

**Columbia County
PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE
September 13, 2021**

Present: Chris Polzer, Keith Miller, Liz Miller, Nancy Long
Absent w/Notice: Barry Pufahl
Also Present: Joseph Ruf, Shonna Neary, Roger Brandner, Greg Bisch, Jim Stilson, Kathy Johnson, Katelyn Schara, David Drews, NaDeanna Giuffre

Monthly Agenda Items:

- 1) Call to Order. Meeting called to order at 9 a.m. by Polzer.
- 2) Compliance with Open Meeting Law. Posting compliance was met per Open Meetings Law.
- 3) Approval of Agenda. *Motion was made by L. Miller to approve the agenda as posted. Seconded by K. Miller. Motion carried unanimously.*
- 4) Approval of Previous Committee Meeting Minutes. *Motion made by Long to approve the previous meeting minutes as presented. Seconded by L. Miller. Motion carried unanimously.*
- 5) Public Input: n/a.
- 6) Approval of Expenditure Reports. Reports will be reviewed by each office.
- 7) Chair's Comments: Chair Polzer advised he would share comments with the individual departments as they are presented.

2022 Retirement and Replacement of Comptroller and Assistant Comptroller

Corporation Counsel Ruf advised that both Lois Schepp and Cathy Karls have announced their retirement plans for 2022. Due to the significance of these two positions, much more notice is being provided so the replacement and training processes can begin sooner. Per Chair Gove's decision, March 2022 has been set as the deadline to hire and/or promote these positions so that the transitions can occur before spring elections and the new county board is set.

Emergency Management. (Johnson)

- 1) **Expenditure Report.** Report was reviewed. *After a review of the Emergency Management expenditure report, a motion was made by L. Miller to approve the report. Seconded by Long. Motion carried unanimously.*
- 2) **General Review of Department Activities.** Chair Polzer thanked Kathy Johnson for her part in the 09/11 Memorial event held at the Portage High School. Chair Polzer further stated he has the utmost respect for all the work and collaborative efforts that were done by local law enforcement and first responder personnel.

Monthly activity report was provided in meeting binders. Discussion. Johnson presented her report and highlighted the following topics: Even with the recent rain in late August and rivers and lakes rising, the fire danger still remained high. Covid vaccinations will be available at the Portage Fire Open House. FEMA Acquisition/ Demo project is moving forward today. ERT and Fire trainings will also be held at the site. ARPA funds were approved for the river gauge replacements.

3. **Hazardous Materials Emergency Planning (HMEP) Grant Application.** Discussion. Corporation Counsel and Accounting are reviewing the grant. This will be used for specialized training. *Motion by K. Miller to approve the Hazardous Materials Emergency Planning Grant and have Columbia County proceed with the process. Seconded by Long. Motion carried unanimously.*

Medical Examiner. (Schara)

- 1) **Expenditure Report.** Report was reviewed. *After a review of the Medical Examiner expenditure report, a motion was made by K. Miller to approve the report. Seconded by Long. Motion carried unanimously.*
- 2) **General Review of Department Activities.** Monthly activity report was provided in meeting binders. Discussion. Schara presented the monthly report and highlighted the following topics: busy month with 62 deaths, 53 of those were certified, 47 cremations, two autopsies, one donation. From a recent overdose in the City of Portage, the screen showed fentanyl laced into heroin and cocaine. Of the three suicides, two were done by hanging and one by gun shot wound. The families of the suicide victims were referred to Health and Human Services. When three calls occurred simultaneously last month, two were handled by Columbia Co ME staff and Marquette County was mutual aided for the third. Staffing: Chief Deputy interviews were held on 09/09/21. Three candidates were interviewed and one was selected. A background is being done. Per diem candidates are applying, but some are not completing or returning their preliminary packets. Training continues for the current deputies.

Sheriff's Office/Jail. (Brandner, Bisch, Stilson)

- 1) **Expenditure Reports.** Report was reviewed. *After a review of the Sheriff's Office's expenditure reports, a motion was made by K. Miller to approve the report. Seconded by L. Miller. Discussion. Motion carried unanimously.*
- 2) **General Review of Department Activities.** Monthly activity report was provided in meeting binders. Sheriff Brandner provided highlights of the report to include: a recent retirement gathering for long-term Dispatcher Gayle Pollack was well attended. During the recent DOC meeting, there was great discussion on state trends, the shift in mindset regarding revocations, holdings in county jails, and the anticipated decline in revenue. There were three fatal crashes recently where a patrol sergeant was first on scene for two and second on scene for the third crash. Because law enforcement sees and must experience so much on a day to day basis, the department-wide training with former Chief Williams specifically for law enforcement and their families was held in August. Trainings like this help to take better care of our staff. This two-day training was offered to all Columbia County municipalities as well as some surrounding counties. Both days had over 125 attendees. Two squads are being purchased from a Columbia County business that came in under the state bid. The Sheriff advised that while walking in the Randolph Labor Day parade, he was uplifted by the community support as he and his staff received a standing ovation as they passed citizens. The 9/11 Memorial event was solemn, but also thought-provoking and inspiring with so many great speakers. Chair Polzer commended all emergency responders as well as Sheriff Brandner and his staff. Staffing: three jailers have been hired while three others failed the background process. Staff shortages are taxing on the current staff and expensive with over 700 hours of overtime in the past six weeks, but it must be done in order to maintain safety and security in the jail. The Sheriff spoke about discussions with Dodge County regarding a contract to hold some of their inmates, but if doing so creates more of a burden on our staff, the inmates will be returned. There were 30 impaired driving arrests, 40 domestic-related arrests, and eight overdoses with two being fatal. Thankfully calls for service have returned to the five-year average from years past. Covid concerns are occurring again and extra precautions continue in the jail to keep our inmates as safe as possible. Thanks to teamwork and Corporation Counsel assisting with more of the open records requests, the Sheriff's Office secretaries reduced the dictated reports folder down to zero. That was unprecedented to-date. The Sheriff commended his secretaries and further stated it speaks to the quality of staff and the


technology available to make some tasks more efficient. Deputy 12-hour shift talks have been ongoing. Switching to these 12-hour shifts would be a benefit to the staff and management. If the deputies choose to move forward with a one-year trial, a MOU would need to be drafted and forwarded to Corporation Counsel for review. Discussions regarding protective status for the jail deputies continue. Another swearing-in ceremony will be done in the near future to encompass the new jail deputies hired.

- 3) **Inmate Count and General Review of Jail Operations.** Inmate Count: 115. Captain Stilson advised that even though the inmate count is down slightly, staff are busy due to staff shortages and ongoing training. There were 58 doctor visits, 525 nurse screens, and two ER visits. There were two inmate suicide attempts both of which were found in time. Communication Center Update: Dispatch Sergeant Liz Schutz recently completed the 102nd Annual edition of the NENA Dispatch Center Manager Certification Program (CMCP) training.
- 4) Request for Accounts Receivable Write-Off. Discussion. *Motion by L. Miller to approve the A/R Write-Off for uncollectable invoices for 2016-2018 as presented. Seconded by K. Miller. Motion carried unanimously.*
- 5) **Position Replacement Request – Jailer.** Discussion. *Motion by Long to approve the jailer position replacement request for Bryan Espinoza. Seconded by L. Miller. Motion carried unanimously.*
- 6) **Position Replacement Request - Dispatcher.** Discussion. *Motion by K. Miller to approve the dispatcher position replacement request for Gayle Pollack. Seconded by Long. Motion carried unanimously.*

Meeting adjourned at 9:52 a.m.

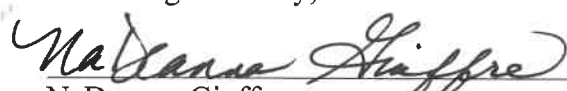
Next meeting date: Monday, October 11, 2021 at 9 a.m.

Secretary of Record,



Supervisor Liz Miller
Committee Secretary

Recording Secretary,



NaDeanna Giuffre
Assistant to Sheriff Brandner

cc: Public Safety Members
Chair Gove, 1st Vice Chair Foley, 2nd Vice Chair Koch
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