

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
(July 27, 2017)

The DeKalb County Regional Planning Commission (RPC) met on July 27, 2017 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, Elizabeth Peerboom, Les Redden, Becky Morphey, Brian Gregory, Linda Swenson, and Kevin Bunge. Also in attendance were County Staff members: Derek Hiland and Marcellus Anderson.

1. **Roll Call** – Commission members John Fisher, Bryan Rhodes, and Don Pardridge were absent.
2. **Approval of Agenda** – *Ms. Aldis moved to approve the agenda, seconded by Mr. Gentile, and the motion carried unanimously.*
3. **Approval of Minutes** – *Ms. Aldis moved to approve the minutes of the March 23, 2017 meeting, seconded by Mr. Gentile, and the motion carried unanimously.*
4. **Discussion of DeKalb County’s Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs) Progress to Date**

Mr. Hiland gave the Commission an update on the DeKalb County’s efforts to create a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs). He explained that it was a planning process that had taken place throughout the year in conjunction with broad based and diverse community participation from public and private sectors. He noted that the eventual strategy document would contain regional economic analysis, goals, and objectives for regional prosperity, and a plan of action, including a list of economic development projects to implement the goals and objectives for all of DeKalb County and its partner communities. Mr. Hiland described some of the workshops that had occurred and some of the entities that had participated. Mr. Hiland especially noted that one item from the process was that the County and the local communities do not do enough to champion themselves or to promote their “wins” (successful endeavors), and that communities should not just leave it to the media outlets to describe what to highlight. Mr. Hiland finished by reminding the Committee that it was up to the various community members to make sure that the document that gets created is an active document that does not get made only to set on a shelf.

Mr. Gregory mentioned that CEDS was being created in collaboration with the DeKalb County Economic Development Corporation. He explained that they are looking into what opportunities were available, to developing short and long term objectives, and putting together timelines. He strongly encouraged other communities to participate in the process. He also noted that one thing he noted was the need for each community to examine itself to find what makes that community unique. Mr. Gregory then gave a detailed description of the City of Sycamore's strategy.

Mr. Hiland added that once the CEDS gets to the review portion of the process, the document will be posted online for public consumption and review. He also informed the Committee members about Jolene Willis, the new Economic Development Coordinator for DeKalb County. Ms. Swenson spoke highly of Ms. Willis and informed the Committee about her initial outreach efforts.

Ms. Swenson agreed that the communities were lax in promoting their positive aspects and described how too often it is just the bad press that gets presented to the public.

Mr. Hiland noted that he would mark down "highlighting the positives of DeKalb County and its local communities" as a future topic for the Committee to explore. He then described his efforts to establish a better connection between staff and the various local City/Town/Village boards, and re-iterated some of the resources available through the DeKalb County Community Foundation presented at the previous Committee meeting.

Ms. May noted that Mr. Hiland had been very helpful to the Village of Lee. She also posed the question of where did the various organizations see DeKalb County developing in the future. She noted that DeKalb County was known as an agricultural county, but discussed the changes she had seen occurring over time and, playing devil's advocate, asked whether they have been for the better or not. Mr. Gregory noted that her concerns were why good planning was vital so as to allow growth and development while preserving traditions. Ms. Swenson noted that the local communities needed "rooftops" to survive. Ms. Aldis pointed out that every community started small, but eventually grew, and that everyone's idea of what a small town atmosphere should be was different.

Mr. Gregory stated that they (local communities) need to have a "billboard" for their community presenting their communities image. He noted that the small unique things about the individual communities are huge in that endeavor.

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Ms. Swenson provided a description of the City of Batavia's past struggles and recent successes.

Mr. Redden asserted that the communities in the different sections of DeKalb County are quite different from one another, and described some ways in which the Sandwich and Somonauk area differed from the rest of the County. He added that there needs to be a guide to how the "re-invention" of the county happens.

Mr. Bunge described the need and importance of the communities establishing boundary agreements with each other.

5. Discussion on Best Practices Regarding Drinking Water Resource Planning and Management

Mr. Hiland informed the Committee that Danielle Gallet from the Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC) had communicated with former Committee member Misty Haji-Sheikh, who is the Vice Chair of the Northwest Water Planning Alliance, informing DeKalb County that the MPC "is creating a free resource for elected officials in northeastern Illinois about drinking water planning and management, and that the resource would like to feature examples of best practices many communities in the region are already doing." He then described a presentation he had attended regarding this issue.

Mr. Redden noted that they received a water report from Mr. Gentile every year. Mr. Gentile described his report and what it entailed. He added that water conservation was a tough issue.

Mr. Kula described some issues the Village of Hinckley had recently experienced with water main breaks.

Mr. Hiland inquired whether any of the communities had anything on record of times of drought. Several member replied yes, and described what they had.

Mr. Redden noted that it was difficult coming up with a plan that the public would agree to. Mr. Hiland responded that the goal is to get the people talking now, before a crisis starts.

6. Municipal Development Projects / Issues

Ms. Aldis (Cortland) reported a number of happenings in Cortland: DC Trash was close to moving into its new building; All Around Pumping hadn't broken ground on the building yet, but had

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gotten the road in; Robinson Farms had been working on two lots developing with four to five townhouses each; Natures Crossing had housing going in; and, that there were plans on the table for Casey's to remove their existing location, combine the three lots that are there, and build a new one there.

Ms. Swenson (Waterman) reported that things were pretty quiet there. She did describe the problems that they had been dealing with a water issue because one of the developments was supposed to put in a new well, but that it hadn't happen yet. She also noted that the Village had a new mayor and board.

Mr. Redden (Sandwich) noted that developments are at a standstill. He did note that the theater and the bowling alley have new owners who both renovated them. He added that there were some new apartment projects in the works. Mr. Redden described a situation the City had been dealing with regarding large outside builders/developers being unprofessional in their treatment of smaller rural communities like Sandwich.

Ms. May (Lee) inquired whether there was a state law as to how many people can live in a single-family dwelling. Several members responded that their adopted building code should have that definition. Ms. May described a situation that the Village was having, and noted that the Village no longer had copies of their building code books. Several members noted that copies of the code books should be available at the libraries in DeKalb and Sycamore. Ms. Carlton noted that they (DeKalb) might have spare copies that they could give them, and that she would look into it.

Ms. Morphey (Somonauk) reported that the new walking path was close to being done, otherwise quiet.

Ms. Peerboom (Maple Park) reported that two (2) subdivisions (Squires Crossing and The Settlement) are being recharged, one with 40 empty lots and another with nine (9) empty lots, had been purchased by Shodeen. She noted that they had put in a moratorium on impact fees to help development.

Mr. Gentile (Genoa) reported that the EPA had approved a low interest loan and forgiveness program grant for the City. He noted that they got South Sycamore Street done through a matching grant program. He also noted that they had received a grant through the DeKalb County Community Foundation to fix their canoe launch area.

Mr. Kula (Hinkley) reported that the Village was quiet.

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Mr. Devlieger (Kirkland) reported that they had been dealing with some flooding recently. He noted that Hickory Ridge was bankrupt, and that the bank had sold all of the property to a developer out of Naperville. He also noted that the Village has a store front that it is looking to sell, for which they have a prospective buyer.

Mr. Bunge and Mr. Hiland (DeKalb County) reported about the changes the County's Planning, Zoning, and Building Department, which was expanded, reorganized and renamed to Community Development Department. Mr. Hiland asked that the various communities send in any "wins" that they come up with so that he could share them with everyone. He then described the County's efforts to establish wind and solar energy regulations, and talked about several recent large-scale agritainment uses being expanded.

Ms. Charlton (DeKalb) reported that the City had worked out an agreement with Northwestern Medicine regarding its new Wellness Center. She noted that the City had also established an impact fee waiver on a number of lots approved in the mid-2000's that were now bankrupt. The program would cover the first 100 lots that are sold. She noted that commercial was doing well, describing several projects happening in the downtown area.

Mr. Gregory (Sycamore) reported that they have had a lot of interest in residential and commercial development.

Ms. Aldis informed the Committee that Cortland Summerfest would be occurring on August 11th and 12th.

7. Next Meeting Date

Mr. Hiland noted that the next scheduled meeting date would be on September 28, 2017 at 6:30 p.m. in the Conference Room – East, DeKalb County Administrative Building.

Mr. Hiland asked that the Committee members please contact him with topics they would like discussed at the next meeting.

Mr. Gregory asked that the Committee members review the Current Development Projects list and to forward any changes to Mr. Anderson. He also asked the Committee members to contact Mr. Hiland with any suggestions regarding the County's CEDS.

8. Adjournment – Ms. Swenson motioned to adjourn, seconded by Ms. Peerboom , and the motion carried unanimously.

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Respectfully submitted,

Brian Gregory
Chairman, DeKalb County Regional Planning Commission

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