

JUDICIARY AND LAW COMMITTEE

Tuesday, May 10, 2011
Administrative Center – Room 3220
2:30 P.M.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Vicki Burke, Bridget Flood (2:41 p.m.), Maureen Freedland, Tammy Gamroth, Brad Konkel

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Joe Bilskemper, Ray Ebert

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

STAFF & GUESTS: Steve O'Malley, Tim Gruenke, John Steers, Mike Kiefer, Margaret Norden, Bev Heebesch, Doris Daggett, Steve Helgeson

ROLL CALL/CALL TO ORDER

Chair Vicki Burke called the meeting to order at 2:30 p.m.

APPROVE COMMITTEE MINUTES OF APRIL 12, 2011

MOTION by Freedland/Konkel to approve the Committee Minutes of April 12, 2011.

Motion carried unanimously. Bilskemper, Ebert, Flood excused.

APPROVE CONSENT AGENDA

MOTION by Freedland/Konkel to receive and file the following consent agenda items:

Minutes of LEC Construction Committee of April 5, 2011

Motion carried unanimously. Bilskemper, Ebert, Flood excused.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None requested.

CONFERENCE/MEETING REPORTS

Supervisor Konkel reported on his ride-along's with Sheriff's Department staff.

DISCUSSION ABOUT JAIL PROGRAMMING TO INCLUDE ART CLASSES

The discussion was a follow-up to a request by Supervisor Freedland, who received a letter with a suggestion to display inmate art in the LEC addition. Mike Kiefer responded to questions about whether a display would be appropriate inside the jail or in the public area. He stated that some inmates express themselves well and could use art or art classes in jail to communicate appropriately, but he would be concerned about hidden messages and symbolism in artwork that could actually be communication with gang members. He will consider the proposal and report back in the future.

REPORT FROM DISTRICT ATTORNEY

Tim Gruenke provided statistics on the number of cases referred (approximately 6,000) and the number charged (approximately 4,500) in 2009 and 2010. He reported that total numbers could be misleading because there are instances of multiple charges for one person that would be lumped together in one court case. Overall, numbers of felonies were down, and misdemeanors were up. This was due in part to the department converting some charges, such as forgery, to misdemeanors. He also reported on the following challenges in his department:

- High turnover of prosecutors that has occurred statewide with the end of collective bargaining, and which results in insufficient time to fully train new prosecutors before they opt to leave;
- Proposals at state level regarding OWI-1 charges and concealed carry, and at a local level regarding marijuana possession, that could have an effect on numbers of cases and how they are charged.

Discussion was held regarding the scope of his authority to dismiss or prosecute cases, and the increase in cases referred by UW-La Crosse police who are now doing more routine law enforcement of the area, and not strictly campus security.

REPORT FROM MEDICAL EXAMINER

John Steers provided statistics, as follows:

- 233 natural deaths;
- 57 accidental deaths;
- 16 suicides;
- 2 homicides;
- 6 undetermined.

He also reported a total of 28 autopsies. The department issued 559 cremation permits. Steers reported he is participating in a new, five-year study of suicides to determine trigger points and preventions.

DISCUSSION ABOUT JAIL VIDEOCONFERENCING VS. FACE-TO-FACE CONFERENCING

The discussion was a follow-up to a question raised at the LEC Construction Committee about the criteria for jail inmates having face-to-face conferences, rather than videoconferencing. Steve Helgeson reported that they are still in a transition phase, but the videoconferencing appears to be well accepted by inmates and families, who have had no complaints about the new system. He stated that he is supportive of having face-to-face conferences, but escorting inmates to the interview area requires more staff than was anticipated, and they are making it available at this time only to inmates who are going to prison. They feel it would be counter-productive to introduce something to the entire jail population if they then encounter problems and have to take away that option. Flexible guidelines will be put in place when the transition is done, and will probably be based on a reward system. Supervisor Freedland asked to have the item placed on the agenda in six months.

ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

Chair Burke reminded the committee of the opening ceremony for the LEC addition on May 19, 2011, at 4:30 p.m.

Jail chaplain program

Women's reward system in jail

K9 unit (August-September, 2011)

NEXT COMMITTEE MEETING: JUNE 7, 2011

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Flood/Konkel to adjourn. **Motion carried unanimously.** Bilskemper, Ebert excused. The meeting adjourned at 3:24 p.m.

Approved, June 7, 2011, Margaret Norden, Recorder