

The special meeting of the Mason County Board of Commissioners was held at 7:00 p.m. in the conference room of the Mason County Airport Terminal Ludington Michigan.

The meeting was called to order by Chairwoman J. Andersen.

Roll call was taken. Present: G. Castonia, J. Hartley, S. Hull,
J. Andersen, R. Bacon, L. Squires, N. Krieger.

Absent:

Invocation was given by J. Andersen. The Pledge of Allegiance to the flag of the United States of America followed.

Motion by G. Castonia and seconded by N. Krieger to approve the agenda. Motion carried.

Reading of Correspondence: None

Public comment:

Connie Andersen, Pere Marquette Township- noted that she is puzzled as to why the County would be responsible for school safety and that this is the school boards responsibility. She requests to know why school boards have not contracted to provide this protection themselves. She noted it is an opportune time to ask for something other than try to solve school safety.

Kyle Corlett, Ludington Area School District Superintendent, noted that Pere Marquette Charter Township had formally made the request for the LASD Elementary schools. Hopes that there is the ability to add an additional resource officer and foster a positive relationship in the community.

Kim Cole, Sheriff Mason County, PM Township, noted that the mission statement of the Sheriff's Office is to do what is right regardless of the cost. He references his time as a D.A.R.E. officer and the impact that it had on the children. He feels no matter what the cost, there should be school resource officers in schools.

Paul Shoup-Mason County Eastern Superintendent-Custer Township, is asking the board to consider having a school resource officer in schools, especially at MCE, due to the location of the school district and the time restrictions it would take law enforcement to arrive at MCE.

Jeff Mount-Mason County Central Superintendent, Scottville, although MCC currently has their own school resource officer shared with West Shore Community College, he is here to support both MCE and LHS in obtaining an officer.

Angela Taylor, Mason County Central, Prevention services for MCC, feels there should be a school resource officer.

Scott Foster-City of Ludington, current Ludington Area School Board Trustee, Muskegon Sheriff Department, and parent of a 4-year old, soon to attend LASD, notes he feels the County Board should support the community and kids.

Traci King- Pere Marquette Township, LASD 2nd Grade teacher, as well as parent of LASD children, notes that when planning school lesson plans, she has to discuss code yellow and code red procedures so she can get the children ready if an intruder comes into the building, if evacuation needs to take place, and even has to help the students not become anxious or worry about any threats. She notes that she feels she and other teachers are prepared but feels having an officer in the building would be a comfort for herself and coworkers. She wonders if she is as prepared as she needs to be.

Vic Burwell-Ludington, Community member whose wife is a member of the Victims Services Unit of the Sheriff Department. He hopes that she never gets a call for a school shooting and hopes that there is a way to be able to fund the school recourse officers.

Buddy Reed-Ludington, feels that if funding is available, then it needs to get done.

Austin Morris, Ludington Police Department, current LHS School Resource Officer for 2021-2022 School year. Notes the tremendous relationships being built at this time with the kids at the school. When he is not working as the SRO, he is working road patrol nights in the summer for the City of Ludington. He feels that having a school officer benefits the children, but that due to the addition of the new lower elementary school, feels he needs another Officer to help out.

Lindsay Boyd- LASD School Teacher and parent feels that having an armed officer present in the building is a relief considering the already stressful situation the teachers face every day at school. She is encouraging of the funding for another resource officer at this time.

Lisa O'Connor, secretary LASD, noted that she is in support of a SRO and requests that an additional officer be added due to having 900 children in one location.

Leah Hatch, LASD secretary, feels that the board should do what is right. She currently has a child in high school and is a grandparent of two.

Hjordis Rivet, LASD 4th grade teacher, noted she is in support and wants this for the kid's safety.

Officer Case, School resource officer for WSCC/MCC- feels that in his current SRO position, he is building relationships with the children and feels this is the most important reason to have a SRO in place.

Liz Reimink- Emergency Manager- Mason County, Hamlin resident, requested that the Commissioners consider her request as there is a lot of behind the scenes work that needs to be completed and she has the responsibility of setting up the safety plans and working with the schools.

Connie Anderson, public comment second time, requested the board to think of all of the other schools and entities that were not included in the proposal. She feels the County's involvement is not the correct answer and that more questions need to be answered prior to any final decision being made.

End public Comment 8 p.m.

Chair Andersen noted that the Board had before them 10 requests from various departments for various needs. Discussion ensued for the next hour.

Items 1 & 2, moving 35 hour per week employees in Courts to 40 hours a week, with compensation time being eliminated.

Item #3 MSUE- Director Kelley noted that he is happy with the facility at WSCC. Rent was only increased \$900 annually, and previously had not gone up for five years.

Item #4 Retiree Health insurance-given has to be funded.

Item #5 Sheriff's request for school security. Significant discussion ensued. The responsibility to provide the funding comes from the State of Michigan along with the school boards. Prior conversations with existing senators noted that \$160 million dollars have been set aside for this purpose and details are still being worked on. Question was asked of the school superintendents present how much each district had in their fund balance and was reported as follows: LASD-\$24 million, MCC-\$14.5 million, MCE-\$4.3 million. Noted was that it would take less than 0.5% of their existing budget to hire their own SRO using their own budgets, why are they requesting the County Board to expend theirs if they (the schools) consider this item to be such a high priority.

Consideration of an ad-hoc committee was proposed to further discuss.

Item #'s 6-7 Overtime request from the Sheriff. Do not need to increase budget, employees have never been denied being paid for work.

Item #8-request from Emergency Manager (E.M.) Reimink for more staff. E.M. Manager noted that the work load has significantly increased along with the requirements of the current grant agreements. Utilizing current clerical staff to assist is unfair to employee as she was not hired to do E.M. work. Discussion ensued from Commissioners with the question of sharing a part-time position with other Counties or obtaining an intern. Requested E.M. to supply a more detailed list of job duties/responsibilities.

Item #9-request of Emergency Manager Reimink to shift hours from grant funding to county funding. Determined to currently leave hours as is and proceed with budget amendment as necessary in the future.

Item #10-Council on Aging request for staffing. Discussion ensued regarding funding distribution and moving to contracting, possibility of restructuring services, and reporting mechanisms. Administrator Knizacky was instructed to seek out job description samples from other Counties.

Scott Foster, LASD Board Director, noted that having the Sheriff Department employees is a collaborative stop-gap measure, feeling that the school can't wait another year regardless of who funds it.

July 26, 2022

He started to verbally attack Administrator Knizacky regarding comments made and was asked by Chair Andersen to be seated.

Sheriff Cole thanked the board for their time and energy with regards to the SRO, asking if this would be on the August 9, 2022, Board Agenda or not and was informed no. An ad hoc committee was being considered to review.

Vic Burwell, resident, first time to be exposed to a board meeting and stated the leadership was amazing and he hopes to see resolution for all involved.

Dereck Wilson, Undersheriff, and Hamlin Township, thanked all that were here and wished to lighten the mood and share a story of his 7-year-old daughter, who attends school where there is currently a SRO. When dropping her off at school recently, he asked her, who her favorite officer, she replied "Officer Morris is my favorite cop."

Bill Kerans, Scottville Senior Center Director, noted that tonight's meeting is a very vivid example of how difficult a job the board members have, noting everyone has an important role, but the board has the highest priority in making sure tax dollars are spent accordingly and he admires the job they are doing.

No decisions would be made at this board meeting, as it was a work session.

There was no public comment:

There was no other business:

The meeting was adjourned at 8:27 pm.

CHERYL KELLY, COUNTY CLERK

JANET S. ANDERSEN, BOARD CHAIR