

Emergency Services Committee Meeting

Small Meeting Room—Cumberland County Courthouse

03/19/19

Members Present:

Mark Baldwin
Deborah Holbrook
Jack Davis
Chad Norris
David Gibson
Carl MacLeod
Darrell Threet
Michael Speich

Other Commissioners Present:

Rebecca Stone
Sue York

Others Present:

Mayor Foster
Gary Nelson-NEWS
EMA Director Rick Williams
Jack Jameson

- 1. Called to Order**—The meeting was called to order by Chairman Gibson at 4:16 pm. A quorum was present. All members were present except for Nancy Hyder, who was in an ongoing Health and Safety committee meeting.
- 2. Approval of Minutes**—the minutes of the last meeting were not available and Chairman Gibson asked that the approval of our last meeting's minutes be put off to the next meeting.
- 3. Sheriff's Department—Sheriff Casey Cox**
The sheriff wanted to reiterate how much of an issue manpower is to his department. He reminded the committee that it has been 20 years since an additional patrol officer was funded to patrol Cumberland County. In that time, the county has seen a population increase of 28%. He also reminded us that the number of roads has increased, as well. We now have 1,800 roads that make up about 1,100 miles of roadway (according to Mayor Foster).

In this time of growth, the Sunset Ridge community has been developed, located just north of town. This is the largest subdivision outside of Fairfield Glade (FG) and Tansi.

The sheriff reiterated how thankful he is for the FG and Tansi departments that ease the burden of 911 calls on the county.

Cumberland County has 681 square miles of territory (fourth largest in state). Putnam County is 281 square miles smaller but they have 5 post-certified police departments within that county (Monterey, Baxter, TTU, Algood, Cookeville City).

Sheriff Cox is requesting 14 additional officers to be added (ideally) over the next five years. He commented that it wouldn't be feasible to train 14 new officers at once. The county is currently served by 30 officers.

Commissioner Holbrook asked about the School Resource Officers (SRO) and whether they work in summer. Sheriff Cox commented that they use comp time in summer, as

well as take their in-service training. He mentioned that SROs are primarily used for school safety and to serve warrants.

The sheriff also addressed the prison situation. State inmates are 50% of the medical budget. An emergency room visit will cost an average of \$2,500. Covenant Health gives the county a 10% discount. If inmates spend less than 24 hours in the hospital, the county pays the cost of the medical bill. Prisoners get premium service (premium price) for medical care and Cox said he'd like to see that reduced to TennCare rates

The county gets paid \$39 a day for state inmates, even though they cost about \$80 a day.

Cox reported that we are going to build a TCAT facility for inmates to better themselves.

Commissioner Speich requested that \$2,500 per school be added as a line-item for security upgrades. Commissioners Gibson and Stone commented that school property have been evaluated by the State and any recommendations made by the state have been met. Sheriff Cox added that SRO training includes identifying security weaknesses in a school and making sure those weaknesses are taken care of.

Mayor Foster commented that Cumberland County is ahead of the game by having added SROs to our schools, something every county has not done. That keeps us from having to use future grants to get SRO officers and we'll be able to use that money for other security upgrades.

Coming back to the need for more officers, Sheriff Cox reminded the committee that Cumberland County averages three homicides a year. We are currently at four. He also wanted to make note that when an arrest is made the arresting officer(s) are taken off the road for at least an hour to do booking, paperwork, etc.

Sheriff Cox also reminded the committee that deputies serve because they love their jobs. They just need more manpower. When officers use comp time it places a burden on other officers who have to work in their place. Commissioner MacLeod said he would like to see us be able to pay overtime instead of use comp time.

Sheriff Cox sympathizes with this committee and other commissioners and understands we will have some tough budget decisions to figure out. He also said he would have a presentation for us at a later date.

4. Other business—Commissioner Threet

Commissioner Threet wanted to briefly address the issue of school security. Threet said he wants to take care of the people who take care of our county (police, etc). He noted that we should be equal to or better than our neighboring counties and that he'd like a list of Sheriff Cox's employees and their salaries. He'd also like to see the salaries and number of officers of Roane and Putnam counties. Cox thinks Putnam county has 36 officers (being a smaller county than ours).

Mayor Foster intervened to remind Threet that such studies were done just a few years ago, per Cox's request and similar to what Threet is requesting. Foster also noted that the former commission made employees a priority and that significant money was spent to make improvements to the salary scales of county employees over a two-year span and that has been increased annually. Commissioner Stone said that oftentimes studies are updated every 3-5 years and it may be time for an update.

5. Other Business—Jack Jamieson, West Creek Drive.

Mr. Jamieson addressed the committee and asked if it were feasible to have an ambulance be located at the Cumberland County Fire Department, across from the Fair Grounds. Jamieson said such an ambulance would serve the north end of the county well, keeping those folks from having to wait on an ambulance to come from the other side of town. Commissioner Gibson commented that we would have to get with the ambulance service. Jamieson said that Crossville Fire Chief Chris South has commented that he would approve of such an ambulance service. Questions about space for the ambulance were raised by Commissioner Gibson and EMA Director Rick Williams. Jamieson thanked the committee for considering his concern.

6. Other Business--Chairman Gibson

Chairman Gibson handed out some paperwork that shows the number of 911 calls placed in the county and the agency responsible for those calls. These calls have been placed this year (Jan 1-Mar 13). These are for commissioners to review and consider. Sheriff Cox commented earlier that dispatch received 40,000 calls last year. EMA Director Williams and Gibson noted that the number of FG calls represent only about a third of the total calls made, as all calls don't come through dispatch. For instance, FG and Tansi have security officers called directly to their cell phone, bypassing dispatch. The column for "Rangers" are those people who guard Bowater.

7. Adjournment—With no other business to discuss, Commissioner Holbrook made a motion to adjourn. That motion was seconded by Commissioner Davis. With that, the meeting was adjourned with all eyes at 5:14 pm.