

**Legislative Committee**

**April 3, 2023**

**2:00 p.m.**

Attendees

Committee: Allen Hinkley, Art Merrill, Mark Tuthill, Lisa Driscoll, Tina Molé

Staff: Haley Gransbury, Judith Garrison, Maria Kelso, Joe Ermeti, Amy Merklen, Penny Bishop

Absent: Dennis Valente, Shawn Smith

Mr. Hinkley called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m. On a motion by Mr. Tuthill seconded by Mr. Merrill, the draft minutes of the March 6 and March 8 committee meetings were approved.

Mrs. Gransbury announced that as of March 24, new passport applications are taking 10 to 13 weeks to process.

Mrs. Garrison reported that the April 6 deadline for petition signatures has not changed although candidates have until April 10 to file their petition because of the Easter holiday.

Mrs. Kelso stated she has asked that BOE be able to use a closet in their new space because they need to keep ballots and petitions locked up. She said there are four rooms being used for storage by IT and BM which are kept locked, however, BOE does not have access to any of them. Mr. Tuthill stated he and Buildings Superintendent Pete Montgomery would discuss the matter when Pete returns from vacation. Mr. Tuthill emphasized that access to electric panels cannot be blocked and putting anything of front of them is prohibited. Mrs. Kelso noted petitions are coming in and that they must be filed by 4:00 p.m. on April 10. She reiterated that petitions cannot be signed after April 6.

Mrs. Bishop reported that Doctor Ucci has requested to add another assistant Medical Examiner to help cover the number of unattended deaths throughout the County. He has spoken with Dr. Michael Freeman several times and offered to bring him on board with Committee approval. Upon a motion by Mr. Merrill seconded by Mr. Tuthill, the Committee approved to hire Dr. Michael Freeman as an assistant Medical Examiner at the rate of \$275 per case effective immediately.

Mrs. Bishop brought up a concern by the County Clerk's office which involves a group of citizens identified as First Amendment Auditors. Mrs. Gransbury further explained that members of the group are known to enter public buildings with devices to record local officials and employees doing their jobs and then posting the videos on social media. The Clerk's Office was seeking guidance because the State has a policy that does not allow video recording in court, however, the County does not have a specific policy in regards to taking videos.

Mr. Ermeti stated that because of a big increase in crime and subsequently their workload, he would like to add a part-time position in the Public Defender's Office. He conveyed an on-call issue as judges request in-person representation and nights and weekends are difficult to cover. He noted Indigent Legal Services (ILS), which funds the Public Defender's Office also supports in-person representation. He himself has answered many of the after-hour calls because the Assistant PD does not want to take arraignment calls. Mrs. Merklen noted the PDO salary now includes \$800 per week for on-call pay. In reply to Mr. Tuthill regarding Centralized Arraignment Part (CAP), Mr. Ermeti said they are moving forward with the plan. The next CAP meeting is scheduled for April 21.

Mrs. Merklen reported the County Attorney's Office is still down two attorneys and she and Jeremy along with Chris (part-time) are stretched thin handling family court, Supreme Court, the Board of Elections case, litigation, federal lawsuits, municipal law, as well as the April 1 foreclosure auction. She said DSS has been contacting her at all hours noting there are 75 children in foster care with much to do as far as orders of protection, etc.

Upon a motion by Mr. Tuthill and seconded by Mrs. Driscoll, the Committee entered into an executive session to discuss litigation and personnel matters.

Committee reconvened in regular session.

On a motion by Mr. Tuthill seconded by Mr. Merrill, the meeting adjourned at 3:00 p.m.