

DEKALB COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
September 29, 2011

The DeKalb County Regional Planning Commission (RPC) met on September 29, 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, Suzanne Fahnestock, Derek Hiland, Bill Beverley, Rich Gentile, Bill Nicklas, Don Pardridge, Becky Morphey, and Linda Swenson. Staff included Paul Miller and Rebecca Von Drasek. Dan Kenney and Bill Oleckno were also present.

- 1. Roll Call** -- *Commission members Jerry Thompson, Jerry Olson, Dave Maroo, Les Bellah, and John Fischer were noted absent.*
- 2. Approval of Agenda** -- *Mr. Hiland moved to approve the agenda, seconded by Mr. Andersen, and the motion carried unanimously.*
- 3. Approval of Minutes** – *Mr. Nicklas moved to approve the minutes from June 23, 2011, seconded by Mr. Gentile, and the motion carried unanimously.*
- 4. Resolution of Appreciation for Bill Nicklas**

Ms. Aldis read aloud a resolution of appreciation for the service of Mr. Nicklas to the Commission.

Mr. Miller stated that the resolution could not go far enough in stressing Mr. Nicklas importance to the Commission. He noted that the Regional Planning group may not exist had it not been for Mr. Nicklas' support and added that the Commission owed him a debt of gratitude for his commitment.

Mr. Nicklas thanked the Committee for the recognition and stated he appreciated his time spent with the Commission.

5. Small Wind Energy Regulation

The Regional Planning Commission, at its January 27, 2011 meeting, included on a list of potential topics of discussion the regulation of small wind energy systems (wind turbines). Interest in alternative energy generation for residences and institutional uses (schools, civic buildings, waste-water treatment plants, etc.) has increased in recent years as fossil fuel prices have gone up. There are a wide variety of small wind energy systems, as well as a range of regulatory approaches. Staff collected three examples of regulation from DeKalb County, the City of DeKalb, and the town of Cortland as a way of starting a dialogue regarding small wind energy systems as a possible land use within municipalities.

Mr. Miller explained that DeKalb County has permitted small wind energy systems on lots of two acres or more since 2007 (the minimum lot size was reduced to one acre in 2009). In

deliberating on whether or not to allow small wind energy systems, the County considered that the issue of whether or not to permit small wind energy systems on lots in unincorporated DeKalb County was largely one of aesthetics. There is little debate that alternative sources of energy are needed, therefore the primary issue lies with the change to the appearance of the landscape, with noise considerations being a close runner-up on concerns. Planning and zoning is concerned with land use not merely to avoid conflicts between dissimilar uses, but to protect desirable or important qualities of the physical environment. Small wind turbines are not a typical feature of the landscape of municipalities, and a proliferation of such structures would represent a change to the aesthetics of neighborhoods. Given their height and motion, some consider such towers to make a profound and negative change to landscape. Others are in favor of the change, finding them pleasing to look at, or at least not offensive, and a positive change to meet the future energy needs of the community.

Ms. Aldis noted that Cortland has put regulations in place to allow various alternative energy measures, but has yet to have any applications. She noted that there were many inquiries regarding the technologies, and prior to the recent “green technology” additions to Town’s regulations the alternative energies would have been prohibited.

Mr. Hiland recognized Dan Kenney and Bill Oleckno as the authors of the City of DeKalb’s regulations regarding small wind energy conversion systems.

Mr. Andersen asked if the small wind energy systems were allowed within residential neighborhoods in Cortland. Ms. Aldis noted that they were and that it was the responsibility of an applicant to secure any necessary “air rights”.

The Commission briefly discussed height restrictions which are placed on the structures and the allowance for some of the energy systems to exceed those height limitations. Mr. Kenney added that the technologies are continuing to improve and that vertical options were becoming available.

Mr. Nicklas noted that the City of Sycamore’s UDO was also silent on wind and solar technologies. He acknowledged a growing interest.

Ms. Fahnstock inquired as to the proof of insurance requirement to build within the Town of Cortland. After review, Ms. Aldis acknowledged this requirement was somewhat unique to these energy system improvements.

Mr. Andersen observed he has seen some of these technologies throughout the County.

Mr. Beverley noted that only one property that he was aware of was asking to allow a wind turbine in Sandwich. He observed that ComEd places many tall structures in proximity to properties and asked rhetorically why then could a private property owner not place one as well.

Mr. Andersen supported the municipalities staying flexible to allow the installations of these new technologies.

Mr. Miller encouraged Commission members to have a discussion at the community level and feel free to ask questions to the County, Cortland, or DeKalb representatives if they need additional information.

As a related issue, Ms. Aldis mentioned aggregation of electrical service proposals being presented to local municipalities.

Mr. Beverly explained that Ms. Aldis was speaking of programs that encourage communities and residents to pool their electrical usage together to negotiate for lower rates.

Ms. Aldis explained that a referendum question can be placed on the ballot and the voters can vote to include themselves within the aggregation. If approved, there is an Opt-out requirement for individuals not wishing to join the aggregation. If the referendum fails, an Opt-in option is presented to those individuals wishing to join up.

The Commission discussed the pros and cons to such a proposal.

6. Member Dues

Mr. Miller reminded the Commissioners that Annual Dues for the Regional Planning Commission have not been received from Hinckley, Malta, Genoa, Sandwich and Waterman.

7. Municipal Development Projects/Issues:

Mr. Nicklas noted that the Ideal Business Park was still expanding. He emphasized that the HyVee appeared to be doing good business, although the City was waiting on sale figures.

Mr. Pardridge had nothing new to report from Shabbona.

Mr. Andersen stated that Kishwaukee Community College was expanding. He noted a recent application for a cable franchise, and that a proposed church on Bucks Road was denied a Special Use Permit. Mr. Andersen encouraged members to contact County Board members regarding their opinions on the County's FY 2012 budget.

Mr. Beverly stated that the Sandwich Fair was successful.

Mr. Hiland pointed out that the police station expansion in DeKalb has been given approval, and that the library expansion is also being discussed.

Ms. Fahnestock mentioned improvements to the water and sewer lines in Maple Park. She also noted the near completion of establishing a TIF district. Ms. Fahnestock stated that "The Maples" project at the intersection of County Line and Rt 38 was going to be breaking ground soon.

Mr. Gentile reported road resurfacing in Genoa, and expressed hope that residents would be happy to see some needed improvements. He observed that things have been quiet recently with respect to development.

Ms. Morphey stated that the sewer plant in Somonauk was receiving an upgrade. She also noted that the Village had a grant for creating safe routes to school.

Ms. Swenson noted that things were quiet in Waterman. She emphasized that two businesses were working on “facelifts” for their downtown facades. She also noted that the site where the Village recently demolished a building would soon be for sale.

Ms. Aldis stated that Cortland was in the preliminary phases of creating a TIF district. She also mentioned that Richland Homes was still building.

Mr. Miller pointed out that there would be an All Hazards Mitigation Plan meeting on October 20, 2011 in the Gathertorium.

8. Next Meeting Date -- The Commission agreed that the next RPC meeting would be on January 26, 2012 at 7:00 pm in the Conference Room East.

9. Adjournment -- *Mr. Nicklas moved to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Beverley, and the motion carried unanimously.*

Respectfully submitted,

Cheryl “Cookie” Aldis
Chairman, DeKalb County Regional Planning Commission

RGV:rgv
P:\Zoning\Regional\Minutes\2011\RPCSep11.wpd