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DeKalb County Government
Sycamore, Illinois

DEKALB COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
(March 23, 2017)

The DeKalb County Regional Planning Commission (RPC) met on March 23, 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, Les Bellah, John Fisher, Rich Gentile, Brian Gregory, Misty Haji-Sheikh, Martha May, Don Pardridge, and Elizabeth Peerboom. Also in attendance were County Staff members: Derek Hiland and Marcellus Anderson.

1. **Roll Call** – Commission members Dawn Grivetti, Becky Morphey, Les Redden, Anita Sorensen, and Linda Swenson were absent. Brian Gregory arrived late.
2. **Approval of Agenda** – *Ms. Aldis moved to approve the agenda, seconded by Ms. Peerboom, and the motion carried unanimously.*
3. **Approval of Minutes** – *Mr. Gentile moved to approve the minutes of the January 26, 2017 meeting, seconded by Ms. Peerboom, and the motion carried unanimously.*
4. **Budget Shortfall Discussion**

Mr. Hiland informed the Commission that it had identified as a topic for discussion and review the issue of how municipalities were dealing with the budget shortfall brought about by the State of Illinois' inability to pass a budget, and inquiring about what steps were being taken to account for the loss of revenue and its effect upon the general fund in each community. He noted that the Commission packet contained copies of some articles shared by Mr. Gregory, of the City of Sycamore, on the topic.

Mr. Gentile reported that the City of Genoa has begun cutting back on all unnecessary spending years before, and that staffing had taken big cuts. However, he noted that the cuts did have a negative effect on the ability of staff to adequately service the community, and elaborated on some of the issues they were dealing with.

Mr. Fischer reported that the Village of Kingston had taken a similar approach, noting that staff did not receive any raises for a number of years and that various projects had to be put off until such time as the funds would become available.

Mr. Bellah reported that the Village of Kirkland had already been limiting its dependency on State funds and that it was not as affected by the State Budget situation as a number of the larger communities.

Ms. Peerboom reported that the Village of Maple Park had to cut some planned capital improvements and was making efforts to save wherever it could.

Mr. Hiland inquired if any of the communities had developed any creative new efficiencies that have helped, such as: new technologies or collaborations. Ms. Aldis, Ms. Peerboom, and Mr. Bellah all agreed that their communities had taken such steps, sharing services and finding ways to help each other. Mr. Pardridge noted that the Village of Shabbona had developed some limited cooperation with neighboring communities. Mr. Gregory noted that the City of Sycamore had developed a lot of cooperation, in particular noting its close relationship with the County. He also talked about the need for communities to unify their efforts to achieve things.

Ms. Haji-Sheikh talked about how the County worked at meeting its budget goals and the efforts taken by staff to help meet those goals.

Mr. Gregory spoke about the impact of rising health insurance costs and the efforts they had been taking to improve safety and well-being in the City of Sycamore. He noted that the process was slow, but that they had seen progress.

Ms. May reported that the Village of Lee had to get another loan. Several of the Commission members suggested applying for grants, but Ms. May related to them how the Village has tried and failed over the last three (3) years to get grants, and explained that their experiences going through the processes had discouraged them from spending the funds to try again.

Ms. Charlton noted that many local communities are part of the Metro West Council of Governments, which lobbies legislators to help address various local issues. Ms. Haji-Sheikh also suggested that the Village of Lee pass a resolution and send it to their state representatives, to make sure that they remain aware of the various local issues they are facing. Several Commission members talked about their experiences contacting their state representatives. Ms. Aldis informed Ms. May to call her for more information on the Metro West organization.

Mr. Bellah noted that apathy was strong and seemed to be getting worse. Ms. May described the difficulties in getting younger residents involved.

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Mr. Gregory stated that if the State cannot fix its own problems, they couldn't fix theirs (the individual communities). He added that Communities needed to focus on being good at what they are good at, to focus on their strengths.

Ms. Peerboom related the Village of Maple Park's problems with trying to get grants.

Mr. Gentile related the City of Genoa's experiences with applying for grants, describing one that they were currently working one, and noted that the City had been successful in getting them.

Mr. Hiland suggested that the DeKalb County Community Foundation may also be a possible source.

Ms. May related the problems the Village of Lee was experiencing in trying to have two dilapidated buildings located near the center of the village removed. Ms. Aldis described a similar situation the Town of Cortland went through, noting that it was not cheap, but it was worth the money to do so. The Commission discussed various possible suggestions and steps that could be taken.

5. Municipal Development Projects / Issues

Mr. Pardridge (Shabbona) asked that "Settler's Point" be removed from the Current Development Projects list. But otherwise said that nothing new was going on.

Mr. Fischer (Kingston) noted that a "carpet and flooring" store had opened in their industrial park. He described a new agreement that had been approved to allow for the erection of a 175' telecommunication tower on Village property, which would give them lease money and a free antenna for the local fire and police use. He finished by adding that the Illinois Department of Transportation would be replacing the box culvert on Illinois Route 72 in town.

Ms. May (Lee) reported that a three (3) unit apartment building was being renovated, and would be ready to rent this year.

Mr. Gentile (Genoa) reported that the City was being sued by Petro Alliance regarding tax monies, but that the City's attorneys were quite good, and that City appears to be coming out ahead in the case.

Ms. Haji-Sheikh (County) reported that the County Jail expansion was coming right along, that there had been no progress on the sober Living House, and that the opening of the Sycamore

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Forest Preserve (Formerly Evergreen Village MHP) was still on hold waiting for FEMA's final approval. She added that land had been donated to the Park, allowing the Great Western Trail to be extended to the Park. She noted that Northwestern Medicine – Kishwaukee Hospital would be breaking ground on a new Health and Wellness Center this year. Ms. Haji-Sheikh reported that the DeKalb County Highway Department would begin working on Waterman Road this year, but noted that it would be a multiyear project. She finished by informing the Commission that the County Board was in the process to creating policy to govern the construction and placement of wind & solar farms, noting that the Board had placed a moratorium on the construction of any new facilities until the new policy had been created and approved by the Board.

Ms. Charlton (DeKalb) reported that around mid-year the Otto's building in downtown DeKalb would be coming down, and that a four (4) story, mixed use building erected in its place. She noted that a local tech business would also be doing a project in one of the two story buildings downtown. She pointed out that there was TIF monies available. She then talked about the challenges in getting people into the buildings in the downtown area.

Ms. Aldis (Cortland) had no new development activity to report, but did relate that the Cortland Water Department took first place in a hydrant contest, and would be going to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to participate in a national competition.

Ms. Peerboom (Maple Park) reported that two (2) subdivisions, one with 40 empty lots and another with nine (9) empty lots, had been purchased by Shodeen, who had already sold the lots and expected to build about five (5) units a year.

Mr. Gregory (Sycamore) reported that they have had a lot of interest in residential and commercial development. He noted that Meijers was working on approval for a site, and that Menards was planning to expand. He also related how the City was working with Autometer to develop an agreement that would see their parking lot, which is currently gravel, get paved and be available for use as public parking at night.

Mr. Bellah (Kirkland) reported that a building moratorium which had been put into place was a problem. He noted that Hines Lumber was looking to expand. He added that this would be his last meeting, and expressed his view that the Commission has been a priceless source of information and important networking tool.

6. Next Meeting Date

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Mr. Hiland noted that the next scheduled meeting date would be on May 25, 2017. Several members of the Commission stated that they would not be available on that date. After discussing the matter, the Commission agreed that the next meeting would instead be held on June 1, 2017 at 6:30 p.m. in the Conference Room – East, DeKalb County Administrative Building.

The Commission then talked about the new County Jail expansion. Mr. Gregory stated that he would contact Gary Hanson, DeKalb County Administrator, about the possibility of allowing the Commission members to take a tour of the area under construction.

7. **Adjournment** – *Mr. Fischer motioned to adjourn, seconded by Ms. Haji-Sheikh, and the motion carried unanimously.*

Respectfully submitted,

Brian Gregory
Chairman, DeKalb County Regional Planning Commission

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