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DeKalb County Government  
Sycamore, Illinois

**DEKALB COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES**  
(April 4, 2019)

The DeKalb County Regional Planning Commission (RPC) met on April 4, 2019 at 6:30 p.m. in the Sycamore Park District Community Center, Classroom A, in Sycamore, Illinois. In attendance were Commission Members: Dan Olson, Rich Gentile, Russell Kula, Steve Devlieger, Martha May, Les Redden, Dan Nolan, Becky Morphey, Brian Gregory, Linda Swenson, and Misty Haji-Sheikh. Also, in attendance were: Curt Lang, Mayor of City of Sycamore; Bruce Hamilton and Chad Benson, of the DeKalb County Information Management Office; Dan Halverson, of DeKalb Fiber Optic (DFO); Amit Patel and Will Finney, of Syndeo Network; and, County Staff members: Derek Hiland, Jolene Willis, and Marcellus Anderson.

- 1. Roll Call** – Commission members Cheryl Aldis, John Fisher, and Brenda Jergens were absent. Commission member Misty Haji-Sheikh arrived late for the meeting.

Derek Hiland called the meeting to order, noted that the Commission Chair and Vice-Chair were both absent, and called for a motion to appoint a Chair Pro Tem for the meeting.

*Mr. Gentile moved to have Mr. Gregory to serve as Chair Pro Tem for the meeting, seconded by Ms. Morphey, and the motion carried unanimously.*

- 2. Approval of Agenda** - *Ms. Morphey moved to approve the agenda, seconded by Mr. Gentile, and the motion carried unanimously.*

- 3. Approval of Minutes** – *Mr. Gentile moved to approve the minutes of the February 21, 2019 meeting, seconded by Mr. Nolan, and the motion carried unanimously.*

- 4. Public Comments**

Mayor Lang welcomed the Commission members and guests to the facility and to the community, and Mr. Gregory briefly described the Community Center’s history, development, and amenities.

- 5. Presentation – Fiber Networks in DeKalb County**

Mr. Halverson, Mr. Patel, and Mr. Finney introduced themselves and described the history of their respective companies and the partnership they formed in 2014, the DFO-Syndeo Network, which is a regional fiber optic internet carrier & provider covering a five county region in northern Illinois.

They described the history of the DeKalb Advancement of Technology Authority (DATA), noting that it is a part of the DeKalb County government and was started almost ten years ago, and the role of their company in it. They explained that DATA provides connectivity for not-for-profit, educational, and municipal entities throughout DeKalb County. Mr. Halverson noted that a number of people were inquiring why, since the County had a fiber network, they didn't just give it away as part of economic development. He explained that the grant that allowed for the creation of DATA requires that they establish sustainability, which requires a variety of services that must be covered financially.

Mr. Finney talked about the advantages of the way the network is organized and how it benefits and impacts local businesses, including the impact on business retention. He related some of their experiences with local companies, such as: Autometer; Solotech; and, Aligus Packaging.

Mr. Halverson talked about the impacts and benefits of DATA on health care and not-for-profit entities, such as: Northwestern Medicine's health care network; the DeKalb County Community Foundation; Hope Haven; and, Tails. He also mentioned that if any other not-for-profits were interested, they can simply go to the DeKalb County website, which has a section on DATA, and they can inquire right there.

Mr. Halverson noted that all of the school districts in the County were now connected to the DATA backbone, which allows them less expensive internet costs, access to internet phone service, and better and more reliable connectivity.

Mr. Halverson then explored the future of wireless: "5G", giving a detailed description of this type of network, and talking about their company's 5G network: AirCell. He also talked about Enhanced 4G and LTE, noting how these systems have improved accessibility and reliability, noting MetroNet's emergence into the local markets. Mr. Halverson discussed the financial advantages to businesses using these services, in particular noting the lower costs for bandwidth per month.

Mr. Finney talked about the residential impact of systems such as AirCell. He delved into the history and impact of AirCell, using the Fairdale tower as a representative example. He also noted that AirCell was operating in five communities in DeKalb County, Fairdale, Shabbona, Hinckley, Malta, and Kirkland, and looking into expanding into Genoa, Waterman, Lee, and some other communities.

Mr. Devlieger inquired where fiber optics are currently run in DeKalb County. Mr. Halverson responded that the County's website contained a map of the fiber optic lines. He pointed out that at one end, it ran from Kirkland to Genoa, down Route 23 to DeKalb, Sycamore, Cortland, and Malta, then down Somonauk Road to US Highway 30, where it connected with Waterman, Shabbona, Hinckley and Big Rock, and continuing south along Somonauk Road to Sandwich, Somonauk, and Earlville. He also noted that at Earlville, Kirkland, and Sandwich, this system connects to the I-Fiber network.

Ms. Haji-Sheikh noted that the fiber network did not appear to extend to homes and inquired as to why. Mr. Halverson replied that largely, it was due to the expense, and because of how the grant was written.

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He noted that there were five purposes eligible for the grant: education, health care, not-for-profit, municipal, and commercial. The first four were covered by the grant, but the last, commercialization, was left for outside of the grant, which is where the partnership with DFO-Syndeo came in. He elaborated on what the expense to municipalities would be to provide the service to homes, noting that communities like DeKalb and Sycamore already had several providers operating in them. Mr. Halverson noted that they were focused more on the rural and less well served areas. Mr. Devlieger noted that Kirkland worked with AirCell to provide service in their Village. Mr. Patel then gave an in-depth explanation and history of the current situation of internet and telecom service in the County.

Mr. Hiland noted that the all of the local communities within DeKalb County were being served by AirCell, or in the process of getting the service established, except Maple Park, and asked who provides service to that village. Mr. Patel responded that Woodstream (under Mediacom) is the primary carrier in the Village, but that this would be changing soon. He noted that they were in the process of working with other carries there to extend the network to that village as well.

Mr. Nolan noted that Shabbona residents were overwhelmingly positive about AirCell. He noted that the question he had heard was whether 5G technology was line-of-sight? Mr. Finney responded that 5G was composed of a variety of technologies, including line-of-sight. Mr. Patel noted that actual 5G was actually limited to approximately three blocks, and still being developed.

Mayor Lang inquired as to the security of these networks. Mr. Finney and Mr. Patel responded that all signals are encrypted.

## **6. Presentation – Upcoming Census Process**

Bruce Hamilton and Chad Benson, of the DeKalb County Information Office gave a presentation regarding the ongoing US Census and the three projects being undertaken by their office for the US Census. Mr. Hamilton started by giving a detailed presentation regarding the Boundary and Annexation Survey (BAS), which they complete every year. Mr. Benson followed by detailing the Local Update of Census Addresses, explaining that this project was seeking to confirm, update, delete, or add new addresses in the Census database. He noted that these were only for residential addresses, and a lot of focus was on syncing up spellings and word choices (i.e.: 1<sup>st</sup> vs First), and explained the process used to verify the addresses. Mr. Benson finished by describing the results they found and the changes they needed to make.

Mr. Gentile inquired whether they would notify a community of a corrections. Mr. Hamilton responded that they could do so.

Mr. Hamilton explained that their third project was the Participants Statistical Area Program (PSAP), which provides an opportunity to update census tracts and/or census block groups. He displayed a couple of maps showing tracts and block groups and what the Census thinks needs to be changed. He also noted that this census information can be important for funding.

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Mr. Hiland explained to the Commission the need for accurate tract boundaries, and encouraged the members to avail themselves of Mr. Hamilton's and Mr. Benson's offer to aid them in doing so.

## **7. DeKalb County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Update**

Ms. Willis updated the Commission on the current status of CEDS Teams 3 and 5, which focus on community cooperation, marketing, and development. She reported on the success of the Economic Development Bootcamp, which had occurred in January, and talked about the possibility of arranging another Bootcamp later in the year.

Mr. Hiland reminded the Commission members about the Paired-up Initiative which had been suggested at the previous meeting as a way for the members from the various constituent communities to learn more about other parts of the County. The idea being to divide the commission members into seven pairs, and each member of the pair would take turns hosting the other member in their community, so that they could learn more about their community. Mr. Hiland noted that they had developed the list of pairs: Lee & DeKalb; Shabbona & Sycamore; Hinckley & Genoa; Kingston & Sandwich; Waterman & Cortland; Kirkland & Somonauk; and, Malta & DeKalb County.

Ms. Willis offered the following ideas, as suggestions of possible activities for the pairs:

- Attend each other's board/council meetings, as schedules allow
- Tour each other's city/village halls
- Attend a staff or department meeting
- Tour each other's municipal facilities, such as waste water treatment plants or maintenance areas
- Tour available commercial buildings and sites
- Tour recent residential development projects
- Identify and tour community assets, like parks, community buildings, school campuses, etc.
- Spotlight major employers, full-time equivalent numbers, industry sectors, and commuting radiuses.

Mr. Hiland noted that they can't raise all ships with the tide, if they don't know what they are attracting to the County. He noted that he would be sending out all the pairings and contact information.

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

Mr. Olson (DeKalb) reported that construction would soon be starting on the new Home2Suites hotel on south Anne Glidden Road. He noted that the Pizza Hut on West Lincoln would be demolished in May and a new restaurant constructed, and the Plaza DeKalb building downtown, containing twenty-three apartments and ground floor commercial, would be opening in the spring. He noted that the Egyptian Theater had received approval for an extension of the theater and some planned improvements to

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existing facilities. He noted that Aldi would be moving to a new location on the opposite side of State Route 23. Mr. Olson reported that the City was working on updating their signage codes, to make them more content neutral. He noted that three new alderpersons had been elected. Mr. Olson mentioned the discussion regarding a possible Zoning 101 class to be put on by the County, and noted that the Illinois American Planning Association (IAPA) was offering some training classes for about \$500 per session.

Mr. Nolan (Shabbona) reported that they now had a Building Inspector in place. He noted however, that one of their challenges was the election for Village president, which was very intense, especially the social media aspect of it all. As for champions, he noted that a four-unit commercial building sold downtown, one of the units will be occupied by a barber, who is a disabled veteran, and is renovating the laundry mat on the other side of the building. Mr. Nolan noted that the Village lost a hairdresser, who moved her shop to Waterman, but did gain a printing company. He noted that Banner Up signs would be installing new directional signage in the Village and near the State Park, to direct traffic downtown. Lastly, he noted that their Zoning Board would be meeting on Monday night to annex a property on the east side of town.

Ms. May (Lee) reported the Village was in the planning stage for their DCCF grant, and talked about their survey efforts. She noted that the Village would be having a community meeting on April 22<sup>nd</sup>, to discuss how the grant money should be spent. Ms. May noted that that the dilapidated house had been removed, and talked about trying to get people out and involved.

Ms. Haji-Sheik (DeKalb County) informed the commission that she was stepping down from the County Board and the Commission next month due to her moving out of state. She noted that the County had the following current challenges: harsh weather and road work; the need to fix some issues on the website; and, the murder of an assistant Deputy State's Attorney. She noted that the County was working on appointing a new Commission member as its representative.

Mr. Kula (Hinckley) noted that the Royal Estates Subdivision had a model home framing was up and they were hopeful that it would be ready for viewing by June. He reported that the Village Board was going to vote on a mobile food vendor ordinance at its next meeting. He noted that a mobile vendor was hoping to open a coffee truck in the parking lot of the Brown Pub, along State Route 30. Mr. Kula reported that the interim Police Chief would be appointing a new Police Chief.

Ms. Swenson (Waterman) reported that a new home would be getting built. She also noted that they were now using the same new building inspectors as Shabbona. They noted that they had recently worked through some major water issues. Ms. Swenson also reported that they had rented a building to the hairdresser who had moved from Shabbona. She also mentioned a website that was being worked on, Visit30.com.

Mr. Kula added that Shabbona/Lee, Waterman, and Hinckley would be having combined, community-wide garage sale, Three on 30 Garage Sale Days, May 2<sup>nd</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup>.

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Mr. Devlieger (Kirkland) reported the Village had three new trustees were elected. He noted that their public works department had leveled a bunch of trees to the west of town for the Big Dig. He also noted that they had sent out proposals to the excavators and waiting for responses from them. He reported that they might have a building permit in the next month, the first since 2006 or 2007. Mr. Devlieger noted that the former pizza place downtown, which had been abandoned and acquired by the bank, had been purchased by a new owner who was renovating it. He noted that the owner had not said what kind of business they hoped to bring into the structure yet. Finally, he noted that a sports bar should be opening within the next few weeks.

Mr. Redden (Sandwich) reported that the City had one new alderman elected. He noted that a local business had been bought by a larger company. He also noted that a downtown restaurant, which consisted of three different units, had closed, but that a gaming parlor would be opening in one of the units. As for challenges, he noted that the Village had their cell phones FOIAed, and that, after four years of negotiations, they may lose a local auto dealer to the Village of Plano.

Mr. Gentile (Genoa) informed the Commission that they got a developer, who is more into seniors and active adults' development, to purchase one of their failed subdivisions. He noted that the City was also trying to establish a façade grant for businesses within the downtown area. He also that the City was working on a grant with the EPA, in their low interest and forgiveness program.

Ms. Morphey (Somonauk) reported that things were quiet in Somonauk. She noted that an individual had purchased the old school gym from the school district, and was planning to open a Somonauk Recreation Center. She mentioned the path from the County Forest Preserve they were working on with the County was coming along, but that there were some drainage issues. She noted that they were planning a fundraising race for the opening day of the path, and mentioned that they had the first bench to be placed along the path donated by a local bank. Ms. Morphey reported that they had a new gaming place in the Village. She noted that Rambo's changed hands, and that the new owners were thinking about expanding. She mentioned that a challenge the Village has is the presence of some empty buildings downtown.

Mr. Gregory (Sycamore) reported that the new waste water treatment plant and the new Meijer's store should be breaking ground within the next month. He also noted that the Bemis auto dealership changed its name to Sycamore-DeKalb Auto Group.

## **9. Next Meeting Date**

The next meeting will be held on May 23, 2019, at 6:30 p.m. Ms. Swenson offered to host the next meeting at the Waterman Winery, and would check with them to see if it would be available. Mr. Hiland added that if accommodations could not be made in Waterman, he would contact Ms. Aldis about having Cortland host the meeting.

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- 10. Adjournment** – *Ms. May motioned to adjourn, seconded by Ms. Morphey, and the motion carried unanimously.*

Respectfully submitted,

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Brian Gregory  
Chairman Pro Tem, DeKalb County Regional Planning Commission

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