

December 27, 2017

The Lincoln County Board of Commissioners met for a special session on December 27, 2017, in the Lincoln County Courthouse, Libby, Montana. Present were Commissioner Cole via VisionNet, Commissioner Bennett, Commissioner Peck, County Administrator Darren Coldwell and Deputy Clerk and Recorder Chris Nelson.

2:00 PM **Crisis Intervention/Mental Health:** Present were Public Health Manager Jennifer McCully, Deputy Sheriff Brandon Huff, Sheriff Roby Bowe, Wendy Drake from the finance department, County Attorney Marcia Boris, Deputy County Attorney Jeff Zwang, Community Health Center Director Maria Clemmons, and District Court Judge Matt Cuffe.

Commissioner Peck said that during last week's meeting a small group was put together to look at how the county will be moving forward with mental health evaluations now that Western Montana Mental Health has closed. McCully said that Cabinet Peaks Medical Center wants to consider utilizing telehealth and the system but doesn't feel this is the optimal choice. Clemmons asked whether the law requires non-voluntary committals to be done in person. Cuffe said the statutes are not entirely clear on the issue but it is better to have a mental health professional do the assessment in person.

McCully said the county could hire someone at a cost of approximately \$70,000 per year. Coldwell said it would be easier to contract out the service because it would not have to be advertised. Cuffe said if they could get someone for the month of January that could do the involuntary committals but the county would still have to figure out what they would do in the future. Huff said he had spoken with Nancy Hughes who said she would be willing to fill in for one month. She would charge \$25 per hour and need housing. Doug Richardson also said he would be willing to fill in for a month.

Commissioner Peck said those options are both short term fixes. Clemmons wondered if they could use Hughes and Richards back-to-back providing the county with 60 days of service and provide more time to figure out a long-term plan. Huff said that might be possible but it would be difficult for one person to do 30 days straight. Cuffe said Dr. Myers is board certified psychiatrist that would automatically qualify to do the assessments. Zwang said that Dr. Myers might be a short-term solution but they would need to see what his availability would be. He added that he didn't believe that Myers would be interested in it full time. Commissioner Peck felt the county needs to be looking at every option and those that can provide service for any length of time. Huff felt Hughes would be the best choice as she has the time and could help in formulating a long-term solution. Cuffe agreed that she would be the optimal choice and said they should get her under contract, speak with Richards and check with Dr. Myers on his availability. Commissioner Peck wondered which department they would report to as they cannot report to either the sheriff's office or the court. Coldwell and McCully felt the health department would be the most appropriate. Coldwell said he would be concerned having only one person handling all the cases and that leading to possible burnout. Commissioner Bennett wondered if they got a fill-in for Hughes whether they could possibly get 6 weeks or more commitment from her. Clemmons said doctors are also able to do the assessments. McCully said the county has been told that would not work. Commissioner Peck said they need to see about getting Hughes under contract while continuing to work towards a permanent solution. Coldwell said he would speak with Cabinet Peaks Medical Center CEO Bruce Whitfield about using one of their dorm rooms for Hughes. He will also check on medical malpractice insurance for Hughes and Richardson as well as rates of pay.

Meeting adjourned at 3:00 PM.

LINCOLN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Mike Cole, Chairman

ATTEST: _____
Chris Nelson, Deputy Clerk of the Board