johnson discussed the IPAWS (Integrated Public Alert and Warning System) national local alerting system under FEMA (see Attachment B). The system notifies various private sector systems that can in turn notify specific geographical areas. Landlines can be accessed through IPAWS, but cell phones are a part of an enrollment system. The County does not have an enrollment system.
- Cell phones can receive Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) that appear as a text banner on a cell phone. They are sent with a special tone and vibration and are repeated twice.
- Emergency Management submitted its application for IPAWS in 2015 and obtained its COG (Collaborative Operating Group) number. If an emergency occurs, it can be broadcast to cell phones in specific geographic areas.
- In November 2019, IPAWS will improve dramatically since it will become GPS (Global Positioning System) based. Federal free service will increase.
- Commissioner Boyle asked if Emergency Management had any pressing budget needs.
- Mr. Johnson said there is a need for some tree work around various towers. He said that Douglas County has a comparatively small budget and staff compared with other counties its size.

911 Discussion and Staffing

- David Sleeter said 911 is an arm of the Emergency management notification system. The 911 Center is taking steps to be efficient and safe. As examples, the 911 Center's Viper Telephone System allows for 14 layers of redundancy and the Orion Radio System utilizes P-25, the latest radio technology system with layers of redundancy and a simulcast system. This means that if one tower goes down, all communication is not lost.
- Improvements at the Fitzgerald building have also stepped up redundancy. It has a back-up temporary power supply as well as its own HVAC system separate from other systems at the Fitzgerald campus.
- The backup that Emergency Management provides at the Civic Center is ideal because it is far enough away from the Fitzgerald facility not to be in the same weather pattern, but not too far. If systems went down out west, operations could still be conducted at the Civic Center.
- Though redundancy is important, the final input into the system by humans determines accuracy.
- Staffing needs are acute. There are 6 openings at 911 Communications that have been posted for 4-5 months. The delay occurred because of critical testing of interactive computerized tests to validate that they reflect what the 911 Center does.
- Recruiting has been a challenge because applicants are not interested in retirement, benefits, etc. They seem to be interested in flexibility and non-permanent positions.
- For the future, the volume and intensity of the calls the dispatchers receive will only increase, requiring a well-trained workforce.
- Commissioner Boyle asked about the ability of the Center to find a person on a cell phone who dials 911 in an emergency.
- Mr. Sleeter said the Federal Communications Commission does not require wireless providers to supply that service to 911 Centers. They sell this service to Uber and pizza restaurants, but not to counties or municipalities for 911 service.
- Mr. Johnson added that the move of Emergency Management to the West Maple Campus will be of great help. Next week is Severe Weather Awareness week and a survey from Homeland Security will be going out to all residents of the county to determine the citizens' awareness of emergency procedures. Commissioner Boyle suggested this information be given to Leia Baez, Douglas County Public Information Officer.
- Mr. Sleeter said he will be asking for an additional dispatcher as well as software and hardware to accommodate the new Omaha Police Department precinct that is coming the first part of 2019. The cost will be approximately \$250,000, which is split with the City: the City pays 85% of the costs and the County pays 15%.
- The 911 Center needs 6 more positions to get up to minimum staffing. The cost for salaries alone is approximately \$280,000.

- In 2017, dispatchers received 2,198 calls per day. 70% of those calls are 911 calls. They dispatch 1,740 calls per day to emergency services.
- Joe Lorenz said he will be meeting with the City next week to let them know that this request is coming since they are responsible for 85% of the costs.
- Mr. Johnson said the siren contract for maintenance is going out for bid.
- Sirens will sound on Wednesday, March 28 at 10:15 A.M.

The meeting adjourned at 2:46 p.m.