

January 5, 2012

PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE REPORT

A Public Safety Committee meeting was held on Thursday, January 5, 2012 at 5:30 p.m. in the Quorum Court Room, County Administration Building, Third Floor, 215 East Central, Bentonville, Arkansas

Committee Members Present: Winscott, King, Curry, Sandlin
Absent: Carr

Others Present: County Judge Bob Clinard, JP's J. Harrison and Jones, County Attorney George Spence, Comptroller Richard McComas, Administrator of General Service Elizabeth Bowen, and Administrator of Public Safety Marshal Watson

Media: Tom Sissom

JP Winscott called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

Steve Curry made motion to amend the agenda to allow Mr. Gary Ludwig of Ludwig LLC Group to speak first, seconded by JP Douglas.

Motion passed by unanimous show of hands vote.

Public Comments

None

Benton County Emergency Service Update – Ludwig LLC Group

JP Winscott recognized Gary Ludwig, Managing Director of the Ludwig LLC Group.

Gary Ludwig stated that the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) study will be done in five phases: 1) a kickoff phase where members of the project team will attend a kickoff meeting with key officials from Benton County to define some of the objectives and try to get a foundation of what is going on and to identify some of the pertinent issues that are attacking the system; 2) During the second phase, Administrator of Public Safety Marshal Watson will help arrange interviews, gather information, and data that they will be need to analyze the system, this will be an all inclusive, that will include all stake holders in the community; 3) In the analysis phase, all data issues that have been identified will be analyzed and they will to try to come up with solutions, ideas, and recommendations to improve the system; 4) the draft phase will provide a draft copy of the report of the information from interviews, data collection, data analysis and recommended options and then will be delivered to the point of contact, Marshal Watson, who will then disseminate the document to the necessary stakeholders for their evaluation, review, and comments; 5) the final report will be distributed.

He stated that the goals and objectives that they are trying to define with the study are: 1) to maintain and enhance the quality of patient care; 2) to provide consistency with performance and patient care; 3) to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the system; 4) to improve financial stability of the system by maximizing the use of resources while improving efficiency and economy.

JP Curry asked if there is a target date to have the report ready. Gary Ludwig stated the study could take three or four months, and that the time is contingent on how many drafts have to be made.

Presentation: Benton County Jail Inmate Food – Larry R. Froelich, Attorney

Larry R. Froelich, Attorney and resident of Northwest Arkansas stated that he is working pro bono, and expressed his concerns about the inmate food served in the Benton County Jail. He stated that cold meals could create the potential for violence in the jail, and that research has shown that prisoners given nutritional supplements committed 35% fewer violent incidences. He added that because the eyes of the world are on Benton County, its jail and the food served to its prisoners are a potential stink bomb for Benton County.

Following the presentation several committee members expressed their opinions on the meals served and the conditions of inmates at the county jail. JP Winscott stated that the inmates are people who have done harm to society and are in jail for a reason; they are there for punishment.

Sheriff Keith Ferguson stated that the inmates' meals meet state standards and are drawn up and monitored by a nutritionist. He added that we do not use food as a punishment; we use food as nutrition, and feed them to keep them alive.

JP Sandlin made motion to table the discussion until the next Public Safety meeting, seconded by JP Curry.

Motion passed by unanimous show of hands vote.

Discussion: Proposed Ordinance to Address Vicious Dog Problems

County Attorney George Spence stated that the proposed ordinance contains the changes that were proposed by JP Blaty and JP Douglas at the December 12, 2011 Legislative Committee meeting, and that those changes were to add the language; 1) However, no dog shall be defined as a “vicious dog” for actions occurring within the residence of its owner. Residence shall mean the actual structure on the owner’s property, 2) Stock dogs while being used to work with cattle or other farm animals.

George Spence stated that Captain Jones of the Benton County Sheriff’s office had contacted him about six months ago after a citizen of Benton County had been attacked while jogging near her home in the Prairie Creek area. He stated that the current law regulating hazardous animals was thought to be difficult to enforce in such cases, and that an ordinance that would apply specifically to vicious dogs was needed, so that the deputies on call can determine quickly what action is needed and what type of decision to make. He added this proposed ordinance does not replace the section in the code of ordinances dealing with dangerous/vicious animals; that the proposed ordinance is cumulative to what is now in place.

Julie Beaman stated that her situation has been resolved, but that the ordinance is still needed. She stated this is not about dogs, but is really about the people. She stated this is not about punishing owners; it is about keeping people safe, and that this was never about resolving her problem, but trying to keep it from happening again.

After further discussion on the changes to the proposed ordinance and what determines a property owner’s boundaries, JP Sandlin made motion to forward the proposed amended ordinance to the January 10, 2012 Committee of Thirteen agenda, seconded by JP Curry

Motion passed by unanimous show of hands vote.

Future Benton County Projects:

Administrator of Public Safety Marshal Watson stated that the kickoff meeting for the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) study with Gary Ludwig of the Ludwig Group, LLC had been held earlier in the day with representatives attending from several EMS Fire Departments, City Mayors, and JP Joel Jones, and added that it was a productive meeting.

Marshal Watson reported on several upcoming Benton County Public Safety Department projects: 1) in December the county received two new fire trucks which were distributed to the Piney Point Fire Department and the Decatur Fire Department; 2) they are currently preparing to order the two fire trucks allotted in the 2012 budget, but it has not been determined where those will go; 3) an Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) software program that will allow the EMD protocols to be integrated into the CAD system has been funded. He explained that this program will make the dispatch center more efficient and help with quality assurance measures; 4) the department is preparing to look at future needs for improving communications.

Other Business

None

After motion and second the meeting adjourned at 6:40 p.m.