

**LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE
NOVEMBER 22, 2011
5:30 P.M.**

MEMBERS PRESENT

Chair Linda Little
Tim Dudley
Jon Baxter
Don Westerman
Mark Wicklund
Susanna Zimmerman

COUNTY PERSONNEL PRESENT

Jay Dunn, County Board
Jennifer Hoffman, Planning & Zoning Dept

MEMBERS ABSENT

None

This meeting was called to order by Chair Little at the Macon County Office Building.

OLD BUSINESS

Chair Little stated there is one day left in the veto session and she has called several different state rep offices and no one really knows what is going to be thrown out on that day. Therefore they can't prepare for that day. She doesn't think it is about any issues they were following along for this year except for the Sheriffs Foreclosure Sale.

Chair Little stated in 2011, in hindsight has been an educational opportunity for me following the process through the spring session. She has some notes on some of the issues the committee has been following during the spring session and how they came out. Also she wants to look at if the committee wants to keep track of the same issues. Several of the issues she thinks has valid points in 2011 and it is not unusual for legislative to take several tries to make it through Springfield, Congress, or even County Board. She just wants a concusses from this committee as well as if there are other issues out there that you have been made aware of that this committee should address. Hopefully that is what we will be doing in December, is getting a list together for the Spring session so they are ready for opening day.

Chair Little stated she wanted to go through the list of things that the committee has talked about in the past giving them an update on the status and what she is keeping her eye on.

Mandated Primary Election for nonpartisan municipal elections. That didn't go anywhere. None of the legislatures picked it up in 2011 but Chair Little still thinks it is a valid point. No one has given her a good reason as to why the legislative should not be changed. She thinks in 2012, they should talk to other counties that are having the same problems we have with the added expense and work with them on addressing the legislators. It is narrow minded to think that if we don't go through our own legislators that nothing can be done, because that is not true.

Tiff Act we have heard back from appellate court and there is a loop hole in the Tiff Act. Last spring we were asked by legislators to provide a bullet point list from the States Attorney's office.

Mark Wicklund stated that Jay Dunn and he just got back from Chicago and they discussed the Tiff Act with legislators. We can actually write in 1-24 and slowly increase the taxes back up. This is an access we could have used in the past, if we had known it was there so we didn't have this problem and we could actually start getting money from. Personally he would like to see Tiff Districts gone.

Chair Little stated that the Tiff Act clarification needs to be stayed on top of and we need to get other downstate counties on board.

Assessments and how they are done. Chair Little's understanding and she has not met with Daysa Miller yet but has heard her say. For example, if a church has a property worth 1 million dollars, it is assessed at 1 million dollars, and there is a tax credit for 1 million dollars. That would completely get rid of the problem they had out east. This is a very important topic.

Jay Dunn wanted to follow up on the meeting Mark Wicklund was talking about. Jay stated he thinks this committee needs to start looking at changing legislation and these specific issues have their own lobbyist for the assessor and the auditor. So if you can get one or two of those lobbyists plus our own lobbyist working together it will get 100% support. He doesn't know but when they talked about it to Mitchell and Brown it didn't get introduced but it may have been a timing issue but the more legislators people can get involved up and down the state it makes a big difference.

Chair Little stated that the one thing she learned from being chair of this committee was there needs to be a lot of people behind an issue.

Jay Dunn stated they need to be pro active and work on this before February or whenever the opening day is.

Chair Little stated she is looking into when the last day to file is and that is why she wants to meet in December and get a list of points they want to look at. They want to be ahead of the curve this time.

Public Officer Prohibited Activity Act. Chair Little stated they were trying to clarify the language because that affected us here when Ed Yoder won the Treasurer seat. This bill did get introduced and was going along fine and then a county up north shut this bill down. She called a couple of the legislators up north and they didn't want to talk about this bill.

Jay Dunn stated there was a lot of miscommunication on that bill too.

Chair Little replied he was correct and she got the same impression when she talked with Adam Brown. She thinks that is still worth pursuing until someone can offer a good clear explanation.

Sheriff's Foreclosure Sales- House Bill #1293. Chair Little stated the sponsor did not call this bill during the veto session and she checked with the Sheriff today and he has not heard anything about this either. Looking at the list of topics, this bill would be the most likely to get called on November 29. She thinks this will come up again in 2012. She stated within the upcoming year the state is going to be thinking of more and more ways to take money out of our pocket and put it into there's.

Local Government Distribution Fund. Chair Little stated that no progress was made. She still thinks they need to stay on top of protecting the revenue streams. The County Association does a very good job of sending out notices when that topic is coming up in committee. She doesn't think they need to be introducing legislation to our legislators. However, our organization does a good job and they just need to stay involved and follow the progress.

There is a study group the governor has put together to look into reducing the number of local governments. Chair Little talked with Matt Snyder today and they should have their study completed by April 1st. They are afraid the Regional Office of Education is going to be caught in that mess. It is just the governor's handpicked committee with no representation from small government. Matt Snyder from Regional Office of Education and Springfield has passed funding for the ROE's for one year and the money is being taken out of the Corporate Personal Property Replacement Tax (CPPRT). This is for one year only and there was a sunset in legislation that was passed. The study is being done and they expect the results to affect the ROE's. All funds that our Board approved to pay them out of will be repaid by end of December this year. Several counties have changed their budget and have reduced the amount they are paying to the ROE by the amount the state is taking from the CPPRT fund. For example, Peoria County has reduced their contribution to the ROE by \$30,000 because that is what they are being shorted by the state. Chair Little stated that they don't need to do that right now in Macon County. However come budget time next year, it will be hard to defend the budget because we won't cover the state every time they take our money and use it in their name.

Chair Little stated that Mitchell and Brown had a press conference this morning introducing House Joint Resolution #52 which seeks to separate Cook County from the rest of Illinois. She did ask Bill Mitchell to come to the meeting because if Macon County is going to support the bill, it will need to come to this committee first. He was unable to attend but was invited to the December meeting if they were still going to pursue the idea.

Chair Little asked committee if there were any other issues that needed to be addressed.

Jay Dunn stated the State has a website that shows the amount each county is going to lose with the ROE on the different funds. Jay will get this information to committee and to the auditor.

Jay Dunn also stated that at the conference in Chicago they learned that Judy Barr Topinka now has a cash dash website for people to look and see if they have money coming to them. One person in Decatur, has \$4000-\$5000 coming, other people on the list was DMH, St. Mary's Hospital, David Fletcher, etc. He stated it sounded like a nice program.

Jay Dunn stated there is another program on a database for when the comptroller prints checks. For example, if we have someone that owes the Circuit Clerk \$100 for a fine and they didn't pay. That person happened to be getting a check, they would take the fine money out of that pay. Jay spoke with Lois Durbin about it and she was going to check into that. He stated it also sounded like a good program.

Mark Wicklund added the people had to have owed that debt for 3 years before they would take the money out. There is a 3-7 year range that they can go after the money.

Mark Wicklund also addressed the issue with legislators who don't call us back, but the County Board Association has their own lobbyist.

Chair Little stated that they told the committee that last year but they were so late getting the committee started they didn't get anything ready. That is why we need to meet in December and get started on items we want to address.

Mark Wicklund stated the census from the Republicans and Democrats on combining local government was they are looking at keeping that a local issue only and not to let the state get involved. There are some township assessors that they have done away with and the county has taken it over.

Chair Little agrees that the decision should be up to the local government.

Chair Little asked committee if there is anything that did or did not happen this year that committee would like to see changed or done differently.

Don Westerman asked if the committee had any reason to not be involved with the coal gasification plant in Taylorville. He knows it is seriously wounded but not dead. Is that something that we should have input in because it is going to affect us in this county pretty good?

Chair Little stated she would be interested in hearing more about it than what she reads and catch on the news.

Don Westerman asked would it be proper for us to be involved in it at all.

Chair Little stated she doesn't think it would be improper but it needs to be something that the board feels strongly one way or the other. She stated she personally doesn't have enough information to form an opinion. She has heard both sides and they both have good points. She would like to be more educated on the issue. If this is something to look into, then they need to get the right people in here to discuss the topic.

Jay Dunn stated the topic is supposed to come up again on the November 29.

Don Westerman stated that would be the only thing they have any say so about because they are not in Christian County.

Jay Dunn stated he thought they already passed a resolution supporting it.

Chair Little stated she thought they did too.

Chair Little stated she doesn't know really what they can do before November 29th.

Don Westerman stated he was just bringing it up to see if it was even proper to take a stand on the topic.

Chair Little stated she doesn't think it is improper because it is something that will affect Macon County.

Don Westerman stated he thinks it would controversial even among board members.

Susanna Zimmerman stated she would have to refuse herself because she is in state government at ADM and they are very much against it and she is too close to it.

Don Westerman stated that Farm Bureau is very opposed to it and the big businesses are too so he was wondering if there are so many people against it then why is Macon County on record of supporting it.

Tim Dudley stated there is nothing we can do about it anyway because they will make a decision on it on Tuesday. The biggest thing he thinks businesses don't like is the talk about rate increases and they are locked. He gets irritated when people talk about Tenaska and the rate increase but ComEd and Ameren bought this thing and then jack the biggest rate increase they ever had on the customers of the State of Illinois just because they want the Smart Grid.

Chair Little stated they didn't even agree to what they were going to use the money for.

Tim Dudley stated they didn't have to have legislation to do that. Anytime they want to improve infrastructure the ICC allows them to raise rates to do that. It is ironic that ComEd and Ameren bought Tenaska to raise rates on companies and individuals and turn around and do it themselves. At least by bringing Tenaska or FuterGen on line, we are using Illinois coal and putting coal miners and truckers back to work. Every time you give one guy a job it touches 8 different people. The economy boom would be great. There is going to be a rate increase because when something new comes in, it has to be paid for somehow. This is cutting edge technology that no one in the United States has. Illinois can be the first state in the Union to have anything of that kind and he does not know why we can't be first for once instead of last. He is not for a rate increase but they are going to be raised anyway.

Mark Wicklund stated the companies are wanting to purchase their power from Illinois and he is all for purchasing local. He asked Susanna Zimmerman if they have a small version of this operation at ADM.

Susanna Zimmerman stated yes, they have CoGen.

Chair Little asked for any question or concerns. Hearing none.

NEW BUSINESS

None

NEXT MEETING

Thursday, December 22, 2011 @5:30 P.M.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Little adjourned meeting at 6:00 p.m.

Minutes submitted by
Jennifer Hoffman, Macon County Planning & Zoning Department