

Defender of the Day contract discussion

March 11, 2020

8:15 a.m.

Present: Commissioner Stamper, Commissioner Fund (by phone), Commissioner Jackson, County Manager Erik Martin, Judge Lawler, Judge Buzzard

Guest: Linda Williams

Recorder: Rieva Lester

Commissioner Stamper said the commissioners would like to hear from the judges about their thoughts on the defender of the day's request for a pay increase.

Judge Lawler said he feels that it was an extraordinary contract when the program began. He said it was reduced to \$6,666 per month in 2017. He said he understands Rachel Tiller is asking for \$7,995 per month. He noted that she spends increased hours on the contract.

Judge Lawler noted that Superior Court judges' pay has increased over the past several years.

Judge Lawler and Judge Buzzard said Rachel Tiller's quality of work and the number of hours she devotes make her request reasonable. He said he feels the five-year contract is a steal for the county.

Judge Lawler said Rachel Tiller works roughly 30 hours per work. He noted that if she takes vacation, she must pay for her replacement.

County Manager Erik Martin noted that grant funding covers her contract. Any overages go toward indigent defense in general, he said.

Judge Buzzard said Rachel Tiller is so prepared and has a good working relationship with the Prosecuting Attorney's Office that the county realizes savings.

Judge Lawler said using Rachel's services means the county has no overhead to pay. He noted that she could make more money in private practice.

Judge Buzzard and Judge Lawler said the county cannot afford to lose Rachel Tiller.

Erik left at 8:28 a.m.

The commissioners said they supported the contract increase.

Meeting ended at 8:31 a.m.