

DEKALB COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
January 27, 2011

The DeKalb County Regional Planning Commission (RPC) met on January 27, 2011 at 7:00 p.m. in the DeKalb County Administration Building, Conference Room East, in Sycamore, Illinois. In attendance were Commission members Cookie Aldis, Ken Andersen, Bill Beverley, Rich Gentile, Becky Morphey, Bill Nicklas, Derek Hiland, and Don Pardridge. Staff included Paul Miller and Rebecca Von Drasek.

1. Roll Call -- *Commission members Frank Altmaier, Suzanne Fahnestock, Les Bellah,, Dave Maroo, Linda Swenson, Jerry Thompson, and Jerry Olson were noted absent.*

Mr. Andersen moved to set aside the rules of the Committee, due to the lack of quorum, seconded by Mr. Nicklas, and the motion carried unanimously.

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

3. Approval of Minutes – *Mr. Nicklas moved to approve the amended minutes from October 28, 2010, seconded by Mr. Gentile, and the motion carried unanimously.*

4. Discussion Item - Annual Dues

Members were informed by Mr. Miller that invoice letters were sent out in January 2011 to remind communities of the annual RPC dues. Mr. Miller asked each Commission Member to assist County staff in facilitating this payment.

5. Regional Planning Commission Intergovernmental Agreements

Mr. Miller pointed out that the “boilerplate” of the intergovernmental agreements, copies of which were executed between the County and each of the municipalities when the Regional Planning Commission was established in 2002, had been provided for review. Ms. Aldiss explained that there had been an inquiry made as to whether or not these intergovernmental agreements should be revisited, given the change in priorities and projects before the RPC since its inception. Mr. Miller responded that it was necessary to revise the agreements only if there was some need to change or add to the terms of the agreements. If there was not a need for any specific revision, he suggested that the Commission should allow the existing agreements. Mr. Miller explained that any changes would require coordination and attention by the County and representatives of each of the municipalities.

Mr. Pardridge added that staff time did not need to be spent to consider new agreements if the existing agreements continue to suffice.

Ms. Aldis asked if Mr. Miller had heard of any dissent regarding the existing intergovernmental

agreements from any members of the RPC. Mr. Miller stated that only once had anyone suggested to him that the organization was no longer needed.

Mr. Nicklas agreed that the agreements were historic and did not need to be changed.

Bill Beverly arrived at 7:10 pm and a quorum was obtained.

6. County Comprehensive Plan Update

Mr. Miller explained that late last year the County, with oversight by the Regional Planning Commission, initiated a process to update the 2003 DeKalb County Unified Comprehensive Plan. A draft of the text was produced, as were updated versions of the Future Land Use Plan and Transportation Plan. Copies of these documents were widely distributed for review and commentary to all surrounding counties and to agencies and entities within the County, including each municipality, each County Board member, the school districts, DSATS (the DeKalb-Sycamore-Cortland metropolitan planning organization), the DeKalb Farm Bureau, the Soil and Water Conservation District, the DeKalb realtors association, Northern Illinois University and Kishwaukee College, and the DCEDC. The documents were made available for review on the County's website under the heading "Hot Topics." Three two-hour-long open houses for public input on the draft plan were conducted in January, one each in Genoa, Sycamore, and Sandwich, and were attended by a total of 47 citizens. A presentation on the Comprehensive Plan update was made to the DeKalb County Board at its January 19, 2011 meeting. All comments received were evaluated as part of preparing a new draft of the updated Comprehensive Plan. A public hearing is tentatively scheduled for March 17, 2011 on the final draft of the Plan. The Plan will subsequently be forwarded to the Planning and Zoning Committee of the DeKalb County Board for consideration, and then to the full County Board for a decision.

Mr. Miller noted that among the comments received from the public were suggestions related to housing. One citizen encouraged the following: (1) an adequate supply of housing for special needs persons with a range of incomes; (2) improved opportunities for home ownership among specific groups including minorities, low-income, and persons with disabilities; (3) development of incentives for construction of energy-efficient housing; and (4) encouragement by municipalities of development of alternative energy sources, including wind and solar. Mr. Miller noted that the majority of residential development is directed toward the municipalities and therefore to make sure these comments were heard he was asking the Commission to review them and offer any response.

Mr. Nicklas thanked Mr. Miller for forwarding the citizen's comments and asserted that it might be an interesting discussion for the Commission. He cautioned, however, that the County Board should not dictate an agenda to the municipalities anymore than the municipalities should try to dictate to the County Board. He noted that the issue of housing can become almost a philosophical debate as to government regulation versus the market dictating the types of homes constructed.

Ms. Aldis rhetorically asked how a municipality could implement an “affordable housing” program because defining the term “affordable” can be very contentious.

Mr. Miller explained that all comments submitted to the County as part of the open houses were recorded within an Appendix of the County’s Comprehensive Plan. He also explained to the author of these comments that these types of suggestions were not under the County’s control but forwarded these comments to the Commission so that the citizen’s opinions were considered by the appropriate authorities. He added that forwarding the comments to the RPC in no way represented an endorsement of those ideas on the part of the DeKalb County Board, but rather that it was staff’s way of showing participants in the Comprehensive Plan update process that their ideas are in fact being considered.

Mr. Partridge noted that housing issues are addressed at many levels of the government and he encouraged interested citizens to attend the comprehensive planning sessions of the municipalities as well.

7. 2011 Agenda Items

Mr. Miller explained that the Regional Planning Commission has, since its inception, served as an important forum for communication, coordination and cooperation between the units of local government on issues that cross jurisdictional boundaries. He noted that each year, several such issues are discussed and related information is shared. Issues previously highlighted as topic for 2011 at its October 28, 2010 included:(1) A review of the annexation process and the consideration of pros and cons of an annexation; (2) Addressing problems within existing subdivisions; (3) How to write grant applications or obtain assistance in grant applications; (4) How to deal with staff shortages; and (5) How to encourage and regulate urban agriculture. Mr. Miller noted that another proposed issue that arose from the open houses related to energy usage and energy efficiency. He observed that this maybe a good topic for a future discussion as well.

Mr. Beverley stated that the cost of construction has increased due to building code requirements related to energy efficiency.

Mr. Andersen noted that the interpretation of Building Code can differ which can cause confusion. He suggested that the RPC Committee consider a discussion about how to uniformly interpret regulations. The Committee briefly discussed this topic and determined that it might be better left for Building Inspectors to discuss the Building Code issues.

Mr. Nicklas noted that energy issues do require policy direction for new structures such as wind turbines. Mr. Hiland offered to provide the recently approved wind energy regulations that were adopted by the City of DeKalb. Mr. Miller offered to place this information on the RPC web page.

Mr. Andersen noted that managing waste might also be an interesting topic. He noted that learning more about waste creation and disposal may be beneficial. Ms. Aldis felt that County officials should already be very educated regarding waste considering the recommendation related to the landfill expansion. Mr. Andersen opined that the process regarding the landfill siting was flawed. He stated that a larger discussion and plan for waste removal might be a productive exercise to address the issue better in the future.

Mr. Gentile suggested that the RPC would benefit from learning more about the fiber optic installation within the County. Mr. Miller offered to ask Herb Kuryliw to attend a future meeting and answer questions from members.

Mr. Nicklas suggested a discussion regarding the maintenance of residential subdivisions that have only been partially constructed, and the financial guarantees covering the public improvements within those developments might be a useful topic. The Commission discussed the various elements that could be included, pointing out that roads, bridges, bike lanes, highway widening, and problems within existing subdivisions could all fit under a discussion on infrastructure. In addition, the discussion could include suggestions of how to make the financial decision to pursue court action to compel completion of public improvements by the developer or receiver of the development, versus the municipality completing the improvements.

Mr. Gentile suggested that the community dispatching services could be discussed.

Grants were mentioned as a topic of interest at the October 28, 2010. Ms. Aldis related her recent attendance at the Finance Summit sponsored by the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity. She informed the Commission that attendees were told to continue to apply for grants but that money was not yet available to fund any of the grants.

Mr. Nicklas noted that urban agriculture was also on the list of possible topics from October 28, 2010. Mr. Andersen asked if this would include farming of vacant properties within “abandoned” subdivisions. Commissioners stated that farming is permitted in some subdivisions but is dependent on the status of the improvements to the property and the location of the subdivision. The Commission also briefly discussed provisions for “rural residential” and the allowance and oversight of livestock.

8. Municipal Development Projects/Issues:

Ms. Aldis asked for any changes to the development project report that was included in the Commission meeting packet.

Mr. Andersen asked about the proposed Dollar General store in Cortland. Ms. Aldis reported to the Commission that there had been some back and forth between the owners and the Town and that the hope is that the groundbreaking will happen in the Spring. She also noted the recent expansion of a local pizza business which included an application for a liquor license; she explained that this was the Town’s first application for such a license in the past 73 years.

Mr. Beverley reported that the Waves of Fun had received an extension for the development, and that Fairwinds Subdivision was under new management.

Mr. Hiland noted that the City of DeKalb has seen an up-tick of interest in restaurant development.

9. Next Meeting Date -- The Commission agreed that the next RPC meeting would be on March 24, 2011 at 7:00 pm in the Conference Room East.

10. Adjournment -- *Mr. Andersen motioned to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Beverly and the motion carried unanimously.*

Respectfully submitted,

Cheryl "Cookie" Aldis
Chairman, DeKalb County Regional Planning Commission

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