

# DRAFT

**PLANNING AND ZONING COMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES  
September 26, 2012**

The Planning and Zoning Committee of the DeKalb County Board met on September 26, 2012 at 7:00 p.m. in the Conference Room East located in the DeKalb County Administration Building. In attendance were Committee Members Ken Andersen, Dan Cribben, John Hulseberg, and Pat Vary. Also in attendance were Charles Foster, Greg Millburg, Dean Johnson, Joe Gulotta, Gary Hansen and Planning, Zoning and Building Department staff members Paul Miller and Rebecca Von Drasek.

Ken Andersen, Planning and Zoning Committee Chairman, called the meeting to order and noted that Committee members John Emerson, Ruth Anne Tobias, and Jeff Whelan were absent.

### **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

*Ms. Vary moved to approve the agenda, seconded by Mr. Cribben, and the motion carried unanimously.*

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

*Mr. Hulseberg moved to approve the minutes of the August 22, 2012 meeting of the Planning and Zoning Committee, seconded by Ms. Vary, and the motion carried unanimously.*

**DISCUSSION ITEM** - Review of Draft FY 2013 Budget for the Planning, Zoning and Building Department

The draft Fiscal Year (FY) 13 Planning, Zoning, and Building Department budget has been submitted for review and approval by the County Board. A copy of the line-item detail from the budget was included in the Committee Member's packets.

Mr. Miller explained to the Committee that Department heads were instructed by County Administration to create budgets that represented no more than a 1% increase over the FY 2012 amount in commodities and services expenses. He pointed out that the draft FY 2013 budget before the Committee proposed a .09% increase in keeping with this directive.

Ms. Vary inquired into the Book and Subscriptions line item and asked if any of the materials are available on the Internet. Mr. Miller responded that these items even online would still have a cost.

Mr. Hulseberg observed that revenues were higher than expected. He also asked if the Committee had vetoed the truck contribution last year. Mr. Miller stated that the Department purchased a new vehicle and that it was two years ago that the Committee delayed the vehicle purchase. Mr. Miller went on to explain that the Contribution to Asset Replacement is set up to fund vehicle replacement, and occurs automatically without being discretionary in the Department budget. He noted that the annual contributions are intended to make vehicle purchases systematic rather than a one-time big ticket item.

Mr. Andersen noted that the Information Management Office took the old Planning and Zoning truck for its use.

Mr. Cribben inquired about the Salaries and Benefits section of the budget. Mr. Miller deferred to Gary Hansen from the Finance Department, since the Finance Department determines what amounts to include in those line items. Mr. Hansen explained that the Salaries and Benefits section is created by the Finance Department using estimated amounts for pay increases and adjustments for insurance costs.

Mr. Cribben asked when staff last reviewed permit fees. Mr. Miller responded that the fees had not been reviewed within the last 10 years. Mr. Cribben requested that staff prepare a report about Permit fees for the Committee.

Mr. Hulseberg inquired into the fees charged from Code Violation Hearings. Mr. Miller reported that properties found in violation are given a fee of \$300 and risk fines up to \$5,000.

Mr. Andersen noted that the Regional Planning Commission creates \$7,000 in revenue. Mr. Miller explained that the funds offset the County's costs in hosting the Commission.

Mr. Andersen asked why the Stormwater Management Planning Committee did not have a fee. Mr. Miller explained that the Stormwater Committee was appointed by the County Board and its members volunteer their time.

Mr. Andersen observed that the Building Permit fees were down from previous years.

Mr. Andersen then stated his objection to any budget which increases taxes and asserted that expenditures should be cut. He offered to examine County staff operations to find more efficiencies.

Mr. Miller emphasized that Mr. Andersen comments are important for the entire County Board to consider, however he pointed out that he only has control over the Commodities and Services section of the Departmental budget. Mr. Miller further pointed out that the Planning and Zoning Department has routinely operated under budget, attributing the savings to staff's attention to detail and frugal fiscal decisions. He shared, however, that the requested amounts in the proposed budget were in keeping with the requested parameters by the Finance Department and the appropriate amounts to continue to offer an adequate level of service to the citizens of DeKalb County.

Mr. Hulseberg noted that the proposed FY 2013 budget for the entire County would increase the average tax bill by approximately \$9.25. He noted that the Mr. Andersen's assertion that staff needs assistance being efficient could be interpreted as offensive. He asserted that the reserves the County will draw down would still exceed the advised reserve balance suggested by the auditors.

Mr. Andersen recognized Mr. Foster. Mr. Foster stated he was concerned about increases in payroll and benefit costs to the County. He believed that looking for efficiencies was an opportunity for staff. Mr. Foster also detailed his research into the General Fund Budget citing that in FY 2004 the General Fund was at 18 million and that the proposed budget for FY 2013 it is at 27 million. Mr. Foster concluded by suggesting that the County operates in “silos,” which he thought to be inefficient.

Mr. Hulseberg asked Mr. Foster what amount was in the reserves in 2004, he inquired if it was over 40%. Mr. Foster did not have that information.

Ms. Vary highlighted that the Go Green initiative as an example where an investment by the County Board had saved the County money by reducing operating costs and energy expenses.

Mr. Hulseberg agreed that Mr. Andersen and Mr. Foster’s concerns warranted a conversation at the Finance Committee. Mr. Hulseberg commented that the reserves were intended to be used when the County needed them.

Mr. Miller agreed with the Members that efficiency is important, he also agreed that the conversation would be productive at the Finance Committee because the Planning and Zoning Budget is only a very small part of the entire budget. He stated he was willing to be part of the larger discussion regarding the General Fund budget.

Mr. Hulseberg stated that he felt County residents get good service for the cost of the Planning and Zoning Department.

Mr. Andersen noted that the Committee was not required to vote on the budget proposal and would vote on budget appeals during the October Planning and Zoning Committee meeting. He pointed out that one such appeal has been filed by County Board Member Scott Newport.

**DISCUSSION ITEM – DeKalb County Soil and Water Conservation District Budget Appeal**

Mr. Andersen recognized Dean Johnson from the DeKalb County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD).

Mr. Johnson has filed a request to increase the County’s contribution to the SWCD from \$20,000 to \$30,000. He stated that he empathized with the Committee that the economy was difficult and that the County Board is facing budget challenges. He stated that he did not want to ask the County Board to reconsider their contribution to the SWCD and that the District appreciates any contribution from the County. Mr. Johnson explained that the State funds to the SWCD have been reduced and that the SWCD Board has already reduced staff by half. Mr. Johnson detailed some of the District’s services noting the review of development applications, monitoring erosion control, and the oversight of agricultural dredging projects. Mr. Johnson noted the additional \$10,000 requested would make a big impact for the SWCD and allow it to retain his full-time services.

Mr. Gulotta, a board member from the SWCD, thanked the Committee for the opportunity to address them. He explained that he was a farmer from Esmond and expressed sympathy for the hard financial decisions facing the Committee. He asserted that the SWCD was operating on a bare bones budget as well and that the contribution by the County Board would be well spent. He noted that the Board's investment in the SWCD helps make cost-sharing programs possible for property owners. He emphasized that the cost-sharing money is reinvested into the County.

Mr. Andersen asked about other sources of revenue for the District. Mr. Johnson responded that the SWCD sells items (i.e. fish, trees, composters, and rain barrels), and they collect fees for services (i.e. soil water inventory reports, ag land disturbance permits, and IL EPA inspections).

Ms. Vary stated that she was amazed at the expertise of the SWCD after attending a few of the District's workshops. She added she disliked the trend State and Federal agencies pushing costs onto local governments. She concluded by voicing support for the requested increase in the County's contribution to the District.

Mr. Andersen stated that this, and other, budget appeals would be discussed and voted on at the October 24, 2012 Committee meeting.

**RESOLUTION - Resolution of appreciation for Hearing Officer Kevin Buick**

Mr. Miller explained that staff reluctantly received a letter of resignation from Kevin Buick, Hearing Officer for the County, on September 7, 2012. Mr. Buick has served as Hearing Officer since his appointment in June of 2002. Since then, he has run numerous public hearings on zoning applications, including Variations, Special Uses, Planned Developments, Zoning Map Amendments, and Appeals. Mr. Buick's conduct over the years has been exemplary, his demeanor professional and amiable, and his decisions and recommendations thorough, thoughtful, insightful, and fair. In recognition of Kevin Buick's efforts on behalf of the County Board and the citizens of DeKalb County, staff has prepared a draft resolution of appreciation.

Mr. Hulseberg observed that the Committee Member's packet did not include a copy of Mr. Buick's resignation letter. Mr. Miller apologized for the oversight.

*Ms. Vary moved to recommend adoption of the resolution, seconded by Mr. Cribben, and the motion passed unanimously.*

**DISCUSSION ITEM – Discussion of possible Hearing Officer candidates**

Mr. Miller noted that with the recent resignation of Kevin Buick, the County needs to appoint a new alternate Hearing Officer. Ron Klein continues to serve as the primary Hearing Officer, conducting all zoning hearings except those with whom he has a conflict of interest due to previous professional relationships. In those cases, an alternate Hearing Officer is required. The alternate Hearing Officer will conduct public hearings on zoning applications, including Variations, Special Uses, Planned Developments, Zoning Map Amendments, and Appeals. The Hearing Officer must not only be conversant with land use law and due process, but most importantly be perceived as fair and non-partisan.

Mr. Miller explained that he has consulted with Ron Klein and Kevin Buick for recommendations for a new Hearing Officer. He has contacted two prospective candidates, Dale Clark and Chris Cosentino. Both expressed interest in serving as Hearing Officer for the County.

Mr. Andersen reported to the Committee that he had reached out to prospective candidates, and that Mike Coghlan had indicated he would be interested in the appointment. Mr. Miller agreed to reach out to Mr. Coghlan. Mr. Miller also explained that prospective candidates would be asked to attend the October, 2012 Planning and Zoning Committee for interviews, with a recommendation by the Committee to be forwarded to the County Board Chair.

### **MONTHLY REPORT**

The Committee briefly discussed the Monthly Report.

Staff explained that there were four recent Code Violation Hearings which resulted in the finding of violation in each case.

Ms. Vary asked that a legend be added to the monthly Building Permit report.

### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

There were no comments offered.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

The Planning and Zoning Committee is next scheduled to meet October 24, 2012 at 7:00 p.m. in the Conference Room East.

*Ms. Vary moved to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Cribben, and the motion carried unanimously.*

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Ken Andersen**  
**Planning and Zoning Committee Chairman**