

Note: These minutes are not official until approved by the Law and Justice Committee at a subsequent meeting. Please refer to the meeting minutes when these minutes are approved to obtain any changes to these minutes.

DeKalb County Government
Sycamore, Illinois

**Law & Justice Committee Minutes
March 22, 2021**

The Law and Justice Committee of the DeKalb County Board met virtually via Zoom on Monday, March 22, 2021. Madam Chair Dianne Leifheit called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. Those members present via Zoom were Ms. Mary Cozad, Mrs. Karen Cribben, Mrs. Kathy Lampkins, Mr. Neill Mohammad, Ms. Linda Slabon, Mr. Larry West, and Chair Dianne Leifheit. A quorum was established with all seven Members present.

Others that were present included Brian Gregory, Sheriff Scott, Rick Amato, Michael Venditti, and Tom McCulloch.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

It was moved by Ms. Cozad and seconded by Mrs. Cribben to approve the agenda as presented. Those Members voting yea were Ms. Cozad, Mrs. Cribben, Mrs. Lampkins, Mr. Mohammad, Ms. Slabon, Mr. West, and Chair Leifheit. The motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ms. Slabon moved to approve the minutes of the February 22, 2021 Committee Meeting and Mr. Mohammad seconded the motion. Those Members voting yea were Ms. Cozad, Mrs. Cribben, Mrs. Lampkins, Mr. Mohammad, Ms. Slabon, Mr. West, and Chair Leifheit. The motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

PUBLIC DEFENDER'S REPORT

Mr. McCulloch placed the February 2021 Public Defender's Report on file with the Committee. According to the report, there were 610 cases opened and 345 closed. The Office is continuing to get appointed to many cases and with trials beginning at the end of the month, they hope more will start progressing towards closing status, Mr. McCulloch explained.

COURT SERVICES REPORT

DeKalb County Court Services Director Michael Venditti placed his monthly Adult, Juvenile, and Pretrial Reports on file with the Committee.

Mr. Venditti reported that the February numbers were normal but also were starting to ramp up and reiterated that trials are scheduled to commence at the end of the month. He believes that by summer there will be drastic increase in numbers.

He lastly answered questions about community services hours and how those are currently being done.

SHERIFF'S REPORT

Sheriff Scott placed his monthly Jail Population and Correction's Overtime Reports on file with the Committee. The Overtime Report still showed the numbers being on target but noted that next month the Committee may see some hire overtime costs associated with staff shortages. The Corrections Division is currently short five staff and although there are four in the hiring system, all of the training that needs to be done for each staff members takes a great deal of time.

Chair Leifheit announced that within the meeting materials there is a Courthouse Office Relocation & Construction Timeline along with architectural drawings. She encouraged the Committee to review the materials and familiarize themselves with the history of the project but reminded them that the future of it is now in the hands of the Finance Committee.

STATE'S ATTORNEY REPORT

DeKalb County State's Attorney Rick Amato joined the Committee to introduce himself to those who he had not yet met and to provide an update on the State's Attorney's Office.

Mr. Amato reviewed how his Office and the Courthouse have navigated through the COVID-19 pandemic. A lot of new technologies have been put into place in order to mitigate the amount of foot traffic coming into the Courthouse. For the past year, court has been conducted via Zoom as well as livestreamed for the public. As discussed by the other court-related offices, Jury Trials had been suspended for quite some time but will be resuming again the week of the 29th. In the beginning the trials will consist of those with very serious charges.

Mr. Amato provided photos of Courtroom 100 with all of the COVID protections. The room has a very large amount of plexiglass dividers between anywhere someone in the room would be seated. In order to meet the public trial demands, the trials will be livestreamed online. The Jurors will not be in the video and deliberations will continue to be confidential.

Mr. Amato commented that it will be interesting to see what technology will stick going forward as everyone moves towards a new normal. He believed that some of the technology advances have made certain things they do more efficient.

He also informed the Committee that domestic violence cases continue to run rapid. The State's Attorney's Office has been working with local law enforcement and non-profit partners to help combat domestic violence and to help put together a Domestic Violence Protocol. The Sheriff's Body Cam Program will make capturing data better but it also does take more time.

Mr. Amato presented a Draft Domestic Violence Protocol that he has been working on. These would be guidelines for law enforcement to follow and adhere to when responding to an incident involving domestic violence. The protocol reflects the best practices among law enforcement, but officer safety and safety of civilians is the highest priority. These guidelines should be followed in order to proceed with criminal prosecution regardless of victim cooperation with the criminal justice system. The protocol is not intended to address every situation or every potential issue, nor is it intended to substitute for individual officer discretion or individual departmental policies that are consistent with state law.

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He also provided the Committee with an Executive Summary of the recently passed Crime Bill. He described the Bill as a mixed bag of some good things and bad. On the surface level, there are positives that are already being worked on as a community (body cams, no neck restraints, etc.). He added that everyone locally wants to follow the demands of the Bill and do the best that they can. Mr. Amato briefly reviewed some sections of the summary and expressed that he would be happy to answer any Board Member's questions about the Bill or come back and discuss it further with the Committee.

Lastly, Mr. Amato reviewed the usage of body cam technology. The good part of the technology is it captures the story very well but the bad part is the speed of the downloading process. Everyone that is involved with downloading and working with the body cam videos are tracking their times dedicated. It may be a good possibility that in the future more staff requests will come to the Board (from the Sheriff, the State's Attorney, the Public Defender) during budget discussions to cover the extended amount of time that is needing to be put towards downloading and reviewing body cam footage, Mr. Amato explained.

ADJOURNMENT

Mrs. Lampkins moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:51 p.m. Ms. Cozad seconded the motion. Those Members voting yea were Ms. Cozad, Mrs. Cribben, Mrs. Lampkins, Mr. Mohammad, Ms. Slabon, Mr. West, and Chair Leifheit. The motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Madam Chair Dianne Leifheit

Tasha Sims, Recording Secretary