

Manitowoc County Public Safety Committee
Manitowoc County Communications and Technology Building

March 13, 2024 5:00 p.m.

Attendance: Present: Chairperson James Falkowski, Supervisor Mickey Lillibridge, Supervisor Nick Muench, Supervisor Leo Naidl, and Supervisor Norb Vogt.

Others in attendance: Patricia Koppa, Coroner Curt Green, Sheriff Dan Hartwig, Det. Brandon Radtke, Deputy Coroner Amanda Ziarnik, and County Board Chair Tyler Martell.

Chair James Falkowski called meeting to order at 5:01 p.m. Roll call circulated.

Minutes of prior meeting: Chair Falkowski asked if there were any changes or corrections to the minutes of the prior meeting from February 14, 2024. None offered and the minutes were approved upon motion of Supervisor Nick Muench and second by Supervisor Norb Vogt, all present voting in favor.

The Chair pointed out that this is Supervisor Vogt's last meeting as he is retiring from the County Board. There is a treat to share after the meeting.

Supervisor Falkowski noted that the monthly reports and monthly financials were sent to all members.

Call for public input. No one from the public was present and public input was closed.

Chair Falkowski presented the Ordinance Amending Manitowoc County Code Section 6.275 (Prostitution.) Motion was made to approve by Supervisor Nick Muench with a second by Supervisor James Lillibridge. Sheriff Dan Hartwig offered additional information and Detective Brandon Radtke explained some of the operations used in enforcement and how having an ordinance assists in enforcement rather than charging under Wis Stats. 944.30.. After discussion, vote taken and motion to send Ordinance to County Board approved.

Then took up the Ordinance Amending Manitowoc County Code Section 4.13 (Fees), which would adopt the Sheriff's Office fee schedule. Supervisor Leo Naidl moved to approve the proposal with as second by Supervisor Lillibridge. Discussion that the changes appeared reasonable and it had been 8 years since there was a change. All voted in favor.

A draft of the resolution setting the new Sheriff's fees had been received. Supervisor Vogt moved to approve the fee increase, Supervisor Muench seconded the motion and all approved.

Chair Falkowski asked Coroner Curt Green for his report. Coroner Green presented a number of statistical reports to the committee members. He also introduced Deputy Coroner Amanda Ziarnik, who has been assisting with some reporting duties. Beginning with the statistical information, Coroner Green gave details regarding the deaths handled by his office including cremations and hospice deaths which he must review pursuant to statute. Most hospice deaths are from the illnesses anticipated, but many more people die in hospice care than in the past. For example, 473 in 2023 compared to 211 in 2008. Cremation is also more common; 476 in 2023 compared with 255 in 2008. (This is actually down from 621 in 2022) While not usually requiring extensive investigation, these matters do take time.

Involving greater investigation, there were 21 drug related deaths not counting suicide by overdose. These can be very complex investigations. Coroner Green described several situations and described the changes in the user population over the years. Suicides are also investigated. There is no trend, but there were 13 in 2023. The office did look at deaths involving gun shots over the decades. Found that since 1990, there have been 198 gun shot related deaths in the county 174 of which were suicides.

Coroner Green provided extensive breakdown of the traffic fatalities over time as well as the 2023 numbers. His office has significant amounts of data which is all manually maintained. The state wants a great deal of that information but doesn't provide a collection mechanism. In order to keep up, will be looking to purchase software in the next budget. Part of the certification process prior to cremation involves extensive documentation which is taking time from other duties and the state is looking to impose some very short time limits. and penalties for failure to comply. Can't operate without the software going forward.

One important community task performed by the office is law enforcement education. Have been providing training to the local agencies. Deputies help with this as well as with the record and report management. Coroner Green discussed the office structure comparing coroner to medical examiner. Noted this will be his last term and the county may want to consider moving to a medical examiner.

Other notes of interest: One legislative change could end up requiring that bodies be kept of extended periods. This could cost a great deal. There are also concerns when a decedent is an undocumented immigrant. Embalming is required as well as certification by coroner. Need to work with the Chicago consulate office. Again two examples of changes that make it more difficult to do the job and keep the office properly staffed. Will want to consider all of this when deciding how to operate in the future.

After thanking Coroner Green, Chair Falkowski noted the next meeting on April 10, 2024. The report will be by Clerk of Court April Higgins.

Supervisor Muench moved to adjourn; Supervisor Vogt seconded. Meeting was adjourned at 6:39 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted
Patricia Koppa for
Supervisor Norb Vogt, Committee Secretary