

**STEPHENSON COUNTY BOARD MEETING**  
**6:30 PM March 11, 2009**  
**Stephenson County Board Room**

The Stephenson County Board met in the Courthouse on Wednesday March 11, 2009. Chairman Blum called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. Mr. Kinney gave the Invocation and Chairman Blum 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, Peter Willging, Donald Parker, John Blum, Vicki Hooper, James Graham, Alvin Wire, Linda Dotson, Thomas Gilmour, Lynn Koch, George Kinney, Salvatore Detente, and Forrest Senn. Members absent: Jim Kuhlmeier, Andrew Kuhlemeier and Brenda Boynton. Nineteen members present. Three members absent.

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

**APPROVAL OF THE FEBRUARY 11, 2009 MEETING MINUTES:** Mr. McKenna made a motion to approve the minutes of the February 11, 2009 meeting as received. Second by Ms. Dotson. The Chair called for a voice vote on the motion. *Motion to approve the minutes of the February 11, 2009 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.* (Noted arrival of Mr. J. Kuhlmeier)

**COMMUNICATIONS:**

- Public Defender Monthly Report for February; 238 New Cases, 239 Cases Closed and Income to Public Defender Fund \$3,680.40
- Violent Crime Victims Compensation Act Monthly Report for February
- Audit Report of the Financial Statements of the Otter Creek Lake Utility District

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.* (Noted arrival of Mr. A. Kuhlemeier)

**PRESENTATION BY STACY WITTFIELD, NEW STUDENT SENATE AT HCC:**

HCC New Student Senate, Stacy Wittfield outlined the duties and responsibilities of the New Student Senate Program as well as their fundraising and community events.

**OLD BUSINESS:** No old business reported

**SHERIFF'S REPORT:** Chairman Blum addressed statements which were made at a press conference criticizing the local court system, States Attorney's office, Sheriff's Department and the Freeport Police Department. He invited any individual or group with any issues to contact himself, Sheriff Snyders or Chief Whitmore to discuss them in a productive and fair forum. Sheriff Snyders reported two candidates for the deputy sheriff position have been approved by the Merit Commission. One has been hired to replace Sgt. Pardus who recently retired. The Courthouse elevators are continuing to require more maintenance. The problem will be addressed in this year's budget. SLANT would like the County to participate again in their program. If the County would provide a deputy, SLANT would pay the salary. SLANT funding is provided by a Federal grant and the County would retain any grant funds in excess of the deputy's salary. This additional deputy would bring us to a total of 29 deputies. Mr. Senn made a motion to participate in the SLANT program. Second by Mr. Parker. The Chair called for a roll call vote on the motion. Members voting aye: Newton, Brown, Hilton, Mikkelsen, Devine, S. Hooper, McKenna, Willging, Parker, V. Hooper, Graham, Wire, Dotson, J. Kuhlmeier, Gilmour, A. Kuhlemeier, Koch, Kinney, D tente, Senn and Blum. Twenty-one ayes. No nays.

*Motion to approve participation in the SLANT program carried unanimously.* The Sheriff presented an Ordinance setting reimbursement for the cost of Medical and Hospital Services provided to prisoners in custody of the Stephenson County Sheriff at the Illinois Department of Public Aid's rates for medical assistance. Mr. Senn made a motion to approve the Ordinance. Second by Ms. S. Hooper. The Chair called for a voice vote on the motion. *Motion to approve Ordinance #009-03-1649 carried unanimously.* Sheriff Snyder's further reported he is working on funding for the Sheriff's Reserve Unit's new boat.

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

**HD 09-07 Resolution # 09-03-1643;** awarding low bid for section 07-14133-00-BR, Rock Run Road District - Knoup Road to Moring Construction for \$234,213.50. Mr. J. Kuhlmeier made a motion to approve HD 09-07. Second by Mr. Koch. The Chair called for a roll call vote on the motion. Members voting aye: Newton, Brown, Hilton, Mikkelsen, Devine, S. Hooper, McKenna, Willging, Parker, V. Hooper, Graham, Wire, Dotson, J. Kuhlmeier, Gilmour, A. Kuhlemeier, Koch, Kinney, Détente, Senn and Blum. Twenty-one ayes. No nays. *Motion to approve HD 09-07 Resolution # 09-03-1643: awarding low bid to Moring Construction for section 07-14133-00-BR, Rock Run Road District carried unanimously.*

**HD 09-08 Resolution #09-03-1644;** awarding low bid for section 08-08115-00-BR, Kent Road District-W. Goddard Road to Moring Construction for \$137,854.00. Mr. J. Kuhlmeier made a motion to approve HD 09-08. Second by Mr. Koch. The Chair called for a roll call vote on the motion. Members voting aye: Newton, Brown, Hilton, Mikkelsen, Devine, S. Hooper, McKenna, Willging, Parker, V. Hooper, Graham, Wire, Dotson, J. Kuhlmeier, Gilmour, A. Kuhlemeier, Koch, Kinney, Détente, Senn and Blum. Twenty-one ayes. No nays. *Motion to approve HD 09-08 Resolution # 09-03-1644: awarding low bid to Moring Construction for section 08-08115-BR, Kent Road District carried unanimously.*

**HD 09-09 Agreement #A09-03-1645;** Intergovernmental Agreement with the Illinois Department of Transportation for construction on Cedarville and Rock City roads. Mr. J. Kuhlmeier made a motion to approve HD 09-09. Second by Mr. A. Kuhlemeier. The Chair called for a voice vote on the motion. *Motion to approve HD 09-09 Agreement #A09-03-1645: authorizing the Intergovernmental Agreement with the Illinois Department of Transportation carried unanimously.*

Mr. Isbell reported on various construction projects for the construction season.

**ZONING REPORT:** No report

**PECATONICA PRAIRIE PATH/JANE ADDAMS TRAIL:** No report

**EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT REPORT:** Mr. Groves reported the water levels are cresting and there are a few road closures. The Annual Spotter class will be held on March 31, 2009 at HCC. There is no registration or fees required.

**9-1-1 REPORT:** Mr. Groves reported on the financials and meeting minutes were distributed. The new coordinator is doing well. Mr. Kinney questioned the large balance in the 9-1-1 account; Mr. Groves stated the funds will be used for the new CAD system.

**HEALTH DEPARTMENT REPORT:** Mr. Beintema distributed food scores for the month of February. He reported that the FQHC information is being compiled into a report. 6,000 surveys will be going out in March in Carroll and Stephenson Counties. He noted the Epidemiology of Infectious Diseases handout indicated 33 Shigellosis cases were reported in Stephenson County. The Health Department has submitted the following grants; DHS Teen Reach, colorectal screening, American Heart and Heart Smart for Teens and Teen Pregnancy Prevention. There is a Smoke Free IL Act training scheduled. Mr. Beintema continues to work with Fehr Graham to submit the 5-year Solid Waste Plan to the State.

**PROBATION DEPARTMENT REPORT:** Mr. Pauley distributed the monthly caseload statistics. He reported the Dependent Children fund is running over budget. The Department will begin Drug testing in house.

**STATE'S ATTORNEY REPORT:** State's Attorney Vogt thanked the Board for authorizing Slant Deputy. He stated the program will be extremely beneficial to the County.

**CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:** Chairman Blum presented the following report;

- Concerning the condition of the local economy, the latest unadjusted unemployment data indicate our rate to be 8.1%. Our total workforce is approximately 25,500 with 23,400 employed. Over the previous

eight years there have only been eight quarters with a smaller number of people employed. The lowest was the fourth quarter of 2001 with 22,000 people employed.

- Home sales in Stephenson County were \$86.6 million in 2007 and through ten months of 2008, home sales have lagged to \$48.5 million which is \$24.1 million behind the same period of 2007.
- The latest foreclosure data found indicates there are (48) properties within Stephenson County within the three phases of foreclosure, default, auction, or real estate owned. With approximately 15,000 owner-occupied properties in the County this gives us a foreclosure rate of approximately 3.2 homes per 1000 or 3%. Rates in Florida, California, Nevada, and the Chicago area exceed 60 homes per 1000.
- So far, our revenue from sales and income taxes has remained at or above forecasted levels. Our next sales tax payment will include the 2008 holiday shopping season which is normally one of the largest of the year.
- The stock market and investment climate during 2008 has had a devastating effect on our IMRF retirement funds. We started the year with \$24.1 million in our retirement reserve accounts administered by the Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund, IMRF. At the end of 2008 these funds have evaporated down to \$8.5 million, for a loss of \$15.6 million. In order to compensate for these losses, the IMRF rate will most likely have to be increased in the next budget year by about \$.04. Under tax caps, this extra levy applied to the IMRF will have to be offset with a reduction in other levies. With a PTELL rate of just .1%, our revenues will be virtually flat. This will certainly be the centerpiece of our challenges for the 2010 budget year.
- The NIDA Board of Directors met on March 10, 2009 and received an update on economic development activities. Work continues with Project Cat with an effort to secure additional funding through new programs in the federal stimulus bill. There are new sources of funding for renewable energy projects and it is only prudent that the owners of Project Cat take advantage of these new sources. We also are working with an electrical power generation facility looking to locate here in the county and generate about 20kw of power using renewable-type fuels.
- The committee structure for NIDA is taking shape with the first meetings scheduled for the end of this month. Some Board Members will be asked to volunteer your time to serve on one of the committees.
- Efforts continue to finalize property tax abatements for wind power developments. We have been working with each taxing district to secure 3-year abatements under enterprise zone rules to insure a realization of the full development potential of wind energy within the county. We are working with Representative Sacia on HB2665 to insure that wind power revenue will continue after the current Public Act expires in 2013. Chairman Blum distributed copies of a letter recently submitted to the Le-Win School Board explaining the abatement process to date and clarifying a number of misconceptions generated over the last 17 years of enterprise zone operations. The bottom line is that we want every taxing body within the enterprise zone to understand and participate in the process and continue to maintain full control over any abatement approved. The Ezone Committee will enhance this effort by sending certified letters to every taxing district located within a proposed zone expansion advising them of any changes to the boundary.
- EcoGrove is almost complete with the last few towers being erected this month. Testing should begin shortly and it is physically possible to be generating power within a few weeks.
- We will be seeking bids for an access road to Mill Race Industrial Park at the end of this month. This is required to meet the timetable set by the EDA to maintain and use the grant funds we received last year. We continue to work with EDA since they have indicated there may be more funding available under the new stimulus program.
- We are monitoring more than 6,000 Bills filed with the State Legislature to determine their effect and cost to our county. Many of these Bills come as unfunded mandates. There is talk of a 33% increase in income taxes and an increase of \$.08 in gas taxes. There are a few Bills that stand out at the present time and the Chairman would like to provide our representatives with an indication of our support as a County. Chairman Blum requested the Board's consensus on the following Bills:

**HB593/SB1352** – intended to license and regulate landlords in rural and non-home rule municipalities. Our current housing committee is in favor of such a bill. *Consensus - NO*

**HB1** – the capital plan. No funding source has been designated. The State Chamber of Commerce has not yet reached an opinion on this Bill. *Consensus – continue to monitor*

**HB63/SB43** – will require prevailing wages on any project within a TIF or Ezone. NIDA has already come out against this along with the State Chamber of Commerce. *Consensus - NO*

**HB905/SB138** – will mandate building codes for counties and the required inspectors to insure compliance. *Consensus - NO*

- There are other Bills that are in the hopper, but it is too early to tell what their impact may be on our County.
- Last month discussion was held on the possible implementation of an early retirement program. Based on information received from our labor counsel any unilateral implementation of such a program would be an unfair labor practice. Therefore, we do not intend to pursue this option outside of the collective bargaining process.
- The Local Workforce Investment Board met this morning, March 11, 2009 and concluded an agreement to partner with the Rockford area LWIB for staff services. This agreement will provide assistance to the LWIB previously provided by Kate Ramsay who has resigned to take another job. Stephenson County will continue to administer the grant to pay for this staff assistance.
- We have continued to work toward a viable plan to upgrade and further dignify the old cemetery that used to be associated with the County Poor Farm. We will be meeting with representatives of the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency on March 13, 2009 to discuss options to legally and properly upgrading the site.
- Last week the Planning and Development Committee heard a proposal from Mr. Jay Castro to create and erect a Lincoln sculpture series at the Kent Monument. Chairman Blum expressed gratitude to Mr. Castro for taking this initiative and will work with him to provide some new historical personality to the Kent Monument grounds especially during the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Lincoln's birth.
- We were able to finalize the lease agreement with the Stewart Centre last month including all of the language required by the County Board. We are moving along a timeline to move on or about May 1, 2009. All departments are working to provide seamless operations so as not to disrupt services to the public. This move will be a significant challenge and you may be asked to physically assist.
- The Freeport School District hosted a taxing bodies meeting today at their offices. Chairman Blum attended the meeting with Russ Mulnix. We discussed a number of issues of interest to all of the units of government and are intended to increase communication and enhance collaboration.
- Last month Chairman Blum participated in the annual shopping cart race against Mayor Gaulrapp sponsored by the Stephenson County Farm Bureau with all food items going to FACC. The goal was to gather as many food items as possible that could be placed in the FACC pantry with the contestant gathering the highest dollar amount being declared the winner. Chairman Blum was able to gather \$300 of nonperishable food items for the pantry, but Mayor Gaulrapp rang up more than \$660 and was declared the overall winner. However, upon further review, Chairman Blum had a cart with a wobbly front wheel and found that the Mayor again cheated, *sort of*. More than half the food items he grabbed were cans of spices. Those little cans carry a big price tag. After the race it was agreed that we would put the spices back and trade them for real food. All in all, the FACC was the winner and Chairman Blum will be back next year with some new rules and a new cart.
- The Mayor's Annual Hunger Luncheon will be held on April 21, 2009 at the Masonic Temple. Chairman Blum will again personally buy a table for the County and hopes to have 10 department heads and/or board members join him for lunch. The food is a bit sparse but the entertainment is great.
- The annual Chamber of Commerce Dinner is planned for March 19, 2009 at the Masonic Temple.
- The almost annual meeting of Township Officials is planned for March 26, 2009 in the Pearl City High School cafeteria.

- All Board Members should have received a brochure from the UCCI Leadership Academy for their 2009 program. Chairman Blum has made the commitment to attend the program this year and has submitted his application. This program will take about 7 months to complete, but he feels it worthwhile to work it into his schedule. If any other board member or department head is interested, we can carpool to the classes.
- Next Month Chairman Blum will present his the State of the County Address along with the Annual Stephenson County Leadership Award.

**APPOINTMENTS:** No appointments

**Administration:** Ms. S. Hooper reported her Committee recommends approval of an Intergovernmental Agreement with Ridott Township for their Assessor work. Ms. S. Hooper made a motion to approve the Agreement. Second by Mr. J. Kuhlmeier. The Chair called for a voice vote on the motion. *Motion to approve Intergovernmental Agreement #A09-03-1650 with Ridott Township for the County to perform their Assessor work carried unanimously.*

Ms. S. Hooper made a motion to approve the following Raffles noting all fees and bonding in were in order;

- 1495 Lena Lions Club, Manager James Brenner
- 1496 Cedarville Fire Department Manager Doug Broge
- 1497 Dakota PTO, Manager Jen B Schuler
- 1498 Northland Turkey Chasers, Manager Corey Nelson
- 1499 St John United Church of Christ/St John Quilt Group, Manager Mavis Clark
- 1500 Pearl City Homecoming, Manager Stanley K Lott
- 1501 St John's Lutheran Church Youth Group, Manager Monica Baier
- 1502 German Valley Lions Club, Manager Peggy Larson
- 1503 Lena Golf Club, Inc, Manager James Larsh

Second by Ms. Dotson. The Chair called for a voice vote on the motion. *Motion to approve the Raffles as presented carried unanimously.*

**Court Services:** Ms. V. Hooper reported her Committee recommends approval of a Resolution to establish a Legal Self-Help Center in Stephenson County. Ms. V. Hooper made a motion to approve the Resolution. Second by Mr. Hilton. The Chair called for a voice vote on the motion. *Motion to approve Resolution #09-03-1647 establishing a Legal Self-Help Center Stephenson County carried unanimously.*

**Nursing Center:** Mr. Détente reported his Committee recommends approval to upgrade the Nursing Center Computer System, by purchasing a new server from Computer Dynamics. Mr. Détente made a motion to approve the proposal for \$10,374 from Computer Dynamics. Second by Mr. Graham. The Chair called for a voice vote on the motion. *Motion to approve the purchase of new server from Computer Dynamics for \$10,374 carried unanimously*

Mr. Détente reported his Committee has again approved the 3% wage increase for the Nursing Center Administrator. Mr. Détente made a motion to approve 3% or \$ 2,100 for the Nursing Center Administrator beginning December 1, 2008. Second by Mr. Brown. Mr. Détente spoke to the fact that due to the economy he is not in favor of increasing any wages at this time. Mr. Parker questioned the increase being effective prior to Mr. Fortney's one year anniversary date of January 17. Mr. Parker made a motion to amend the motion to begin the increase retro to January 17. Second by Ms. Dotson. The Chair called for a voice vote on the amendment. *Motion to approve the amendment carried.* Mr. Graham voiced concern with comments made by Mr. Détente at committee level that were now being contradicted at Board level. Mr. Détente addressed the concerns and stated his opinion has been consistent that he is not in favor of any raises at this time. In light of the fact that other Department Heads were given an increase, in all fairness the Nursing Center Administrator's salary should also be considered. *The Chair called for a roll call vote on the amended motion to approve the 3% salary adjustment for the Nursing Center Administrator retro to January 17. Members voting aye: Newton, Brown, Hilton, Mikkelsen, Devine, S. Hooper, McKenna, Willging, Parker, V. Hooper, Graham, Wire, Dotson, Gilmour and Koch. Members voting nay: J. Kuhlmeier, A. Kuhlemeier, Kinney, Détente, Senn and Blum. Fifteen aye. Six nay. Motion to approve the 3% salary adjustment for Nursing Center Administrator retro to January 17, 2009 carried.*

**Planning & Development:** Mr. Mikkelsen reported his Committee recommends approval of a Resolution endorsing the inclusion of a First Source Hiring Agreement as a provision in all development agreements, entered into by the County, within the Economic Development Project Area. Mr. Mikkelsen made a motion to approve the Resolution. Second by Mr. Newton. The Chair called for a voice vote on the motion. *Motion to approve the Resolution #09-03-1648 endorsing the inclusion of a “First Source Hiring Agreement” as a provision for all Development Agreements entered into by Stephenson County Illinois carried unanimously.*

**Information Items from Standing Committees:** No reports

**CLAIMS**

Finance & Procurement	\$	604,260.43
Administration	\$	26,015.37
Public Works	\$	199,212.57
Nursing Center	\$	171,577.43
Public Property	\$	31,648.23
Court Services	\$	21,665.90
Public Safety	\$	56,643.31
Planning & Development	\$	6,811.82
9-1-1	\$	65,494.13

Mr. Graham made a motion to approve the claims as received. Second by Ms. V. Hooper. The Chair called for a roll call vote on the motion. Members voting aye: Newton, Brown, Hilton, Mikkelsen, Devine, S. Hooper, McKenna, Willging, Parker, V. Hooper, Graham, Wire, Dotson, J. Kuhlmeier, Gilmour, A. Kuhlemeier, Koch, Kinney, Détente, Senn and Blum. Twenty-one ayes. No nays. *Motion to approve the claims as received carried unanimously.*

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

Blum 7 days, 0 miles-Boynton 0- days, 0- miles-Brown 5 days, 12 miles-Detente 6 days, 114 miles-Devine 5 days, 22 miles-Dotson 4 days, 144 miles-Gilmour 6 days, 206 miles-Graham 8 days, 34 miles-Hilton 6 days, 16 miles-S Hooper 4 days, 8 miles-V Hooper 4 days, 8 miles-Kinney 4 days, 48 miles-Koch 3 days, 72 miles-A Kuhlemeier 3 days, 95 miles-J Kuhlmeier 4 days, 92 miles-McKenna 4 days, 16 miles-Mikkelson 7 days, 14 miles-Newton 5 days, 72 miles-Parker 5 days, 20 miles-Senn 4 days, 56 miles- Willging 4 days, 16 miles-Wire 5 days, 362 miles. Mr. Graham made a motion to approve the Mileage & Per Diems as received. Second by Mr. Senn. The Chair called for a voice vote on the motion. *Motion to approve the mileage & per diems as received carried unanimously.*

**OTHER BUSINESS:** Mr. Kinney questioned contracts for Robert Skurla and Frank Cook. He asked if Mr. Skurla’s contract should be open ended. Mr. Cook was appointed by the State’s Attorney by means of a verbal agreement, Mr. Kinney questioned if there should be a written contract as he is paid out of the County Board expense. Mr. Mikkelsen stated he will look into Mr. Skurla’s contract.

**MEMBERS OF THE AUDIENCE:** Mike King of 5003 N. Dakota Road, Dakota addressed the Board. He stated he had attended the February 24 meeting of the HCC Board of Trustees regarding the wind farm property tax abatement. He voiced his concern with promises made that could be kept and promises that should never have been made.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION:** No executive session needed.

**ADJOURN UNTIL 6:30 P.M. WEDNESDAY APRIL 15, 2009:** Mr. McKenna made a motion to adjourn until 6:30 p.m. on Wednesday April 15, 2009. Second by Mr. Hilton. The Chair called for a voice vote on the motion. *Motion to adjourn carried unanimously at 9:07 p.m.*

*Mr. Senn will lead the Pledge and Mr. Detente will be responsible for the Invocation at the April 15<sup>th</sup> Meeting*