

**Public Comment -**

***Janet Drew – citizen from York, Maine***

Ms. Drew brings concerns weekly that too many people nationwide are incarcerated and we need to work together to change that. Ms. Drew referred to an article she read regarding the Boston jail system; the benefits of keeping people out of the system and that there is a lot of money coming in. It's an opportunity to put people in community apprenticeships and build the things needed to build with people who really want to succeed. Ms. Drew thinks we need to be on the same team; and start believing people that are in the system. Sheriff Morton spoke last week about allowing five people a week coming into the jail. Ms. Drew asks if we're even thinking of making progress, we need to stop bringing more inmates into the jail.

***Larry Dansinger – citizen from Bangor***

Larry begins his comment by explaining why himself and other people are at these meeting speaking during the public comment period. This group is concerned about the conditions in the jail and the number of arrests. He and others want to reduce that number and the reason for that is because of public safety. It's not about law enforcement, it's about public safety. There's a difference between the two. You can arrest a number of people, but that does not protect public safety.

Larry believes that victims of crime are less worried about people being punished than being more whole themselves. In fact, punishment, in its own sense does not work. Punishment actually makes people worse. Not that it does not teach, the lessons taught are: don't do a crime, don't get caught or I'm a bad person and it doesn't matter what I do anymore; that's why there's such a large recidivism rate. So instead of focusing on punishment, we need to focus on what I would call accountability. There's a lot of different ways of creating accountability. DA Lynch talked about that a little bit at the last meeting and that was very encouraging. I think there are some good models out there such as restorative justice, that we can use. In many cases, there are people that may continue to be a danger to somebody or somebody else in the community. And in those cases, they need to be monitored in some way whether that's being locked up or something else. But for the most part, locking people up is just damaging them. It's making our society or community less safe.

Larry apologies that some people are feeling offended by things being addressed. The focus has been on problems in the jails, too many people arrested, and wanting action to be taken to reduce that number of people in the jail.

**Public Comment – Continued:**

Larry hopes the commission is focused on the \$29M coming into the county to be used on rehabilitation and preventative measures, so that there can be a reduction of people who are in jail. Larry feels the opportunity to reduce the amount that taxpayers are paying since the jail is the largest expense for Penobscot County.

***Melissa Berkey – citizen from Bangor***

Ms. Berkey added that she too, hopes some of the \$29M can be used towards keeping people out of jail. It is understood that those monies have to be tied to COVID. Since you did have an outbreak of COVID at the jail, I'm hoping that these monies can be used towards community services, or more pre-trial or whatever it takes mental health beds. So that frees up the jail to be a better facility with less people. Happily, COVID is over and it was handled well. Obviously, by reducing the number of people in the jail, you also reduce the risk of COVID.

***Commissioner Andre Cushing –***

Commissioner Cushing stated that since he was the individual who responded to Mr. Dansinger, he wanted an opportunity to explain himself.

Commissioner Cushing wanted to point out that his level of frustration is the repetitiveness of questions which do not recognize that the Sheriff has made significant strides to address both the COVID problem and the overcrowding problem. We don't have a quota system where we go out and book to arrest people. Those people are brought into our care by other police departments in the area; and we have to deal with the situation that is handed to us. I think it is unfair to categorize that process, as arresting people in some random manner.

The other thing that I find interesting is that saying we don't want to put people in jail, but we do want to address the mental health and substance abuse needs. How do we do that? The jail right now does not have bed space available to appropriately deal with that. It's been a major part of the discussion that we've looked at in finding a new facility. I think it's high time that those who have concerns recognize that these people do not have a place to go at the state level. Doreatha Dix does not have the bed space, even though they physically have space in that facility. They do not have the staff available to house people. Riverview Hospital is full; which by default are brought to us when they are in a situation which causes them to be incarcerated. They are incarcerated here because they've been arrested for committing a crime. There are some factors that are beyond our control as to how many people come into the jail. I certainly would hope that in the future that there be some respect for some of the adjectives used to describe both our corrections department and our Sheriff.

PRCC Update –

Director Chris Lavoie reported the following:

- PRCC has three new staff members in training; there are two open positions in which we are working on filling.
- The radio console upgrade is going well. We have run into some issues with our infrastructure and how it is set up; there was some delay in the cut over. RCM is doing an amazing job and they're really taking good care of us. We're very happy with the service that they are providing.
- Last week we had a couple of pretty big radio outages. This stemmed from the heat in the dispatch room which controls all of the third and fourth floors. When the fourth floor would heat up during the day, it was overheating the power supplies and literally take down the entire radios. Facilities Director Brian MacDonald and Director Lavoie are working on some solutions so that those two floors can be on two separate zones. Other options would be installing heat pumps in both the fourth floor and dispatch rooms.
- Statistics year to date for 911 calls taken are 14,480; this is our slow season and we are right on par. Call volume will pick up with the warmer weather coming. Our business lines year to date are 60,423 which is pretty normal.
- Legislations for this session that we are following are:
  - LD 1291 is an act to reduce fire response time by eliminating the standard dispatch protocols for fire 911 calls.
  - LD 1306 is an act to include crisis response services offered through the E 9-1-1 system. EMS in the ESCB or the emergency services communications bureau would come up with protocol calls didn't necessarily require police, fire or ems. But maybe they could be referred to a crisis worker or social worker that we would transfer the call to them or dispatch them.
  - LD 1314 is an act to require dispatch centers to employ a person with a social work background. That bill states that we would have to hire 24/7 365 days social work coverage. My concern is that we already know there's a shortage of social workers and dispatchers. I don't think that we're going to have an easy time finding people to fill that position. Director Lavoie ran numbers on this act, and so you're aware the minimum; hiring six additional personnel without training, would be \$565,925.60 a year.
- Financially year to date, we are well within our operating budget; spending \$460,009. There's been no large capital expenses or repairs, so no surprises year. As far as the radio contract expenses, pretty much what we expected.

UT Update –

Director Shaw Weeks presented the following:

- A recommendation to award the Argyle/Alton Salt sand shed bid to Williams Construction. Commissioner Sanborn moved to approve the bid as presented. Commissioner Cushing seconded the motion. Vote to approve passed 3-0.
- Director Weeks presented a letter of support to Elliotsville Foundation for LUPC Permit filing for signature. Signed.

Sheriff's Update –

Sheriff Troy Morton reported the following on Corrections:

- In-house jail population is 125; 49 boarded out to other facilities, no federal inmates, county swaps and there **183** inmates in Pre-trial Services. Of the 125 housed at PCJ, 11 have been sentenced to the Maine Department of Corrections, but can't be moved to the Maine State Prison due to a COVID-19 outbreak at that facility. Until those prisoners can be moved, some of the 49 inmates boarded at other jails will remain where they are.
- DOC and PCSO are partnering today for a regional vaccine clinic. This clinic is not just for officers in our agency, but from other counties, and state facilities requesting the vaccine.
- We had 15 inmates eligible in the jail for vaccines. Ten accepted the vaccinations and they were administered by PCHC. This was conducted even before the state allowed vaccinations for inmates. We appreciate the relationship with PCHC to get that accomplished. Sheriff states that sometimes we have to find other means to go through in order to make things happen.
- CDC unclassified us as an outbreak. Both staff and inmates have recovered.
- A very serious assault on a staff supervisor last night with injuries to his head.
- Admissions to the jail are steadily going up. We're trying to find a balance of new admissions in and bringing back those that were boarded out at other facilities. Obviously, we're making sure that they're all going through testing protocols. Sheriff reiterated that all transfers are tested when they're moving from facility to facility.
- Police departments are still doing a good job of trying to use summonses. In some situations, we've had some very violent people that the police departments request to them in since the public are at risk. There are people in the public that are extremely violent.

**Sheriff's Update – Continued:**

Sheriff Morton appreciates Commissioner Cushing's comments earlier in the meeting. There is frustration that seems week after week after week there is some misinformation being sent out; sometimes dozens of emails which continue to take up staff time when these same questions have been answered repeatedly.

- Recent information that we weren't running our MAT program. This program has never stopped. This program includes counseling face to face in the facility. This program includes 10-16 people at any given time.
- Medical and mental health screenings not being conducted. Again, this could not be any further from the truth. We received a national grant to make sure that we have mental health clinicians available in our buildings.

Sheriff Morton reported the following on the Law Enforcement Division:

- There has been a tremendous uptake of calls to service and some very serious.
- The State put out a report indicating that it is another record high of overdoses for the month. Our Patrol is witness to the overdoses taking place in the public. While an awful lot of focus has continued to be put on the criminal justice system, I think it's critically important that we make sure that the services out there are providing services to those with substance use disorder are up and running and available to those in need.
- Our deputies responded to a report about an underage party involving drugs and alcohol in Hermon. The homeowner was there indicating that many of these people they didn't even know. Apparently, they showed up after reading on social media about the event. Some of the individuals fled from the home. One of the individuals that fled attempted to get into a home of a mother and her young children home alone. Her car was stolen and when the deputy supervisor showed up into the driveway, the stolen vehicle ran into the supervisor's car smashing the front end of the vehicle. This individual was on probation and later released again on probation.
- A deputy on routine patrol observed a fire on a deck of an apartment complex in Corinth. He alerted the folks in the apartment building to get out and returned to fight the fire the best he could with his own fire extinguisher. He certainly made an impact to those 17 residents in that building.
- Deputies also responded to a reported situation where a school bus was trying to drop off a very young child. The parents were under influence in such a condition that the law enforcement had to intervene and find someone to care and supervise the child.
- A deputy responded to a home invasion where a homeless person broke into an elderly lady's home while alone. She had no family members that could help her secure her

**Sheriff's Update – Continued:**

home. After the incident, the deputy drove to his own home, picked up materials and went back to secure her door and window.

- Deputies responded to another standoff and had assistance by a clinician. The best outcome that you could possibly have in these situations where people are taken into custody without injury to anyone, and those people receive the help that they need through mental health services.
- Sheriff is sharing this information because this is what law enforcement are facing in the communities. Our deputies are not out there randomly arresting folks.
- Sheriff reported on some of the legislation he is testifying on. One item pops up is that victims DO want people paying for the crimes that were committed on them. These victims are very interested on what is going to happen to them.
- Sheriff explained our standards on inmate mail. Every facility has their own set of standards, these are ours at PCJ:
  - Legal mail is opened in front of inmates
  - Incoming mail is searched and provided to the inmate. No stickies or cards are allowed.
  - We provide indigent stamps to those inmates who cannot afford stamps
  - Inmates sending mail out – mail is collected once a day and is not searched

**American Recovery Funds Discussion –**

This funding is a direct appropriation based on population to every county in the United States. The State of Maine is receiving a total of \$260M; with Penobscot County receiving approximately \$29.5M spread over 2 payments.

The State of Maine will receive just under \$1B to the state government. The counties statewide are receiving \$260M. Every town and city are receiving \$118M. Part of the act also increases the child care credit, an additional \$300 a week unemployment benefit, \$1400 for those making less than \$75K, rent subsidies and payroll protection plan. Monies will go to broadband expansion, grants for childcare, monies to schools and additional money for vaccine distribution. There are three buckets of money and we need to make sure that our monies are used for long term benefits for our citizens of Penobscot County.

Commissioner Sanborn states that communities are starting to reach out to find out more about what can be done to best serve their communities. There are many questions that we don't have the answer for. We need to find a way to get the word out once we have the answers provided to us.

**American Recovery Funds Discussion – Continued:**

Commissioner Cushing feel it important that we find a mechanism to help sort through the needs of the communities. We have discussed engaging the budget committee and someone that can speak to their requests. Commissioner Cushing is in agreement that we need to look into our long term for mental health and substance abuse preventative measures. We should look to the State to see if we can collaborate to get more mental health beds in this area. We will need to come up with a process in which we can safely be fiscally responsible in our spending.

We need to remember these are COVID relief funds. NACo has submitted a letter to the treasury department asking for guidance and what these funds can be used for.

Our job is to look for gaps, where we can help. We will need to communicate with the municipalities to see what they have for projects as well as what the State is doing. We will not lose the PILT funding during this time which is a great source of income for the county.

We should check with Penquis and EMDC to see if there is anything we can do to help fill any gaps. We will need to take an inventory of our needs and those in the municipalities. The final decision will be ours during this historic opportunity.

**Administration Update –**

Commissioner Baldacci reported the following:

- Employment within the County:
  - Asst Finance Director position closed – applications are being reviewed
  - IT Systems Administrator position closed – interviews are being held this week
  - Two Clerical Specialist positions in Probate were filled and they started work yesterday.
- Copier bids will be opened next Tuesday
- There was a legislative conference call held yesterday
- Commissioner Sanborn moved to approve the warrants as presented. Commissioner Cushing seconded the motion. Vote to approve passed 3-0.
- Payroll Change Notices signed for: Torrie Overlock and Velma Jordan – hired Full-time; Laura Doak – Resignation.

**Administration Update – Continued:**

- Payroll Warrant to be approved for 03.26.2021: \$250,901.48
- A/P Warrant to be approved for 03.30.2021: \$254,900.62
- UT Warrant to be approved for 03.30.2021: \$114,724.77
- UT TIF Warrant to be approved for 03.30.2021: \$6,307.76

**Meeting Adjourned-**

Commissioner Sanborn moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:12 a.m. with no further business on the agenda. Commissioner Sanborn seconded the motion. Vote to approve passed 3-0.

**Certified By:**

**-ABSENT-**

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Administrator, Erika Honey

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Peter K. Baldacci, Chairman

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Laura J. Sanborn, Commissioner

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Andre E. Cushing, III, Commissioner