

If you want to get Josephine County Commissioners riled up walk to the podium during public comments time and mention either sheriff's funding or homelessness. During the February 15 Business Session Michael Storms reminded Commissioners funding for the sheriff and homelessness are foremost in citizen's minds right now, yet the Commission seems to have abdicated it's responsibility for both.

Storms' comment set off one of Commissioner Dan DeYoungs' famous rants..."I honest to goodness don't know where you're coming from," he said. He then gave the history of efforts to secure funding for the sheriff and how they get shot down by voters every time. DeYoung seemed to blame Storms personally for voting no on the Board's last effort, the seasonal sales tax. "Maybe you didn't, personally, but five to one it was no. And so if there's another idea out there that you, the voter, would like to see you bring that to us. What would you vote for? Because I'm fresh out of ideas," said DeYoung.

Commissioner John West, being new, told Storms the county is working on funding the sheriff "internally" and contradicted DeYoung by saying "We're not throwing our hands up by no means" although he did concede "...we're running out of bullets in the gun." Commissioners are trying to figure out what the public will support, said West. "Don't, don't give up on us."

So far, West has advocated cuts as small as stopping newspaper subscriptions and finding a better deal for the county's legal notices so that money can stay in the general fund for the sheriff's use.

Commissioner Herman Baertschiger took DeYoung's comments a few decibels louder when he yelled at Storms. "The Chamber was against it, the Democrat Party was against it, the Republican Party didn't support it! I don't know what to do. It has to be citizen driven. The newspaper was against it!" Baertschiger said he thinks "because of the politics in this county, if it (a plan to fund the sheriff) comes out to the Board of County Commissioners it's just not going to pass, because these people, they just won't support it."

Baertschiger also shot back at Storms' criticism of the Board's handling of homelessness by saying "it's a big problem and nobody seems to have the answer. So we're going to do the best we can but to expect us three to have the answer with limited resources, extremely limited resources...bureaucrats and politicians that have the resources don't have the answer so how do you figure we're going to have the answer!"

Most of the meeting before the Public Comments time was taken up by Josephine County Sheriff Dave Daniel handing out awards recognizing his jail staff for "what's not often seen, their compassion and courage...and I will say at times that means saving lives." He recognized jail staff for being alert to emergencies and saving lives when inmates overdosed on fentanyl, attempted suicide and when an elderly man in jail had a heart attack. Daniel said these people "have our backs and put their lives at risk and I want to thank you so much for your effort, your

work and putting your life on the line for us.” The Commissioners praised them as well and said these deputies have their ”unwavering support.”

Others speaking during Public Comments included Kate Dwyer, Executive Director of the Four Way Community Foundation, also spoke to let the Commission know about grants and how important they are to county departments. She warned Commissioners that “well-intentioned efforts to tighten our belts sound like they might take grant funded money away from departments and they may misunderstand some of what has been said. That greatly imperils our county departments ability to reap grant funding and so I would encourage you to learn more about the structure of how that funding works and the way that the funding community thinks about the money they give to our departments.” She said she would be available to talk to Commissioners individually about this.

Also at the podium was the perennial Judy Ahrens who waved around flyers for a Republican fund-raiser and urged the Commissioners to attend. She said there would be “experts” in education there to tell you things that would “make you throw up.” Ahrens lamented that kids aren’t being taught anything in school but sex. Mark Jones said it appears the Commission wants to micro-manage its department heads while Victor Zeitz thanked Commissioners for helping him find information on the county’s website “but my top priority would be to know where and when various boards and committees are going to meet...and what is the agenda.”