

**STEPHENSON COUNTY BOARD MEETING**  
**Wednesday April 9, 2008**  
**6:30 PM**  
**Stephenson County Board Room**

The Stephenson County Board met in the Courthouse on Wednesday April 9, 2008. Chairman Blum called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. Ms. Kubatzke gave the Invocation and Mr. J. Kuhlmeier led the Pledge of Allegiance. The Clerk called the roll. Members present; Samuel Newton, Bennie Brown, Charles Hilton, Jeffrey Mikkelsen, Debra Devine, Sheila Hooper, Todd McKenna, William Hadley, Donald Parker, Vicki Hooper, James Graham, Alvin Wire, Linda Dotson, Jim Kuhlmeier, Sandra Kubatzke, Andrew Kuhlemeier, Lynn Koch, Brenda Boynton, Russell Cashmore, Salvatore Détente, Forrest Senn and John Blum. Twenty-two members present. No members absent.

**APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA:** Mr. McKenna made a motion to approve as received. Second by Mr. Koch. The Chair called for a voice vote on the motion. *Motion to approve the agenda as received carried unanimously.*

**APPROVAL OF THE MARCH 12, 2008 MEETING MINUTES:** Mr. Detente made a motion to approve the minutes of the March 12, 2008 meeting as received. Second by Mr. McKenna. The Chair called for a voice vote on the motion. *Motion to approve the minutes of the March 12, 2008 meeting as received carried unanimously.*

**CLAIMS ON THE CLERK'S DESK:** Ms. V. Hooper made a motion that all claims on the Clerk's desk be referred to the proper committees without reading. Second by Mr. Senn. The Chair called for a voice vote on the motion. *Motion that all claims on the Clerk's desk be referred to the proper committees without reading carried unanimously.*

**COMMUNICATIONS:** The Clerk reported the following communications had been received;

- Public Defender Monthly Report for March, 2008; 285 New Cases, 253 Cases Closed and Income to Public Defender Fund \$5,268.70
- Violent Crime Victims Compensation Act Monthly Report

Ms. V. Hooper made a motion to approve all communications and place on file. Second by Mr. Senn. The Chair called for a voice vote on the motion. *Motion to approve all communications and place on file carried unanimously.*

**STATE OF THE COUNTY ADDRESS:** Chairman Blum delivered his 6<sup>th</sup> Annual State of the County Address. His intentions are to provide a perspective on our history, accomplishments, and future. He touched on a few topics that he feels has, and will; shape our future not only as a county unit of government, but as a community. . . (See attached)

**OLD BUSINESS:** Mr. Graham presented the following old business;

**Resolution #08-04-1543 authorizing the issuance of not to exceed \$10,000,000 Health Care Facilities Revenue Bonds (Freeport Regional Health Care Foundation Project) Series 2008 and authorizing the execution of documents in connection therewith**

Mr. Graham made a motion to approve the Resolution. Second by Mr. Détente. The Chair called for a roll call vote on the motion. Members voting aye: Newton, Brown, Hilton, Mikkelsen, Devine, S. Hooper, McKenna, Hadley, Parker, V. Hooper, Graham, Wire, J. Kuhlmeier, Kubatzke, A. Kuhlemeier, Koch, Boynton, Cashmore, Détente, Senn and Blum. Not available: Dotson. Twenty-one ayes. *Motion to approve Resolution #08-04-1543 authorizing the issuance of Revenue Bonds for Freeport Regional Health Care Foundation Project carried unanimously.*

**Trust Indenture, Loan Agreement, Tax Letter of Instructions and Purchase Contract**

Mr. Graham made a motion to approve execution of the four documents in connection with Resolution #08-04-1543. Second by Mr. Détente. The Chair called for a voice vote on the motion. *Motion to approve the Trust Indenture, Load Agreement, Tax Letter of Instructions and Purchase Contract carried unanimously.*

**SHERIFF'S REPORT:** Sheriff Snyders reported on the success of the Disaster Drill. The jail population is currently at 169. It has been averaging somewhere between 155 and 170.

**HIGHWAY REPORT:** Mr. Isbell presented the following Resolutions;

**#08-04-1544 HD08-08 Obtaining Engineering Firm for Section 07-12130-00-BR Bolen Road over Sumner Creek**

Mr. J. Kuhlmeier made a motion to approve HD 08-08. Second by Mr. A. Kuhlemeier. The Chair called for a roll call vote on the motion. Members voting aye: Newton, Brown, Hilton, Mikkelsen, Devine, S. Hooper, McKenna, Hadley, V. Hooper, Graham, Wire, Dotson, J. Kuhlmeier, Kubatzke, A. Kuhlemeier, Koch, Boynton, Cashmore, Détente, Senn and Blum. Not available: Parker. Twenty-one ayes. *Motion to approve #08-04-1544 HD 08-08 carried unanimously.*

**#08-04-1545 HD 08-09 Obtaining Engineering Firm Sections 07-08119-00-BR and 07-17126-00-BR Howardsville Road over branch of Yellow Creek**

Mr. J. Kuhlmeier made a motion to approve HD 08-09. Second by Mr. Cashmore. The Chair called for a voice vote on the motion. *Motion to approve #08-04-1545 HD 08-09 carried unanimously.*

**#08-04-1546 HD 08-10 Section 08-XX000-01-GM – Township Seal Coat (Materials Only)**

Mr. J. Kuhlmeier made a motion to approve HD 08-10. Second by Mr. Cashmore. The Chair called for a voice vote on the motion. *Motion to approve #08-04-1546 HD 08-10 carried unanimously.*

**#08-04-1547 HD 08-11 Section 08-XX000-01-GM, Township Seal Coat (Furnished and Spread)**

Mr. J. Kuhlmeier made a motion to approve HD 08-11. Second by Mr. A. Kuhlemeier. The Chair called for a voice vote on the motion. *Motion to approve #08-04-1547 HD 08-11 carried unanimously.*

**#08-04-1548 HD 08-12 Section 08-04000-02-GM, Florence Township (Cooper St. & Shepard Drive)**

Mr. J. Kuhlmeier made a motion to approve HD 08-12. Second by Mr. Wire. The Chair called for a roll call vote on the motion. Members voting aye: Newton, Brown, Hilton, Devine, S. Hooper, McKenna, Hadley, Parker, V. Hooper, Graham, Wire, Dotson, J. Kuhlmeier, Kubatzke, A. Kuhlemeier, Koch, Boynton, Cashmore, Détente, Senn and Blum. Not available: Mikkelsen. Twenty-one ayes. *Motion to approve #08-04-1548 HD 08-12 carried unanimously.*

**#08-04-1549 HD 08-13 Section 08-00000-01-GM, County Seal Coat**

Mr. J. Kuhlmeier made a motion to approve HD 08-13. Second by Ms. Kubatzke. The Chair called for a roll call vote on the motion. Members voting aye: Newton, Brown, Hilton, Devine, S. Hooper, McKenna, Hadley, Parker, V. Hooper, Graham, Wire, Dotson, J. Kuhlmeier, Kubatzke, A. Kuhlemeier, Koch, Boynton, Cashmore, Détente, Senn and Blum. Not available: Mikkelsen. Twenty-one ayes. *Motion to approve #08-04-1549 HD 08-13 carried unanimously.*

**#08-04-1550 HD 08-14 Section 08-11000-01-GM, Oneco Township**

Mr. J. Kuhlmeier made a motion to approve HD 08-14. Second by Mr. Wire. The Chair called for a roll call vote on the motion. Members voting aye: Newton, Brown, Hilton, Mikkelsen, Devine, S. Hooper, McKenna, Hadley, Parker, V. Hooper, Graham, Wire, Dotson, J. Kuhlmeier, Kubatzke, A. Kuhlemeier, Koch, Boynton, Cashmore, Détente, Senn and Blum. Twenty-two ayes. *Motion to approve #08-04-1550 HD 08-14 carried unanimously.*

**Purchase of Used Tandem Axle Semi**

Mr. Isbell reported his Committee has approved the purchase of a used tandem axle semi that will be able to pull the lowboy with heavier equipment. It was noted this was a budgeted expense. Mr. J. Kuhlmeier made a motion the Board concur with the Committee's decision to purchase the semi. Second by Mr. Hadley. The Chair called for a roll call vote on the motion. Members voting aye: Newton, Brown, Hilton, Mikkelsen, Devine, S. Hooper, McKenna, Hadley, Parker, V. Hooper, Graham, Wire, Dotson, J. Kuhlmeier, Kubatzke, A. Kuhlemeier, Koch, Boynton, Cashmore, Détente, Senn and Blum. Twenty-two ayes. *Motion to approve concurrence on the purchase of a used semi truck carried unanimously.*

**ZONING REPORT:** Mr. Groves presented the following Special Use Permits for the location of Wind Power Generating Facilities on 30 different wind turbine sites and associated operations and maintenance buildings;

**SU 08-04 Zoning Ordinance for Substation**

The Planning and Development Committee recommends Zoning Ordinance for Substation is granted. Mr. Mikkelsen made a motion to approve the Special Use request. Second by Mr. Cashmore. The Chair called for a voice vote on the motion. *Motion carried unanimously. Special Use Ordinance #SU 08-04 granted.*

### **SU 08-05 Zoning Ordinance for 30 Wind Turbines**

The Planning and Development Committee recommends Zoning Ordinance for 30 Wind Turbines be granted. Mr. Mikkelsen made a motion to approve the Special Use request. Second by Mr. Cashmore. Discussion was held and Special State's Attorney Frank Cook addressed concerns with salvage value and responsibilities regarding decommissioning. The Chair called for a voice vote on the motion. *Motion carried. One nay noted. Special Use Ordinance #SU 08-05 granted.*

**PECATONICA PRAIRIE PATH/JANE ADDAMS TRAIL:** Meeting minutes distributed

**EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT REPORT:** Report distributed

**9-1-1 REPORT:** Meeting minutes distributed

**HEALTH DEPARTMENT REPORT:** Mr. Beintema reviewed proposed changes to the Well Code approved by the Board of Health;

### **Proposed changes to the Stephenson County Well Code**

The majority of the amendments are clarifications recommended by the State. Ms. V. Hooper made a motion approve the proposed changes to the Stephenson County Well Code. Second by Mr. Detente. The Chair called for a voice vote on the motion. *Motion to approve the proposed changes to the Stephenson County Well Code carried unanimously.*

Mr. Beintema reported the Health Department is submitting a proposal for a Federally Qualified Health Center planning grant. The Board of Health has approved refinancing their 5 year mortgage. This will reduce the balance \$200,000. Food Scores for the month of March and the Animal Control Report were distributed.

**NURSING CENTER REPORT:** Mr. Fortney reported the census is currently at 115. The annual license survey resulted in ten Federal tags. Life safety had eight tags. Mr. Fortney is working on a plan of correction.

**PROBATION DEPARTMENT REPORT:** No Report

**STATE'S ATTORNEY REPORT:** No Report

### **APPOINTMENTS:**

Appoint Randy Stenback to German Valley Fire Protection District

Appoint Jim McLeland to Freeport Rural Fire Protection District

Appoint Frederick Kuhlmeier to Rock City Fire Protection District

Reappoint James Noller to Lena Fire Protection District

Reappoint Randy Lawson to Davis Fire Protection District

Ms. S. Hooper made a motion to approve the appointments as read. Second by Mr. Cashmore. The Chair called for a voice vote on the motion. *Motion to approve the appointments as read carried unanimously.*

### **Action Items from Standing Committee**

**Finance:** Mr. Graham presented the following action items;

#### **Additional \$15,000 Contribution to NIDA**

Mr. Graham stated in light of the significant investment in Mill Race Industrial Park he felt NIDA has placed the County in an unfair position. He voiced concerns with; the duplication of services for the development of downtown Freeport, and how NIDA handled Mr. Skurla's departure. He further stated his frustration with editorial comments in today's Journal Standard.

Mr. Graham reported Finance and Planning & Development Committees both recommend approval of an additional \$15,000 for interim support to the Northwest Illinois Development Alliance, so they may continue to pursue economic development. Mr. Graham made a motion to approve \$15,000 of additional interim support for NIDA with funds to be taken from the General Fund Contingency Account. Second by Ms. V. Hooper. Much discussion followed on our partnership and the need for visible results before long-term funding would be approved. Board members stated their opinions and budget concerns. It was agreed that NIDA needs to be generating its own revenue. Mr. Graham expressed that we need to move on from the past and start rebuilding the trust and relationship with NIDA. Further stating that creating a better partnership will benefit Stephenson

County in the long term. The Chair called for a roll call vote on the motion. Members voting aye: S. Hooper, McKenna, V. Hooper, Graham, J. Kuhlmeier, Koch, Boynton, Senn and Blum. Members voting nay: Newton, Brown, Hilton, Mikkelsen, Devine, Hadley, Parker, Wire, Dotson, Kubatzke, A. Kuhlemeier, Cashmore and Détente. Nine ayes. Thirteen nays. *Motion to approve an additional \$15,000 for NIDA from the General Fund Contingency Account failed.*

**Consulting Arrangement with RSAD**

Mr. Graham reported Finance and Planning & Development Committees both recommend approval of a short term contract not to exceed six-months with RSAD. Mr. Graham made a motion to approve the contract with RSAD. Second by Mr. Mikkelsen. Following discussion, Ms. S. Hooper made a motion to refer this issue back to Committees to be renegotiated. Second by Mr. Cashmore. A special joint meeting of the Finance and Planning & Development Committees was called for April 17. The Chair called for a roll call vote on the motion. Members voting aye: Newton, Devine, S. Hooper, Parker, V. Hooper, Dotson, Kubatzke, A. Kuhlemeier, Koch, Boynton, Cashmore, Détente, Senn and Blum. Members voting nay: Brown, Hilton, Mikkelsen, McKenna, Hadley, Graham, Wire and J. Kuhlmeier. Fourteen ayes. Eight nays. *Motion to refer discussion on the consulting arrangement back to Committees carried.* Chairman Blum noted discussion on NIDA funding would also be revisited at the special meeting.

**Public Property & Safety: Mr. Senn reported the following Resolution should be sent back to Committee; Resolution to Amend 2007-2008 Fiscal Year Budget to insure adequate funding for the Sheriff's Department**

Mr. Senn made a motion to refer the Budget Resolution for the Sheriff's Department back to Committee. Second by Mr. Cashmore. The Chair called for a voice vote on the motion. *Motion to refer the Budget Resolution back to Committee carried unanimously.*

**Administration:** Ms. S. Hooper presented the following action items;

**Proclamation for National Day of Prayer**

Ms. S. Hooper made a motion to as National Day of Prayer in Stephenson County. Second by Mr. Senn. The Chair called for a voice vote on the motion. *Motion to approve the proclamation, declaring National Day of Prayer in Stephenson carried unanimously.*

**Raffles (all fees and bonding in order)**

- 1444 St John United Church of Christ, Manager Mavis Clark
- 1445 D & D Baseball, Manager Daniel S Pattat
- 1446 Freeport Moose Family Center 162, Manager Lynn Folgate
- 1447 Freeport Moose Family Center 162, Manager Kenneth A Kostenbader Sr
- 1448 Freeport Moose Family Center 162, Manager Kenneth A Kostenbader Sr
- 1449 MALCOLM EATON Enterprises, Manager Julia Hilliger
- 1450 Family Ties Relay for Life, Manager Amy Johnson
- 1451 Cruise Night/Tutty Baker Days Festival Inc, Manager Connie Sorn

Ms. S. Hooper made a motion to approve the Raffles. Second by Mr. Parker. *The Chair called for a voice vote. Motion to approve the Raffles carried unanimously.*

**Information Items from Standing Committees**

Administration: The State's Attorney has completed FOIA policy and procedures. A copy was distributed to Board Members. The Soil and Water Conservation District Board is working to prioritize the conservation project in the County. Their newsletter was distributed to Board Members.

Court Services: The Committee has approved funding \$3,000 from the Youth Diversion Fees to Youth Becoming Leaders. The HOPE subcommittee will meet at 4:00 p.m. on April 21.

**CLAIMS**

Finance & Procurement	\$ 1,030,206.22
Administration	\$ 51,867.28
Public Works	\$ 123,476.05
Nursing Center	\$ 202,036.28
Public Property	\$ 37,261.03

Court Services	\$	24,113.07
Public Safety	\$	63,452.38
Planning & Development	\$	1,486.21
9-1-1	\$	20,830.16

Mr. Graham made a motion to approve the Claims as presented. Second by Mr. Détente. The Chair called for a roll call vote on the motion. Members voting aye: Newton, Brown, Hilton, Mikkelsen, Devine, S. Hooper, McKenna, Hadley, Parker, V. Hooper, Graham, Wire, Dotson, J. Kuhlmeier, Kubatzke, A. Kuhlemeier, Koch, Boynton, Cashmore, Détente, Senn and Blum. Twenty-two ayes. *Motion to approve the Claims as presented carried unanimously.*

**Mileage & Per Diems** – *Subject to review by Finance Chairman*

Blum 5 days, 0 miles-Boynton 2 days, 26 miles-Brown 4 days, 10 miles-Cashmore 3 days, 60 miles-Detente 4 days, 53 miles-Devine 3 days, 10 miles-Dotson 3 days, 109 miles-Graham 6 days, 21 miles-Hadley 2 days, 10 miles- Hilton 4 days, 12 miles-S Hooper 5 days, 16 miles-V Hooper 4 days, 14 miles- Koch 3 days, 72 miles, Kubatzke 7 days, 187 miles-A Kuhlemeier 3 days, 95 miles-J Kuhlmeier 5 days, 114 miles-McKenna 3 days, 12 miles-Mikkelsen 8 days, 62 miles-Newton 4 days, 54 miles- Parker 5 days, 20 miles-Senn 4 days, 56 miles-Wire 3 days, 118 miles.

Mr. Graham made a motion to approve the mileage and per diems. Second by Mr. Cashmore. The Chair called for a voice vote on the motion. *Motion to approve the mileage and per diems carried unanimously.*

**OTHER BUSINESS:** None

**MEMBERS OF THE AUDIENCE:** Mike King of 5003 N. Dakota Road, Dakota voiced his concerns and displeasure with Wind Turbines in Stephenson County.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION:** No executive session

**ADJOURN UNTIL 6:30 P.M. WEDNESDAY MAY 14, 2008:**

Mr. Mikkelsen made a motion to adjourn until 6:30 p.m. Wednesday May 14, 2008. Second by Mr. McKenna. The Chair called for a voice vote on the motion. *Motion to adjourn carried at 9:32 p.m.*

*Mr. Koch will lead the Pledge and Mr. A. Kuhlemeier will be responsible for the Invocation at the May14th Meeting*

**State of the County – 2008**

This is my 6<sup>th</sup> annual update to you and is intended to provide a perspective on our history, accomplishments, and future. Tonight I would like to touch on a few topics that have and will shape our future not only as a county unit of government, but as a community.

Our progress and success as a community is directly proportional to our ability to appropriately organize our resources, motivate ourselves, make prudent investments, maintain a vision, and execute leadership at all levels of our organization.

Leadership usually evolves out of challenges and opportunities that face you as an individual. All of you have overcome challenges and have seen opportunities come and go in your lives.

As a collective group of county board members you have your individual experiences, education, and passions to draw on as you develop and exercise your own style of leadership.

Some of you came to this Board with a passion for service, a passion for people, a passion for charity, a passion for the environment, and much more. Together we are able to blend this passion with the obligations and requirements of providing services to the public and generating opportunities for all of our citizens.

Becoming a good leader is not an exact science, yet understanding science can be helpful. Becoming a good leader is not a matter of time, but time does matter. Becoming a leader cannot be planned in advance, but is a result of advance planning. Becoming a leader is not what you perceive it to be, but will be a result of the environment within which you operate.

The Wright Brothers are generally recognized as the first men to fly an airplane. After this accomplishment Orville Wright was asked about the process of learning to fly. He said, “Learning the secret of flight from a bird

was a good deal like learning the secret of magic from a magician. After you know what to look for, you see things that you did not notice when you did not know exactly what to look for.”

What Orville was trying to explain was the value of learning and experience that lead them to eventual success. Having these appreciations and passions is the key foundation to developing good leaders both within you as well as within our community.

I don't believe we do enough within our communities to recognize those people that exemplify positive leadership attributes. Even within our own County government we have dedicated leaders that work tirelessly to improve the delivery of services, motivate their coworkers, develop employees, and maintain high standards of professionalism.

This is why I have decided to establish an annual Chairman's Leadership Award to be presented to a deserving member of our County organization. The first annual award will be presented here tonight.

We have many people that work diligently to serve the citizens of Stephenson County. It is difficult to choose one of the many to receive such an award. This year I used my own experiences to choose the recipient, but in the future we will establish a process to allow recommendations from the entire organization.

Tonight it is my pleasure to present the first annual Chairman's Leadership Award to Mr. Ron Kane. Ron is not only our Supervisor of Assessments, a job he conducts in a very professional manner, but also acts as the Administrator of the Enterprise Zone Committee, and drives the County GIS and IT Committee. He has led us to develop a comprehensive GIS capability that will enhance many aspects of our growth and prosperity. He has shown professionalism in the management of his department while identifying revenue sources to support needed technical initiatives. I wish to thank Ron for his continued service to Stephenson County and present him with this award.

One of the most significant qualities a good leader seems to possess is an awareness of and an appreciation for history, not only the history of our world, our country, or our state, but the history of our organization, our businesses, our people, and more. This awareness prevents our efforts from repeating previous mistakes and gives us a benchmark for future successes.

Speaking of history, Stephenson County was established in 1837. Just 5 years prior to this, the Sac and Fox Indians were still in NW Illinois. Chief Black Sparrow Hawk was trying to maintain a foothold for his people on this land, but he was being pushed across the Mississippi River by local militia and federal soldiers. The Battle of Kellogg Grove happened in June of 1837 and dozens of militia were killed along with many more Indians. It is told that Abe Lincoln arrived with his militia unit only in time to bury the dead. We have established a monument at the Kellogg Grove Battle location to commemorate these human losses and are working to enhance the park to more fully respect this important connection to our history. We have recognized the obligation to represent both sides of this historical event and will progress in this regard.

Just 20-years after this battle at Kellogg Grove, Lincoln was back in Stephenson County to participate in one of the Lincoln-Douglas debates that launched him forward as a viable candidate for President of the United States. Later this year, we will be celebrating the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this pivotal debate and a great deal of attention will be drawn to our county seat, Freeport. Many people within our community are working to make a favorable impression when the world comes to visit us in September. All of us need to do our part as this event approaches.

I have asked the Public Property Committee to take the lead in coordinating the appearance of the courthouse during the planned events. All of you are invited to make suggestions, gather donations, and participate in the process of presenting our house to all of the visitors we expect.

In addition, we want to insure our county capitol is in the best shape to receive visitors. We have a number of issues to take care of in order to make our streets entering Freeport more pleasing in appearance.

I am asking the County Health and County Zoning Departments to take a proactive role in assisting the City of Freeport in the clean-up of many less than desirable properties.

We have a short time to prepare, but a long time to ponder the consequences if we do nothing.

Over the past couple of months we have seen signs of deterioration in the national and state economies. The housing and credit markets have experienced turbulence, large investment firms are on the edge of collapse, and

the stock market is volatile. The value of the dollar has fallen and in turn drives investors into commodities putting upward pressure on grains, oils, and metals.

The price of petroleum is at an all-time high, and much of this can be attributed to the fall of the U.S. dollar. In fact the decrease in the value of the dollar has produced a mirror image with regard to the price of crude oil.

Consumer spending, long a safety net against a full blown recession, is weakening at the national level for the first time in many years.

I believe it was Warren Buffet that said, "When you're out of work it is a recession, but when I'm out of work it's a depression."

It also appears that our State is less equipped now, more than ever, to handle an economic downturn. The Illinois Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability stated recently that with a downturn in the economy, tax revenues will not generate the estimated \$1.6 billion in new revenue that was used as a base for the current state budget.

Comptroller Hynes' office announced that the state has \$1 billion outstanding in back bills. It is taking more than 30 days to pay the state's bills. It is anticipated that the outstanding amounts will increase and the payment cycle will get longer.

State Treasurer Giannoulas' office states that returns on state investments will decrease from \$426 million in 2007 to \$375 million in 2008.

According to the State Legislative Update, "Couple the decreasing state revenues, stagnating state cash flow, potential gubernatorial tax and fee proposals, and extremely high combativeness in the State House and it is hard to be optimistic about what the next few months are going to bring to Springfield."

In the face of these dire outlooks it would seem we should roll up in a fetal position, close our eyes, and wait for the storms to pass. We can't, we won't, and we shouldn't.

In spite of national and state concerns we have strengths and opportunities here in Stephenson County that gives us reason to stay standing with our eyes open. There was a time, not long ago, that the perception was we had few, if any, opportunities. However, with the help of our communities, community organizations, and dedicated individuals we have generated quite a list of opportunities and possibilities to maintain quality growth.

Our local real estate market has been robust in the face of national media reports to the contrary. I received a letter last week from a local real estate broker that said, "During the past few months we have been bombarded with reports from mainstream media that the housing market is in a slump. We've heard that the real estate market is spiraling down and that property values are at an all-time low. We've also heard and read that due to the sub-prime mortgage fiasco, qualified buyers are having a hard time finding funding. What they don't tell you is that this isn't happening all across the nation, but in areas where real estate prices were over inflated to begin with.

Did you know that last year in the Freeport area we had the best market ever? Did you know that now we have a surplus of buyers and a shortage of sellers? The area real estate market is in great shape."

We have economic development opportunities based on our agricultural strengths. Not only are we a large producer of corn, beans, milk, pork, and beef, but we have grown to recognize a number of value-added opportunities. We have a number of large cheese plants adding value to local milk production. We have one of the largest egg producers in the Midwest. We now have a winery and many other businesses that add value to locally grown products before they go to market.

We have significant potential in the area of renewable energy. We have a 60-million gallon per year ethanol plant in production. We have 2 commercial-size methane digesters in operation generating electricity from manure. We have 4 different wind power developments under consideration that will generate almost 800 mw of renewable, clean electricity. There is a pilot project underway to recover land-fill methane and use it as an industrial fuel.

These types of opportunities actually buffer our local economy against the current recessionary pressures indicated in the national media. This is indicated by continued strong local employment levels, a large number of construction projects in the local queue, increasing income tax revenue, and relatively solid sales tax revenues as matched against state trends.

A difficult component in the exercise of leadership is the development and maintenance of a collective vision. Everybody has a viewpoint. You hear them on the street, in the coffee shops, in the media, and in debate here in our various meetings. These views must be transformed into a collective and common vision. Views are individually shaped by personal experience, education, and emotions. A vision is shaped by the adoption of a path toward goals based on collective reasoning, the demands of the future, and a commitment to meet these demands. A vision will exist well into the next generation of leaders and beyond.

The adoption of a vision comes with many challenges. One of the biggest challenges is the management of change. Much of our efforts are directed not only toward change, but preparing people for change. This is one of the most difficult challenges since there are people that will never change, will disagree with any change, and will never recognize that change is required.

We are a shepherd of change and must be able to continuously articulate and understand the vision upon which the change is based.

The challenges that exist in our future are complex and interrelated. We have needs. We need more and better jobs, we need new investment in facilities and property, we need a better and more diverse housing stock, we need better roads and transportation opportunities, we need more retail and service choices, we need a growing and vibrant population, we need clean air and water, we need sources of clean and efficient energy, we need improved recreational resources, we need to deliver government services more efficiently, we need to provide better services to those people facing poverty, we need to reduce crime, we need to strengthen opportunities for our youth and families, and the list goes on.

Our vision must encompass these needs and contribute to the changes needed to satisfy these needs.

I'd like to touch on a few of our economic development efforts that are part of our vision of change that will lead to the satisfaction of many needs here in Stephenson County:

Mill Race Crossing is a large Economic Development Project Area established in Stephenson County by State legislation giving the County Tax Increment Financing capability for the next 20-years. This is a long-term project designed to be able to transform new tax increment into incentives for more property investment over an extended period of time. It took approximately 18 months to meet all the statutory requirements and receive final approval from the State for this extended EDPA.

As an initial effort to attract industrial, value-added agriculture, or renewable energy projects to the Mill Race Crossing EDPA the County established the Mill Race Industrial Park. This park was formed when the County purchased 142 acres of land adjacent to the Titan Tire plant for \$8500 per acre in 2006.

Since the purchase the County has invested in the property to transform it into industrial-size lots with initial required infrastructure. In addition, the County has received more than \$3 million in grant dollars from the EDA, IDOT, and DCEO in support of this development.

The property is zoned for heavy manufacturing, platted for development, has TIF financing available, is included in the enterprise zone, has access to CN Railroad, has access to US 20, and is near a municipal airport. The property has been prepared with access roadbeds, engineered drainage, detention ponds, a rail bed, and has been engineered to allow water, sewer, and utility access.

An assessment conducted on the property by industrial real estate experts in January of 2008 indicates that the property we purchased for \$8500 per acre is now market valued at \$60,000 per acre and the aggregate value of the ten industrial lots is now \$6.5 million. The lots can support up to 2.1 million square feet of building space, potentially generating approximately 2200 jobs, and providing annual property tax revenue of \$1.6 million. This is a tremendous County and regional asset.

We have entered a partnership with GVA Worldwide Industrial Real Estate to market the Mill Race Industrial Park in two different ways. The first is to market the park on a lot-by-lot basis and the second is to market the entire park to prospective developers as a package. These two efforts are not mutually exclusive, but are complementary. The first will allow us to attract individual projects and the second will allow us to consider a public-private partnership to accelerate the development. Having individual projects within the park would enhance developer interest in the private portion of the development.

We were very pleased to receive \$1.7 million from the EDA in the fall of 2007 for use in infrastructure development in the Mill Race Industrial Park. This was a significant vote of confidence in our efforts on behalf

of the federal Economic Development Administration. It was the biggest single grant awarded in the Midwest region.

During our initial development phase we were working with a couple of prospective projects. The first significant project was Trim-Rite, a pork processing company that was looking to establish a larger and more efficient facility to support their custom meat packing business. We worked with them to provide the best economic environment to place their investment, but in the end the owners of the business pulled back their plans to take in animals on the hoof due to the high cost of animals, the unsure availability of animals, and the downturn of the Asian markets that contained their primary customers.

The second significant project was Blackhawk Biofuels, LLC, a 30-million gallon per year bio-diesel plant. Again, we worked with them tirelessly to provide the best economic environment to place their investment. In this project, we felt very confident in the successful outcome since we worked closely with this company from the first day of idea conception to the raising of more than \$25 million of local investment in the project. This project was controlled by many Securities and Exchange Commission rules and timelines and was very complex. The project had generated more than \$3 million of seed capital, had a mortgage commitment from First Farm Credit Bank for about \$28 million and was required to raise \$25 million of private equity. They were successful in raising the private equity and as they neared the deadline to break escrow on their financing they needed to close on the mortgage side of the debt. At this late point in the SEC timeline, the lead bank decided the investment in the project was now more risky due to the high prices of raw materials, bean oil, and declined to close on the deal.

With only a few days remaining to break escrow to comply with the SEC timeline, the Board of Managers was faced with a serious dilemma. If they walked away from the project the seed capital investors would lose their investment, the equity investors would not see any returns, and the expenses involved in the planning and start-up phase would go unpaid. Time was too short to find another lead bank to handle the mortgage part of the investment.

Blackhawk Biofuels was then introduced to a 45 million gallon bio-diesel plant being built in Danville, IL. The plant is about 90% complete. The plant has a mortgage bank in place, however the private equity side had some problems and the plant construction stalled. This project needed private equity to complete their project and Blackhawk seemed like a good suitor. The marriage was completed in a short time and the project in Danville will survive at the expense of the project in Stephenson County. This is a tremendous disappointment for Stephenson County, but from a business point of view it is a success for Blackhawk Biofuels, the City of Danville, Vermillion County, and the State of Illinois.

We have a detailed redevelopment agreement in place between Stephenson County and Blackhawk Biofuels, LLC. This agreement contains obligations in the event the project does not go forward in Stephenson County. We have sent Blackhawk Biofuels an initial letter requesting their intentions on how they will satisfy the terms of the agreement. Discussions are very ongoing and I expect to provide you with more information next month.

It is obvious that business makes decisions to invest, build, hire, relocate, or grow. The County can only facilitate these decisions. Losing these two projects was very disappointing, but was not due to any lack of commitment or support on our part. We are in the early stages of developing the Mill Race Industrial Park and the entire Mill Race EDPA and we will have decisions made in our favor and decisions not. The decisions that are not in our favor do not diminish our vision, our commitment to the future, or our efforts to grow the economy. If anybody thinks that we don't work 110% on any economic development opportunity, they are very wrong. If anybody thinks that we don't have a comprehensive approach to development, they are wrong. If anybody thinks that personal attacks on County and economic development leadership by a few people adverse to change will stall our efforts, they are wrong. If anybody thinks we don't have the dedication, passion, and drive to succeed, they are wrong. We are going to press forward and relish success.

Over the past couple of years we have worked to facilitate wind power development within our County. Other counties in Illinois as well as across the nation have recognized this renewable and clean energy source. We have taken a more comprehensive view on wind power as a catalyst not only for construction jobs and tax revenue, but for new educational and manufacturing opportunities.

We have Ecoenergy, Navitas (Babcock and Brown), Horizon Energy, Outland Energy, and others looking at Stephenson County for potential wind farms. We have had numerous debates, hearings, and decisions made to facilitate these projects. Tonight we will take under consideration additional special-use permits for Ecogrove. In total, the first phase of Ecogrove will contain 67 turbines generating 100 mw of renewable electricity. This phase will cost more than \$200 million to build and will provide numerous construction jobs, about a dozen technical-support jobs, and a revenue stream for local governments. Follow-on phases are expected to triple these economic benefits.

In addition, we are already seeing benefits from partnerships in the wind generation industry. Highland College is now certified as the only wind technology program in the State and one of the few in the nation. Enrollment for the first semester will open the end of this month.

We are discussing manufacturing opportunities for wind component manufacturers in Mill Race Industrial Park as well as other sites in Freeport.

Our partnership with Ecoenergy, a locally owned business, is generating other opportunities in the renewable energy field that will result in local and regional economic benefits.

Our efforts in renewable energy are getting traction, and many opportunities will come forward.

Our local economy is benefiting from new investment in our retail, commercial, and professional sectors.

The opening of a new Walmart and Menards will add significant choice to the local retail market and will generate additional sales tax revenue to the county.

The construction of a new clinic on Burchard Avenue by FHN will add more professional jobs and buying power to our community. This area may also be the site for our new Supportive Living Facility that will add choices for our senior community, provide property tax increment, and a partnership with our County Nursing Center.

Developing a regional economy is not only about new investment and new jobs. It requires retention of current employers and businesses.

It requires having the necessary infrastructure to support growth such as water, sewer, roads, public safety, housing, education, recreation, transportation, and more.

We are working in many of these areas to support the roots of economic development:

The First-Time Homebuyer program has brought an average of \$7 million per year to our County and has allowed more than 110 people to purchase their first home.

The upcoming Housing Summit will help coordinate the housing needs for all of our communities in the Freeport area.

The USEPA Brownfields program has brought \$800,000 into our County this last year to correct environmental issues that exist in many of our communities.

Our commitment to the Local Workforce Investment Board has kept more than \$3 million of job training funds here in NW Illinois.

Our commitment to partnerships with area governments has resulted in the creation of the Jane Addams Trail and the Pecatonica Prairie Path.

It is critical to quality development that we participate in and emphasize partnerships. We need a solid partnership between our County, Freeport, the Villages, and the region. We need a healthy vehicle to support the necessary public-private partnerships that are necessary to promote business and real estate investment.

One critical partnership has been our relationship with the Freeport Area Economic Development Foundation, now named the Northwest Illinois Development Alliance or NIDA. This organization has been in place for more than 20 years and has been instrumental in establishing a number of economic development tools such as TIF Districts and Enterprise Zone. It has been the primary entity driving economic development in the Stephenson County area. It has only been relatively recently that Stephenson County has put any direct investment into NIDA, \$100,000 over about 6 years.

A few months ago, NIDA entered a period of change. They began searching for a new Executive Director to move the organization forward in support of the partners, the private sector and government. This process will take until June of 2008 to complete. In addition to new leadership, NIDA is in need of consistent and significant funding to complete their mission. Tonight you will consider a special commitment of an additional \$15,000 for

NIDA to match the City of Freeport's commitment to NIDA for short-term funding needs. I urge you to look positively at this investment and weigh the possible return.

We have worked to implement an enterprise zone fee that will generate revenue from any project built in the zone. We expect that with a successful partnership with NIDA that revenue from this source will be significant and represent a strong revenue stream to support NIDA and our own economic development efforts.

We still need to establish the criteria for our relationship with NIDA as we enter this period of change. Our needs in the economic development area are large, our current financial exposure in the economic area is large, and our responsibility to our citizens to provide economic opportunities is large. During the next few weeks and months we will be evaluating and developing our possible long-term relationship with NIDA to include funding.

Our investment in economic development sometimes is minimized by those that don't look at the overall commitment that has been made by Stephenson County:

We have a \$6 million installment note for financial support of the Mill Race Industrial Park.

We have generated over \$3 million in grants to date for Mill Race Crossing.

We have received \$7 million in bond cap annually to support a First Time Home Buyer program.

We have received more than \$800,000 from USEPA to clean up Brownfield sites.

We have received more than \$3 million in federal workforce training dollars each year.

We are using \$10 million of our bond cap to support industrial revenue bonds in our county.

We have forgone more than \$11.6 million in tax increment from 7 established TIF Districts in the County, approximately \$1.2 million of County property tax.

We have forgone more than \$20 million of property tax revenue from abatements in the enterprise zone.

These are all economic development dollars used to promote growth in our county.

Another regional partnership is the Tri-State Alliance. This is a partnership involving NW Illinois, NE Iowa, and SW Wisconsin and is geared toward generating consensus on capital investment in the region.

One of the top priorities is the completion of a 4-lane US 20 from Freeport to Iowa. We have worked for years to build this road a few miles at a time. This new alliance will give us the political mass to bring attention to the federal and state governments to realistically fund this highway project. This project is necessary to improve public safety and unlock the economic potential of our region.

We need to move from an unsafe 2-lane highway... To a safe, expedient 4-lane highway.....

A Tri-State Alliance summit is planned for April 21, 2008 from 9:00 am to 1:45 pm in Freeport at the Masonic Temple. Your voice and presence at this event would be welcome and is greatly needed.

I spoke with you last year about the importance of improving the environment for our youth. We want our young people to be safe, have a strong family, get an education, and have opportunities to grow. We have a number of organizations that have been doing a passionate job of dealing with the many challenges facing our youth. I am aware of the efforts by the Boys and Girls Club, the Millionaires Club, Youth Becoming Leaders, and others.

The Vision 2020 Community Youth Development Council has been engaged in a project to look at the effectiveness of youth programs in our county and have been coming up with some interesting findings, both good and bad. This project has looked at data from 8<sup>th</sup> grade to 12<sup>th</sup> grade in all of our county schools to see what is going on within our youth population. It has identified both challenges and support components that have a dramatic effect on the growth of our young people. This project has developed a means to evaluate existing programs to determine the potential for success. I have had a briefing on the initial data and found it important to share with you. I will invite the YDC to make a special presentation for your consideration in the near future.

Our emergency preparedness efforts have quadrupled since 9/11. We are now better prepared and equipped to deal with natural disasters such as tornadoes and floods. We are better prepared to deal with bio-threats such as West Nile Virus, mad cow disease, anthrax, and more.

We are prepared to deal with terrorism activity whether from inside or outside our community.

I am proud of and grateful for the volunteers that serve in various positions from storm watchers to first responders.

If we don't maintain security and safety there is no chance for sustained economic or social growth.

This past year has been a palate for disasters here in our County. We had a regional rain event that caused the designation of our region as a federal disaster area.

We had a 2-day snow event that resulted in a disaster declaration.

We had a snow season that broke records and emaciated our snow removal budgets. We are now watching the snow melt from this record winter and will hopefully avoid more devastation.

This Board has made the decision to place a public safety sales tax referendum on the ballot for November 2008. Our public safety responsibilities have grown and require significant investment to maintain. It will be up to the voters to determine whether this sales tax is approved to meet our public safety obligations. The voters deserve to know the facts before the vote. Therefore, I am asking the public safety organizations in the county to provide a program of information for consumption by the voters in advance of the November ballot. I request that the Director of Emergency Management and the Sheriff make a progress report to this Board on this effort during our May 2008 County Board meeting.

I would like the Administration Committee to determine the viability, timing, agenda, and protocol for a joint County Board – Freeport City Council meeting.

I would like to rename the Nursing Center Committee the Health Services Committee and put oversight for the Nursing Center, Health Department, Animal Control, and Solid Waste in that committee. I would like to remove the requirement in our County Code that the Court Services Chairman be the representative on the Board of Health and make it the Chairman of the Health Services Committee.

As we approach our next budget formation, I am asking each department to include at least three efficiency initiatives in their respective budgets. These initiatives should include suggestions on how to reduce costs and maintain services, consolidate manpower, identify new revenue sources, add technology, or make the department more efficient. I believe our department heads, both elected and appointed, are up to the challenge and I look forward to some fresh ideas for consideration.

As I look around this room I see leaders of our communities. I see people who have dedicated a part of their lives to be elected and serve the people of Stephenson County. I feel a passion for service and a compassion for the people we serve. I speak of leadership. It is not easy and is defined by the environment in which we serve. It is our job to prepare for change. It is our job to initiate change. It is our job to maintain safety, stability, and guidance into change.

As we approach the celebration of the Lincoln-Douglas Debate we will have more than our share of reminders of Lincoln and what he meant to our nation. His very human and remarkably stable leadership style in the face of immense tragedy and sacrifice continues to impress the people of our world. Lincoln was a man with a wry sense of humor locked within a very melancholy life. It is amazing that he could maintain his perspective as he was ridiculed in the press, as he lost children to tragedy, and struggled to maintain our great union. I challenge all of you to embrace a lifestyle of leadership and thank you very much for your dedicated service.