



CASS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

LAW ENFORCEMENT STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

March 19, 2024

1. **CALL TO ORDER** – The meeting was called to order at p.m. by Chair Lee.
2. **ROLL CALL** – Those in attendance included Mary Howie and Roseann Marchetti, Sheriff Richard Behnke, Prosecutor Victor Fitz, Administrator Matthew Newton, City Manager Kevin Anderson, Village Manager Emilie LaGrow, and Chief Doug Westrick. Commissioner Ryan Laylin and Supervisor Bill Kasprzak were absent. There were 13 members of the public present.
3. **PUBLIC COMMENT** – Public comment was given.
4. **ADDITIONS/DELETIONS TO AGENDA**
 - A. Lee moved, Marchetti seconded, CARRIED discussion of Marijuana Tax to New Business item a.
5. **APPROVAL OF AGENDA** – Marchetti moved, Howie seconded, CARRIED, to approve the agenda as amended.
6. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES** – Marchetti moved, Anderson seconded, CARRIED, to approve the minutes as presented.
7. **CLARIFICATION OF COMMITTEE MAKEUP** – Lee and Fitz advocated for allowing proxies for committee members if committee members cannot attend. Because the committee's authority is limited to making recommendations to the Board of Commissioners,
 - A. Fitz moved, Westrick seconded, CARRIED, to allow the following members of the committee have a proxy if they cannot attend a meeting: County Administrator Matt Newton, Prosecutor Victor Fitz, Edwardsburg/Ontwa Police Chief Doug Westrick, Dowagiac City Manager Kevin Anderson, Sheriff Rick Behnke, and Cassopolis Village Manager LaGrow.
 - i. LaGrow, Behnke, Howie, Anderson, Westrick, Fitz, Marchetti, Lee and Newton approved.
Howie opposed.
8. **CCDET MILLAGE**
 - A. **Attorney advice** – Administrator Newton reported that the County attorney's opinion is as long as the maximum amount of the levy stayed the same, it could be considered a renewal. Changing the title of the millage would also be permitted if the language remains the same. The attorney also pointed out that the language is not necessarily reflective of the title of the millage. The attorney recommended against _____.
 - B. **Membership feedback regarding CCDET millage in August**
 - i. Behnke said feedback continues to hear that the community is in support of the CCDET concept as previously approached. CCDET pays for annual subscriptions to pay for tools that benefit all law enforcement agencies across the county.
 - ii. Fitz said the less we tweak the language, the more we have a chance at passing it. Because there is historic support for the millage, he wants to make sure the millage is not changed so much that it is unrecognizable.
 - iii. LaGrow asked what the point in changing the title was, considering that the language is so broad. Committee members agreed that changing the wording is not necessary.
 - iv. Committee discussed whether there is an opportunity to change the focus of CCDET to allocate the funds from the millage outside of drug crimes, considering funds are currently not being fully used.
 - v. Anderson asked what we are hoping to accomplish and what budget is required to accomplish that.
 - C. CCDET Advisory Committee



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- i. Lee suggested this committee but with fewer commissioners. He would like to see it as a standing committee – CCDET Fund Recommendation Committee.
- ii. Marchetti would like to see the other police chiefs on the committee.
- iii. Fitz moved, Howie seconded, CARRIED, to have the Cassopolis village manager, Dowagiac city manager, Cass County sheriff, Cass County prosecutor, two Cass County commissioners, the county administrator, and the police chiefs of Edwardsburg and Cassopolis, as the CCDET advisory team.
- iv. Fitz moved, Howie seconded, CARRIED, to clarify that there will only be one vote for the village of Cassopolis and one vote for the city of Dowagiac.

9. NEW BUSINESS

- A. **LaPeer County** – Fitz recommended that the LaPeer County Prosecutor be invited to the next meeting via Zoom. Behnke said it may be irrelevant if a broader law enforcement millage is not being sought.
- B. **Marijuana Tax Revenue** – Lee asked if the committee could commit marijuana tax funds to law enforcement. Newton explained that \$300,000 of this year's marijuana tax revenue is already budgeted.

10. ADJOURNED – Marchetti moved to adjourn at 3:51 p.m. Or