

**CALHOUN COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
WORKSHOP – COURTHOUSE SECURITY
NOVEMBER 28, 2016**

PRESENT AND ACTING:

**DANNY RAY WISE
GENE BAILEY
DARRELL MCDUGALD
JERAL HALL**

**GLEN KIMBREL, SHERIFF
COUNTY JUDGE KEVIN GROVER
CARLA HAND, CLERK OF COURT AND COUNTY COMPROLLER
SARAH WILLIAMS, CLERK ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT**

The workshop was called to order by Chairman Wise at 2:00 p.m., CT.

Mr. Wood stated there is a contract to secure the South door of the courthouse and provide electronic keys for entry and exit. This contract was requested by the previous Board, and the contract was held until the new Board members could provide their input on the system. Mr. Wood asked Sheriff Kimbrel and Judge Grover to express their ideas to the Board.

Judge Grover stated the courthouse can be secured without implementing the key system on the South door of the courthouse. Most courthouses have one entrance and exit for the public and courthouse employees. Judge Grover stated the key system on the South doors would be a matter of convenience for employees. There are certain days, for instance there is a jury pool to be screened and there are a lot of people entering the courthouse, it would be more convenient for the employees to have a separate access. Judge Grover stated Calhoun County is the only courthouse in our circuit which is not secure, and only one of two courthouses in the State of Florida which is not secured. The court does not have the authority to implement courthouse security. Legally the authority rests with the Board for the facility and by statute the Sheriff for the actual security. Judge Grover stated several months back the Florida Supreme Court began a survey to see where courthouses in the state were with security, which revealed Calhoun County was only one of two courthouses which are not secure. Based on the results of the survey the Chief Judge for our circuit issued a letter to the Board requesting Calhoun County secure the courthouse. The previous Board voted to fund two (2) new positions to secure the courthouse and supported moving forward with a secure courthouse. Commissioner McDougald stated the Board voted to fund \$100,000 for courthouse security. Clerk Hand stated the funding was for two (2) positions, and was a little over \$100,000. Judge Grover stated he believes the Sheriff has already filled one position, and plans to fill the other in the near future. Judge Grover stated Commissioner Flowers had relayed to him the Board wished for him and the Sheriff to get together and make a plan for courthouse security. Judge Grover stated he and Sheriff Kimbrel have agreed on the date of next Monday, December 5th, to move forward with a secure courthouse. Judge Grover stated the Board has the authority to stop this

plan, but there are a number of liability issues which exist for the Board, the Sheriff, and the County in general with delaying this plan. Judge Grover stated since the Florida Supreme Court has done their survey, the Chief Judge for our circuit has recommended securing the courthouse, and with the number of complaints he has received from courthouse employees and citizens who frequent the courthouse he strongly urges the Board to move forward with increased security at the courthouse. If the key system on the South door of the courthouse is the issue on moving forward, the Board can hold off on installing the system and still move forward with a secure courthouse. The Board could always come back and add the key system later if they see a need. Judge Grover stated he wants everyone to know he is 100% convinced there is a need to secure the courthouse. Judge Grover stated there are safety concerns and he is seeing more escalation of anger and conflict not just personally, but with the feedback he has received from citizens and employees at the courthouse.

Commissioner Bailey stated he is for securing the courthouse and using one entrance and exit like Bay and Jackson County courthouses. Commissioner Bailey stated Judge Grover has his support.

Chairman Wise asked if Homeland Security has sent the County any funding for securing the courthouse. Judge Grover stated he is not aware any funding has been received, but it has been indicated to him from Senator Montford's office the County was in a better position to get funding if we have some increased security in place. Commissioner McDougald stated a former Commissioner had said he spoke to the Senator about securing funds for courthouse security. Judge Grover stated the County does not need any additional funding to move forward with courthouse security. Commissioner Bailey asked if there was going to be continual funding for the two (2) additional positions. Sheriff Kimbrel stated it would be up to the Board to continue funding courthouse security. Commissioner McDougald stated funding came from ad valorem taxes for courthouse security this year.

Chairman Wise asked what time the secure courthouse would start. Judge Grover stated that would be something which needs to be decided. Judge Grover explained the process of how courthouse security has been approved to the three (3) new Board members, and stated everything is in place to implement a secure courthouse on Monday, December 5th. The only reason this would not occur is if the Board changes their position or the Sheriff decides not to move forward on that date.

Commissioner McDougald asked if the other doors of the courthouse are set up where they can be locked and used as exit only doors. Judge Grover stated yes. Commissioner McDougald asked if someone were to exit the doors if there would be an alarm which would sound. Judge Grover stated there is not. Chairman Wise asked if that was a feature which could be added. It was indicated an alarm could be added to the doors. Chairman Wise asked what times of the day the courthouse would be considered secured. Judge Grover stated most of the offices of the courthouse close at 4:00, and he did not think hours would change from what they are now. If an employee has a key to the courthouse, they would still be able to access the courthouse after hours. Commissioner Wise asked if there were any constitutional officers or employees who come in at 7:00 am. Several of the constitutional officers indicated they and some employees are at work by 7:00. Chairman Wise stated an officer would need to be available when these employees arrive in the mornings. Commissioner McDougald stated there are also some employees who also stay after 4:00 pm. Sheriff Kimbrel stated the ones who are still in the courthouse after hours would be able to let themselves out. Mr. Tim Jenks stated the bailiff goes around

and locks all the doors of the courthouse at 4:00 so no one else can enter the courthouse after that time. Ms. Margie Laramore stated there has been instances where someone gets into the courthouse after 4:00. Sometimes the door is not checked by the people exiting the courthouse and the door does not shut completely. Judge Grover stated those doors are supposed to self-close and if they are not, the company who maintains the doors need to be contacted. Mr. Wood stated the doors have been adjusted several times. Sheriff Kimbrel stated if there are citizens in the courthouse who are not finished with their business at 4:00, those citizens may need to be escorted to the door to ensure the doors close properly and no one else enters. Mr. Wood stated he and some other employees have keys to enter the courthouse and asked if those employees would be allowed to retain those keys. Chairman Wise stated if the courthouse is to be secure then there should only be one entry and exit to the courthouse. Judge Grover asked if Chairman Wise is talking about after hours or during operating hours. Mr. Wood stated he was referring to after hours. Judge Grover and Ms. Laramore indicated they have business at the courthouse on the weekends and after hours at times, and Mr. Wood stated there are some employees who have key fobs to the doors in the EOC. Sheriff Kimbrel stated he doesn't think there will be a problem if the front door of the courthouse is used during normal working hours, and if there are times outside of those normal hours' employees must be at the courthouse to have one door they go in and out so it can be monitored. Clerk Hand stated she does not have a key fob to the door in the basement, but has a key that opens the main doors of the courthouse. Chairman Wise stated if someone has to stay late they would only be leaving out the doors. Clerk Hand stated there are some Saturdays where she would need access to the courthouse, and Ms. Laramore stated she has to come occasionally on Saturdays too. Sheriff Kimbrel stated one door would need to be chosen to be used. Commissioner Bailey indicated he would prefer the front door be the point of entry.

Commissioner McDougald asked why there would need to be two (2) security officers hired to secure the first floor instead of one. Sheriff Kimbrel stated if there is only one officer, he would not be able to leave to get lunch or take a break. Judge Grover stated if there is ever an incident there will need to be one officer to cover the incident and one officer to stay at the front door. Commissioner Bailey stated with all the doors locked but one, the officer would not have to worry about watching the front door and the back door. Sheriff Kimbrel stated the long range plan would be to have cameras on all the doors and monitor screens at the front doors where the officers are working. There was further discussion about security at the front doors. Sheriff Kimbrel stated his concern is something happening at the courthouse before increased security measures are in place, and he is very concerned about liability. Sheriff Kimbrel stated he does not want to implement security half-way; he wants to do it the right way so neither he nor the County will get sued. Sheriff Kimbrel stated he went to Gulf County to see how they run their security, and modeled his plan for a secure courthouse around their operation which involves two (2) officers. There was further discussion about how the two (2) officers would be used for security at the courthouse. Sheriff Kimbrel stated he believes the Supreme Court of Florida will one day have the legislature mandate secure courthouses.

Commissioner McDougald asked about school security, and stated there does not seem to be much security at the schools. Sheriff Kimbrel stated there is one officer who stays at Blountstown High School and one officer who goes to Altha School and Carr School. Blountstown High School and Altha School campuses are both locked campuses once students arrive in the morning. Commissioner McDougald stated there is one officer for two (2) schools, and asked how that compares with the rest of the state. Sheriff Kimbrel stated he is not sure how Calhoun County compares with other counties, but school

security is an area he would like to improve on as well. Commissioner McDougald stated his objection to courthouse security is there are two (2) additional officers hired to secure the courthouse, but there are schools who do not have full time security. There was further discussion about security in the County.

Judge Grover stated one of the complaints he has heard consistently about security at the courthouse is with the restraining order process. Judge Grover described the restraining order process. First someone comes in to fill out a petition for a restraining order, and then the court reads the petition. If based off the allegations it is decided there is a threat, a temporary restraining order is assigned and a hearing is scheduled. There is a notice sent to the person who is accused of being violent and to the alleged victim. The court is then ordering them both to appear in the courthouse at the same place at the same time, in an unsecure location. Judge Grover stated multiple times he has had family members come to him and tell him it is wrong of him to order both parties to an unsecure courthouse at the same time when there is no security to protect the victim. Judge Grover stated implementing a secure courthouse is the right thing to do. Judge Grover stated it would also not look good if we have a violent situation occur at the courthouse, and have delayed to do what almost every other courthouse in the State of Florida has done. Judge Grover stated he is particularly frustrated the courthouse is not secure because he is the one who has to issue these restraining orders and put these people in a potentially dangerous situation, but yet he does not have the authority to secure the courthouse for these people.

Commissioner Bailey stated he worked with corrections for many years and the worst system he worked with was the card system to enter the building. The cards were constantly getting lost, and the doors would be opened for other people, and there was a lot of money spent replacing cards. The best system was an I.D. card which identified someone who worked there and allowed the guard at the gate to let them in the building, and hard keys to enter any doors.

Mr. Wood stated at one time it was suggested to secure the second floor of the courthouse only, in an effort to not impede the public's ability to enter the courthouse from any door. Mr. Wood asked if this would be a cheaper, easier plan. Judge Grover stated the entire courthouse needs to be secured, because there are concerns from employees and others in locations other than the second floor. Judge Grover stated what he is asking to be implemented at the courthouse has already been implemented at the Board meetings, where everyone is screened through a metal detector before entering the Board room. Judge Grover stated this has not seemed to be an inconvenience, it only takes everyone a minute or two to enter the Board room. Ms. Laramore stated a couple months ago she had a situation in her office on the first floor where she was truly afraid an individual was going to get violent, and her co-worker had their finger on the panic button ready to call someone. Judge Grover stated he has heard similar stories from multiple people who work in the courthouse on the first floor.

Mr. J.K. Newsome stated when they first realized at the Library they were having security problems they changed all the locks on the doors so there was control over who had keys to enter the Library. They also installed surveillance cameras.

Chairman Wise asked if everyone was in agreement anyone who was entering the courthouse after hours would enter through the door in the EOC of the basement. Judge Grover stated not everyone has a key fob to that particular door. There was further discussion about what door employees would enter

after hours. Clerk Hand stated she has a list of all the keys for the entrance doors to the courthouse, and the names of who the keys are assigned. The keys are numbered and cannot be duplicated except by approved staff. Sheriff Kimbrel stated there could be a key count once every 30 days. Chairman Wise asked if these keys would only be for non-traditional hours. Sheriff Kimbrel stated that is correct, during normal working hours everyone would enter and exit through the front door of the courthouse.

Mr. Wood stated if the courthouse is secured, all employees of the courthouse should be asked to park away from the courthouse to allow the guests of the courthouse to have convenient parking.

Commissioner McDougald stated if there will be two (2) officers their hours could be staggered where one comes in a little early to allow courthouse employees to arrive to work at 7, and the other could come in a little late and stay later. Sheriff Kimbrel stated this could be done.

Ms. Becky Smith stated since Deputy Matautia has been stationed in the courthouse she has seen a huge difference in the atmosphere. He makes his rounds, and has walked in when there have been irate customers in her office and their attitude will immediately change.

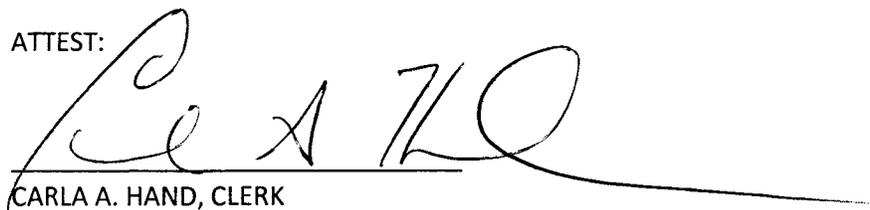
Chairman Wise asked when the Board would meet to vote on when to implement courthouse security. Sheriff Kimbrel stated courthouse security was voted in by the previous Board, this is just a matter of implementing security. Sheriff Kimbrel stated he just needs a consensus of the Board to move forward next Monday with one entrance and one exit to the courthouse. The other issues with the key system, and possibly adding security cameras can be addressed later after security has been implemented. Judge Grover added there is a money available (Court Facility Funds) to be able to install security cameras and other security measures for the courthouse.

The Board came to a consensus to allow the Sheriff to move forward next Monday, December 5th, with one entrance and one exit to the courthouse. Sheriff Kimbrel stated he will draft a notice to go out in the newspaper this week, and will post the notice on the doors of the courthouse to inform the public of the change.

There being no further business, the workshop adjourned at 2:40 p.m., CT.


DANNY RAY WISE, CHAIRMAN

ATTEST:


CARLA A. HAND, CLERK