

Members Present

Mr. Tripp, Mr. Washington, Mr. Flett, Mr. Einfeldt, Mr. Wheeler, Mr. Vickery, and Mr. Tholen

Members Absent

Mr. Olthoff, Mr. Stauffenberg, Mr. Reid, Ms. Polk, and Mr. James

In Attendance

- **Board Members**

Mr. Hess

- **Department Heads**

- **Media**

None

1. Call to Order/Roll Call

The meeting was called to order by the Vice- Chairman, Mr. Vickery, at 9:00 a.m. Quorum present.

2. Public Comment

3. Approval of Minutes – February 26, 2014

**A motion to approve the minutes was made by Mr. Tripp and seconded by Mr. Washington.
Motion carried with a voice vote.**

4. Planning/Economic Alliance

- **Budget/Staffing Discussion**

Mr. Van Mill gave a PowerPoint presentation on his budget and staffing.

Mr. Van Mill stated that he took a preemptive approach to the budget cuts before the county board meeting and did a significant amount of lay-offs. He wanted to inform the committee of some of their challenges and hopefully get some feedback from the PZA Committee as to priorities and how to proceed going forward.

Mr. Van Mill stated that the Planning Department's budget over the course of the last seven years has been trending down. At the beginning of 2014 their original budget was \$610,000 and with the revised budget it is now \$455,000. Last year their building division had 6 staff members, 1 manager, 2 full-time building inspectors, 1 zoning officer, 1 property maintenance manager, and 1 building coordinator. As a result of the staffing cuts, they now have 2 staff members consisting of 1 manager and 1 building inspector.

Mr. Van Mill stated that over the last 10-15 years they have been issuing over 1000 permits a year which equates to about 3000 inspections and about \$480,000 in revenue and that number is probably going to go up for two reasons. One reason is that they have added a \$25 administration fee per permit which will generate around \$25,000 and the second reason is that they do not waive enterprise zone fees anymore. Now they get 50% of what the building permit fee would cost which could generate a significant amount of revenue. For the last four years they have done all the electrical inspections for the City of Kankakee which is about 250 inspections a year which has generated about \$12,000 in revenue. They are the county register for contractors and last year they registered 950 contractors which equates to \$95,000 in revenue. On top of all of these things that they do, they have done a minimum of 110 property maintenance complaints, issued over 50 floodplain permits, and administer the storm water ordinance. The question that he would like to ask right now is "Can they continue to provide the same level of service going from 6 full-time staff members to 2?" He would like the committee's thoughts on that.

Mr. Tripp stated that it depends on the work load. If the permits are way down then you adjust accordingly. He doesn't think that they are very high right now so maybe it would be easier now than when they start to pick-up.

Mr. Tholen stated that he thinks that it is pretty obvious that it is going to be impossible to handle what they were doing with only two people now. Somebody has to be at the office to staff the office itself which leaves one person to go out to do inspections and whatever else needs to be done. It is down now but we can be optimistic that the economy is starting to recover and that there will be an increase in construction.

Mr. Van Mill stated that he has already seen an increase this year. On average, they do about three inspections per permit, some more and some less. They may take about 20 minutes each but the inspector may be going from Reddick to Momence because our borders are so big.

Mr. Van Mill stated that Mr. Tholen is right. It is physically impossible. So what are our priorities? To generate revenue seems to be the #1 priority. Secondly, he needs to insure that they maintain some sort of staff morale. That is the big issue for him during this situation. Thirdly, quality inspections have to be maintained. Lastly, they need to be able to engage their clients and the public in the best way possible. Last year his priority list would have been totally flipped but given the situation today this is what they are hearing from the committee – that this should be the priority list, not like it was before which was the complete opposite.

Mr. Vickery stated that the committees and the board were suddenly faced with some financial issues and they relied on the Chairman to go down that line and make some cuts. Budgets evolve and they are working documents. He thinks that as facts come out in certain areas we are going to have to make some changes.

Mr. Wheeler stated that this is not a very good discussion to have to have but unfortunately it is the reality that we are faced with. These are things that we have to do. It is unavoidable that there is going to be some type of service interruption. He is sure that they will get to the permits but maybe not as timely as they have in the past. He knows that Mr. Van Mill is doing the absolute best that he can to cover everything.

Mr. Tholen stated that contractors are not going to wait for permits or inspections. There is going to be a lot of things going on that go uninspected.

Mr. Van Mill stated that if they have to go out and pursue enforcement that is only going to snowball into a back log of other things because enforcement takes huge amounts of time. They are faced with the dilemma that they may not be able to provide the level of service that they used to. They want people to continue to get permits so that they can get revenue but the flip side of that is much more development without permits is likely.

Mr. Tholen stated that this is going to be another obstacle to development, slowing down the overall economic recovery in the area.

Mr. Van Mill stated that they will be very slow in responding to property maintenance issues, if not non-existent.

Mr. Tripp stated that we have to be aggressive on the income side of things. All of the departments have great, valid arguments. If we are going to be able to do what has to be done then we need to get aggressive on the other side of it. He does not know what it is but we need to explore and be aggressive on increasing the income side of it.

Mr. Van Mill stated that they have done that in the two ways he mentioned earlier – the \$25 administrative fee on every building permit and 50% of fees on enterprise zones.

Mr. Tripp stated that he means the county as a whole, not just his department.

Mr. Van Mill stated that he sees the impacts being: issuance of building permits delayed, inspections not done in a timely manner, accessibility of staff will be extremely limited, not able to do 950 data inputs of contractor licensing, unable to respond to complaints, etc. He thinks there comes a time when they need to report to the committee on what they are anticipating because this committee is the first line for them.

Mr. Van Mill stated that they are considering limiting office availability to the public so they can get their work done. Also, they could maybe close over the lunch hour although that is a lot of time when people come in. They might get to a point where they may have to formalize scheduled appointments with the building inspectors – first come first served. Walk-ins are going to be very, very difficult. They are thinking about performing early morning inspections. If he has overflow and the permits are a reasonable distance out of a municipalities borders the mayors have told him that they would help out but that is not a sustainable solution.

Mr. Wheeler asked if he has looked into online applications only for permits instead of coming in his office.

Mr. Van Mill stated that they have done a little of that. A lot of those software systems are \$50,000 to \$60,000.

Mr. Wheeler stated that he agrees with limiting the office hours. Maybe he could say Monday, Wednesday, and Friday are the permit days and Tuesday and Thursday they do not take them. It seems like he is going to have to do these things at least in the short term until we know for sure what the actual revenue numbers are going to be. What does he need?

Mr. Van Mill stated that he does need a guy that can go out and “put out the fires” such as go check on a floodplain issue. Administratively, right now, maybe a part-time person. Ideally, they need the property maintenance person. They probably spent \$20,000 in education and training on one of the people that they laid-off.

Mr. Wheeler asked if that position could be an “on-call” basis.

Mr. Van Mill stated that he does not know for sure.

Mr. Tholen stated that the budget cut was \$155,000 to his department and he lost four employees. What is the cost of the position that “puts out the fires”?

Mr. Van Mill stated that it is \$45,000.

Mr. Tholen stated that he thinks the idea of Monday, Wednesday, and Friday being the days for permit applications is probably the way that it will have to go. He also knows that if a contractor comes in to do a project and he can't get the permit he is going to go ahead and do the project.

Mr. Van Mill stated that if there is no building permit it will probably not get assessed.

Mr. Tholen stated that contractors are not going to wait around for us. Contractors do not like building permits anyway and if they can get it for free they will.

Mr. Van Mill stated that if the public is getting the same level of service after the budget cuts that they were getting before the budget cuts the perception is going to be that there was a lot of fluff.

Mr. Einfeldt stated that now the county has a pretty smooth flow of getting permits and getting inspections. He doesn't want to have five men on the job, have an excavator pull the last load dirt out, start putting lumber down in the hole, set forms, and then have somebody tell him the inspection is going to be two days later. That already goes on sometimes now and he finds that impossible to deal with. You are going to have the complaints and jobs will not get inspected or permitted and it is something that needs to be looked at. He would pay extra for a punctual inspection. Revenue needs to come now. To cut any of the services is always a tough deal.

Mr. Tholen asked how many contractors he thinks would be on board with that.

Mr. Einfeldt stated that he thinks the people that are real contractors and are putting up home after home would not mind. More homes are being put up everywhere. Security Lumber told him that in 2011 they only had 3 or 4 full house packages sent out, in 2012 they had 15 to 18, and in 2013 they had over 35. They said that they wouldn't be surprised if they had 60 packages go out this year. This year is going to be busier than last year.

Mr. Van Mill stated that as interest rates go up, people are going to want to act now and we will see more construction happening.

Mr. Einfeldt stated that he doesn't know where they can get more revenue but this is one of those areas where everybody is going to be complaining.

Mr. Hess asked what is going to happen when the next contractor says that he will pay \$250 to get a quicker inspection. You would get into a bidding war.

Mr. Einfeldt stated that it would have to be a fee that is not negotiable.

Mr. Hess stated that it is impossible to make a lot of inspections in a short time because there is only one inspector regardless of how much money is paid.

Mr. Wheeler stated that maybe the solution would be a tiered fee structure. For a guaranteed time and date, the fee would be higher and once those were filled up it would be whenever they could get to it.

Mr. Van Mill stated that they would be treating people differently based upon their ability to pay. He thinks that you have to be very careful about that. If they do something like that, what does that do? Is it going to get them another person so that they can get the inspections done?

Mr. Wheeler stated that it allows them to better plan out their time and it increases revenue.

Mr. Tholen stated that the increase in revenue should translate directing into staff members for his department.

Mr. Van Mill stated that so far the board has not shown him that.

Mr. Einfeldt stated that that money would have to go directly to the support of another staff member.

Mr. Hess stated that it has to go to the general fund.

Mr. Einfeldt stated that then the general fund is going to have to appropriate in that direction.

Mr. Vickery asked if the committee would like to make a recommendation that Finance looks at increasing staffing.

Mr. Wheeler stated that it might be something to look at in the long term but this is something that needs to be addressed immediately.

Mr. Van Mill stated that he understands that other departments have issues also. He knew that this would not be the normal cuts that they have seen over the years but this is getting down to the people that they have spent a lot of money on in training and education. He wanted to put this out in front of the committee so they were aware of the situation. From their perspective just to keep their head above water, they really need that one person.

Mr. Washington stated that maybe we are going to have to do this in phases. Right now Mr. Van Mill needs a structure in place that can handle what is happening in the slow time. If we can put that in place and monitor it closely and also monitor the amount of funds coming in from the increase in fees then at some point in the near future a recommendation could be made for a budget adjustment to bring that extra person back in.

Mr. Van Mill stated that they are going to put something together. He would not feel very comfortable closing the office at noon without the committee being aware of it first. He needs the committee's input.

Mr. Washington stated that we have not made cuts before on the scale that we are doing this time but in times past when they have imposed these cuts over a short period of time various departments have come back and requested adjustments to be made when that funding was available. The budget is a living document. We can't look at it in terms of being fixed and unchangeable; we need to look at it as a flexible, fluid document that can be molded into what we need when we need it. There are going to be some changes that we are going to have to make.

Mr. Wheeler stated that maybe we could look at an intergovernmental agreement with municipalities to handle overflow on an as-needed basis.

Mr. Van Mill stated that they are talking to them. They are trying to not make it that formal yet but if they need to they will.

Mr. Tholen stated that they are losing experienced, educated employees and another big part of this is that there are personal relationships with different inspectors. The inspectors know what contractors do reputable work consistently so if they have to skip an inspection they know which one they can skip without having to worry about it.

Mr. Van Mill stated that the municipalities would not do any enforcement, just the inspection. If there was an issue, they would call them to take care of it.

Mr. Vickery stated that those relationships are pretty important. He had ComEd come out on a project and they asked who the contractor was. When he told them who it was they left because they had inspected so many of that contractor's projects they knew that it was going to be done right. He still thinks that the committee should make a recommendation back to Finance that something needs to be looked at.

Mr. Van Mill stated that he is not for sure what the Finance Committee would even have. This is a conversation amongst the committee that is responsible for the activities in his department.

Mr. Vickery stated that a committee is supposed to take action. They can make a recommendation to Finance that they need a little help in PZA to maintain what they have worked very hard to do over the last ten to fifteen years. He thinks that as a committee they can't just sit and do nothing.

Mr. Tholen asked if a motion to bring it before the full county board would be appropriate.

Mr. Van Mill stated that every department is then going to want to have the same luxury to do that. Each county board member here could take two county board members that are not here and contact them. He is not trying to single himself out; he is just trying to give the committee some indications of where they are heading.

Mr. Tholen stated that the difficulty he has had in this whole process of going through the budget is that on one hand they are told not to micromanage each department's budget but then his department went from six employees to two and that does not work for us as a county. Furthermore, the implications of that is going to be a drastic decline in revenue, not only through building permits, but through lost tax dollars because people are going to do work to improve their homes. As some point, the board as a whole is going to have to prioritize which department has the higher priority.

Mr. Washington stated that the Finance Committee has viewed every department's needs in the past and will continue to do so in the future. If we continue to try and bypass Finance and go straight to the full board then we are bypassing the structure of the county board.

Mr. Tholen stated that he only suggested that so Mr. Van Mill would not have to give this presentation to both bodies. If it is not appropriate then it can go to Finance first. He agrees with Mr. Vickery that we need to do something.

Mr. Washington stated that he agrees.

Mr. Vickery asked if the committee would like to bring this presentation to Finance along with a recommendation that they analyze and look at the possibility of expanding the proposed budget for PZA.

Mr. Hess stated that the Finance Committee is meeting tomorrow and that agenda is already posted. There is going to be another PZA Meeting before the next Finance Meeting.

Mr. Vickery asked if this could be referred to the Committee of the Whole Meeting which meets April 1.

Mr. Van Mill stated that he won't be here for that meeting. What if we have a small contingency of PZA members to see where this goes?

Mr. Vickery asked who would like to serve on a small committee to work on this. How about Mr. Hess, Mr. Tholen, Mr. Einfeldt, and Mr. Tripp?

Mr. Van Mill stated that they could meet with Mr. Bossert and Mr. Hess.

Mr. Tripp stated that since Mr. Hess knows the whole picture maybe he could just meet with Mr. Bossert, along with the contractors. He would be fine with that.

Mr. Vickery asked if they are going to let the contractors know of this situation.

Mr. Van Mill stated that there have been articles in the paper so they do know and word of mouth is probably getting out there, as well.

Mr. Vickery thanked him for the presentation because when they make budget cuts they need to know what the ramifications are.

Mr. Van Mill stated that the committee has seen the history of the budget cuts throughout the last several years. They have probably decreased by 50% in terms of their allocation but services have continually gone up. They have always been around the 1000 number for building permits. They have lost staff continuously over the past few years. They have taken the right steps to bring it down to a level of minimization but now they have taken it beyond that. It is beyond providing any level of service. His recommendation is that he could use that one person that can take care of the complaints, do some inspections, and take care of contractor registration.

Mr. Wheeler stated that it is very helpful to know what the impacts are in his department and he hopes that the other department heads do the same. He is glad that they did not make a recommendation to do something on the county board level. It would have been offensive to the Finance Committee as well as to all the other department heads that have been looking at these cuts. They are in those positions for a reason but that doesn't mean that we can't revisit each and every one of those and we probably will as time permits.

5. Transportation

• Rural Transit Service Provider

Mr. Lammey stated that in today's packet is a memo on rural transit service provider. They sent letters out to 13 organizations asking if they wanted to provide our rural transit service for next year. They received one response which was from SHOW BUS, our current provider. Their submission is in today's packet. In the memo, he asked for the committee to agree to have the Chairman pursue a purchase of service agreement which he received yesterday. It is the same document that they have done in the past for the last 25 years. The funding is federal, state, and there is some local share.

Mr. Tripp made a motion to approve purchase service agreement and Mr. Washington seconded it.

Discussion

Mr. Wheeler stated that he did not think that there was any local money involved.

Mr. Lammey stated that they have structured it for the last five years so there was no local share but the times have caught up with them. The money that they used to provide that local share match has disappeared so once again they need to talk about local share.

Mr. Lammey stated that from 2001 to 2007 they had local county money involved in this contract from \$10,000 to \$40,000. From 2008 to 2012 they had an influx of state money and had no local share at all but they ran out of money in 2013. There was a local share in 2013 but SHOW BUS paid it for us. In this year, 2014, they are looking at a local share of somewhere around \$30,000. They have three options that they are pursuing on that local share. One is coming to the committee and asking for money, another is to cut service, and the last is to ask the state for an emergency influx of federal money which they are doing right now. His perception is that their chances of that money is better if we can show them that we are prepared to cut service so they are going to announce in the paper a hearing on cutting service sometime in the next week. If that doesn't work he is not sure what they will do.

Mr. Wheeler asked if they cut service would it be on routes that are thinly traveled or would it be across the board.

Mr. Lammey stated that they have basically two services. One is the service that they run back and forth every hour to Momence so what hour do they choose to cut out. There is also the five day service a week that they run to various parts of the county with two buses running. One goes to Pembroke every day and he is not anxious to cut service to Pembroke. The other route runs to certain parts of the county on certain days. They could probably cut one of those buses back to four days a week instead of five. He is not sure that that buys them \$30,000 in cuts.

Mr. Tripp stated that we are going to have to find some money to put into this.

Mr. Lammey stated that he thinks that they can get the state to kick in some extra federal dollars for this year. He is not sure about next year. There is a situation coming up next year that makes things a little bit better. They have two buses that are in the shop frequently which is costing them a fortune to keep them in service. They have three new buses coming in which will take those two buses off the road which will reduce around \$20,000 a year in repair cost.

Mr. Tholen stated that he thinks that there is a perception in the community that a lot of our public transit buses are not utilized to their capacity. He also believes that there is a large misunderstanding and confusion between SHOW BUS and METRO.

Mr. Lammey stated that METRO confused things even more by beginning service to Momence.

Mr. Washington asked if they gave a reason for beginning that service to Momence.

Mr. Lammey stated that the board actually voted "no" on the service to Momence but it started anyway.

Mr. Tripp asked why they don't combine the two and just operate as one.

Mr. Lammey stated that they are funded under two different funding sources and they cannot mix the two.

Mr. Tripp asked how it can be changed.

Mr. Lammey stated that in Illinois there are no systems that serve urban and rural at the same time because of the way that the state interprets the federal law.

Mr. Washington stated that another minor confusion is the blue lettered buses coming from Watseka and the green lettered buses that operate in Kankakee County.

Mr. Lammey stated that we own six buses and those are the ones with the green letters. SHOW BUS also provides service to the seven counties to the south and southwest of us and those are lettered in blue. We benefit rather heavily by SHOW BUS bringing in people from Iroquois County for dialysis and while the buses are here waiting for those patients we use them on our service. There has been a thought that we should letter our buses with "Kankakee County" to remove the confusion but if we do that we lose that benefit of having the buses from both systems serve in our county.

Mr. Wheeler asked when the deadline was for this agreement to be executed. How long do we have to figure out where the funding is coming from?

Mr. Lammey stated that this is for 2015. The application has to be in before June 30. They can send in the purchase agreement without committing to money. They try to do these things as early as they can so they can get in line for the money. They can discuss the local share again next month.

Original motion carried with a roll call vote of 8 ayes and 0 nays. Voting aye were Mr. Hess, Mr. Tripp, Mr. Washington, Mr. Flett, Mr. Einfeldt, Mr. Wheeler, Mr. Vickery, and Mr. Tholen.

- **Traffic Safety Audit Contract**

Mr. Tholen made a motion to approve and Mr. Hess seconded it.

Mr. Lammey stated that for the last three or four years they have hired an outside consultant to assist them with traffic safety engineering issues. Last year they had someone come in and look at all the signals in town to look at red and yellow intervals and to look at the pedestrian cross walk intervals. They sent their recommendations to IDOT and they blew them all off. They will send that info to IDOT again this year. They are looking to hire a consultant again this year. It is the same company that is doing the Long Range Transportation Plan, URS Corporation. The amount of money is \$18,741 which is money that the state gives us. The consultant is looking at the contract and will probably make some recommendations for some changes. He will put that in the packet when it is sent to county board. If they committee can approve it based on changes, he would like that.

Mr. Wheeler asked if the changes could be noted so they are aware of them.

Original motion carried with a roll call vote of 8 ayes and 0 nays. Voting aye were Mr. Hess, Mr. Tripp, Mr. Washington, Mr. Flett, Mr. Einfeldt, Mr. Wheeler, Mr. Vickery, and Mr. Tholen.

6. Old Business

7. New Business

Mr. Lammey stated in the back of the room is Jeff Olson, a new hire as a transportation planner as of March 3.

8. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:25 a.m. was made by Mr. Washington and seconded by Mr. Tholen. Motion carried.

Jim Vickery, Vice-Chairman
Joanne Langlois, Executive Coordinator