

*Note: These minutes are not official until approved by the DeKalb County Regional Planning Commission at a subsequent meeting. Please refer to the meeting minutes when these minutes are approved to obtain any changes to these minutes.*

DeKalb County Government  
Sycamore, Illinois

**DEKALB COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES**  
(October 25, 2018)

The DeKalb County Regional Planning Commission (RPC) met on October 25, 2018 at 6:30 p.m. in the DeKalb County Administrative Building, Conference Room East, in Sycamore, Illinois. In attendance were Commission Members: Cheryl Aldis, Jo Ellen Charlton, Rich Gentile, Russell Kula, Steve Devlieger, Martha May, Les Redden, Dan Nolan, Becky Morphey, Brian Gregory, and Kevin Bunge. Also in attendance were: Jeff DeSplinter, of the USDA Rural Development (via phone); CEDS – Group 5 members: Dan Templin, Jerry Foster, Paul Borek, and Jennifer Groce; and, County Staff members: Derek Hiland, Jolene Willis, and Marcellus Anderson.

**1. Roll Call** – Commission members John Fisher, Bryan Rhodes, and Linda Swenson were absent. Commission member Martha May arrived late for the meeting.

**2. Approval of Agenda**

*Mr. Gregory moved to approve the agenda, seconded by Ms. Morphey, and the motion carried unanimously.*

**3. Approval of Minutes** – *Ms. Charlton moved to approve the minutes of the August 23, 2018 meeting, seconded by Mr. Gentile, and the motion carried unanimously.*

**4. Public Comment**

None.

**5. Presentation – USDA Jeff DeSplinter Regarding Available Grants and Loans for Water & Wastewater Treatment Facilities**

Mr. Jeff DeSplinter, Area Specialist with USDA Rural Development, joined the meeting via phone. Mr. DeSplinter gave a presentation regarding the USDA’s Water and Wastewater Loan and Grant Programs and the Community Facilities Direct Loan & Grant Programs, including such topics as: interest rates; terms; the types of projects to which the funds may be applied; and, eligibility requirements. Ms. Willis distributed handouts, which summarized the information discussed by Mr. DeSplinter, and contained his contact information. Commission members posed some questions regarding the elements of the programs, which were then answered by Mr. DeSplinter and Ms. Willis.

## **6. DeKalb County's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)**

Ms. Willis informed the Commission that members of CEDS Team 5 (Dan Templin, Jerry Foster, Paul Borek, and Jennifer Groce) were in attendance at the meeting. The Team Members and the Commission members all introduced themselves, and it was noted that Commission member Brian Gregory and staff members Ms. Willis and Mr. Hiland were also members of Team 5. Ms. Willis gave a brief summary of the DeKalb County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), and the process being used to implement CEDS. She informed the Commission that teams were formed to address each of the five goals identified in the planning process. She noted that CEDS Team 5's goal was "Collaborate countywide to maximize the economic health of all communities in DeKalb County", and explained that the team felt it was important for them to network with the RPC members to highlight the Commission's collaboration and communication and provide insight to the strategies assigned to Team 5.

Ms. Willis then elaborated on the Team 5 matrix included in the Commissioner's packet for the meeting, and explained that they would be focusing on Strategy a.: Marketing all communities in the County.

Mr. Gregory noted that what the Team needs to know what they are going to market, what are the communities good at and what sets them apart and makes them unique. He noted that by developing a countywide initiative of identifying elements for each community, then they all win together.

Ms. May asked what makes the County as a whole unique. Mr. Gregory responded that the County has a blending of agricultural, history, and heritage that creates opportunity for business, people, and community.

Mr. Nolan noted that something that makes Shabbona unique is the presence of the state park, but noted that the Village is marketed very poorly inside the park.

Mr. Borek noted that closely tied to this discussion is Goal 4: Branding DeKalb County. He noted that three key elements of the County are: agriculture, education, and innovation. He explained that while the DCEDC focuses mainly on industry and manufacturing, but has noticed that DeKalb County is a very diverse area. He also noted Team 4 is considering hiring a branding firm to help with this process.

Mr. Templin noted the need to build more familiarity with local businesses.

Ms. May inquired whether marketing for economic development would mean that DeKalb County would be changing from agricultural to industrial, and explained how not everyone may desire such a change. Mr. Gregory noted that being business friendly doesn't just mean industry, pointing out that agriculturally related businesses are still businesses. Mr. Devlieger noted that communities needed to look at what they are good at, what niche they fill, and build on it. Ms. Charlton noted that there are also food-related businesses that could build off local products: catering businesses; jam/jelly making; and other home-based businesses. Ms. Groce noted that you don't have to be different, just that you need to build on what you have, to enhance your existing strengths and positives, which in turn enhances the whole region.

*Note: These minutes are not official until approved by the DeKalb County Regional Planning Commission at a subsequent meeting. Please refer to the meeting minutes when these minutes are approved to obtain any changes to these minutes.*

Mr. Templin noted that a key issue was to consider the segments to be marketed to. He noted that not everyone around the County knows about each other. He highlighted that many local business chambers don't interact with each other, and noted that having multi-chamber events benefits everyone. He ended by emphasizing the need to know who is our audience, internal vs external.

Mr. Foster commented on the need to create a regional identity, noting that a focusing on agritourism could be an opportunity, an outlined an idea revolving around the use of a number of five to ten acres agricultural lots.

Ms. Groce re-iterated the goal of the maximizing the economic health of the County, and the need to create a county-wide business climate. She noted that the County and all the communities lying therein need to celebrate together for all their benefits. She pointed out that the regions of the County are very different from one another and that there is a need for these regions to sell themselves to each other first, so that they can then sell the whole County to the world.

Mr. Hiland noted that the economic health in each community varies greatly, and emphasized the need for the communities to learn from one another. He then suggested that the Commission consider moving around the location of some of its future meetings to occur within its constituent member communities.

Ms. May informed the Committee about the history of Lee, in particular highlighting its Norwegian heritage.

Mr. Templin suggested that thought needs to be given to just what does success mean, and how they should go about defining what success would be. Ms. Groce agreed with and elaborated on this idea.

Mr. Gregory noted that a success would be in changing the mindset of people to see the big picture, too much time is spent competing with each other, and discussed some of the things that need to change to benefit the County as a whole.

Ms. Aldis noted some of the issues and problems with implementing these ideas.

Mr. Redden described some of the struggles of businesses in the Sandwich. He highlighted the need for communities to develop relationships with their business people.

Ms. Charlton inquired as to where CEDS was at in its process and what kind of timeline it had. Ms. Willis noted that CEDS was in the very beginning, noting that tonight was the first meeting for Team 5.

Mr. Gregory asked the members to think about how they could help each other, how can we act so that everyone wins, and expounded on the possible role of the Commission in that process.

Ms. Aldis noted that one issue Cortland has is a lack of facilities, especially for small business.

*Note: These minutes are not official until approved by the DeKalb County Regional Planning Commission at a subsequent meeting. Please refer to the meeting minutes when these minutes are approved to obtain any changes to these minutes.*

Mr. Borek noted that the communities need to share their needs with each other, because maybe they would be able to help each other.

Mr. Gregory noted that maybe a good topic for the next meeting would be what opportunities exist within our communities.

Ms. Groce noted that there isn't enough support for local businesses in the County, and re-emphasized the need to educate the local communities about each other.

The Commission members then decided to go around the table and just name some of the things that make their communities unique.

Ms. May noted that many of Lee's streets were named after places in Norway, and that it is the highest point on the railroad between Chicago and the Mississippi.

Mr. Nolan informed the Commission that the streets of Shabbona were named after Native Americans, and noted the presence of the Shabbona State Park.

Ms. Morphey informed the Commission that Somonauk would be getting a new pathway to the nearby Sannauk Forest Preserve, and that there was a new bakery in town. She also recommended visiting the Village's Finding Heroes Park.

A brief discussion was had about how Sycamore still had penny parking meters

Ms. Charlton spoke about DeKalb's connection with the history of barbed wire, and the various cool, old neighborhoods within the City.

Mr. Bunge noted DeKalb County's agricultural history, and the County's efforts to encourage various agribusinesses. He also noted that a major plus for the County was all of the unique local communities within the County, noting that many of the suburban communities to the east were actively trying to acquire the types of downtowns that the County's local communities already have. Mr. Bunge also discussed the railroad history of the unincorporated community of Clare.

Mr. Gentile talked about Genoa's historic downtown, and suggested everyone visit the Kishwaukee Heritage Museum. He then spoke about Genoa's efforts to highlight its connection to the Kishwaukee River, noting the parks and trails they have along the River. It was noted that a number of river activities occurring along the river, such as river rafting and kayaking, and Genoa's annual "Kayak the Kish."

Mr. Kula noted the eateries South Moon BBQ and Dairy Joy as popular destinations in Hinckley. He also noted that a new Escape Room business had opened in the Village.

*Note: These minutes are not official until approved by the DeKalb County Regional Planning Commission at a subsequent meeting. Please refer to the meeting minutes when these minutes are approved to obtain any changes to these minutes.*

Ms. Aldis informed the Commission that Cortland was one of the few communities in the County to have never burned down. She also highlighted the Town's train-related history, noting that a remnant of the old DeKalb – Aurora electric rail line still existed within the town. Ms. Aldis also noted the Town's agricultural history.

Mr. Redden noted the presence of amenities in Sandwich not typical for a city of its size, such as: The Sandwich Opera House, a hotel, and an 18-hole golf course. He discussed the annual "Plano Baloney Sandwich" Day, in which the Cities of Plano and Sandwich celebrate the fictional town of Baloney, said to lie between the two closely situated communities. Mr. Redden did note however that not having the interstate nearby was a disadvantage for the City.

Mr. Devlieger noted Kirkland's annual 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebration, which is far bigger (and more successful) than would be typically expected from a village of its size. He noted that the Village is a tight-knit, family-oriented community, and that the residents are really good about supporting its local restaurants. Mr. Devlieger talked about Kirkland's history as a location a major loading point where sheep used to be loaded onto the trains for transport into the Chicago, noting that there used to be a stockyard in the Village. He also noted that the Village was exploring ways to highlight the presence of the Kishwaukee River and the nearby state park.

Ms. Willis asked the Team 5 members to consider the following questions:

- How often did they want to meet?
- How long did they want to engage with other groups, such as the RPC or CBB?

Ms. Willis also asked the Commission what they would like the Team 5 to focus on.

Mr. Gregory and Mr. Hiland suggested that both the Commission members and the Team 5 members think about these questions and the items discussed, and be ready to talk about it at the Commission's next meeting on January 24<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Hiland noted the lack of any document that highlighted most of the mentioned in the meeting and suggested that such a document could be useful in highlighting the County and its communities.

It had been suggested earlier that the maybe the Commission meeting rotate its location among its member communities. It was asked if one of the member communities would be able to host the Commission' January meeting. Mr. Nolan responded that he believed that Shabbona could host the meeting at the Community Center at the Resource Bank.

Mr. Foster noted that, as representatives from Malta and Waterman were not present, he wanted to point out the presence of the orchards near both are unique, and the winery near Waterman. He also noted that the winery in Sycamore had not been mentioned.

## **7. County / Community Updates**

*Note: These minutes are not official until approved by the DeKalb County Regional Planning Commission at a subsequent meeting. Please refer to the meeting minutes when these minutes are approved to obtain any changes to these minutes.*

- a. **Sustainable Energy Projects and Ordinances**
- b. **Building Code Updates around the County**
- c. **Emergency Alert Processes (e.g. Tornado Sirens)**

**8. Municipal Development Permits / Projects / Challenges / Champions**

The Commission decided that the topics to be discussed under Items 7.a, 7.b, and 8 of the agenda had already been covered during the Item 6 discussion.

Mr. Devlieger related that Kirkland was contacted by the unincorporated community of Fairdale and asked why the tornado siren did not sound during a recent storm event. He noted that Fairdale informed the Village that they had been previously told by the Village it had been informed that the Village would be responsible for deploying the siren during bad weather events. Mr. Nolan inquired as to what protocols were used by the other communities.

Mr. Nolan noted that in Shabbona, the fire department activates the siren. Ms. Aldis noted that in Cortland, their police department does it. It was noted there are protocols for when to sound the siren, and it was suggested that they contact one of these entities for further insight on the matter.

**9. Next Meeting Date**

The next meeting will be held on January 24, 2019, at 6:30 p.m. in the Community Center located on the property of Resource Bank, 102 Indian Road, Shabbona.

- 10. Adjournment** – *Mr. Gregory motioned to adjourn, seconded by Ms. Morpey, and the motion carried unanimously.*

Respectfully submitted,

---

Cheryl Aldis  
Chairman, DeKalb County Regional Planning Commission

Moa: moa  
P:\Zoning\Regional\Minutes\2018\RPC 10-25-18 Minutes.docx

*Note: These minutes are not official until approved by the DeKalb County Regional Planning Commission at a subsequent meeting. Please refer to the meeting minutes when these minutes are approved to obtain any changes to these minutes.*