

**Cheboygan County Board of Commissioners  
Committee of the Whole Meeting  
February 27, 2018**

The Committee of the Whole meeting of the Cheboygan County Board of Commissioners was called to order in the Commissioners Room by Chairperson John Wallace at 9:30 a.m.

Roll called and a quorum present.

**PRESENT:** Commissioners Karen Johnson, Richard Sangster, Michael Newman, Cal Gouine, Roberta Matelski, John Wallace and Robert Bolinger.

**ABSENT:** None

Commissioner Wallace gave the invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Motion** by Commissioner Bolinger seconded by Commissioner Sangster to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried with 7 yes, 0 no and 0 absent.

**CITIZENS COMMENTS**

Michael Blewett representative with NEMCSA presented a new program called Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP). He stated RSVP shows seniors how they can apply the skills and wisdom they have acquired throughout their life to make a positive difference in the lives of others. RSVP is American's largest volunteer network for people 55 and over, with more than 300,000 volunteers tackling tough issues in communities nationwide. Seniors choose how and where they want to serve, how much time they want to give and whether they want to share skills they have or develop new ones.

**SCHEDULED VISITORS/DEPARTMENT REPORTS**

Cheboygan County Prosecuting Attorney Daryl Vizina presented the 2017 Prosecutor's Annual Report. When he started working in the Prosecutor's Office nine (9) years ago, there were six (6) staff members and four (4) assistant prosecuting attorneys. Currently in his office, there were five (5) staff members and two (2) assistant prosecuting attorneys. He reported that his office had lost a clerical position, the Domestic Violence Prosecutor position and the Straits Area Narcotics Enforcement who was shared with other counties. Prosecutor Vizina stated that his office had taken some losses, but continued to serve the community to the best of their ability. He reviewed and highlighted his report stating that his office authorized 218 criminal cases. The Prosecuting Attorney's office handled a total of 1007 criminal cases; 118 juvenile delinquency cases; 36 abuse/neglect cases; 130 child support cases; 7 terminations of parental rights cases and 26 mental health cases. Also a felony crime class breakdown; felony drug breakdown and a felony offender summary were given. The Prosecutor's Office handles the widest range of social cases including the truancy policy with the schools. At the conclusion of every felony conviction, the Michigan Department of Corrections was required to prepare a several page document called a Pre-Sentence Investigation (PSI). The PSI was designed to inform the Circuit Court Judge of the Defendant's history – criminal justice, education, family, employment and substance abuse and also to make incarceration recommendations. The Cheboygan County Prosecuting Attorney's Office continually had the highest felony caseload per attorney in the region. With the exception of Chippewa County, Cheboygan County secured nearly 40% more felony convictions per attorney than the next closest county and over 125%

more per attorney than Antrim, Charlevoix, and Presque Isle Counties. A Detroit News article from 2017, listed Cheboygan County as the third highest county in the State of Michigan for the use of prescription opioids. It stated, "In 2015, Cheboygan County pharmacies dispensed 377 hydrocodone pills per person in Cheboygan County". The Prosecutor's Office was in the process of revamping the crimes victim rights services. Currently, the Prosecutor's Office communicates information to the victims through mailing via the US Postal Service. It was their intent to give the victims the option to receive notifications, forms, resources and communications electronically through their smartphone or personal computer. A majority of the victims would greatly benefit from the proposed program. It would be faster, easier, more efficient and reduce postage costs. He was optimistic that the new "Crime Victim Network" would be operable by the end of 2018. A total of \$103,147.59 in restitution was collected for crime victims in 2017. There was one important case in 2017, People vs. Dr. Jerome Siudara. A history of the case was given. Prosecutor Vizina commented that this was the most complex case that Cheboygan County had likely ever had. Special Recognition was given to Detective Rich Rule for his professional excellent from the Michigan Department of State Police for his exceptional commitment and effort in this case. Discussion was held on what it would take to commit a mental health patient and if there were any inpatient facility or housing for mental health patient in Cheboygan County. Prosecutor Vizina stated that Cheboygan County had a male and female transition house for drug court participants, which was run by the Salvation Army. As far as any inpatient facilities or housing options, there were none located in Cheboygan County.

#### **ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT**

Administrator Jeff Lawson reported receiving three (3) demolition bids for the demolition of the Gold Front and Gold Dust buildings. The low bid was from Dore and Associates Contracting of Bay City, MI, which came in at \$221,000. Staff was in the process of reviewing the bid and verifying Dore's qualifications and proposal with the State prior to awarding the bid.

Administrator Jeff Lawson reported receiving three (3) bids for the Jail Addition and Renovation project and five (5) bids for the storage building. The architect was in the process of reviewing the bid information from the contractors for recommendation of the award. The Jail Addition and Renovation bids were higher than the original estimates. Once the bids were reviewed by the architect a revised budget would be provided.

Administrator Jeff Lawson reported that the Staff has resubmitted the County's Indigent Defense application to the MIDC for review and approval for funding. The State required reclassification of certain expenses related to construction items and elimination of wage expenses for area they considered supplanting.

**OLD BUSINESS** - None

#### **NEW BUSINESS**

Administrator Jeff Lawson presented the Cheboygan County Opioid Case Legal Services award. A proposal request was solicited from qualified legal firms to provide proposals to represent the County in an opioid litigation. The following three (3) proposals were received: The Miller Law Firm out of Rochester, Michigan working with the national firm of Robins Geller Rudman & Dowd, LLP; Sommers Schwartz parenting with various affiliated firms; and Weitz & Luxenberg out of Detroit and New York, partnering with Smith & Johnson out of Traverse City, and the Sam Bernstein Law Firm. After review of the proposals by staff and civil counsel, it was

recommend to award representation to The Miller Law Firm and Robbins Geller Rudman & Dowd, LLP. The Miller Law Firm would be paid 25 percent of any monies that was recovered by the County in the lawsuit.

**Motion** by Commissioner Sangster seconded by Commissioner Matelski to award litigation of legal services to represent Cheboygan County in an opioid litigation to The Miller Law Firm and Robbins Geller Rudman & Dowd, LLP and authorize the Chairperson to sign any necessary service agreements. A roll call vote was taken. Motion approved 7 yes, 0 no and 0 absent.

## **BOARD MEMBER MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION**

Commissioner Rich Sangster presented a power point presentation on 6 Point Focus for Regional Growth and Prosperity. He stated that as the epicenter of commerce and populace for Cheboygan County, a healthy and thriving City of Cheboygan was critical for a solid platform of Regional growth and prosperity. A list of challenges preventing success and stability, and elements contributing to success and stability, which included the Meijer's Project; commercial and residential blight; low tax base; aging population; partially functioning hospital; high unemployment; weakening school systems and education gap. All these things continue to add up. Coordinating resources to turn problems into possibilities, utilizing cooperative resources such as MEDC, NCMC, Pure Michigan, MSU Extension, Top of Michigan Trails Council, Grand Traverse Land Conservancy, US 23 Heritage Route, Michigan Works, Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council, an array of State & Federal Agencies, NEMCOG and NLEA. A regional coordination and communication efficiently pools and leverages resources in collaboration to facilitate an environment where stakeholders could address issues that once put them at odds with each other. Larger groups become more effective at recognizing and addressing issues of a collective concern than smaller local divisions. Currently, Cheboygan County has relied on Regional Development through funding of the NLEA. Commissioner Sangster stated that over the past 10 years, Cheboygan County has funded the NLEA with approximately a half million dollars and the NLEA has facilitated efforts that have resulted in growth. The NLEA focuses on Northwestern Michigan Development and draws funds from four (4) Counties (Antrim, Emmet, Charlevoix and Cheboygan). Cheboygan County also utilized NEMCOG as a resource for Regional Development. NEMCOG focuses on Northeastern Michigan development and offers a collaborative platform for eight (8) counties (Alcona, Alpena, Cheboygan Crawford, Montmorency, Oscoda, Otsego and Presque Isle Counties). Cheboygan County has a vacant hybrid position that combines Zoning Administration with Community Development and does not currently have an integrated, comprehensive plan in action for strategic growth and prosperity. When looking at the Economic Development listings by County for NEMCOG, Cheboygan County's link goes to the NLEA's contact person who was Andy Hayes. All the other counties have an Economic Development Director listed. Commissioner Sangster stated that Cheboygan County was gaining momentum for economic revitalization driven by critical need, infrastructure improvements and new investments. With forward thinking and municipal support, the timing was right to move forward cooperatively as a county under the guided direction of a Community Development position 100 percent vested in Cheboygan County. So the Steps to Success were to support the need for focused county-wide coordination; distinguish zoning from development; create an oversight Task Team Board of county stakeholders; reallocate funds to support a local leader; and synthesize existing plans into a strategic growth strategy. There was a need to create success together with public & private task team board oversight; collaborative goal setting; informed decision making; task team transparency with local leaders and stakeholders; prioritize regional projects for economic wellbeing and quality of life; consideration of regional needs and concerns; development of a single comprehensive strategic plan; collective goals and measurable objectives with timely deliverables; cultivate trust and strengthen partnerships;

and actively seek and engage in solutions for collective success. Some of the potential Task Team participants for cooperative growth and prosperity were the Cheboygan County Board of Commissioner; Cheboygan City Council; Village of Wolverine and Mackinaw City; Tuscarora Township; Cheboygan Downtown Development Authority; Cheboygan and Indian River Chamber of Commerce; Cheboygan Area School Districts and there were others. These Task Team participants could be changed out with, whatever, the need might be. Commissioner Sangster stated that Cheboygan County needed to work collaboratively toward the common goal of regional socio-economic health and prosperity under the leadership of a Community Developer utilizing a strategic master plan. There were a lot of links and there was nothing scientific about this. He stated that Cheboygan had a better geographical location than any other county in the area. In moving forward the county needed the recognition of an agreement for the changes and to create an oversight Task Team Board to see how this goes.

Sue Eno from the NLEA stated that Commissioner Sangster was spot on regarding the need for an Economic Development Director who was located in the county and who was here every day. The \$40,000 that was allocated to the NLEA has not changed over the last ten (10) years. It would not be reasonable to think that this amount of money would staff a full or even a part time office. She gave a little bit of background as to the results of participating with the NLEA over the past ten (10) years. There has been over \$450,000 that has been paid to NLEA within the last ten (10) years, which has resulted in a total of close to \$39 million coming back to the county in the way of 17 community projects totaling \$15 million; 328 different business clients were assisted; 14 business startups; 30 business expansions; 538 positions were created; 225 of those different business clients were in Cheboygan; funding for skilled trades; seven (7) different companies benefited in the amount of \$238,000 and 213 workers were trained. Just this past year, one of the things NLEA sponsored in each of their counties that they do business in was "Pitch Night". She stated that there were three (3) individual businesses in the downtown Cheboygan area that benefited in the amount of \$20,000. Almost half of what was paid to the NLEA came back in the form of cash to start up these businesses and this should be a big benefit to those businesses. She commended Rich for standing up and speaking about economic development in this county. If you look at the counties around us, this county continues to be low income. Cheboygan County was losing talented folks and there was a need for someone at the table. She stated that she still believed in the NLEA partnership that has stood the test of time. NLEA had over 100 different clients or partnerships that they have established with such as the secondary education facilities in the area as well as other organizations. When she thinks about a \$40,000 budget item that had been the same for the last ten (10) years, it makes her wonder if the county would want to think a little bit differently. In the time period before 2008, she heard that it was the private sector that stimulated the economy and grew jobs. However, she felt that 2008 changed the dynamics. This was about jobs in the community. The partnerships between the county, the city and the private sector were hugely needed. An Economic Development Director would want to work with NLEA as a partner. This was what the other counties have done. A broader sweep should be done instead of targeting the NLEA. There should be some type of group effort to bring everyone together and finance it, which financing was the biggest issue. A good economic development person would want to work with NLEA. At the end of the day, the Board needed to see the benefit of the partnership with the NLEA and expand the budget. If the downtown businesses were successful, than we all were successful and maybe we could retain some of these folks and stop them from leaving. She stated that it was hard to get new people into the community because there was some infrastructure that wasn't here and someone who was really dedicated to that could make all the difference in the world.

Commissioner Wallace stated that this topic would be put on the Planning Session agenda scheduled for April.

### **CITIZENS COMMENTS**

Carl Muscott a citizen from Tuscarora Township commented that part of the problem with counties in Michigan was that counties really did not have much control. There were 22 separate government units who often did not fight amongst themselves, but rather cooperated. The government has not driven away any commercial or industrial growth. It needs to be facilitated upon arrival. What drives growth were jobs. He commented that with the new plant coming into Grayling, there would be housing and commercial development following it, but the jobs would come first. Lisa McComb from Otsego County Economic Alliance works with less than a six (6) figure budget and they concentrate on the townships in Gaylord within Otsego County. For the past several years, Otsego County Economic Alliance consistently has had more than \$100 million of industrial and commercial growth. He reported seeing a sign where a new hotel across from Walmart in Gaylord, which was being financed by Citizens National Bank. Unfortunately, there weren't any projects like that going on here in Cheboygan. A Task Team needs to be created to see what the counties assets were, drive some lunch bucket jobs, and then the county would see the growth.

Sue Eno from the NLEA commented that Citizens National Bank did open a branch in Gaylord, but the business wasn't there so the bank ended up closing. One of the things that they found upon talking with the City Manager was that he had a plan and he knew exactly where the bank needed to be. The county, the city, the planning director and the township were all on the same page talking the same talk. She stated that this was huge when all of those same individuals agreed. This needs to happen in this county because if everyone talked the same talk, then it was a whole lot easier to move forward. This was why Lisa McComb could work with a small budget because she had everybody on the same page, which was a challenge for Cheboygan County.

Mary Hebert commented that she has been working on the Cheboygan Carnegie Project in downtown Cheboygan, which has now expanded to become a campus. The long term use would be a community gathering space and art center. She stated that the experience of working on this project reflects on both the comments from Sue and Commissioner Sangster, but she decided to go out on her own. An economic specialist and architect was recruited, along with several other people to assist with the funding and granting of things that would provide for the total \$1.5 million cost. NEMCOG approached her to also be a partner on that same project. Sometimes it was the creation of a position, a designated person that could facilitate what they would need to establish themselves within the county. But the other part of it was that they just didn't know the resources. She stated that Commissioner's Sangster Task Team would do two (2) things with or without an economic developer. It would educate the people on all the resources that were available. Everybody within the county has been very positive and very supportive on the project that she has been involved in for the last couple of years. She commended Commissioner Sangster and Sue Eno on their work.

Detective Rich Rule commented that he had worked with many Prosecuting and Sheriff Departments from across the State of Michigan and Cheboygan County had the best staff to work with. Commissioner Wallace thanked Detective Rich Rule for his good police work.

**BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS**

Commissioner Gouine commented that part of the painting in the District Health Department was finished and he would like to have the staff look it over.

Commissioner Newman commented that they were working on the vacancies with the Finance Director and Planning and Zoning Director. Administrator Lawson reported that there would be a recommendation to the Board on the Finance Director at the Finance Business Meeting on March 13th, but he was still working on the Planning and Zoning Director position.

Commissioner Matelski commented that there were some very good comments about the Economic Development.

Commissioner Johnson stated that the comments given with regard to splitting zoning and economic development were spot on. It would be helpful for the County with developing zoning ordinances and also helpful with the growth of the economy. The two people hired would need to communicate instead of one person doing both things with one idea. This would bring a lot better ideas to the table.

Commissioner Wallace commented that the CCE 911 Director contract had been signed. There was a handout listing the 2018 Basic Grant that was awarded from the Probate Court. He reminded the Board that Administrator Lawson's evaluation was due by Thursday, March 1, 2018. A Program Highlight from NEMCOG was handed out, which showed what NEMCOG has accomplished in the last year. He called everyone's attention to an invitation for Sue Eno's retirement party of 47 years with Citizens National Bank scheduled on Wednesday, March 21<sup>st</sup> from 11 a.m. to 2 P.M. at Citizens National Bank.

**Motion** by Commissioner Wallace seconded by Commissioner Newman to adjourn to the call of the chairperson. Motion carried with 7 yes, 0 no and 0 absent. Meeting adjourned at 11:10 a.m.

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Karen L. Brewster  
Cheboygan County Clerk/Register

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John B. Wallace  
Chairperson