



CASS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

LAW ENFORCEMENT STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

March 26, 2024

1. **CALL TO ORDER** – Fitz called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.
2. **ROLL CALL** – Lee and Kasprzak absent. All other members were 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, Laylin seconded, CARRIED, to approve the agenda as presented.
6. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES** – Moved to correct the spelling of Westrick and clarify that Commissioner Laylin was absent. Anderson moved, Laylin seconded, CARRIED, to approve the minutes as amended.
7. **GENERAL LAW ENFORCEMENT MILLAGE** – Anderson moved, Laylin seconded, CARRIED, to note that the committee does not approve of a millage specific to general law enforcement.
8. **CCDET MILLAGE LANGUAGE DISCUSSION** – Sheriff Behnke and the administrator's office will work with equalization to make the necessary updates needed to modernize the CCDET millage discussion.
9. **BOC NEXT STEPS** – Newton explained that the commissioners asked Administrator Newton, Sheriff Behnke and Prosecutor Fitz would work together on a plan. Administrator Newton asked if that was the goal of the CCDET Advisory Board. Newton and Fitz clarified that the board asked the county leaders identified to take this approach.
10. **CCDET ADVISORY BOARD** – Newton explained that once the Administrator, Sheriff and Prosecutor develop their plan, the BOC will revisit whether or not the CCDET Advisory Committee will be needed and set bylaws as necessary.
11. **PROSECUTOR STAFFING CONCERNS** – Fitz explained that he is working with the Administrator's Office
12. **OLD BUSINESS** – None.
13. **NEW BUSINESS**
 - A. Laylin asked if the meetings would be put on hold.
 - B. Anderson asked if the meeting should be disbanded.
 - C. Behnke said he believes the committee is needed and that input from the community is needed. He said a meeting next week is not necessary, and that the advisory committee may take on another role in the CCDET committee.
 - D. Howie said the public should be on a committee.
14. **COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENT**
 - A. **Emilie LaGrow** – Expressed appreciation for the BOC setting up a meeting, asked why the prosecutor's office did not meet with administration before the committee was formed. She likes the idea of this board or some version of it moving forward.
 - B. **Sheriff Behnke** – The Drug Enforcement Millage was not established for marijuana; it was established because of a cocaine problem in Dowagiac. It eventually moved onto focusing on meth.
 - C. **Prosecutor Fitz** – Clarified that there have been ongoing discussions with administration for two years. Agrees that there needs to be an advisory committee, whether it's this committee or something specific to CCDET, and should include Cassopolis and Edwardsburg. He reminded everyone that drug enforcement is needed.
 - D. **Administrator Newton** – Previously a quarterly report was required. He encouraged more regular communication between CCDET and the BOC, which could take the form of an advisory committee, with guidance via bylaws from the BOC.



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- E. **Chief Westrick** – He feels like a lot of changes have been proposed in the last two weeks, but by pausing the committee now, we’re going back to where we started. Sheriff Behnke said he understands why he thinks that way, but emphasized that part of the plan will likely include an oversight committee like this one.
 - F. **Commissioner Marchetti** – Once a proposal is formed, it will come back to this committee before going to the Board of Commissioners.
 - G. **Kevin Anderson** – Wants to clarify that the taskforce has had success and has been effective. Newton said the goal is to look at whether or not a new structure makes sense. Anderson said he thinks the language should be “how can we improve” rather than “why is it not working.”
 - H. **Sheriff Behnke** – Can’t remember a time when Edwardsburg/Ontwa or Cassopolis have requested assistance or funding that they have not been awarded such.
 - I. **Commissioner Laylin** – Can we look at getting rid of paying rent for a building?
 - J. **Commissioner Marchetti** – When she first came on board, she used to get regular reports from Det. Toxopeus. When COVID happened, that stopped.
15. Laylin moved, Marchetti seconded, CARRIED, to adjourn the meeting at 2:44 p.m.

DRAFT