

BE IT REMEMBERED THAT, The Board of Commissioners of the County of St. Joseph met in a claims session in the County City Building on July 10, 2018 at the hour of 10:00 a.m. (EST) at which time in the following members were present: Andrew Kostielney, Dr. Deborah Fleming D.M.D., and Dave Thomas were present.

REPORTS AND REQUESTS FROM:

COMMISSIONERS

A)

IN THE MATTER OF APPROVING
THE ACCOUNTS PAYABLE DOCKETS

Dr. Fleming moved to accept the Accounts Payable Docket as read and outlined.

Motion seconded by Mr. Thomas.

Motion adopted by a 3-0 vote.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Karen Smith, Bristol, Indiana.

I am here to see if there are any updates on K-9 Flash.

Mr. Woods. I have spoken to the Sheriff and I want to report back to you that it is the Sheriff's belief that Flash still has useful life based upon the people that he has spoken to. He believes the dog can continue to be in service as an Officer for another 2 ½ to 3 years. They only have two dogs at this point. Two K-9 officers and he would like to put Flash with another handler, so he can continue on with his service on the force. One of the issues raised was the separation period. Sheriff Grzegorek explained to me the separation period is necessary in order to have him fully calming period till we have a new handler to come and work with Flash. Legally I believe the dog is personal property of the County, however I also realize this is a K-9 officer. This is a specialized K-9 that has been trained as an attack dog. So, Sheriff Grzegorek also had concerns about releasing him back into the public without the handler who's been around for years because these dogs are trained to attack. The Sheriff wants to keep the dog and put him with another handler for his service life to the county. There would be a shortage of K-9 officers if Flash was taken off the force. That is his opinion.

Mr. Thomas. I received a couple emails from citizens. I received a generic email from our office email saying they heard from the Sheriff, I thought it was you, but I wasn't sure. I did send back an email, who is this from? In the email there was a reference that some office in the county has received over 500 emails. Whoever wrote the emails said should I email the Sheriff either a hard copy or generic copy. I suggested they forward email copies to the Sheriff and the Council members. Was that your email Frank?

Mr. Fotia. Ann wrote it.

Mr. Thomas. So, Ann talked to the Sheriff so whoever wrote it said they talked to the Sheriff. That's what I know about that. I do agree that it is a County asset. I personally stated to the people last week that I know it's a county asset. It would be nice if there was to a really good way to move forward in a positive way and since we have a dog that may or may not be your shelf life and we have someone willing to donate a brand-new dog with a brand-new shelf life who could bond with a new handler. Someone was quoted in the paper that part of the treatment of the dog to be isolated was to psychologically, depending on your point of view, torment or train him and make him desperate for human contact so he would bond with a new trainer. Some people think that's humane. I personally don't. Would there be any support from the Board of Commissioners to...

Mr. Kostielney. We are still under public comments so do you have any comments? We will still continue this conversation Dave.

Ms. Smith. I think there are some underlying issues. Not only within the Department itself but within the dog treatment program that I think somebody needs to look at before somebody gets sued. You guys do your research before tonight's meeting. I don't want to bring it up in the middle of a huge meeting with everybody there.

Dr. Fleming. Are from St. Joseph County?

Ms. Smith. I am but I have two businesses in town. I have a tow company where I work with the county and I donated Panzer to the county.

Dr. Fleming. Why are you so focused on the dog?

Ms. Smith. I love animals for one and I think his treatment horrible it is beyond...

Dr. Fleming. Horrible why? You don't think his job is to be a part of the county dog.

Ms. Smith. Not like he is now. He is being treated inhumanely. I am completely opposed to that. It's like Stockholm syndrome. Let's isolate your dog

Several people speaking at once.

Dr. Fleming. That's the way you have to do that.

Ms. Smith. No, you don't.

Dr. Fleming. That's your opinion.

Ms. Smith. Yes, that is my opinion.

Mr. Thomas. Originally you donated this dog and paid \$10,000. Not this dog but another dog.

Ms. Smith. Yes Panzer.

Mr. Thomas. So, you have already donated \$10,000 worth of dogs to the County personally and she wants to do another one.

Ms. Smith. Yes.

Dr. Fleming. I did not know that.

Julie Witham, Mishawaka, IN.

I can elaborate a little on what's going on. Actually, I was in contact with Foundalick Kennels, down towards Kokomo, Indiana. They are a trainer, worldwide, of K-9's. They train the handler and the dogs and like he said this is a time bomb, because when you retrain a K-9 with a handler they are to work together at a center like this. I asked him if he would write us a letter. I understand his point that he really doesn't want to get in the middle of this, but I do understand the point of what he is saying as this dog is not certified in narcotics and stuff. That actually expired two years ago. So, what Karen is saying she might want to get some documents.

Mr. Thomas. If there is no probable cause on a crime, then the whole case would be thrown out of court because the probable cause would be lost.

Ms. Witham. Actually, anybody that is in jail that has been arrested by K-9 Flash could come after the City or the County because his certifications have expired two years ago.

Mr. Thomas. I asked if when Mr. Woods talked to the Sheriff did the certifications ever come up and he said no. These are a lot of serious matters.

Ms. Witham. We have people willing to, we could even do another fund to where the county may end up with two dogs. One from Karen and one that we could come up with in an extra fund. So, they would be getting two dogs that could be trained with handlers, by Foundalick, I should have an email today that should have costs and everything. If we could get them maybe two dogs in replacement of Flash. It is very sad where he is. I actually went by and took a picture.

Mr. Thomas. That meeting tonight is a County Council meeting it won't be with us.

Frank Beigelbeck, Valparaiso, IN.

The last two summers Flash has spent at least two weeks with me while Mike was gone. On various three-day weekends when he has events out of town the dog would be there. Since my wife died him and my daughter come to dinner every Sunday and bring Flash. We play outside so as far as this vicious dog being released to inexperienced people, I am sorry it's not like that. The certification on Flash for narcotics expired.

Mr. Kostielney. Are there any more public comments? Seeing none. We could look into the certification issue. Is that the owners, handler's responsibility or the Sheriffs to do, I don't know.

Mr. Woods. I would assume that would be the departments responsibility not the handler.

Mr. Kostielney. If you could please look into that to make sure that all the certifications are up to date.

Mr. Thomas. Based on this I don't know what your feelings are, or Debs feelings are. Sounds like you are just learning some of these issues.

Mr. Thomas. There were emails about Flash and a petition started.

Dr. Fleming. Yes, it went all over the world from St. Joseph County for one little dog.

Mr. Thomas. It has over 116,000 signatures on it.

Ms. Witham. It is a good thing in a lot of our eyes.

Dr. Fleming. For a dog. I have a couple of dogs.

Mr. Thomas. I want to thank you for your generosity past and future. I would strongly consider retiring the dog to the family if they sign a waiver if the dog does something dangerous we aren't liable. Again, thank you for your generosity. Apparently, the Sheriff's office is in some kind of transition as far as the trainer or handler taking the dog today. So, it

isn't likely they will have someone today by the time this new dog is available they could have their issue figured out and meet with that dog and the dog and handler can bond together. These dogs go home with the family every day.

Mr. Kostielney. I would say again to verify with the Sheriff. It comes back to separation of powers. This is an Officer in the Sheriff's department.

Mr. Woods. It is it's a K-9 Officer. I will follow up on this.

There being no further business to come before the Board at this time, Mr. Kostielney asked for a motion to recess, Dr. Fleming so moved, seconded by Mr. Thomas. Meeting recessed by a 3-0 vote.

  
ST. JOSEPH COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

