

MCHENRY COUNTY BOARD – COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
667 WARE ROAD - WOODSTOCK IL 60098

MINUTES OF FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2011

Chairman of the Board – Kenneth D. Koehler (District 2)

District 1 Bob Bless Anna May Miller Marc Munaretto Robert Nowak	District 2 JS “Scott” Breeden James Heisler Kenneth Koehler Donna Kurtz	District 3 Mary L Donner Nick Provenzano Kathleen Bergan Schmidt Barbara Wheeler
District 4 Sue Draffkorn John Hammerand Pete Merkel Sandra Fay Salgado	District 5 Tina Hill John P. Jung, Jr. Virginia Peschke Paula Yensen	District 6 Randall Donley Diane Evertsen Mary T McCann Ersel Schuster

The Honorable County Board of McHenry County, Illinois met as a Committee of the Whole on Friday, March 12, 2010

The meeting was called to order at 8:30 a.m. The following members were present: Bless, Breeden, Donner, Donley, Heisler, Hill, Jung, Koehler, Kurtz, McCann, Merkel, Miller, Munaretto, Nowak, Peschke, Salgado, Schmidt, Schuster, and Yensen. The following members were absent: Draffkorn, Evertsen, Hammerand, Provenzano, Wheeler.

Also in attendance: Peter Austin, County Administrator; John Labaj, Deputy County Administrator; Ralph Sarbaugh, Associate County Administrator – Finance; interested Department Heads, Elected Officials, staff, interested public and the press.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None.

BUSINESS

Discussion – Strategic Plan: The meeting focused on the McHenry County Strategic Plan and how the Plan could be improved upon to continue to meet the growing needs of the County while providing the highest quality of services to its citizens. Mr. Austin stated that the County is stronger because of the planning process. This is a tool that has been used to provide communication not only to the department heads and elected officials, but to the public as well. The plan tells the County what non routine items the County needs to focus on. This has been a tough couple of years. The County has been moving forward and everyone should be proud of what has been accomplished. At this time we do not know if we have seen the last of the economic battles so we are here today to find out what is needed in order to execute this plan for now, through 2011 and into the future. This County has realized the value of the planning process. Ideas discussed were both an update on progress with the current plan and new ideas. These ideas will be put together to form the County Board’s plan for 2012.

The Committee members were questioned what they saw as a significant issue or any item that may need to be included in the plan that was not discussed this morning. Mr. Merkel stated that he is the liaison for the McHenry County Conservation District (MCCD). The MCCD passed a bond issuance in 2007 that allowed them to purchase large tracks of

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land. A lot of decisions will be needed regarding this property. He stated that land preservation and open land space should be included in the plan to bring awareness to this issue.

Ms. Kurtz stated that there is a tremendous potential to partner with other local governments, whether it be schools, economic development partners, municipalities, or villages on projects to be more effective and fill the gaps where services may be lacking.

Customer Service is a priority for the whole County. Committee members stated that this is an important issue for everyone and we need to make sure this remains a priority for each and every department.

Redistricting will be a big issue. Some of the questions that should be asked is should the county advocate for single member districts? Should they remain as they are and just change the boundaries? No matter what the decisions may be, they will lead to some fundamental changes on how the Board will look and how these changes will affect this Board. Whatever changes are being made, there will be some ramifications from these changes so the Board needs to be cognizant of what is being done so the Board does not get stuck with some unfortunate consequences of their decisions. These changes may affect the structural changes in the Board and how it operates. This issue was not on the plan, but, should be a topic of discussion.

Committee members stated that when creating priorities for 2011 and beyond, they need to include the Division of Transportation and issues surrounding the perception of that Department. The County needs to reestablish how the County Board and the Division of Transportation communicates information surrounding projects that are being introduced and the roles within the community.

Webcasting needs to be discussed as this has different meaning to each person. This process could cost as little as a couple thousand dollars or significantly more, depending on where the County wants to go with this process.

The Public Safety Center is a large topic that has been included in the plan for the past couple of years. Now may be the time to think about the time line for this project.

Committee members stated that Administrative Adjudication should be part of the discussion as this may be a process that could help eliminate over-crowding in the courts.

The Unified Development Ordinance changes will include a lot of member involvement. This issue will shape the County for the next 20 years.

The Prosecutors offices will need expansion.

The County has talked about obtaining permitting software, this should be included in the list of additional items to be considered in 2011. Committee members stated that the UDO should be considered into any discussions on this type of software. The Permit Software would be a good time to invest in one system that addresses the needs of the various

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departments. This would allow for interagency review within the same system. The software should include online permitting payments as well.

It was stated that this year the cost of personnel and benefits have become an issue. The County is being questioned by the public if the benefits offered are too rich. The County pays for 90% of the costs for healthcare and the County should align itself to be more in line with what is offered in the market. There has been concern from the constituents regarding what they see as a "Cadillac" plan. It was noted that they spoke about these benefits being a part of union negotiations and to these issues are put out on the table for consideration. The County Board can only make a decision for the non-union personnel. If changes are made, this would create a two tiered system within the County, which could become a challenge. If the County Board wants this two tiered system, this could be accomplished in July. It was also questioned if the County Board should continue to receive the same benefits as the full time employees. They questioned what "perks" the Board Members should be entitled to. The premiums for the County Board Members alone are costing the County over \$250,000 per year. Should they receive these benefits while only working part-time? Committee members were informed they may need to change the percentages, but, they need to be cautious when proposing changes. If percentages are increased, pay for the employee decreases. They have to review everything as they do not want to see a race to the bottom. Committee members stated that it may be a good time to have a survey completed of the surrounding counties to find out what type of benefits they pay for, both for the employees and their County Board members.

Some committee members voiced concern regarding the discussion today. They thought they would be reviewing the issues that have been brought to the fore-front because of the condition of the economy and how this has affected the county, especially in the future. Committee members were informed that as an organization, the economic situation has been reported regularly. Despite the economy, the County has finished the year with a surplus and has been able to control costs. A report is scheduled to be provided within the next couple of weeks on how the County finished out FY2010. The size of the budget is less and the reserve has been increasing in spite of the current economic conditions. The County has 40 less staff than in the past and there remains some uncertainty of what is happening with property taxes. This meeting was about the planning process for the County and the plans for the future. Sales tax is up by 6 ½ % so some things in the economy are turning around. Revenues will continue to be reviewed with the County Board Members.

Mr. Donley voiced concern and stated he thought this meeting would be about the belt tightening needed in the County and a discussion to understand our actions. He stated that the only thing they are seeing is the increase of projects and addition of departments. All of a sudden you see a department bloom and the county can't control of the costs. He wanted to see ideas for trimming costs. These issues need to be addressed now and they should not wait for the future. It was also noted that in the past when talking about the

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budget they have not evaluated the underperforming departments. This is a critical evaluation of what the departments are doing.

In the Recorder's Office income has decreased because of the decrease in the need for land transfer stamps and they stated they are not aware of any changes within this situation. Committee members were informed that this department is down 10 staff members from the previous two years. Positions have not been filled when a person has retired or leaves their position. Not all employees in this department are General Fund Employees. They have budgeted \$2 million dollars less than two years ago. The Administration and Human Resources departments want the committee members to be aware that they actively review the positions and address positions if needed. The budget has declined along with the decline in revenues. With this decline, the expenditures have declined with the County still being able to add to the reserve. The County Board could have directed each department to decrease their budgets by 20%. Instead, we entered into discussions with the Department Heads and Elected officials and asked them to step up to the plate to reduce their expenditures to address these issues. There are some additional areas that could be cut if needed but we don't want to damage the operation or services being provided. Every department has seen vacancies within their department.

What we are saying is that the County has remained strong today because of the strategic planning efforts that have taken place in the County. The County needs to continue to stay on top of the issues in the County. The purpose of the Strategic Planning meeting is to discuss what the goals for the County are. If additional information is needed, please let them know. Mr. Donley noted that we hear a department is down 10 employees, maybe this department was overstaffed from the start. He stated he did not feel this was a serious enough planning meeting and he would like more facts. What issues will the County face because of the State? We need to plan for what we don't know. Ms. Kurtz stated that even though we have talked about some important issues, we need to know if we consider one program what additional programs will be eliminated. She stated that we need to control growth and move government in a different direction. There will be some tradeoffs, that is what strategic planning is for. She stated she wants to know specifically what programs are no longer being provided or eliminated. The surplus programs need to be reviewed to see what could be changed.

Committee members were reminded that the Circuit Clerk now has less staff since the implementation of the integrated justice system.

An outside audit of each department could be completed. Questions that will need to be asked are what we would like to do, what are we currently doing and what are we required to do. These answers help with the planning process

Caution is needed when working with other governments as the county becomes the "big brother" and ends up picking up the majority of the costs for these services.

Committee members questioned if they thought the Coroner's office should be changed to a Medical Examiner and work in conjunction with other Counties. Now is the time to answer these questions.

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Ms. Schultz informed committee members that starting in 2012, there is a Federal mandate to have all ballots bilingual. She does not think the constituents will like this change but this has been mandated and therefore is required.

Mr. Austin thanked the presenters and staff for their help on today's Strategic Planning Session. Please provide any additional concerns to his office.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 11:55a.m.

Dated and approved by the McHenry County Board at Woodstock, Illinois this ____ day of _____, A.D., 2010.

Kenneth D. Koehler, Chairman
McHenry County Board

ATTEST:

Katherine C. Schultz, County Clerk

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