

Legislative Committee
Monday, April 27, 2009
JAMES P. COUGHLIN CENTER

Present: Stan Kline, Nancy Barker, Don Griesbach, Bill Wingren, Pat Brennand, Ken Robl, Jim Koziczowski, Harvey Rengstorf, Patrick O'Brien, Jerry Finch, Tom Widener, David Albrecht, Kathy Lennon and Jef Hall

Also

Present: John Casper – Oshkosh Chamber, County Executive Mark Harris, Representative Spanbauer, Representative Hintz, State Senator Hopper, John Haese – Commissioner, Jerry Bougie – Director of Planning & Zoning, Barry Busby – Coroner, Amy Schaenzer – Northwestern, Dr. Topel- Human Services Director

Excused:

Absent: Tom Ellis and Jo Sievert

The meeting was called to order at 8:31 A.M. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

It was moved by K. Robl and seconded by P. O'Brien to approve the minutes of March 23, 2009.
CARRIED.

UPDATE ON LEGISLATIVE SESSION - Winnebago County Representatives

State Representative Spanbauer told the committee that he is concerned about Park View Health Center. He is worried about maintaining that facility, especially now with increases that are happening.

State Senator Hintz told the committee that is complicated when you are talking about federal funding formulas that are used to reimburse the rates and many things have been done with the state budget so that counties are having problems with their budgets. Protections that were supposed to be there for counties to retain federal funding have been removed. He feels that a strong case has been made that this is bad policy, and has a negative impact on counties that have nursing homes. He told the committee that the State Joint Finance Committee has 15 of the 16 members with a public nursing home in their district. They have been working on alternate proposals to restore the money to the counties.

Senator Hintz told the committee that the bed tax and the referrals for mental health admissions for children and those above 64 are items he feels will be amended to help out the counties. He did tell the committee that the State Finance Committee is adding a surcharge on wireless phones for the 911 upgrade. This surcharge will range from \$.42 to \$.92 to maintain 911 centers.

Senator Hintz told the committee that revenues are down 4% for the same time last year. That is about \$328 million. However, that number was a little above projections. The Fiscal Bureau will be letting the legislators know what this means for budgeting for the next two years. If we have not hit bottom yet, it will make things difficult in terms of restoring funding that has already been reduced.

State Senator Hopper told the committee that he is working to get support for county reimbursements – but it will take a bipartisan effort.

He told the committee that there is \$139 million being pulled from the Transportation Fund to help out the General Fund. This is an ongoing problem in balancing the state budget. Monies have been pulled from one fund to fund another. \$1.2 billion since 2003 has been pulled from the Transportation Fund to fund other projects.

Mr. Hopper told the committee that the seatbelt law is hard to enforce for law enforcement. It is really a matter of common sense.

Senator Hopper told the committee that prevailing wage has many ramifications on volunteer projects. Prevailing wage can make some projects very expensive for small rural communities.

RESOLUTION SUPPORTING MORE ARRA FUNDING FOR LOCAL ROADS

John Haese told the committee that it is difficult for local municipalities to get stimulus money. The projects need to qualify for federal guidelines in order to get the money. Requirements often times are too costly for many local projects. Federal requirements are very heavy on the administrative side – which many local projects do not need.

The county would like to get some more funding, but federal requirements are too much for local municipalities to handle. This resolution would be of very little help to towns, but would help the county as a whole.

After discussion with the committee, Chairman Kline called for the vote. K. Robl moved and B. Wingren seconded to pass this along to the County Board. This was carried 13 - AYES, NAYS – 0. CARRIED. D. Albrecht was not present for this vote.

RESOLUTION TO REMOVE FARMLAND PRESERVATION PROGRAM FROM THE BUDGET

Director of Planning & Zoning, Jerry Bougie spoke to the committee about this issue. Many revisions of this bill have been put into the Governor's budget bill. Mr. Bougie sees many problems with this bill from a perspective of the entity that administers the program on a daily basis.

They have made the program mandatory for counties to do a plan, and subsequently the towns do not get to do their own preservation plan. This plan should not be mandatory. It should be voluntary if local communities want to involve themselves in the program.

The state is asking for a conversion fee to be taken off A1 zoning. The county is required to collect that fee. That would mean the county is doing the state's work. This issue is part of the Comprehensive Plan. It really needs to be a stand alone bill. This is what the Planning & Zoning Department would like to see.

The committee discussed this resolution. J. Finch moved and P. Brennand seconded to send this resolution forward to the County Board. AYES: 13, NAYS – 1. CARRIED.

RESOLUTION TO SUPPORT/OPPOSE CHANGING THE PREVAILING WAGE REQUIREMENT

This bill changes the thresholds from \$234,000 for multiple trade public works projects, and \$48,000 for single trade public works projects to \$2,000.

Many local businesses are against this bill. It is felt that this kind of thinking will impose additional costs on residents with small construction projects. This will drive the cost of the small projects over the top.

On the other hand, some people feel that this legislation will help the person actually doing the work. This will create a new class of workers that used to have good jobs, but now the wages have been driven down. This does not help the community. It erodes the middle class.

Discussion occurred with the committee. Chairman Kline called for a motion on supporting this resolution and sending it forward to the County Board. Supervisor Hall moved and Supervisor Finch seconded it.

Vote on resolution – AYES – 3 and NAYS – 11. LOST.

Supervisor Brennand left the meeting.

RESOLUTION OPPOSING BUDGET CUTS IN HUMAN SERVICE PROGRAMS

Dr. Topel, director of Human Services told the committee that there are significant cuts in human services programs. These programs include abuse & neglect prevention services, mental health care for children or adults over 65, and budget cuts to Foodshare, Medical Assistance and BadgerCare. It is Dr. Topel's concern if that funding is cut for these programs, the result may be cutting staff, and then we may be non-compliant with federal Medicaid laws, and/or with federal economic support laws.

The state is shifting many costs from the state budget to the counties. The federal government gave Wisconsin a 6% increase in all Medicaid services across the board. The state has kept all of this money. The county is the entity that provides the services.

If a child has to go into long term institutional placement, this is all paid for by the county. The State Juvenile Correctional System cut its budget as well, and our rates will go up as well. If a judge places a juvenile in a state correctional facility – the county will bear the total cost of that placement.

Average stay in a mental institution is 3 – 5 days. We are currently seeing lengths of stays into months. The county has no control over the length of stay. Many times facilities to place people with behavioral issues are hard to find. For the most patients – the psychiatrist determines the length of stay.

The income maintenance area will take a 10% cut. This includes Foodshare, Medical Assistance, Child care and Badger Care. Winnebago County is going up 10% in this area.

With all the cuts in the Human Service area, Dr. Topel estimates a million dollar hit for Winnebago County.

Dr. Topel has suggested that the State slow down either BadgerCare Plus for child disabilities or Family Care in its entirety for six months to a year, then the difference would make up what is being discussed today.

Discussion with Dr. Topel and the committee took place. Supervisor moved that the Legislative Committee support this issue and forward it to the full County Board. This was seconded by Supervisor Kozickowski. Vote on this resolution: AYES – 12, NAYS – 0. CARRIED.

RESOLUTION TO PROVISIONS OF THE EXPENDITURE RESTRAINT PROGRAM

This resolution is asking for a change in levy limits. This resolution is asking the State to eliminate levy limits, or set a more realistic limit at 4%

Executive Harris told the committee that the public will be intolerant of higher taxes. The state is facing a very difficult budget and raising the property taxes will not be a welcome idea.

It was felt by some that each municipality should be able to set their own rates for their community.

After further discussion, it was moved by Supervisor Hall and seconded by H. Rengstorf to forward this to the County Board. Vote on Resolution. AYES – 6, NAYS – 6. This will not be sent forward.

SUPPORT THE STANDARD ENFORCEMENT OF THE SEATBELT LAW

This bill would be for primary stop for seatbelt violations. No other issues need to be occurring to make the stop. Also included in this bill is profiling. Records on all people being stopped will be kept.

It was brought up, if this bill is passed by July 1, there will be a \$15 million grant for Wisconsin.

After the committee discussed this resolution, T. Widener moved and K. Lennon seconded to support this issue and move it forward to the County Board. AYES – 8, NAYS - 4 CARRIED.

RESOLUTION SUPPORTING THE BLAIR HOLT FIREARM LICENSING ACT

This issue was brought forward by J. Finch. He told the committee that what this act does is take guns that are passed down from one family member to another are required to register the gun with the new owner and pay a fee.

Supervisor Wingren told the committee that the actual bill that is before the House is nothing like the information passed out to the committee.

J. Finch pulled the resolution. He will bring it back when he has more information on it.

RESOLUTION OPPOSING ELIMINATING SPRING NON-PARTISAN ELECTIONS

There were two resolutions from other counties regarding this issue, Outagamie and Oconto. This resolution is supposed to save money by combining elections and getting a better turn out.

The objection to this bill is that it will get the people who are interested in local issues and keeps it much more segregated, partisan, nonpartisan.

After discussion, P. O'Brien moved and it was seconded to support this and send it forward to the County Board. Vote on Resolution – AYES - 11, NAYS – 1. CARRIED.

At this point in the meeting, Chairman called to move for adjournment. It was moved and seconded to adjourn until June 22, 2009. CARRIED.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:10 AM.

Respectfully Submitted By:
Nancy Barker
Secretary

Recorded By:
Jean Mahy
County Clerk's Office