

LINN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
CEDAR RAPIDS, LINN COUNTY, IOWA
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 22, 2024 9:00 A.M.

The Board met in session at the Linn County Jean Oxley Public Service Center. Present: Chairperson Running-Marquardt, Vice Chairperson Rogers and Supervisor Zumbach. Board members voting "AYE" unless otherwise noted.

Chairperson Running-Marquardt called the meeting to order.

Public Comment: Auditor Joel Miller stated that his comments relate to the I.T. Director's update later in this meeting. He reported that they have had 14,757 absentee ballots mailed out to voters and 8,406 people have voted in person at various locations. They have between 800 – 1000 voters a day. There was a phone outage yesterday and he doesn't know the circumstances (internal or external), but it affected phones and voters calling in to find out where to vote, etc. This is a critical time, and they need to have phone communications. He asked the Board to ask Phil Lowder when he gives his update. He does appreciate the extended hours of the I.T. Helpdesk. He also stated that the City Assessor is having issues with getting access to one of the systems that his office and their office rely on for data input. The issue is with operating hours of their access to that system, and it seems that a compromise needs to occur. This is two weeks without a resolution. The City Assessor is asking for afterhours access without preapproval. They currently have 6 a.m. – 6 p.m. Monday – Friday. They have personnel that work beyond those hours, weekends and work remotely from home. They were told to ask for those extended hours every time they need access. With regard to Elections, he has asked the I.T. Director and staff to extend their on-call hours, and they have (6 a.m. – 5 p.m.). This allows for systems to be checked out before early voting at the Public Service Center at 7:30 a.m. and that they know everything is okay to ensure that voters have access to the information they need from his office. He hopes to be back to participate in the conversation with the I.T. Dir., but he asked the Board to address those issues when they have the opportunity to talk to him. Voting is going really well, and they want to keep it that way. Weird things happened yesterday like the lights went out on second floor and the elevator went out the first day. These are things that have never failed before but failed. 14 days and counting.

Motion by Running-Marquardt, seconded by Rogers to approve minutes of October 21, 2024 as printed.

The Board received updates from the following Department Heads:

David Thielen, LCCS Exec. Dir. - budget on target; General Assistance continues to work on winter shelter (opens Nov. 15); working on General Assistance ordinance changes; landlord/tenant initiative; census is increasing at the Juvenile Detention Center (putting stress on staff); additional security issues are being addressed at Juvenile Detention Center; busy month with Ryan White program (high number of intakes); Mental Health Access is working on withdrawal licensing; Vision Clinic held at the Child Center (500 attendees with 90% receiving glasses that day); playground continues to be vandalized; Family Transformation Program served 96 families; East Central Region is in the middle of behavioral health realignment (the nine counties in the current region will grow to 14); Options is working on increasing volunteer opportunities back to pre-pandemic levels. There are 10-15 on the waiting list; Home Health is fully staffed and 63 clients. Thielen explained the funding (Medicaid, Board of Supervisors and State Public Health). Chairperson Running-Marquardt asked if there are more ways for the Board to support the program more (financially).

Pramod Dwivedi, Health Dept. Dir. – identified an air monitoring site within Viola Gibson Park; patient/client visits statistics; Community Health Assessment identified key emerging themes; collaborating with the University of Iowa's Inst. for Public Health Practice; starting Learning Institute; focusing on immunization education for the farming community; wastewater surveillance (monitoring COVID, influenza and RSV); had one foodborne illness outbreak; Racial Equity Inst. Workshop (22 participants); Research Project working with Coe College; and looking forward to joint session with the Board of Health tomorrow.

Jon Gallagher, Soil Conservation Dept. Head – Watershed Collaboration efforts were explained in detail. He stated that the Linn Soil & Water Conservation Dist. Commissioners will be hosting a Conversation about Conservation Efforts in Linn County on November 14th in the Mt. Vernon area. A lengthy discussion continued regarding the pros and cons of cover crops. Cover crops help with soil erosion but at the same time it requires chemicals.

Chairperson Running-Marquardt asked Gallagher to look for resources that they can pull down from the State or Federal government (from larger watersheds in the state).

Dustin Peterson, Veteran Services Dir. – Budget on target; assisted 4 families in September; discharged outreach (mailed information of services available to 20 vets); speaking engagements including Central City American Legion with several Legions present; Cedar Valley Veterans Network; name change has been a smooth process; meetings attended; he thanked Chairperson Running-Marquardt for attending their Fall School last week (they were 1 of 4 counties that sent a Supervisor). It showed the level of

support that Linn County has for veterans; Iowa counties list of recently discharged veterans has been suspended for the next few months; veteran benefits received in September 2024; Proclamation next week for Operation Green Light Nov. 4-11; veteran appointment reminders are sent out via text message including a customer satisfaction survey. Adjusting with those that do not have smart phones. The Veterans Day ceremony will be held at 10:30 a.m. at the Vets Memorial Bldg. on November 11th. All veterans and their families are welcome.

Chairperson Running-Marquardt stated that the State of Iowa is 47th in veterans utilizing benefits. The job that Peterson and his staff at Linn County Veteran Services is doing is amazing and others across the state look to Linn County for leadership. She is proud to be from Linn County and heard about struggles other Veteran Service Commissions have with their Board of Supervisors. The two gentlemen that she serves with and the previous Boards have for decades worked really hard to do what they can to support veterans in the community. People were excited to see a Supervisor from Linn County there and building those relationships is an important piece and she thanked Peterson for his work and the ripple effect it has for the entire state.

Phil Lowder, I.T. Dir. – budget on track. One staff vacancy struggling to fill. KPI's are tracking within normal range limits; 79 vulnerabilities in the last patch, October is National Cybersecurity awareness month and their theme is staying safe on line; the Fall 2024 aerial imagery collection will be starting in November.

Charles Struck, I.T. Development Mgr. stated that I.T. and Elections are working together to make sure that they have communication. They have a schedule established (started Monday). The hours for this week are 6 a.m. – 5 p.m. and next week will be 6 a.m. – 5 p.m. Monday – Saturday. The day before the election is 6 a.m. - 5 p.m. and Election Day is 5 a.m. – 10 p.m. Staff is scheduled for all that time to make sure they have coverage. All vendors are on a quick call (individuals that can be contacted) where they can escalate tickets quicker with faster results. The afterhours calls also get routed to management (Lowder, Struck & Siebrecht).

Supervisor Zumbach asked about yesterday's phone outage.

Lowder explained that it was a brief outage (up within five minutes). It was an internal issue, but they don't know what happened. It could have been a carrier issue that manifested it down to the software or it could have been a recent patch that was applied that could have caused the system to lock up (there are a lot of moving pieces). They have an immediate reaction to that and that is to restart the phone service (quickest path to being online).

Chairperson Running-Marquardt stated that Auditor Miller spoke during Public Comment and really appreciates the extended I.T. hours. She also really appreciates them working with Election and others during this critical time to make it work so that they are truly doing the best they can for voters to exercise their right to vote.

Chairperson Running-Marquardt stated that Auditor Miller brought up in Public Comment that they are dealing with software access afterhours in the City Assessor's Office. She asked if there was any way where they can make it more user friendly or more accessible for them after hours.

Lowder responded that he was out of the office last week and not fully up to speed yet. He will, however, make a generalized comment. The City Assessor's Office is coming in remotely and two-thirds of all breaches are from remote software which is a significant concern. The longer the front door is left unlocked, the more chances there are to have an issue. They try to balance that and go with best practices. He and Charles will have a conversation on what was discussed but generally they follow best practices and that is to limit that exposure. He stated that there was a very notable breach in September from United Health whereby hundreds of millions of social security numbers and information were released. That came through a remote access breach.

Struck stated that they have started that conversation and will continue. They have a security committee which is made up of members of I.T. staff and they talk about these things to determine what is the best course of action.

Chairperson Running-Marquardt stated that issue is not as critical right now as services and the strength of I.T. and phone systems are taken care of now during this critical time of voting. The election work is top priority and way more important right now than finding an easier way for software access afterhours.

Lowder noted that they did offer to the City Assessor that if they need additional late-night access to call the I.T. Helpdesk and they will make provisions for the time period they request.

The Board expressed their gratitude to Lowder and his team for doing the best they can as a team to move the county forward and it is duly noted. They try to balance managing expectations, emerging issues while a Department Head is on vacation. Struck did a really good job helping to field a lot of those calls. The Board also noted that I.T. is in the business of getting little thanks but get a lot of calls when things are not going right. They apologized for calling Lowder on vacation.

Page 3
October 22, 2024

Adjournment at 10:31 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

JOEL D. MILLER, Linn County Auditor
By: Rebecca Shoop, Deputy Auditor

APPROVED BY:

KIRSTEN RUNNING-MARQUARDT, Chairperson
Board of Supervisors