

NATURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE
McHenry County Administration Building
667 Ware Road, Woodstock, IL 60098

MINUTES OF FRIDAY, JULY 10, 2009

Chairman McCann called the committee meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. The following members were present: Mary McCann, Chairman; Yvonne Barnes; Anna May Miller; Virginia Peschke; and Scott Breeden. Barb Wheeler and Pete Merkel were absent. Also in attendance: John Labaj, Deputy County Administrator; Patti Nomm, Environmental Health; Dennis Sandquist, Mark Phipps, Matt Hansel and Maryann Wanaski, Deb Sorenson, Planning & Development; Cathy Link, Purchasing; Jamie Rein, Assistant State's Attorney; Captain Tony Cundiff – Sheriff's Office. Adam Lehmann, Administration Intern; interested public; and the press.

Mary McCann, Chairman	
Yvonne Barnes	JS "Scott" Breeden
Pete Merkel	Anna May Miller
Virginia Peschke	Barbara Wheeler

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Committee members reviewed the minutes the Natural and Environmental Resources Committee meeting of June 9, 2009 along with the joint Finance and Audit and Natural and Environmental Resources Committee meeting minutes of June 9, 2009. Ms. Barnes made a motion, seconded by Ms. Peschke to approve both sets of minutes for June 9, 2009. Ms. Miller asked that the joint meeting minutes be amended to indicate that she was absent for this meeting. The minutes were approved as amended with all members present voting aye on a voice vote.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

NEW BUSINESS

Background information on property maintenance issues: Mr. Hansel presented some slides of various types of maintenance issues on properties. He reviewed the violation process and what is done when the department receives a complaint. He noted that 90% of the complaints received are from neighbors. Once a complaint is received, a form is filled out and an inspector is sent out to investigate and photograph the complaint if one is found. If a violation is observed, a letter is sent which gives the owner 14 days to come into compliance. If after 14 days the issued has not been resolved another letter sent giving the owner and additional 10 days to resolve the issue. If after the second letter there is no response, court papers are filed and the issue goes to ordinance violation (ov) court. It was explained that the OV Judge can only issue fines and cannot force compliance. The court is used to monitor the situation. The ultimate challenge is to have the owner come into compliance but staff has no power to make this happen. Fines are determined by the Judge. The Department asks for a fine of \$500 per week, but fines usually average between \$25.00 and \$100. Larger fines can be issued in Chancery Court, but collecting the fine can also be a problem. Chancery Court can also force compliance, which is the ultimate goal. Mr. Sandquist reported that last year 1,100 compliance complaints were received, 900 were resolved and 200 are still open. He stated that vast majority are resolved quickly. Ms. Rein also reported that 90 to 95 percent of the ones that go to court are resolved with the owner agreeing to the violation and the issue is resolved. Violations can involve many departments (Sheriff, P&D, Health, etc.). Some violations are inherited and the new owner becomes responsible for the previous owner's problems. Violations, especially those that ultimately involve a forced clean-up can be time consuming and such issues also may involve other concerns such as mental problems which need to be taken into consideration. Foreclosures also present problems with yard maintenance and locating the current property owner, which in most cases is a banking institute. Members discussed concerns and how various issues can best be addressed. It was also noted that the County's Conservation Design Ordinance encourages natural prairie plants and occasionally this can also add to the problem of unwanted "weeds" and the growth of noxious plants. Continued maintenance of detention areas also raises problems especially when the area is owned by property owners bordering the area or an owners association that is no longer in existence. After discussion, staff was directed to review various state and county ordinances that may address nuisance violations to see what options may be available and bring their findings back to the Committee for further discussion.

Background information on noise issues: Captain Cundiff, Ms. Rein and Ms. Nomm joined the Committee to review noise concerns. Captain Cundiff reported that there has been ongoing complaints involving motor cross tracks, ATVs, dirt bikes and loud music. Complaints are responded to but unless a person is willing to file a formal complaint there is not much that can be done to resolve the problem. Noise complaints can often be addressed with a disorderly conduct charge, but some callers are unwilling to sign such a complaint. Some calls are neighbors complaining against neighbors. Complaints regarding liquor establishment are addressed in the Liquor Ordinance. After discussion, staff was asked to review other county ordinances and bring recommendations to the next meeting for consideration

Yard waste disposal alternatives: Ms. Nomm provided an overview to complaints that have been received by the Health Department regarding burning of landscape waste from May of 2008 to May of 2009. Of those complaints 705 were substantial. She stated the department has been researching alternative methods to reduce the number of complaints and violations. Alternatives include providing various drop off sites and franchising waste hauling services. A meeting with township

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Supervisors is planned for July 16th to discuss these alternatives. The franchising of solid waste removal would be provided by a single hauler for services in specific areas this would reduce costs and provide much needed services, such services could also be customized to meet the community needs, truck traffic would also be reduced. Three potential areas have been identified as possible franchise areas, two are in Wonder Lake and one is in Pistakee Highlands. The Purchasing Department is researching the bidding process for these services. Next steps would be County Board approval and then holding public meetings for residents in the designated areas. Members were pleased with the proposed plans and directed staff to move forward with their efforts.

Ms. Miller left the meeting at 9:45 am.

OLD BUSINESS: None

REPORTS

Ms. Link reported that the Green Team has realigned its efforts to be more effective in their work. They are using the NACO guidelines and have formed seven subcommittees. The waste audit has been completed and it was noted that Valley Hi and the McHenry County Division of Transportation are not currently recycling. The Green Team would like to get a representative from Valley Hi to join their committee. The County has also registered for two NACO competitions, "change the world – start with one bulb"; and, the County Drive Smarter Challenge. Ms. Link also reported that office supply orders have shown an increase of 38% in orders for "green" supplies. Suggestions to include in the drive smarter challenge included sponsoring a one day "tire pressure" event. A paper shredding event could be combined with a light bulb collection event to encourage the use of more energy efficient bulbs. Ms. Link announced that the County will hold an auction at Valley HI on August 15th.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

None

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Peschke made a motion, seconded by Ms. Barnes to adjourn at 10:23a.m. The motion carried with all members present voting aye.

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