

**MINUTES
METRO PEORIA AD-HOC COMMITTEE
AUGUST 14, 2013
2:30 PM**

MEMBERS PRESENT	Timothy Riggerbach, Chairman Mary Ardapple Andrew Rand	Michael Phelan Ryan Spain
MEMBERS ABSENT	W. Eric Turner	
OTHERS PRESENT	Alex Rusciano, WCBU Bill Atkins, State’s Attorney Carol Trumpe, County Board Cheryl Budzinski, League of Women’s Voters Chris Setti, Assistant City Manager Doug Crew, PASS Forward Kate Green, Assistant to the City Manager	Lori Curtis Luther, County Administrator Mark Rothert, County ED Director Patrick Urich, City Manager Tom O’Neill, County Board Wil Hayes, Health Department Steve Sonnemaker, County Clerk

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Riggerbach at 2:30 PM.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion to approve the minutes of the July 10, 2013, meeting was made by Member Spain; seconded by Member Ardapple. The motion was approved unanimously by viva voce vote.

DISCUSSION

Update on Regional Economic Development Initiatives

Mr. Rothert provided an update on Focus Forward Central Illinois (FFCI). He said that the group has passed new bylaws as well as a budget. He said that FFCI also adopted a resolution to become an independent organization. He said that FFCI is in the process of identifying and selecting board members from both the private and public sectors, as well as a wide representation from each of the major industries in the region. Mr. Urich said that FFCI is trying to achieve a balanced board which would be appointed by the respective members of FFCI through the normal appointment process.

Mr. Rothert commented on FFCI’s commitment to transparency, and stated that the organization has agreed to follow policies that are in the spirit of the Open Meetings Act (OMA), including annual audits and proper notice of meetings. Chairman Riggerbach asked why FFCI would not simply adopt OMA standards. Mr. Rothert said that FFCI is not technically a public body. He said that Frank Knott reviewed other similar bodies, and that those did not adhere to OMA. He said that some potential deals could be harmed if FFCI followed the rules of OMA, and that open and honest dialogue may not always occur under OMA standards. Mr. Urich noted that Stephen Morris pointed out that mechanisms for reporting information out to the public are important for transparency, but the board should be allowed to deliberate as a private entity. Mr. Rothert continued to state that the EDC is along the same development path at FFCI, with bylaws and board members under establishment. He stated that FFCI is intended to be a long-term organization.

Member Ardapple inquired if FFCI will continue to manage the smaller groups that are part of the organization. Mr. Rothert said that FFCI will serve as the parent organization over these action teams. He continued to state that there is no definitive timeline on hiring FFCI staff, but that a focus has been placed on getting EDC staffed first. He said that Jim Baumgartner will serve as the Interim Director of FFCI for the next several months, and that a permanent home for both FFCI and the EDC has not been established. Chairperson Ardapple asked if a national search will be conducted for the leadership of FFCI. Mr. Rothert said yes. Member Spain noted that these organizations need to be staffed promptly because there many development opportunities that need to be explored throughout the region. Mr. Rothert agreed to share that message with FFCI.

Election Commission Legislation

Ms. Curtis Luther requested that the topic of Election Commission legislation be pushed to the next month's agenda. She said that the State's Attorney's Office has rendered an opinion for the County Board, but that document cannot be shared with all members of the Metro Peoria Committee at this time. Mr. Atkins said that the document cannot be shared at the current time, but it might be shared in the future. Ms. Curtis Luther said that there are serious questions regarding the legislation, and that she has not heard any interest on the part of the County Board to move forward quickly given the concerns that still exist. Mr. Urich said that there are concerns, but a discussion needs to take place about how to make changes to existing legislation so that all parties can agree and support it. Chairman Riggerbach inquired if November 2014 would be the first opportunity to bring forth the referendum. Mr. Atkins said that according to his interpretation of the statutory rules, that November 2014 would be the first time it could be conducted because it is the next general election. However, he stated that other legal opinions have been rendered which consider elections such as a consolidated election to be acceptable.

Member Spain said that he did not know why the legal opinion could not be shared, but that the initiative was part of a joint legislative agenda, and that he hoped that the appropriate time would come to have a joint discussion regarding the issue. He reiterated that the City and County are together on this topic, and that he thought both parties are on the same page. Member Rand said that he believed there was still a duty to discuss the topic with the community members that brought forth the concept of consolidated functions in order to optimize cost, quality, and functionality. He said that the item did not necessarily need to be tabled; rather, it would be appropriate to have County Board Members discuss this matter and bring it forth to the next meeting. Member Ardapple said that it should be brought back next month, and that a balanced conversation should take place that would provide transparency for the general public on this matter. She requested that literature be brought to the next meeting for the Committee to review and share with the public.

Mr. O'Neil said that Springfield is attempting to appease multiple groups, so the legislation is still in limbo at that level. Ms. Curtis Luther said that there is a lack of clarity about budgetary control, and the concept behind consolidation is for cost effectiveness. She said that she does not know if the current legislation accomplishes that. Member Ardapple said that regardless of the outcome, there is still a responsibility to put forth the contents of the discussion to the public.

Chairman Riggerbach commented that the City is ready to use its resources it anyway it can. He said that he does not want to momentum to die on this topic, and that there is not only potential cost savings, but also an enhanced delivery of service. Member Spain requested that Mr. Urich bring an update from the City's Legal Counsel regarding this issue to the next meeting. Chairman Riggerbach agreed and slated the item to be on the next month's agenda.

Open Air Dining Regulations

Mr. Urich stated that Member Spain had previously raised concerns regarding restaurants with indoor/outdoor dining areas. Member Spain had previously asked whether this type of restaurant is under the regulation of the Health Department. Mr. Urich said that he and Ms. Curtis Luther had both had conversations with Greg Chance, Peoria County Health Department Administrator, who said that the area of concern is the food preparation area rather than the dining area. He said that there was nothing that would preclude the use of that type of space for a restaurant. Mr. Hayes stated that there are some barriers that need to be in place in order to prevent insects or rodents from entering the premises. He discussed the use of an air curtain as one potential option. He said that a restaurant in Peoria Heights uses this type of system. Member Ardapple asked if there would need to be any changes to the building code. Mr. Urich said no.

Member Spain inquired about the installation of an air curtain. Mr. Hayes said it is basically a blower that maintains a stream of downward air to deter insects or rodents. He said it can be expensive, but is not very elaborate. Member Spain asked if air curtains are considered best practice for this type of dining space. Mr. Hayes said that this system is the norm in other communities such as St. Louis or Chicago. Member Spain commented that this opens the door to a new type of restaurant atmosphere in the region. Mr. Hayes said that some people have inquired but none with the exception of the Peoria Heights restaurant have been willing to implement the model.

Member Ardapple asked if there was literature to provide interested parties. Mr. Hayes said that the Health Department provides examples of how to implement this type of dining arrangement, but they also advise people to perform their own research as well. Member Ardapple asked how the City can tell the restaurant industry that they are welcome to take part in this model. She said she believed the message was not out to the business community that this type of venture was accepted. Member Spain noted that there is a missing piece of communication if only one of these restaurants exists in the region. Mr. Hayes said that he could not deny the added expense that is associated with indoor-outdoor dining. He said that the State Food Code mandates that outer openings are protected, and that a larger opening equates to a more expensive project. Member Ardapple asked about City Staff's response to a potential inquiry about this model of dining. Mr. Urich said that the City would be receptive to the idea.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Stormwater Management

Chairman Riggerbach continued onto future agenda items with a discussion concerning stormwater management. He said that this has been a legislative priority for years. Ms. Curtis Luther said that this area was more straightforward than the Election Commission legislation, where a potential lawsuit could shape future discussions. She said that Tri-County Regional Planning Commission could meet with the Committee at the September meeting to discuss the potential to create a stormwater utility, if that is the final recommendation. She said that Denny Kief is working on this issue for the Tri-County Regional Planning Commission. Chairman Riggerbach requested that Ms. Curtis Luther extend an invitation for Mr. Kief to attend the September meeting. Member Rand asked about what the discussion would be with the Tri-County Regional Planning Commission. Chairman Riggerbach said that they would discuss what is involved in establishing the stormwater utility as well as what other communities have done. Mr. Urich stated that there is an impact on both the City and County, so it needs to be a collaborative discussion.

Springdale Cemetery

Chairman Riggerbach asked when the Committee would like to review Springdale Cemetery. Ms. Curtis Luther said that the County Board discussed this topic and provided instruction to the County to include the historical amount provided for the Cemetery in the 2014 budget. Mr. Urich said that he would invite Bob Manning, Chairman of the Springdale Cemetery Management Authority, to the next Committee meeting to provide an update.

County Roads within City Limits

Chairman Riggerbach said that the new Public Works Director for the City has been requested to review the issue of management of County roads within City limits. He noted issues within the 3rd District including a number of bottleneck roads. He said that jurisdictional transfers of the roads involve a complicated process which includes bringing up the roads to City standards. He said that it might be appropriate to have the City's Public Works Director and the County Engineer review the policy and report back to the Committee in six months. Mr. Setti said that this discussion has already begun between the City and the County. Ms. Curtis Luther said that the existing policy has been in place for years, and it takes a great deal of money for the County to bring the roads up to City standards. She said that it is not financially feasible. She said that this leaves streets that are basically not maintained, and that the current policy needs to be addressed.

Member Spain said that a report back should take place quicker than six months. He requested that the item remain on the agenda. He noted that it would not be solved in one meeting, but that it needs to remain on the forefront until a new policy is formulated. He said that the new policy must take into consideration the financial condition of both the County and the City. He requested that both parties return to the September meeting with a framework for future discussions. Mr. O'Neill commented that both the City and County now have great leaders in each respective department which will be able to tackle the issue.

Member Rand asked what the current policy is between the City and the County. Mr. Urich said that the policy is from 1966 and it states that any transfers are to take place only after the road is brought up to City standards. He said that the costs of the improvements are split between the County and the City. Examples were provided of how the City is negatively impacted, such as the bottlenecks in the 3rd District, as well as how the County is negatively impact, such as City development on Radnor Road.

Mr. Urich noted that the previous policy was created when there was more money available. He said that motor fuel tax revenue is declining. He continued to say that a policy needs to be created that works for both parties. Member Phalen offered that the Village of Peoria Heights was unhappy with Glen Avenue in the past and approached the State, as well as a number of other stakeholders including the library and School Board, and were able to achieve the desired improvements.

Townships

Chairman Riggerbach turned to the discussion about townships and asked if Staff could look into what services are provided by the Township and at what cost. He said that it was appropriate for the Committee to discuss this topic because the goal is to review the use of governmental dollars and if they are being spent in the most efficient and effective manner. He asked if Mr. Setti could take on this project. Member Ardapple suggested that Staff engage with Bradley or another outlet which would be able to provide the appropriate due diligence without taking away from Staff time.

Member Rand inquired about the subject matter of the discussion, and wanted to know if it was appropriate for the Committee to spend time on this topic. He said that the Committee's charter is to increase governmental cooperation and collaboration. He said he wanted to understand the end goal of the conversation. Member Ardapple said that it would be appropriate to have a better understanding of the jurisdictional responsibility of the Township. She also noted that there could be a means to collaborate on the provision of services. Ms. Curtis Luther said that the County already works with the Township on the delivery of some services including road maintenance. Member Rand asked that the Director of the Township be invited to the next meeting to explain the Township's role.

Member Spain noted that the fact that townships were on the agenda did not indicate that the goal was for elimination. He said that Member Turner had suggested learning more about opportunities to work with the Township, and that is how the item was put on the agenda. Member Phelan commented that engaging townships in the Metro Peoria effort should not be a cause for concern. He said there are similarities between township and county governments. Townships are established under the State Constitution as the designee for three responsibilities: assessment of property, maintenance of township roads, and provision of general and emergency assistance. He noted that the budgets for townships are minimal, but do vary based on the size of the township. He said that if a jurisdiction wants to see a governmental body that functions efficiently, it could look to a township. Member Phelan said that Township Officials of Illinois Executive Director Bryan Smith could come to a meeting to explain the role of townships.

Chairman Riggerbach offered that it might be more appropriate to engage Peoria's Township Supervisor Joe Whalen one-on-one rather than leave this item on the agenda. He said that if the Committee would like to engage the local townships in the Metro Peoria process, the City would be open to that. He said that answers would be provided to questions previously posed by the League of Women's Voters through the discussion with Mr. Whalen.

Chairman Riggerbach reviewed the items for the September meeting including further discussion regarding the Election Commission legislation, an update from Mr. Manning regarding the Springdale Cemetery, discussion with the Tri-County Regional Planning Commission regarding stormwater management, and an update on the policy discussion between the City's Public Works Director and the County Engineer. Member Ardapple requested to add a discussion of the Regional Office of Education's efforts with purchasing and joint procurement efforts. She also inquired if the City will be responsible for loading the Committee's documents to the website. Mr. Setti agreed and said that City Staff will need to be trained.

The meeting was adjourned by Chairman Riggerbach at 3:35 PM.