

KNOX COUNTY COMMISSION

Special Meeting

Wednesday – October 27, 2010 - 1:00 p.m.

A special meeting of the Knox County Commission was held on Wednesday, October 27, 2010, at 1:00 p.m., at the county courthouse, 62 Union Street, Rockland, Maine.

Commission members present were: Anne H. Beebe-Center, Commissioner District #1, Richard L. Parent, Jr., Commissioner District #2, and Roger A. Moody, Commissioner District #3.

County staff present included: County Administrator Andrew Hart, Administrative Assistant Candice Richards, CIO/CSO Jeff Lake, Technical Support Specialist Mike Dean, Executive Assistant Constance Johanson, Sheriff Donna Dennison, Patrol Administrator Tim Carroll, Building Maintenance Supervisor Jon Grout, Airport Manager Jeff Northgraves, Registrar of Deeds Lisa Simons, Registrar of Probate Elaine Hallett, DA Prosecutorial Assistant Shane Riley; DA Legal Secretary/Systems Administrator Kelly Perry; and Finance Director Kathy Robinson.

Others in attendance: Michael Phillips, Candidate for Knox County Sheriff.

Special Meeting – Agenda **Wednesday – October 27, 2010 – 1:00 p.m.**

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| I. | 1:00 | Meeting Called To Order |
| II. | 1:01 | Discussion Items
1. Meet with Department Heads to Discuss MRI Report (1 - 3pm)
2. Commission to Work on Recommendation Priority List (3 - 4pm) |
| III. | 4:00 | Adjourn |

I. Meeting Called to Order

Commission Chair Anne Beebe-Center called the October 27, 2010 special meeting of the Knox County Commission to order at 1:00 p.m.

II. Discussion Items

1. Meet with Department Heads to Discuss MRI Report.

Commissioner Anne Beebe-Center explained that the purpose of the meeting was for department heads to share their opinions with the Commission. Department heads had already shared some written thoughts via email but the Commission wanted a chance to discuss those opinions in person.

SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

Sheriff Donna Dennison explained that she was not trying to put anybody from MRI down but that she felt a few things in the report needed to be changed. She also strongly felt that the jail should have been included since as the Sheriff, she oversees the jail operations. She felt that the report slandered her chief deputy (*who had resigned previous to the report coming out*) and she thought that the remarks relating to the chief deputy should be removed from the report. She added that the Sheriff's Department just wants to be able to get past the report and return to business. She stated that for the cost of the study, the County could have just built onto the jail and solved the space needs issue for the same amount of money.

There was a brief discussion between Commissioner Beebe-Center and the Sheriff. Commissioner Beebe-Center felt that there was some ambiguity in the report that might be cleared up if the expert that wrote the report came to a Commission meeting to clarify. The Sheriff thought this would be a waste of time and that the report should not be accepted by the Commission. After being asked several times if the Sheriff would think professionally that having clarification would be useful, the Sheriff consented that if the Commission wanted to do so, she would not object. Commissioner Parent commented that he did not understand parts of the law enforcement piece of the report so he would like the expert to come up.

Commissioner Moody was concerned about the lack of administrative and management skills of the layers below the sheriff. There needs to be the opportunity to have training through the County in management, which would benefit the sheriff and the whole county. If the person coming in already has the skills, that works out great, but if not, the County has the responsibility to train them.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

EMA Director Ray Sisk felt that the report dealing with his department was fairly accurate. The report identified some issues that the County already knows about and is working to resolve. The EOC – operational efficiency issue was one such problem as the facility is fairly vulnerable. It is

difficult to predict how much longer EMA costs will be funded at 50% reimbursement from the Federal government. There have been reductions in the amount of Homeland Security grant funding. Emergency Management Performance Grants (EMPG) support the importance of local missions and are unlikely to disappear in the mid-term. The EMA budget is about six months in advance of the County budget because of the State being on a fiscal year while the County operates on a Calendar year.

For EMA to have another employee, the County would have to be willing to fund it up front and get reimbursed 50%. The County would receive a lot of value for the amount of money spent. The department really needs another full-time person. Current employees and volunteers have all been doing a lot of extra hours and everybody is getting burned out. A full-time deputy EMA person could be trained and act in place of the director periodically to give him a break. Most of our problems are man-power (or lack thereof) related. Staff from other County departments have been volunteering in EMA but the director needs to be able to send these people for training. Right now they are doing it because they care about the County. Director Sisk said that he would like to see employee's job descriptions include EMA training and EOC support. The County is also the host for Rockland's EOC. Every emergency situation is different so it is not easy to know what help is needed in advance. Sometimes it's as simple as getting linked to the state. Sometimes the EOC needs to be set up out in the field where the emergency is. It's not always based around a physical facility. Every piece is different enough that what is needed varies.

IT support is mission essential. The majority of what EMA does is IT, or technology, based. The technology needs of EMA are not really any different than the other County departments except that EMA has a few standalone systems that other departments would not need. The majority is just needing connectivity and equipment that works well. There are a few services that the County should be providing, including having a central grants administrator for the municipalities because while some towns have professional staff members on staff, most towns do not.

FINANCE

Finance Director Kathy Robinson expressed some concern over the fact that she had not been scheduled a meeting with the MRI representatives on Monday. Other departments had been given that opportunity and she wanted to have the opportunity to meet with them to discuss her questions and to better understand the consultants' way of thinking as they wrote the report. She hoped to speak with them prior to the meeting when the consultants all come up for the one meeting.

County Administrator Andrew Hart explained that because of the limited amount of time on Monday, MRI only met with departments looking at major staffing changes. The sheriff also met with MRI because of the extensive list of recommendations in the report for the Sheriff's department. There was not enough time for MRI to meet with every department and so only the departments with major changes were chosen to do so. The Finance did not have the same level of changes as other departments. Rather than a staffing change, Finance changes were more of an administrative nature. When Ms. Robinson requested a phone conference with MRI, the consultants were concerned because they understood from the meeting with the Commission that the Commission wanted department heads submitting responses to the county administrator in writing. The MRI consultants did not want to circumvent the process set by the Commission. Department heads need to follow the direction given and not go contacting MRI consultants on their own because the County will incur additional costs. Departments with personnel changes were given higher priority over organizational or operational changes.

Director Robinson commented that she thought that the county administrator could probably answer her questions relating to the MRI report prior to the experts coming to meet with the Commission.

BUILDING MAINTENANCE

Building Maintenance Supervisor Jon Grout explained that part of the problem with the MRI report is that it was generated at a particular point in time and the makeup of the department has changed since then. It is no longer a four-person department because one janitor resigned due to health issues. Because of the study being underway, no action was taken to replace that employee. As the maintenance supervisor, Supervisor Grout is not a janitor so there are not actually four janitors. It is actually one supervisor and two janitors now that the third janitor has resigned.

Another issue Supervisor Grout thought worth mentioning were the observations made regarding courthouse building security. The county administrator had been asking for a list of people with ID cards or pass-code authorizations to secured County doors on the courthouse. Supervisor Grout stated that he maintained this list electronically and the list changes frequently, at a minimum of probably three times a month. It would not make sense to have a paper copy because it keeps changing. It is also probably about 200 names by now because if a name is deleted when a person leaves the County, that person's name is also removed from the previous records that show someone

going in and out of the building. The person's access is revoked, but it makes sense to keep their name in the system so that the entry history does not suddenly contain a bunch of unknowns.

As far as moving janitorial services to nighttime hours, it is not quite so simple as it sounds. The building hours may be 8 a.m. – 4 p.m., but there are some employees in the building as early as 6 am. There are also sometimes employees and members of the public in the building well past regular office hours, especially when the EOC is being manned, or if a court case runs into the evening. It is true that both janitors are working during the earlier part of the day. They come in before office staff arrives and do other duties during the day like cleaning bathrooms or changing light bulbs. To move them to the nighttime is counterproductive because they end up trying to avoid meetings or court cases. Some departments clear out right at 4 p.m. but some employees are in the building late into the evening.

When asked if the County really needed four maintenance employees, Supervisor Grout explained that right now there are only three – one supervisor and two janitors, but the employees need to be able to take time off. The duties of the fourth employee are being filled right now with a contract employee. The part-timer that has been used in the past was unable to help out this time because of his other job. The contract cleaner is the same guy who has been cleaning the airport. He has been helping at the courthouse for the last few weeks. He is technically contracted with the airport and not the County as a whole. The jail is traditionally cleaned by the inmates.

County Administrator Andrew Hart explained that when the full-time employee resigned, Supervisor Grout had asked to fill it with a part-time person, but because of the study, it was decided not to do that. The contracted employee doing cleaning services for the airport was asked to come help out at the courthouse. He has his own business and works for a lot of different businesses. He has been able to fill in here and it has been very beneficial to both the airport and the courthouse.

There was a short discussion regarding doing an analysis to compare what the costs would be with going in either direction with janitorial services: either contracting out for all building maintenance services/janitorial services, or keeping things the same. Whether cleaning services were contracted out or not, there still needs to be someone in the building to watch over everything.

County Administrator Andrew Hart commented that he was not sure why there was not already county-wide cleaners for the courthouse, the jail complex at 327 Park Street, and new airport terminal. The county wouldn't have to worry about discipline or paying out benefits, etc. The County currently contracts out landscaping and snow plowing, electricians, plumbers, etc. It does not make sense to have three facilities being taken care of by three different companies. It would make more sense to have a generalized facilities manager and one company clean/maintenance all of them.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Technical Support Specialist Mike Dean explained some concerns that he had regarding the report and the future of the IT department. A large portion of the report contained just enough truth to make it true but in his written response to the Commission, TSS Dean had indicated that there were places in the report where either he and CIO/CSO Jeff Lake did not give MRI enough information, or MRI did not ask enough questions to understand that the County IT staff are already working on things. Mike Ryan, the specialist who reviewed the County's IT department, is a consultant. His job every day is to provide IT services on a contract basis. TSS Dean stated that he was not surprised that Mr. Ryan's conclusion was to outsource IT.

TSS Dean stated that if all the Commission wants to do is maintain what is already there, then outsource IT; however, if the Commission wants proactive solutions and to move forward, the County needs in-house IT stuff. What is seen as idle time for the IT staff is actually time being spent studying, researching, troubleshooting, etc. That is stuff you would pay for by the hour with a contractor that is currently just handled in-house with IT staff. There are advantages with going to outsourcing; it can mean a decrease in costs, but it is also a decrease in services. It is possible that the IT staff did not provide enough data but there was no non-disclosure agreement entered into with Mr. Ryan and the County cannot just tell people how the network is designed because it is a security risk. Had Mr. Ryan wanted more information, he could have asked. TSS Dean stated that he believes that Mr. Ryan started with a preconceived hypothesis and then found evidence to support it. The IT plan, or evolution of the IT department, needs to come from the Commission and then IT designs the process to get to the desired end. He added that the Commission Chair has said that she'd like to offer services to municipalities but the County cannot do that with no structure. The IT staff have also not been mandated to do that. In the time since beginning his employment with the County, TSS Dean stated that the network has been simplified and significant changes have been made to make the network reliable and secure. The "vision" is up to the Commission; that is not which specific pieces of technology, but rather the direction the Commission wants to go with technology.

It was suggested that every department has different IT wants and needs but there are some things that every department needs and the County should start with those. It would be helpful if each department head made a list of issues or potential problems relating to technology, especially if the department head did not know how to fix it. There will be some overlap but a lot of departmental problems involve IT fixes.

Commissioner Anne Beebe-Center commented that she had worked with the previous county administrator when the IT services for the County had been started. She stated that her understanding of the goal was to raise the technology proficiency level of all employees, create schedules for replacing equipment, centralize files what needed to be centralized, and put interoperable systems together. She stated that she had thought that this was already happening and was therefore shocked when she read the report. She added that she did not understand where MRI was coming from in their opinions and would very much like to have the content expert go through the report and explain so there could be some resolution. She stated that she liked the idea of the department heads submitting a list of their technological needs and problems.

There was a general discussion about the smaller day-to-day technical needs departments often have that the current in-house IT staff takes care of on a regular basis. To have a contracted IT presence coming in for every minor issue would be very costly and a hassle. Before getting IT staff, the County had to handle IT issues this way, and service was very slow and frustrating. At least with the County's in-house staff, they are already on hand and if they do not know the answer to a problem, they have sources they can go to for help. Some networks (like the law enforcement servers) cannot wait when there is an issue. If an outside contractor is used in the DA's office, a DA staff member has to essentially "baby sit" that person to ensure that they are doing what they are supposed to, which is a waste of time and resources. With technology evolving, an employee's work can be completely crippled if they are unable to use their computer or even if they cannot print something. Even if you can find a company that could respond to a technical support issue that required immediate assistance, it would come at a very high cost. All of the "moving forward" technical recommendations in the report require IT staff to be able to implement it. If there were no in-house IT staff on hand for the minor as well as the large issues, the process would become stunted.

The report was generally thought as "scathing" and believed to be biased towards contracting it out. There was concern about several remarks in the report which indicated that IT staff had misused their informational access, which was wrong. Several individuals wanted the Commission to respond publicly since these incorrect statements were quoted in the newspaper, but Commissioner Beebe-Center and the county administrator were both concerned that when you respond publicly, you risk escalating the argument and then the public wonders why the County is getting so defensive. There are parts of the report that cannot be substantiated should be eliminated from the final report. Then maybe the public would see the changes. The IT staff does monitor outbound traffic on the network but there is a difference between monitoring computer use and internet traffic. The IT staff is not monitoring the day to day use of the computers or rifling through employee's data or reading their emails, as the MRI report would suggest.

REGISTRY OF DEEDS

Registrar of Deeds Lisa Simmons explained to the Commission that some of the recommendations from the report are already being worked. The report also recommended eliminating a position which is upsetting because everybody knows their job and works well together. She added that the department could not afford to lose a person. The report indicated that the department should go bookless and that it would save time but the County has tried that and it did not save any time. Every document still has to be verified. The only time used is the ten minutes it takes to print the book. The only money to be saved by not printing them would be a little bit of printer toner. Some of the older public members are not comfortable using the computers and need to use the physical books. Going paperless would also mean having to have more public terminals and that would cost a lot of money. Employees end up having to spend a significant amount of time helping the public and walking them through how to use the computers. At least half of the counties in the state are bookless but they had to buy more terminals. That is usually done because they have run out of space for the books, and not because they want to go paperless. Knox County's Registry of Deeds will probably run out of space within the next five years.

The commissioners were concerned that if the position were cut and the economy turned around, the County would have to hire someone new and have to train them, which did not make sense financially.

Prosecutorial Assistant Shane Riley commented that as an occasional user of Deeds, he felt that going to an electronic format is not always time or resource effective for people using that office. The economy may be down but it just means that staff direction has shifted from printing books to helping the public with the technology. A lot of people do not use the technology on a regular basis and need help from the employees. Also, Deeds is a department that actually brings in revenue.

AIRPORT

Airport Manager Jeff Northgraves commented that the report supported his assertion that the airport does need an additional maintenance person. He added that his budget request for 2011 has the additional position as part of the year being full-time, and part of the year as part-time.

PROBATE

Register of Probate Elaine Hallett had to leave earlier in the meeting so she would be asked to join the Commission the next time they meet.

COMMUNICATIONS

Director of Communications Linwood Lothrop was not in attendance at the meeting so he would be asked to join the Commission the next time they meet.

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE

Commissioner Anne Beebe-Center asked County Administrator Andrew Hart if he had any opinions that he wanted to share.

County Administrator Andrew Hart said that he did not. He stated that he served a dual role as department head and administrator and felt that he needed to remain objective. When he was approached by employees in his department asking for his support, he had told them that he was not going to be writing anything but told them that they could write something to the Commission if they wanted to.

Commissioner Anne Beebe-Center asked Executive Assistant Constance Johanson about her opinion regarding moving some human resource tasks to the Finance Office.

Executive Assistant Constance Johanson replied that she agreed with the Finance Director in that the MRI experts did not ask a lot of questions or talk about the how/why of moving HR tasks to Finance. She felt that she was not able to get the visiting expert to understand what it is that she does for a job. The County is a direct reimbursement employer for unemployment and there is already so much being spent on unemployment. Letting more staff go would cost the County more in unemployment. She suggested that she thought certain portions of the recommendations could be corrected by integrated some information in MUNIS and allowing the county administrator and department heads to have access. The County's website and various other tasks got on her plate by default and she felt that she had done her best to do them.

There was a discussion regarding MRI's suggestion to outsource minute-taking for Commission meetings. It was suggested that most people do not understand how difficult a task it can be. The minutes are very time consuming and require that the person taking the minutes already understand the subject matter to be as accurate a representation of the meeting as possible. Court reporters have been hired in the past for transcripts and that cost about \$800, and that was just for one meeting. Outsourcing minutes would most likely be extremely expensive. The Commission minutes have evolved over time, depending on who was actually doing them. In the last few years the Commission seemed to want fairly detailed minutes, but that makes them a long and arduous task. The more meetings that are held, the more of a work load it becomes. It was decided to discuss this topic at further Commission meetings. It was also suggested that the new Commission in January may want to discuss it again to decide the kind of minutes they would like to have for Commission meetings.

2. Commission to Work on Recommendation Priority List.

Commissioner Roger Moody stated that the issues with the biggest impact needed to be looked at first. The Commission needs to make decisions about the suggested staffing changes because it is not fair to leave the employees in limbo. The Commission needs to decide what should happen so that the County can see how it impacts the budget, the staffing, and space needs.

Commissioner Richard Parent stated that he agreed that the staffing cuts are the most dramatic changes the Commission might have to make. It is critical that the Commission meet with the experts who wrote the pieces of the report, to ask them questions, and to find out where they were coming from when the suggestions were made.

Commissioner Anne Beebe-Center stated that several things needed to concurrently happen. The specialists who had visited and subsequently written portions of the report for the following departments would be asked to either attend the next Commission meeting in person or connect via phone conference:

1. IT
2. Administration/Finance/benefits
3. Sheriff
4. Deeds
5. Building Maintenance

It was stated that Andrew Gilmore was the point of contact for all of the experts and could be contacted to help set up the meeting with the experts. Don Jutton and Andrew Gilmore had also put together the pieces written by each expert and should therefore be asked to attend as well.

Commissioner Anne Beebe-Center stated that several things have to happen pretty quickly:

1. Estimating Building Maintenance options/costs
2. Department heads need to send information to IT staff about what's in place, what's working, what's not working, goals for future with regards to IT needs for their department
3. Create IT committee to look at that
4. Need to meet and come up with a broad brushstroke of a plan, not necessarily a vision
5. Department heads need to come up with their own assessment in a week
6. Meet again together in a week and a ½ - to 2 weeks
7. Needs to be in a language that anyone can understand so that the Commission can easily explain when asked
8. IT specialist needs to explain each thing that they are saying is not in place
9. County Administrator will write up what a county-wide facilities manager could cost

Next meeting: Tuesday, November 2nd from 1:30 – 4pm

Department heads were asked to submit their reports to the county administrator prior to the meeting so he can forward everything to the Commission for them to have a chance to read it all ahead of time. After that meeting, Commissioner Beebe-Center will put together the evaluation and have it ready for the regular Commission meeting on November 9th.

The county administrator was asked to set up a meeting with the consultants in two weeks on November 17th (Wednesday).

III. Adjourn

- A motion was made by Commissioner Roger Moody to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Richard Parent. A vote was taken with all in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 4:32 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Candice Richards
Administrative Assistant

The Knox County Commission approved these minutes at their regular meeting held on December 14, 2010.