

CALHOUN COUNTY
PROCEEDINGS OF THE
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

March 15, 2007

The Regular Session of the Calhoun County Board of Commissioners convened at 7:06 p.m., Thursday, March 15, 2007 in the Commissioners' Meeting Room, County Building, Marshall, Michigan.

Roll Call: Present: Comrs. Arnquist, Bolger, Moore, Rae, Segal, Solis and Todd.

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

A Moment of Silence was observed in memory of Eileen Hillary Bolger; followed by the Pledge of Allegiance, led by Comr. Todd.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA/ADDENDUM:

“Motion by Comr. Bolger, supported by Comr. Rae, adopt the following: Resolved by the Calhoun County Board of Commissioners approve the March 15, 2007 agenda and addendum as presented.”

Voice Vote: Motion CARRIED

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

“Motion by Comr. Solis, supported by Comr. Rae, adopt the following: Resolved by the Calhoun County Board of Commissioners approve the February 15, 2007 and March 1, 2007 minutes as presented.”

Voice Vote: Motion CARRIED

CITIZENS' COMMENTS:

Ms. Pearl Gray-McWhorter, Battle Creek resident, presented a certificate awarded to her by the state for her service to veterans, pointing out that the county and Battle Creek City have never recognized her work.

Ms. Gray-McWhorter advised that she caught burglars in her yard and called 9-1-1, and that when the police finally arrived the officer said that she should erect a fence. Ms. Gray-McWhorter stated that she is “broke,” and that the permit to erect a fence alone costs \$70.

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Ms. Gray-McWhorter advised that Battle Creek City is supporting Semco Energy Company raising their prices on gas. Ms. Gray-McWhorter stated that residents within the City pay more for gas than anywhere else in the state. Ms. Gray-McWhorter advised that she urged the Board to watch those crooks in Battle Creek.

Mr. Gardy Berezonsky, Marengo Township resident, objected to relocating the Board meetings to Albion, Battle Creek and Athens. Mr. Berezonsky stated that he would like to know how much extra moving the meetings shall cost the taxpayers. Mr. Berezonsky inquired whether mileage shall have to be paid for staff to travel to the meetings.

SPECIAL ORDER OF BUSINESS -- "Frances Smith Day" Proclamation:

Chairwoman Segal read, and accompanied by Prosecutor Hallacy, presented the following proclamation to Frances Smith.

Res. 37-2007

"Motion by Comr. Bolger, supported by Comr. Moore, resolved by the Calhoun County Board of Commissioners approve the following proclamation:

WHEREAS, FRANCES A. SMITH began her career with the Calhoun County Prosecutor's Office on March 28, 1957; and

WHEREAS, Frances A. Smith, as of March 28, 2007, has continuously served as a member of the staff of the Calhoun County Prosecutor's Office for FIFTY (50) Years; and

WHEREAS, Frances A. Smith has, through her tireless effort and work, been a cornerstone for the Prosecutor's Office in the pursuit of justice and in bringing peace to the victims of crime; and

WHEREAS, the Attorneys and Staff of the Calhoun County Prosecutor's Office are privileged to work with a person whose integrity, professionalism and caring for others has earned her the respect and admiration of her fellow employees; and

WHEREAS, employees within the various Calhoun County departments have had the pleasure of working with Fran and acknowledge her dedication to local government service and her willingness to assist those in need; and

WHEREAS, Calhoun County Law Enforcement and the Citizens of Calhoun County are honored by the dedicated service Frances A. Smith has given to this county.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Calhoun County Board of Commissioners that FRANCES A. SMITH is hereby honored and thanked for her Fifty Years of dedicated service to the Calhoun County Prosecutor's Office, Calhoun County Law Enforcement and the Citizens of Calhoun County; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Calhoun County Board of Commissioners hereby proclaim March 28, 2007 as

“FRANCES SMITH DAY”

in Calhoun County and acknowledge this significant event in the history of Calhoun County.”

Voice Vote: Motion CARRIED

Ms. Smith stated that it has been a pleasure to work for the Prosecutor's Office and thanked Prosecutor Hallacy and the Board.

Prosecutor John Hallacy advised that the Assistant Prosecuting Attorneys Association honored Ms. Smith last summer, and that Ms. Smith's portrait is hung in the Grand Hotel in Mackinaw City.

Ms. Smith introduced her family.

CONSENT AGENDA:

Res. 38-2007

“Motion by Comr. Bolger, supported by Comr. Rae, adopt the following: Resolved by the Calhoun County Board of Commissioners approve the following March 15, 2007 Consent Agenda as presented:

A. Petitions, Communications, Reports:

- (1) Resolution received from Midland County urging the Michigan Legislature to freeze taxable residential property values. (Referred to the Legislative Liaisons, with a copy remitted to Equalization Director David Lee)”

Voice Vote: Motion CARRIED

UNFINISHED AND OLD BUSINESS -- 2007 Budget Adjustment:

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County Administrator/Controller Greg Purcell advised that the adjustment was brought to the Budget Committee, which recommended that the adjustment to hire a Finance Director be placed before the full Board.

Res. 39-2007

“Motion by Comr. Todd, supported by Comr. Rae, adopt the following: Resolved by the Calhoun County Board of Commissioners approve the 2007 budget adjustment appropriating \$50,189 from the Contingency Fund to the Finance Department.”

Comr. Bolger stated that he previously expressed his desire for the county to do something differently, and still believes things can be done differently; e.g., contractually hiring a certified public accountant. Comr. Bolger advised that what bothers him is that this body could not find \$26,000 to save a Juvenile Justice Prosecuting Attorney position, and now can find \$50,000.

Comr. Moore noted that the salary proposed is at the top step of the grade. Mr. Purcell advised that the county may have to pay the highest step to acquire a qualified individual, however, that Administration shall attempt to hire at a lower step. Comr. Moore voiced concern that the proposed salary level sends a message to the remainder of the staff regarding hiring at above the minimum step. Comr. Moore stated that he does not believe all the questions were answered at the Budget Committee level. Comr. Moore advised that he did not support the hiring in Committee, therefore, will not support the appropriation at the Board level.

Comr. Solis pointed out that the county has a budget of \$39 Million and that some departments have financial persons. Comr. Solis stated that it was quite clear in the last budget process that the county needs a Finance Director; further, pointed out that it is a matter of priority to make sure the county “stays above water” and maximizes the grants.

Comr. Rae advised that Commissioners Moore, Solis and he met in Budget Committee and discussed the hiring of a Finance Director at length; further that he has checked with other counties, and counties much smaller than Calhoun County have a Finance Director.

Chairwoman Segal stated that she believes Ms. Kline has done a phenomenal job and thanked Ms. Kline for her work. Chairwoman Segal advised that the Board is looking for someone dedicated to looking for extra money.

Roll call vote: Yes - 5 (Comrs. Todd, Arnquist, Rae, Segal and Solis)
No - 2 (Comrs. Bolger and Moore)
Motion CARRIED

PETITIONS AND NEW BUSINESS:

County Administrator/Controller’s Report

National Guard and Reserve Employees Statement of Support

Chairperson Segal read and presented the following Statement of Support to retired Col. Howard Strand.

Res. 40-2007

“Motion by Comr. Bolger, supported by Comr. Moore, resolved by the Calhoun County Board of Commissioners approve the following:

WHEREAS, We, the Calhoun County Board of Commissioners, recognize the National Guard and Reserve as essential to the strength of our nation and the well-being of our communities; and

WHEREAS, in the highest American tradition, the patriotic men and women of the Guard and Reserve serve voluntarily in an honorable and vital profession. They train to respond to their community and their country in time of need. They deserve the support of every segment of our society; and

WHEREAS, if these volunteer sources are to continue to serve our nation, increased public understanding is required of the essential role of the Guard and Reserve in preserving our national security. Their members must have the cooperation of all American employers in encouraging employee participation in Guard and Reserve training programs.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Calhoun County Board of Commissioners join with other employers in pledging that:

- 1) Employment will not be denied because of service in the Guard or Reserve.
- 2) Employee job and career opportunities will not be limited or reduced because of service in the Guard or Reserve.
- 3) Employees will be granted leaves of absence for military training in the Guard or Reserve, consistent with existing laws, without sacrifice of vacation.
- 4) This Statement of Support for the National Guard and Reserve Programs will be made known throughout our organization.”

Roll call vote: Yes - 7 Motion CARRIED Unanimously

Col. Strand advised that he represents the Michigan Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and

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Reserves and the 19,000 Guards and Reservists in the state. Col. Strand stated that it is a pleasure to receive the signed Statement of Support, and presented the Board with a letter for display within the County Building advising that Calhoun County supports the National Guard and Reserve Programs.

Revised Board of Commissioners Meeting Schedule

Mr. Purcell advised that he has contacted the various cities and there shall be no cost for the meeting rooms, however, there shall be cost for the building maintenance's overtime and video taping of the meetings. Mr. Purcell further advised that Commissioner Moore is "lining up" a building in Athens Township. Mr. Purcell applauded Board members for making themselves more accessible to the constituents, and thanked the Cities of Battle Creek and Albion for allowing the Board to use their facilities at no charge.

Res. 41-2007

"Motion by Comr. Arnquist, supported by Comr. Rae, adopt the following: Resolved by the Calhoun County Board of Commissioners approve the Revised 2007 Board of Commissioners Meeting Schedule, subject to determination of the Athens Township meeting location prior to publication of the schedule."

Comr. Bolger advised that he has discussed the issue with his constituents and they are opposed to the idea. Comr. Bolger stated that the idea was proposed to improve access for constituents in Battle Creek and that he believes there is more to Calhoun County than only a population center. Comr. Bolger stated that this proposal still deludes the county seat, and voiced concern that taking the meetings to Battle Creek and Albion will make it harder for the people to address the Board.

Comr. Rae stated that the whole purpose of conducting the meetings in various locations is to bring government closer to the people, and he believes that it shall. Comr. Rae pointed out that the main population center is in Battle Creek, and stated that he believes conducting the meetings in the various locations will make the Commissioners' functions more transparent. Comr. Rae stated that the vast majority of the people he has discussed the proposal with think that it will work, and that he does not believe Commissioner Bolger has to be afraid of trying something new.

Mr. Jerry Keller, Battle Creek resident, advised that conducting the meetings at other than the county seat is not new, that it has been tried before.

Comr. Rae continued that he cannot agree with the concern that Commissioner Bolger is raising as the same concern was raised when the Burnham Brook Center and the jail moved.

Comr. Arnquist advised that she also supports the proposal. Comr. Arnquist pointed out that the Board conducts 24 meetings per year and that 18 shall still be conducted in Marshall. Comr. Arnquist stated that she believes conducting the meetings in other locations shall improve access and attendance for other people in the county.

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Comr. Solis concurred with Commissioners Arnquist and Rae, however, acknowledged that moving the meetings shall create extra work for the staff.

Roll call vote: Yes - 5 (Comrs. Rae, Segal, Solis, Todd and Arnquist)
No - 2 (Comrs. Bolger and Moore)
Motion CARRIED

February 2007 Financial Statements

Interim Finance Director Pam Kline reported that the February financial statements show a reduction to the General Fund totaling \$432,601 which is a product of the timing of revenue and the standard monthly expenditure payments.

Mid-South Substance Abuse Commission Appointments

Chairwoman Segal advised that there is a Mid-South Substance Abuse Commission Board meeting Monday at 6:00 p.m. in Lansing at which she would like some Commissioners to attend.

Res. 42-2007

“Motion by Comr. Segal, supported by Comr. Moore, adopt the following: Resolved by the Calhoun County Board of Commissioners reaffirm the appointment of Eusebio Solis to the Mid-South Substance Abuse Commission, with appointment term to expire December 31, 2008; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Calhoun County Board of Commissioners appoint Mike Rae; and Gregory Moore, as Alternate, to the Mid-South Substance Abuse Commission, with appointment terms to expire July 1, 2007.”

Roll call vote: Yes - 7 Motion CARRIED Unanimously

CITIZENS' TIME:

Ms. Gray-McWhorter advised that the Public Service Commission conducted a hearing and that no Board members attended. Ms. Gray-McWhorter advised that the Public Service Commission shall be conducting another hearing and recommended Board members attend to find out what is going on. Ms. Gray-McWhorter again advised that Semco Energy Company charges Battle Creek residents \$1.25 more than any where else in the state and are in “bed” with the City of Battle Creek.

Ms. Gray-McWhorter complained that the majority of people that work for the citizens earn a salary while she does not receive a dime, nor any recognition. Ms. Gray-McWhorter advised that she spent 7 ½ hours at the Veterans Administration Hospital yesterday and she is sick, yet still the county does not give her a tribute. Ms.

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Gray-McWhorter stated that she did not even have any thing to eat until 9:00 p.m., and inquired how many of the Board members would do that.

Mr. Terry Langston of the Albion Substance Abuse Coalition expressed the Coalition's appreciation of the Board's efforts in reviewing substance abuse prevention and treatment services in Calhoun County. Mr. Langston stated that there are some success stories and that he would like the Board to keep in mind that the providers have done some wonderful work in helping people. Mr. Langston stated that while the Board continues to discuss a coordinating agency the Coalition requests that the Board look for transparency, accountability, trusting relationships and how to serve everyone in the county.

Mr. Creighton Burrows, Marshall resident, pointed out that the jail was supposed to be built in Marshall as approved by the people, however was moved to Battle Creek. Mr. Burrows advised that the Michigan Constitution states that the principle office of the Sheriff shall be at the county seat, so Road Patrol was moved back to Marshall. Mr. Burrows stated that the jail and the Office of the Sheriff should be brought back to Marshall, the county seat.

Mr. Burrows addressed conducting the county Board meetings in other than the county seat, pointing out that the Board meetings were previously moved to Battle Creek and Albion, and that the people that used to attend the Board meetings no longer attend as no one listens to what the people want.

Mr. Keller advised that moving the county Board meetings to various locations has been tried before, and it did not increase attendance and actually decreased attendance as those that regularly attended became confused regarding where to go. Mr. Keller pointed out that the state established that county seat as the center of the county, and that is where county business should be conducted. Mr. Keller stated that the Board should be held accountable for all the additional money it will cost moving the meetings; i.e., building maintenance overtime and employee travel expense.

Mr. Keller further advised that the people voted for the jail to be built in Marshall; however everyone lied, and moved the jail to Battle Creek regardless.

CLAIMS PAYABLE LISTINGS:

Res. 43-2007

“Motion by Comr. Solis, supported by Comr. Rae, adopt the following: Resolved by the Calhoun County Board of Commissioners approve payment of the list of claims against the county in the total amount of \$210,604.67 for the week of February 28, 2007; further, approve payment of the list of claims against the county in the total amount of \$561,067.33 for the week of March 6, 2007.”

Roll call vote: Yes - 7 Motion CARRIED Unanimously

RECESS:

The Board recessed at 8:07 p.m. at the call of the Chair.

mlb