

# Portage County Board Commissioners

## Meeting Minutes

449 South Mt. Pleasant Street  
Ravenna, OH 44266

<http://www.co.portage.oh.us>

Amy Hutchinson, Clerk  
330-297-3600

Wednesday, October 9, 2019

9:00 AM

Commissioners' Board Room

*The Commissioners' meeting minutes are summarized; Audio recordings and backup material are available.  
Please contact the Commissioners' Office for specific details.*

The Portage County Board of Commissioners' meeting came to order with the following members present:

| Attendee Name             | Title          | Status            |
|---------------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| Vicki A. Kline            | President      | Present           |
| Sabrina Christian-Bennett | Vice President | Attending 9:04 AM |
| Kathleen Clyde            | Board Member   | Present           |

Also attending throughout the day Barb Tittle and Record Courier Reporter Diane Smith.

### DISCUSSION

Present: Department of Budget and Financial Management Director Todd Bragg

#### 1. Sheriff's Office Budget

- Commissioner Kline is concerned that the Sheriff's budget is not sustainable but asked what the Board could provide in terms of additional funding.
- Director Bragg noted the employee increase has not been determined and if County employees do not receive anything, the Board can fund the Sheriff's positions.
- A 1% increase equates to approximately \$250,000 for all General Fund employees and 1% throughout the County would equate to an additional \$250,000.
- For those funds that cannot sustain the increase, the General Fund will, and that's already computed in the \$250,000.
- Commissioner Kline is not inclined to provide zero increases to employees.
- Commissioner Kline reported priorities 1-6 for the Sheriff's Office equal \$606,858.00 - Jail Administrator, Dispatchers, Criminal Warrant Division, Transport Officers, Drug Task Force Officers (Full Time), and Detectives.
- The Maintenance person was not listed on the priorities, but Mr. Rost was going to check with the Sheriff and get back to the Board.
- Commissioner Kline asked about the employees the Board funded for \$500,000 and Director Bragg responded the \$11,800,000 in salaries was increased with the \$500,000 the Board provided from the original \$11,300,000. The 2020 budget will need to increase another \$500,000 for the full year.
- Commissioner Kline noted the additional 15 people are not included in the staffing request. The priority was 10 people, but the Board provided 15 people, and now the actual priority is 25.
- Director Bragg asked if the Board is hearing any comments from the public or other Elected Officials that the Sheriff is understaffed and Commissioner Kline noted she has not heard a lot from the public, but people do want to know how the Commissioners intend to fund his requests and her response has been the Board is still discussing the issue.

- Commissioner Kline stated Pete Kacarab said the Sheriff's budget should be 1/3 of the County's entire budget and Director Bragg responded Portage is not the highest nor the lowest, more in the middle in terms of the amount the Sheriff takes of the budget.
- Commissioner Kline read an excerpt from the 2020 Budget Issues provided by the Sheriff's Office which stated, "the Commissioners cannot simply set a general policy concerning the funding of County offices and then apply it across the board without considering the individual circumstances of each office." She explained the Board is very aware of the situation and doesn't apply a general policy across the board and Director Bragg agreed.
- Commissioner Christian-Bennett asked if the totals include benefits and Director Bragg explained the totals include PERS, but no health benefits, so 21 people equates to an additional \$250,000 in health benefits.
- Commissioner Clyde asked if the Jail Administrator was part of the original request and Director Bragg remarked it was not and there are several others not listed including 2-1/2 full time equivalent to guard the Justice Center, 6 additional Road Patrol Deputies (but Mr. Rost is fairly certain it's only 3), and an additional full time Dispatcher (listed as an additional part time position on the request).
- Director Bragg asked if the Sheriff's Office can use the \$1 million they are using for Corrections Officers to add the Jail Administrator, but Commissioner Christian-Bennett noted other individuals held the title, how were they funded.
- Commissioner Clyde asked about the staffing plan and Director Bragg stated what's in front of the Board today is the document.
- Director Bragg explained everything else left on the list is non-jail related positions the Detective Bureau, Road Patrol, Drug Task Force, and Dispatcher.
- Commissioner Kline noted the warrants are 10 years old and asked if any follow up has been done and Director Bragg responded a lot of the warrants were being slowed in their delivery because the jail was at capacity. Commissioner Kline mentioned she contacted the Judge and that was confirmed.
- Commissioner Christian-Bennett asked about the other employees who were acting Jail Administrator and Assistant Administrator, and whether they return to their originally salaries? Director Bragg believes they were return to a position under the Administrator.
- Commissioner Christian-Bennett noted the extra \$500,000 given for the additional 15 Corrections Officers, along with the request for an additional 21, doesn't consider the 9 that are currently being paid out of the sales and use tax. The POD is creating almost 50 new positions and Director Bragg responded the jail expansion has added at least 15 and now they are requesting the 16<sup>th</sup> position. There are 3 positions in the other fund, roughly 18-19 positions if the Administrator was added. Director Bragg also mentioned it's possible the 15 Corrections Officers may be reduced in 2021, but the Commissioners have not received an answer and it's not expected until later in 2020.
- Commissioner Kline asked about the \$250,000 for Health Benefits and Director Bragg replied it's roughly for 21 people.
- Commissioner Clyde asked about the Sheriff's request to add 21-26 people, and what the amount would be and Director Bragg responded if awarded, the Board would add \$1.2 million to the existing \$7 million

- Commissioner Christian-Bennett inquired about the \$72,000 for new leases and if it's due to the removal of vehicles the County currently own outright and Director Bragg replied yes. The funding comes out of set aside funding for purchases, so it isn't additional money being spent, just being spent a different way.
- Commissioner Christian-Bennett asked how many vehicles are being replaced and Director Bragg responded roughly 10 vehicles - 5 this year and hopefully the order will come in November for 5 more.
- Commissioner Christian-Bennett asked if the additional road patrol would equate to additional vehicles besides the 10 already budgeted and Director Bragg replied the new Road Patrol Officers would probably add 2 additional Road Patrol vehicles. The agreement with the Sheriff was to keep 23 vehicles on the road and there are 24 currently under the program, but the Sheriff indicated they can only drive 15. Director Bragg and the Sheriff are working to find the discrepancy. The Sheriff has indicated it's a matter of safety and he does not feel that taking a vehicle with 150,000 on a high speed chase is appropriate for Road Patrol. Director Bragg suggested removing the other vehicles and using that money to replace them.
- The Sheriff's Office will still need to put together their request for existing staffing but it hasn't come forward. It will include raises for existing non-union staffing. The union called for 2 ¼% increase.
- The Office also has a request for training, but that has not come forward.
- The current request is for additional staffing.
- The number of inmates increase the service agreements for food and medical.
- Commissioner Kline suggested the Board consider the priority on the list, which equates to 10 people, but the Warrant Division could handle 1 person, so the request could be reduced to 9.
- Ms. Tittle suggested having a clerical position sort out the backlog of current warrants and Director Bragg noted around July, the full capacity of the jail will be available and someone will begin looking at the warrants. Commissioner Kline suggests holding off until they have a better idea about the warrants, bringing the priority to 8 employees.
- Commissioner Clyde asked why the Jail Administrator is priority #1 when it wasn't even included in the other request?
- Director Bragg pointed out the Sheriff's mandate is to run the jail and the question is whether the Board feels it is being run sufficiently. If not, the Board needs to provide funding, if it does regardless of the request, the Board can say no because the current structure is providing adequate service.
- Commissioner Kline observed that since the Board is not in the law enforcement business, it cannot say whether it's adequate. Director Bragg pointed out the Board has levels whereby it can gauge whether the mandate is being met or not. The Board receives reports and services for the jail and has access to any lawsuits against it. It also can investigate the number of injuries to Corrections Officers and has the ability to go to other Counties asking if Portage's level of lawsuits is disproportionate and if so, is it because of mismanagement or lack of staffing?
- Commissioner Christian-Bennett pointed out the Sheriff's Office is having a hard time getting people to work there and to stay long term. Commissioner Christian-Bennett explained there are no guidelines or formulas on how many people should be there, it's basically left to the discretion of the Sheriff.

- Commissioner Kline asked if the Dispatchers are union and noted they are set to receive a 2 ¼% increase and Director Bragg responded yes.
- Commissioner Christian-Bennett would like to know how they are paying the current Jail Administrator position now and are they paying \$92,500 and when promoting someone, did the department backfill the position? Director Bragg will investigate.
- Commissioner Clyde noted it would be helpful if the Sheriff's Office would show the number of employees, how many Corrections Officers, how many openings do they have, is there an Administrator, etc.
- Director Bragg reiterated the Commissioners' goal is not to micromanage the jail, it is to determine if the current operations in the jail acceptable or not, regardless of how he achieves it.
- Commissioner Christian-Bennett noted the Sheriff's Office is a huge part of the County's budget.
- Ms. Tittle wondered if people have been complaining about the response time from the Sheriff's Office and Commissioner Christian-Bennett replied she has not heard of any complaints, but if communities want more patrol, they can enter into contract with the Sheriff's Office. Commissioner Kline has not heard anything, either.
- Jail Administrator – The Board would like to see the current staffing levels, including vacant positions, existing employees, and possible turnover. Commissioner Christian-Bennett also asked of the 15 additional Corrections Officers for \$500,000, how many positions have been filled.
- Director Bragg noted the Board can set aside additional funding into Contingency when the Sheriff's Office needs additional positions.
- Commissioner Christian-Bennett stated the Board should wait until it has additional information from the Sheriff's Office before deciding and Commissioner Clyde noted the information is important as it's hard to make decisions in a vacuum.
- Commissioner Clyde is hesitant on most of the additions because there has been a very large addition already to the Sheriff's budget within the last few months and there's only so much the County taxpayers and the County budget can do.
- Commissioner Kline feels very strongly about the training because if the department has good trained people, it will need less.
- Commissioner Clyde pointed out the Sheriff is at \$1.5 million dollars in additional requests and Commissioner Christian-Bennett noted it's on top of the \$ 1 million the Board is already paying for 9 employees.
- Commissioner Kline pointed out sustainability is also very important to the equation.
- Director Bragg encourages the Board to review the Sheriff's mandates and the Prosecutor's Office provided an Opinion on what it means to fulfil the Sheriff's mandates.
- Director Bragg noted on a mandated duty, the Board cannot say there isn't enough funding because State law provides mechanisms to gather more money.
- The Board must determine whether the current level of service is meeting the mandate as outlined under State law.
- The Board agreed to continue the discussion with Director Bragg on October 17<sup>th</sup>.

- Director Bragg pointed out the Sheriff isn't the only discussion the Board needs to have concerning the budget – ITS, Adult Probation, Common Pleas, and COLA/increase.
- There are at least 3 departments that are requesting to bring employees to mid-point of the Compensation Management Scale. The Board discussed moving those individuals all at once versus increasing the pay scale slowly over 3 years. The cost to move underpaid employees to minimum is approximately \$80,000. Commissioner Kline suggests doing it now instead of waiting the 3 years but it could be addressed along with the COLA/increase.
- The Board will discuss Adult Probation's request for \$210,000 next Thursday.
- Commissioner Christian-Bennett pointed out Judge Giulitto requested a 5% increase and Director Bragg noted almost all the Courts requested 5%, with the Prosecutor requesting 3% and the Treasurer at 2-1/2%. Generally, the Board decides on a standard rate and most Elected Officials have worked with that figure.
- Director Bragg asked if the Board will discuss the COLA/increase on Thursday, October 24, 2019 and Commissioner Clyde would rather wait and address this issue last, but noted the Board is cognizant of it throughout the process. Commissioner Kline suggested the Board address this issue on October 24<sup>th</sup>.
- Director Bragg is hopeful the October 24<sup>th</sup> meeting will allow him the opportunity to create the proposed budget, which he will present to the Board on October 31<sup>st</sup>. Director Bragg will need the Board to decide whether it wants departments coming to them with alterations before Thanksgiving because Director Bragg will still need time to sit with the Board to discuss the final budget. If the final budget is adopted on Tuesday, December 3, 2019, Director Bragg will need to meet with the Board on November 18<sup>th</sup>. In order for that to happen, Elected Officials would need to meet with the Board no later than November 11-15, 2019 to discuss their proposed alterations. If proposed budgets are sent October 31<sup>st</sup>, they will have one week to review and request a meeting. Director Bragg will have a product ready by the deadline.

## 2. Capital Improvements

- Admin Building – Director Bragg stated the Board of Elections is appreciative of the work that has been done in their area, but they are still not satisfied.
- Commissioner Christian-Bennett remembered they were supposed to have money in their account by August and Director Bragg will investigate.
- Cardveyor – This is an \$80,000 purchase they will need replaced in 2020.
- Board of Elections Capital Equipment – There may be a mandated purchase coming for \$50,000 the grant from the Secretary of State will not cover. Commissioner Christian-Bennett remembered they received \$50,000 and used \$35,000, but Director Bragg noted all of the funding has been set aside, it just hasn't been spent yet.
- Commissioner Kline noticed nothing in the Capital Budget for security and an amount should be added. Director Bragg will add a line item.
- Commissioner Kline asked about metal detectors for the Administration Building and Director Bragg noted the building would need at least 2 and both detectors would need to be staffed.

- Commissioner Kline indicated it would be about \$15,000 each for the 5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> floors to have glass doors installed as an additional security measure. The \$45,000 would be a one-time expenditure to lock down areas after hours. Commissioner Clyde asked about the stairs and Director Bragg noted you can prevent entrance from a stairwell to any floor but those that have fire exits. Key pads could be installed so that people could go out, but not come in. Director Bragg will have that option reviewed. Commissioner Christian-Bennett asked about the original doors and Director Bragg noted the existing doors could be another option to investigate. The Board is interested in an option for additional protection in 2020 and Director Bragg will ask Director Townsend to gather quotes for the glass doors.
- Portage County Administration Building 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Remodel - Paint and tile is less expensive than tearing out walls and storage closets. Commissioner Christian-Bennett noted the County receives rent from Job and Family Services for the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, but the rent is less than what the County used to receive due to the modifications that were made to the capitalization.
- 6<sup>th</sup> floor Remodel - At one time the Board had an \$800,000 estimate to remodel, but the estimate it's 4-5 years old. Director Bragg mentioned the County Auditor doesn't feel it need any additional renovation, but others feel it does. Commissioner Christian-Bennett asked about the Regional Planning Commission noting she hasn't received any complaints about the area.
- Cement Work - The outside patio has been sanded off in areas where it has raised, but near the annex, there's a 1" gap developing and broken concrete leading up to the F lot. Commissioner Kline noted the sidewalks are relatively inexpensive as compared to other items and Director Bragg will ask Director Townsend to get quotes for the repairs next year.
- Hearing/Air Conditioning for the Administration Building - Not an immediate need of repair but will be in the next 5 years.
- Parking Lot C (main County lot) - Continues to crack/seal but needs additional attention.
- Annex Basement and Elevators - Commissioner Kline does not want to put money in the Annex, but employees need to be removed from the site. Currently, Job and Family Services Children's Services is located in the building and Director Bragg will check with Director Jeffries to see how many employees are located there.
- Commissioner Kline stated the goal should be to get rid of the Annex and eventually the Coroner's building, but a long term plan is needed for the Administration Building. Director Bragg mentioned the heating and air conditioning system is on borrowed time.
- Commissioner Christian-Bennett pointed out the Coroner's Office is pleased with the renovations, but Director Bragg noted it's still not appropriate for County office space.
- Director Bragg noted the County still needs space and how is the Board going to continue to provide it - should it buy older buildings or to expand what the County currently has.
- The Prosecutor's Building 2<sup>nd</sup> floor needs to be converted to digital (\$77,000). Some funding will be provided by the Prosecutor via FOJ funding, but he will need additional revenue from the General Fund to cover the expenses.
- Prosecutor's E-Discovery - \$75,000-\$200,000. Commissioner Clyde noted the Board needs to contact the Prosecutor's Office about the Matrix program and

Director Bragg explained Prosecutor Vigluicci was checking to see if the program was compatible with judicial entry.

- Northeast corner leak at the Prosecutor's Office – The County received a quote of \$45,000 just to find out what's wrong. The owner of the building next door will not allow the contractor to work off their roof, so a spider net will need to be used instead. Director Townend is trying to get the pricing lowered, but Director Bragg estimates \$75,000 for the quote and repair.
- Riddle Block – Roof, Probation Offices, Tuckpointing - Work needs to be done on the building or the building needs to be sold. The windows are a concern and will need addressed within the next 2 years. The roof is slate and is failing and since it's considered a historic building, certain standards must be maintained. Commissioner Kline noted the staff does not want to move because of the proximity to the Courthouse. Director Bragg suggests a possible move by Municipal Court to an area created next to the Administration Building to free up space for Common Pleas and the Clerk to expand within the existing Ravenna facility. Common Pleas has indicated they have the caseloads to justify a 3<sup>rd</sup> court and the Board must be cognizant of that.
- Ravenna Courthouse Security Upgrade – The Clerk recently finished a \$160,000 upgrade and a \$500,000 renovation was completed 2 years ago. There's still more to do at the Clerk's office and the spacing needs reconfigured.
- Kent Courthouse – The back landscaping area will cost at minimum \$25,000. It is unclear whether it is included in the original building specs, but the end result falls upon the County to complete the task. The area should be done next year.
- Station 30 – The building is adequate, but the parking lot needs repair. Director Shackelford indicated the equipment housed there could be relocated to the Justice Center.
- Commissioner Kline noted the goal is to minimize the number of building the County has due to the maintenance on the facilities.
- Former Motor Pool – Commissioner Christian-Bennett noted the Board is still waiting to hear from Water Resources whether they need the facility for the lift station for Chinn Allotment, but Director Bragg explained the Department only needs an easement on one of the corners, but it reduces the usability of the parcel. Director Bragg will contact Director Gene Roberts at the Water Resources Department to discuss. Director Bragg will also meet with Internal Services Director JoAnn Townend to get estimates for removal of the storage tanks and demolition of the building. If the Board is not selling the facility as a service station, it will be responsible for the removal of the tanks and that comes with removal and testing costs. This issue should be decided within the coming year. The Board will also need to discuss what to do with the existing inventory and whether the property will be sold with the building or after it's torn down. Commissioner Christian-Bennett remembered the Board was going to offer the inventory to in-house departments that have their own maintenance departments rather than letting the equipment sit.
- Record's Facility (former Nursing Home) – If the Board is going to keep the facility long term, it must put considerable funding into it. The Board could add a storage area by the Administration Building to remove the building altogether. Commissioner Kline asked about the life of the building and to put any money into it may not be a good idea. Director Bragg suggested the Board could store its

records at Iron Mountain. The Board agreed to get a quote for storage and Director Bragg will investigate. There may be asbestos in the facility, which will increase the demolition cost if the Board decides to go that route.

- Justice Center – Nothing needs addressed next year, but there are projects in the old section that are holding until the remodeling has been completed. The roof will cost \$80,000, the parking lot still needs work and it was quoted at \$65,000, insulation needs replaced and could possibly be done by the County's Maintenance Department and the tile flooring needs to be removed. Additionally, the office portion's carpet will need to be replaced.
- The County's F-Lot is aging and will need to be replaced.
- Juvenile Detention Center/Juvenile Court Floor Repair in the Bathroom - Callahan Carpet was contacted to investigate the area and respond back, but it may be a larger problem then they can handle. The outside area around the Court is Portage County's responsibility, so landscaping, sidewalk, and paving repairs need completed in 2020.
- Technology – Will be discussed tomorrow with ITS.
- Vehicles – The leasing option provides lower figures in the early years, but eventually will continue to rise to the \$350,000. The County will receive additional funding when vehicles are sold.
- Airport – Director Bragg received additional information from Mr. Bonner and he is currently reviewing. In the next few months, the Board will need to decide upon a plan and over the course of 2020, to begin putting the pieces into place with the idea that in 2021 and 2022 the County can start implementing.
- Commissioner Kline noted it's the Board's responsibility and it will eventually need to take it over and fix it. Commissioner Christian-Bennett noted they've done a great job with what they have, but they can only do so much.
- Director Bragg noted the Commissioners, Treasurer, and the County Auditor have worked to try to reduce operating costs for the last 4 years and that effort has produced results. The Board could do one time funding to create an improvement that will last for years, and it should be done now while the Board has the funding. The Airport should be done sooner than later due to the cash balance.
- Regional Planning Commission Building – The Board is having difficulty selling the building but will need to decide how to move forward. Commissioner Kline has spoken with Jack Kohl and he is not interested in the building.
- Commissioner Christian-Bennett mentioned the Regional Planning Commission is interested in refinancing, but Director Bragg believes it would be a mistake. He discussed this issue with Director Peetz and explained if the Commission doesn't have the funding to cover the loans, it needs to come to the Board to work out an arrangement.
- Pretty Glenn Dam – Director Bragg noted the Board is working towards removal of the dam but it's likely that it will not be completed in 2020. The County set aside \$1,600,000 for the project and will apply for grants to assist with the project. Commissioner Christian-Bennett stated the quote will probably need to be updated but Director Bragg suggests holding off until the bids come back. Director Bragg pointed out most of the grants aren't available for demolition of the dam, they are for the restoration afterwards and once the design is in place for the demolition, the Board could then apply for the grants for the restoration.



- Commissioner Christian-Bennett asked about the Mantua Village housing study and recalled turning over Technical Assistance hours was contingent upon the County acquiring the water department and Director Bragg concurred. He also indicated the Board doesn't need the study completed in order for the acquisition to take place. The key is to have the low to moderate income (LMI) declared so it can qualify for the Critical Infrastructure grants to replace the pipes and hydrants. Commissioner Christian-Bennett reiterated the Board shouldn't allocate its Technical Assistance hours to the Village because the County is likely to do the survey if the transfer happens.
- Commissioner Christian-Bennett has spoken to Regional Planning Commission Director Peetz, who indicated the County has hours it hasn't used from 2018 that rolled over and Director Bragg stated the Board has 130 hours total (receiving 75 per year). Director Peetz mentioned the Board could use the hours from 2018-2020 to offset the cost of the housing study.
- Director Bragg reported Portage Development Board, Ohio State and Regional Planning Commission have requested additional funding on top of what is normally provided. Ohio State is requesting \$11,000, Portage Development \$25,000, and Regional Planning Commission is dependent upon the Comprehensive Plan, nit would be an addition request, as well. Director Bragg will add this as a topic for October 24, 2019.
- County Auditor Esposito suggested the Regional Planning Commission building could be turned back into a funeral home.
- Commissioner Clyde suggested forming a work group to turn the Capital Project list into a plan and she would be happy to assist. The group could consist of Director Bragg, Director Townend, a Courthouse representative, someone from Adult Probation and a Commissioner, to prioritize and report back to the Board. Commissioner Clyde will coordinate and get back to the Board.
- Director Bragg suggests something similar should be done with the Airport Board, and Commissioner Christian-Bennett is interested.
- Director Bragg will prepare information for the October 17<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> meeting, so a proposal can go out October 31, 2019.

Motion: by Sabrina Christian-Bennett, seconded by Kathleen Clyde that the Board adjourn the Meeting of October 9, 2019 at 10:59 AM.

Roll call vote: Commissioner Christian-Bennett, Yea;  
Commissioner Clyde, Yea;  
Commissioner Kline, Yea;

We do hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and correct record of the Portage County Board of Commissioners' meeting of October 9, 2019



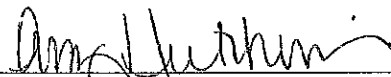
Vicki A. Kline, President



Kathleen Clyde, Vice President



Sabrina Christian-Bennett, Board Member



Amy Hutchinson, Clerk

