

September 26, 2007

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE REPORT

The Personnel Committee met Wednesday, September 26, 2007 at 3:00 p.m., in the QC Meeting Room, Third Floor, County Administration Building, 215 East Central, Bentonville

Committee Members Present: Hill, Hobbs, Stephenson, Winscott, Wolf

Others Present: County Clerk Mary Lou Slinkard, Collector Greg Hoggatt, Judge Jay Finch, Captain Hunter Petray, Captain Mike Sydoriak, Captain Mike Jones, Petie Cobb, Barbara Ludwig, Richard McComas

Media: Scarlett Simms – Morning News, Jennifer Turner – Benton County Daily Record

1. NEW BUSINESS

A. New Positions/Additional Staffing

01 County Clerk

- a) Office Manager (Grade 12, Maximum Hire-in Rate \$31,137.60)
- b) (2) Deputy Clerks Records/Voters Registration (Grade 6, Maximum Hire-in Rate \$26,873.60)

County Clerk Mary Lou Slinkard stated that her Administrative Assistant is currently performing the duties of an Office Manager, and needs to be freed up to perform the duties of an assistant to the County Clerk. She said the Office Manager being requested will be a Grade 12 because this person will manage the other three offices in addition to the main office.

County Clerk Mary Lou Slinkard stated the workload in her office has greatly increased, and she expects the volume in 2008 to continue to increase. She said that she expects traffic in the branch offices to increase to the point that one person cannot operate the office alone. JP Winscott asked where the increase is coming from. County Clerk Mary Lou Slinkard stated that 2008 will be an election year, and a high volume year in Equalization Board filings. JP Stephenson asked how many employees are currently on staff in the County Clerk's office and for how long. County Clerk Mary Lou Slinkard stated that there are 16 employees including her, and other than replacing the two office managers that went to the branch offices, there has been no increase in headcount for several years. JP Stephenson asked if the County Clerk's office operates strictly from County General, or if it is a commissioned account. County Clerk Mary Lou Slinkard stated that she has a "County Clerk's Automation Fund" which pays for all of the computer technology and scanning, but the remainder is out of County General.

02 Circuit Clerk

- a) Deputy Clerk – Bookkeeper (Grade 8, Maximum Hire-in Rate \$29,016.00)
- b) File Clerk (Grade 4 – Maximum Hire-in Rate \$24,731.20)
- c) Office Manager (Grade 12, Maximum Hire-in Rate \$33,238.40)

Circuit Clerk Brenda DeShields stated that she has 32 employees and explained all of the duties of her office, noting that her office opened 7,000 cases last year, and that she is also responsible for all of the deeds and mortgages in the county. She said the law requires that she spend 25% of the previous year's collections on technology, and after personnel and other expenses are taken care of she then returns what is left to the county. She stated that she is requesting a bookkeeper because there is currently one person handling all of the accounts payable in her office, which can cause a delay in victims receiving their court-ordered restitution, and they are the whole reason the court case was filed.

Circuit Clerk Brenda DeShields stated that her Administrative Assistant is currently handling all of the duties of office manager, as well as filling in at the counter, which leaves her without an assistant. She said that the File Clerk position is needed because her office has 4 departments spread out among three different buildings, and the person in the records room is there alone, and has to wait on customers, answer phone requests, and for safety reasons she would like someone else in the office with her. She noted that in one hour she waited on 15 customers, and answered 12 phone calls. JP Stephenson noted that in 2006 the bookkeeping department handled 3,695 active files, and through August 2007 they have processed 3,421. He also noted that her office is fee based, so the personnel costs do not impact County General.

03 Office of the Sheriff/Jail Field

- a) (1) Animal Control Officer (Grade 11 – Maximum Hire-in Rate \$32,198.40)
- b) (2) Sergeants (one field and one courthouse security)
- c) (1) Professional Standards Investigator (Grade 14 – Maximum Hire-in Rate \$35,360.00)
- d) (9) Field Deputies (Grade 11 – Maximum Hire-in Rate \$32,198.40)

Captain Jones stated that there is currently one animal control officer covering the entire county, and 825 calls so far this year, which is an increase of 189 calls over last year. He said that they try to work one side of the county per day, which may leave the calls unanswered for a day or two. JP Schindler noted that each call may take several hours. Captain Jones stated that the officer is stretched to the limit. JP Schindler expressed concern about the officer handling calls involving more than one animal by himself. Captain Jones stated that he is requesting two sergeants—one as a rotating shift sergeant and one to supervise courthouse security. He said on a number of occasions they have had to rely on a Deputy 1st Class or Corporal who has no training in leadership and supervision. He said this rotating sergeant would cover sick leave, vacations, and other absences. He said that he needs a sergeant to supervise the courthouse security deputies, because they are currently supervised by a sergeant out in the field. He said courthouse violence has increased nationwide, and he feels that the courthouse deputies need supervision close at hand. Captain Jones stated there are currently 5 deputies, and when they are asked to provide bailiff services for one of the circuit judges, they have to pull

someone out of the field to cover security, which in turn leaves them shorthanded in the field.

Captain Jones stated that he is requesting a Professional Standards Investigator, which is more commonly referred to as an Internal Affairs Investigator, to perform the 150 to 175 background investigations in the Jail and in the field, and in addition he would perform the investigations into misconduct or complaints against deputies, which run between 25 and 50 per year. He said there is currently one deputy in the jail who performs these duties, a CID Investigator who performs internal complaints, and a training coordinator who does backgrounds for the field, so he would like to add one person to perform all of those duties, and allow the other three to concentrate on their normal duties. JP

Stephenson asked if the public had confidence in investigations conducted in house.

Captain Jones stated that if the person is trained in this area and works independent of the Jail or the Field, they have more credibility than when someone from one of the divisions is performing the investigation. He said that currently a CID Investigator is handling all of the investigations in the Field Division, and someone from the Jail handles complaints against the Jail. He added that the State Police are called in when the case involves excessive force in which the discharge of a firearm was involved. He said background investigations in law enforcement officers are critical now because of liability issues, and the packet is approximately 35 pages, and takes weeks to complete.

Captain Jones stated that there is a total of 44 Deputies patrolling Benton County day and night, and he is requesting 9 additional Field Deputies to address the increase in crime, particularly on the boat docks. He said an increase of 2 deputies per shift will allow them to become more proactive in crime prevention, instead of constantly reacting after a crime has occurred. JP Wolf stated that she has always been bothered by the fact that our deputies work alone instead of in pairs, and asked if this would alleviate that situation.

Captain Jones stated that they could double up the patrols in a high activity area, so that backup will be able to respond more quickly. He said calls for service have increased by 1200 calls this year. JP Schindler asked about domestic abuse calls. Captain Jones explained that they always dispatch two cars, but that one may be several miles away, and these are particularly dangerous calls. JP Schindler asked if additional deputies will require additional equipment. Captain Jones stated that they will need additional cars, but that the deputies take the cars home and are on call. JP Wolf stated that it is her opinion that they have got to bring the number of field deputies up. JP Hobbs asked if the salaries were comparable to cities in the area. Captain Jones stated that it is. JP Stephenson stated that even so, it is still inadequate.

Jail

- a) (3) Jail Sergeants (Grade 13 – Maximum Hire-in Rate 34,340.80)
- b) (1) Jail Sergeant – Operations (Grade 14 – Maximum Hire-in Rate \$35,360.00)
- c) (4) Jail Deputies (Grade 11 – Maximum Hire-in Rate \$32,198.40)
- d) (2) Jail Transport (Grade 11 – Maximum Hire-in Rate \$32,198.40)

Captain Hunter Petray stated that he is requesting a total of 10 new positions, and cited the annual Jail Standards Committee inspection report which noted that the Jail has insufficient staff to maintain security for the staff and inmates. He said failure to maintain standards could put them in violation of state code, and that is a position that they do not want to be in. He said he is requesting 2 Jail Sergeants for the booking area,

where they process approximately 40 intakes and 40 releases per day. He explained the lengthy process required and the importance of it being done accurately. He said the last thing he wants to see is someone released by mistake, and these are probably the two most important positions on his list. He stated that the third sergeant is for Gang Intelligence. (Discussed during midyear requests)

The committee discussed the housing of Federal inmates.

Captain Petray stated that he is requesting a Jail Sergeant to oversee Operations in the Jail, who will answer directly to the Lieutenant and make sure that all of the paperwork concerning disciplinary actions is processed correctly. He said it will help with the high turnover rate because employees will have one more step to advance in the career path, and also alleviate some of the workload on the Lieutenant because he is swamped.

Captain Petray stated that the four Jail Deputies are being requested due to the insufficiencies in staff noted in the Jail Compliance Report.

Captain Petray stated that high volumes of prisoners are transported from the Jail to the courthouse, and the deputies are divided among the circuit courts. He said the prisoners are mingled in with the public during court appearances, and they have to watch to make sure that contraband is not smuggled to a prisoner.

e) (1) Investigator II – CID (Grade 14 – Maximum Hire-in Rate \$35,360.00)

f) (1) Sergeant CID (Grade 14 – Maximum Hire-in Rate \$35,360.00)

Captain Mike Sydoriak stated that he is asking for two positions in the Narcotics Division—one investigator and one sergeant. He said the narcotics sergeant will replace the sergeant that went the Drug Interdiction team, and one Investigator II went to the DEA, so one of the narcotics investigations teams is one man short.

04 Collector

a) Deputy Collector I (Grade 5 – Maximum Hire-in Rate \$25,812.80)

Collector Gregg Hoggatt stated that he needs an additional Deputy Collector position to make sure that all four satellite offices are fully staffed at all times, and noted that the Collector is a commissioned account, so there will be very little impact on County General.

05 Juvenile Probation

a) Juvenile Probation Officer (Grade 11 – Maximum Hire-in Rate \$32,198.40)

NOTE: 50% paid by State

Juvenile Probation Director Petie Cobb stated that she has 16 employees in her office—3 intake officers, 9 probation officers, 1 chief probation officer, 1 counselor and 2 support staff, and she is requesting an additional probation officer. She distributed handouts illustrating the caseloads. She said their philosophy is rehabilitation in order to keep the juveniles out of the adult system. She said juvenile cases increased 39% between 2002 and 2006, and the 9 probation officers are supervising 698 juveniles, which averages out to 78 people per caseload. She said she has requested a probation officer every year in an attempt to get the caseload down to 60 to 65 cases per officer, but they are still playing catch up. She said that they submit grant applications every year for drug court probation officers, but they should only handle 30 cases and the present officer is handling 85. She said that there has been an increase in gang activity, drug use, sexual abuse cases, teen

pregnancies, and the severity of crimes. She noted that one change is that in the past the earliest someone was diagnosed as bipolar was age 19 or 21, but just recently a 7-year-old was diagnosed. She said it is very difficult to adhere to the strict standards of the office when someone is out of the office due to illness or vacation.

JP Stephenson asked how many additional probation officers it would take to get the caseloads down to the desired number. Petie Cobb stated that she would need three more. Petie Cobb noted that one position currently on the Schedule 4 that is not funded is eligible for a 50% reimbursement from the state, but any additional positions added will be 100% funded from County General.

Judge Jay Finch stated that Petie Cobb had asked him to explain a little more about the juvenile justice process since it is under his direction. He said that one of the reasons there are so many employees involved in Juvenile Court cases is the speed with which they are required by law to process the cases. He said they handle a wide spectrum of cases, from the hard core juvenile who is committing serious crimes, to the innocent infant who is the victim of abuse. He said that the reason Benton County is recognized across the state of Arkansas as having an excellent juvenile process is because of the support they have received from the Quorum Court.

06 Drug Court – Judge Finch

- a) Staff Assistant – Drug Court (Grade 5 – Maximum Hire-in Rate \$25,812.80)
- b) Part-Time Drug Counselor (\$25,000) NOTE: State will pick-up position as full-time in July, 2008)

Judge Finch stated that the State has given him another Drug Court Counselor for July of 2008, but they have not been able to find someone who is qualified. He said that may be due to the extensive qualifications required, or the competitive market. He said he is requesting a staff assistant for the counselor to handle scheduling and the volume of paperwork associated with Drug Court. JP Stephenson asked if Barbara Ludwig could do a market study to correct the salary for the Drug Counselor. Barbara Ludwig stated that it is not a county position, but a state position. She said they have occasionally in the past agreed to supplement a state salary with county funds if they choose to.

07 Juvenile Detention Center

- a) Juvenile Detention Worker (Grade 7 – Maximum Hire-in Rate \$27,955.20)

Juvenile Detention Center Director Dennis Cottrell stated that they have been operating with the same number of personnel since they opened the JDC in 2000. He said they have logged almost 1,000 hours of overtime which would almost pay for an additional person, but more than anything else he is concerned about the safety of the staff and the juveniles.

08 Road Department

- a) (2) Heavy Equipment Operators (Grade 6 – Maximum Hire-in Rate \$26,873.60)
- b) Data Coordinator (Grade 4 – Maximum Hire-in Rate \$24,731.20)

Road Department Superintendent Randy Rudolph stated that he is requesting 2 heavy equipment operators to replace two positions that were transferred to the patch crew several years ago. He said his foreman spends a lot of time working equipment instead of

supervising other jobs, and if an emergency call comes in, they have to pull someone off of a construction project to answer that call.

Steve Douglass stated he and Randy Rudolph are requesting that they share a Data Coordinator to handle the data entry, paperwork, and reports that are required to track progress on road projects. He said that they are sometimes tied to the office doing reports when they should be supervising, and it would be helpful to have someone to take calls when they are out on jobsites. JP Winscott asked who uses the information in the reports. Richard McComas stated that they use it to track costs of road projects, to determine if it would be cheaper to contract out a project.

09 Information Systems

- a) PC Support Specialist (Grade Professional – Maximum Hire-in Rate \$36,786)
- b) GIS Analysts II (Grade Professional – Maximum Hire-in Rate \$41,940.00)

Systems Administrator Dennis Hayes stated that they are requesting a PC Support Specialist, and the number of Support Specialists has not changed in 5 years, despite considerable growth in the county. He said they are responsible for setting up computers and printers, installing software, setting up cell phones, and they provide support for all of the departments which operate 24 hours a day. He said they have implemented a Help Desk system, which helps them operate more efficiently, and they have seen a 25% increase in the number of support calls in the last year. He said the number of computers that they service has increased from 350 last year to 580, and the Sheriff's Department has just purchased 40 laptops for deputies to use. He noted that downtime costs money in any business, so it is important to take care of the service requests. He added that the increase in the number of remote locations that they must service has also been an additional challenge.

GIS Coordinator Elizabeth Bowen explained that they are requesting a GIS Technician to support the digital mapping functions in the county, such as aerial photography and parcel mapping for the Assessor's office, the mapping of building permits for the planning department, making the Assessor's data accessible to the Planning Department, and assisting the Environmental Department in locating dump sites. She said this position will be for support in the Sheriff's Office, which uses GIS data to map sex offenders, and to track the frequency of crimes in specific areas.

10 Public Defender

- a) Juvenile Case Manager (Grade 6, Maximum Hire-in Rate \$26,873.60)

Chief Deputy Public Defender Jeanette McKinney stated that they are requesting an additional Juvenile Case Manager, who will handle court dates, calendars, and appointments, attend court, and keep clients informed about court dates. She said the office currently has 4 case managers who handle 2 attorneys each, and the Juvenile case manager is handling cases for 3 attorneys. She said that juvenile cases track very quickly, so the workload is overwhelming. She said that the state has approved an additional attorney in anticipation of the new Circuit Court judge, so the workload will continue to increase.

JP Stephenson announced that the next Personnel Committee meeting will be October 1, 2007 at 2:00 p.m., and the committee will vote to prioritize the personnel requests.