

Montgomery County Board

Special Economic Development Committee Meeting

Minutes

Date: Monday, May 19th, 2014

Time: 7:13 PM – County Board Room

Members Present: Chairman Heather Hampton+Knodle, Megan Beeler, Ron Deabenderfer, Jay Martin, Dave Ronen

Members Absent: Nikki Bishop, Chairman Roy Hertel

Others Present: Sandy Leitheiser

The Committee met today to discuss the following:

1. **Update/Approval Econ. Dev. Fund/Developing Guidelines for Long-Term Improvement Fund:**

Hampton+Knodle stated that the purpose of this meeting is to review the County Board member responses to the Questions posed in the three question survey in regards to the Long-Term Improvement Fund. She proposed that members read through each question and their respective responses, and then comment on them individually, and members agreed. The first question is:

What is the most pressing capital improvement the county government needs to make to its own assets within the next 3 years?

Members read the themes and responses to this question, and discussed the potential of writing a letter of request to the City of Hillsboro for potential TIF District funds for Courthouse exterior renovations including tuck-pointing and sidewalks. A consensus among members was to make a suggestion to appropriate funds for tuck-pointing and sidewalks around the Historic Courthouse area in future years. Ronen offered to contact DCEO about potential grants for these projects also, and Beeler mentioned checking into Landmarks Illinois grants as well. Deabenderfer stated that it would be difficult to maintain 80,000 lb. roads throughout the county. Hampton+Knodle reviewed which roads throughout the county are presently at 80,000 lb. levels, and informed members about the state proclamation relating to county roads needing to meet this requirement. She stated that the county has about 21 bridges that need replaced also. Deabenderfer asked if bridges were upgraded when they were replaced, and Hampton+Knodle stated they were. She said that Highway Engineer Smith's recommendations were to get a gravel road grinder to grind down the roads, and then be able to put rock down and then oil and chip. Members agreed to ask Engineer Smith to check with neighboring counties to see if they have such a grinder that we could rent for this use. Martin stated that he feels that proper road maintenance is very important from an economic development standpoint, since how roads look can be a positive or negative reflection on those who may be seeking to locate businesses in the area. Beeler stated that Smith has a 15 year Roads and Bridges plan that may be worthwhile to integrate in the committee's ideas. Hampton+Knodle suggested requesting a budget layout from Smith for his top road priorities and materials and equipment needed to address the Roads and Bridges problem and get "the most bang for our buck."

Members also addressed the building maintenance responses to this question. Ronen stated that the high efficiency lighting, heating and cooling needs have been addressed at the courthouse complex buildings. Deabenderfer stated that he understood that a state agency or a contractor has been hired and did assess the county buildings approximately three years ago. He referred the committee to Bob Sneed for more information in this area. Hampton+Knodle asked if the Judge's Court funds can be used for jail expansion and Deabenderfer said possibly it could. Members discussed how the present jail can be expanded or reconfigured, and agreed the county especially needs to explore ways to increase space for female and juvenile prisoners. Beeler requested that the space be evaluated for reconfiguring before taxpayer dollars are spent to expand the jail space, and

that state and federal mandates for prisoner requirements should be looked at in advance of expansion.

Deabenderfer stated that new roofing needs should be considered also, since the present roofs are now over 20 years old. Hampton+Knodle asked about the potential of using ankle bracelets in lieu of incarceration. Ronen inquired about the use of drug rehabilitation sites for drug offenders, which would reduce the jail population.

Other topics of need listed in the responses include moving the Highway Department, and Deabenderfer stated that the City of Hillsboro would like it moved outside of city limits to the county farm area or to the Eagle Zinc site after it is cleaned up. Sites outside of the Hillsboro area were brought up, including the Irving, Butler or Witt area, with the priority given to a location centrally located within the County. The potential sale of the current Highway Department site was also discussed. Consensus was to approach the City of Hillsboro about the Highway Department site as a beginning point to addressing its location.

The second question posed to members for consideration was: **What is the most important thing all Montgomery County residents and communities need to prepare for its (the county's) future after coal is gone?** Members again read each theme and response given by county board members to this question. Hampton+Knodle stated that the main themes she saw in the responses were to increase efficiency at the county level (automating where possible, hiring freeze); and preparing for the future with workforce development and economic development (including shared water supplies). Deabenderfer stated he is reluctant to do much with a vocational center concept due to the high cost of equipment and teaching staffs, as well as the ever-changing employer needs and technology demands. Ronen wondered if a basic industrial arts curriculum could be offered in county, which may not be much in cost. Hampton+Knodle stated the computer technology field would be an advantageous area to explore, which may be offered at a feasible cost and provide a high impact on workforce development. Members discussed how to nurture workforce development in the public school setting, including Career Days, Junior Achievement programs and 4-H experiences. Beeler stated that the basic work ethics need also to be addressed to assure a success rate in formal training programs. Hampton+Knodle stated she envisions using the Regional Office of Superintendent as a contractor who will address workforce development needs within curricula, and also possibly using them to facilitate computer skills training coursework. Beeler inquired about the logistics of funding these types of programs, which are not required for county government, and Hampton+Knodle stated she plans to request the assistance of State's Attorney Wilson and Treasurer Jenkins for guidance in this process. Martin asked about the potential of showcasing youth development programs on the county website to promote their availability. Members discussed the need for self-reliance and automating services and avoid re-hiring employees. Hampton+Knodle re-introduced the Pillars of Development Guideline to members and asked them if there was an interest among members regarding a 0% interest loan for qualifying municipalities or other local governments or businesses to receive funds for either infrastructure or economic development needs. Deabenderfer suggested a re-work of the Revolving Loan fund to be used for this purpose. Members agreed there is a need for these types of loans or possibly grants as well. Hampton+Knodle suggested including public input for this request. Deabenderfer stated that although the public input is important, ultimately the board members are elected to represent their constituency. Members discussed whether the "town hall" public meetings are advantageous. Beeler wondered if the outcome of public meetings could be done in time to have an impact on this present budget. The idea of using a web-based survey for public input was discussed as well.

Hampton+Knodle asked members how these responses should be compiled for full board review. Consensus was to not place them in an order of priority, but just list them in summary form so the

members can review them. Deabenderfer suggested the responses should include individual project costs also. Ronen also liked the approach to generalize the responses for members' review.

Motion by Ronen, second by Deabenderfer to adjourn the meeting. All in favor, motion carried.

Meeting was adjourned at 10:03 PM. Minutes respectfully submitted by County Clerk/Recorder Sandy Leitheiser.

Notes submitted by Heather Hampton+Knodle

There were several efficiency improvement measures that could result in cutting expenses mentioned in the survey responses as well. Regarding public input, the majority of committee members wondered whether we should encourage public input through contacting their board members by phone and email and in writing in addition to an online survey in place of the public meetings.

These suggestions are not in any prioritized order. There is a separate list of questions that were forwarded to the board chairman to gather additional background on items mentioned in the survey responses. *Version 5/20/14*

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

- Roads – Request County engineer to prioritize top projects and to provide a list of materials and/or equipment needed to “get the most bang for our buck.”
- Courthouse – Appropriate funds for tuck-pointing Historic Courthouse and sidewalks in future year and explore how to request T.I.F. funds from City of Hillsboro to match County funds.
- Jail – Seek outside review on whether jail space could be reconfigured, use of ankle tracking bracelets or other cost-saving measures.
- Roads – Need at least 1 county road engineered at 80,000 lbs. running north and south as an artery to connect with the east-west highways (Rt. 16, Rt. 185).

LONG-TERM IMPROVEMENT

- Workforce Development – contract with Regional Office of Education with increased funds for soft skills (ex. be at work on time, work every day, dressing appropriately, verbal and written communication skills) development in high school and post-high school youth. Also, increased vocational training in computer technology and other skills yet to be identified as giving our area a competitive advantage in a “post-coal” economy.
- Continue automating county administrative services.
- Infrastructure Funds – Place a portion of funds in Revolving Loan Fund for zero-interest infrastructure (water, utilities, telecommunication, demolition, streetscapes) loans to communities in the county.

Meet base reserve requirements. Continue to fund reserve at level determined by board up to a top limit to be determined by the board. Fill gap for operating funds at current rate of \$100,000/month this year. Set goal for reducing rate each subsequent year. Use December 1st as a snapshot for fund balance. The % for capital improvements, Workforce and Infrastructure Loan funds to be determined at that time based on available balance.

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