

**DEKALB COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION  
MEETING MINUTES  
January 26, 2012**

The DeKalb County Regional Planning Commission (RPC) met on January 26, 2012 at 7:00 p.m. in the DeKalb County Administration Building, Conference Room East, in Sycamore, Illinois. In attendance were Commission members Derek Hiland, Rich Gentile, Ken Andersen, John Fischer, Dave Maroo, Martha May, Becky Morphey, and Brian Gregory. Staff included Paul Miller and Rebecca Von Drasek. Donna Nilles, Peggy Lowery, and Richard Boris were also present.

- 1. Roll Call --** *Commission members Jerry Thompson, Cookie Aldis, Bill Beverley, Linda Swenson, Don Pardridge, Les Bellah, and Suzanne Fahnestock were noted absent.*
- 2. Approval of Agenda --** *Mr. Andersen moved to approve the agenda, seconded by Mr. Gentile, and the motion carried unanimously.*
- 3. Approval of Minutes --** *Mr. Gentile moved to approve the minutes from September 29, 2011, seconded by Mr. Andersen, and the motion carried unanimously.*
- 4. Annual Dues --** Mr. Miller reminded the Commissioners that the Regional Planning Commission voted in 2007 to assess annual dues to its member communities. He explained that these dues are intended to offset the County's costs of providing staffing, meeting room and materials. An invoice was sent in January, 2012 to each member community for the \$500 dues. Dues are requested to be received by the end of February 2012.
- 5. Member Re-Appointments --** Mr. Miller pointed out that the following member's terms were due to expire in April of 2012:

<u>Municipality</u>	<u>Appointed</u>	<u>Alternate</u>
Village of Lee	Jerry Olson	Martha May
Village of Malta	Jerry Thompson	Anita Sorensen
City of Sandwich	Bill Beverley	
Village of Shabbona	Don Pardridge	Claudia Hicks

He asked these individuals to work with their city council/village board to forward in writing to County Board Chairman Larry Anderson the names of a representative to the Regional Planning Commission and an alternate. The names of the member representative and an alternate need to be received no later than April 3, 2012, so that the County Board Chairman can make appointments at the April 18, 2012 meeting of the DeKalb County Board. He said hopefully the same representatives can continue to serve and that, once appointed, the terms would be for a three-year period.

**6. 2012 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. Each year, several such issues are discussed and related information is shared. Issues previously highlighted have included: comprehensive planning; impact fees; zoning laws and regulations; annexation rules; stormwater management; groundwater information; freedom of information laws; GIS data; the Countywide fiber optics project; urban agriculture; and small wind energy regulation. The Commission has also sponsored workshops and seminars on subjects of interest to entities that have land use regulation authority. Mr. Miller suggested consideration should be given to what issues are currently taking place within member communities, with an eye toward sharing lessons learned from experiences and seeking input and ideas from each other. He provided as an example of a common issue is property maintenance codes: what are the different municipal regulations and procedures; what does the County do with respect to property maintenance in the unincorporated areas; and what are the best management practices and techniques for dealing with nuisance or problem properties? Another possible topic he suggested was planning and holding a "Zoning 101" seminar for elected and appointed officials (city councils, town and village boards, plan commissions, zoning boards) to educate the officials on the purpose and intent of zoning. Such a seminar might be timely given the upcoming elections in March, 2012.

Mr. Hiland agreed that it had been over five years since the last "Zoning 101" seminar. He emphasized in those five years there had been a significant amount of turn over in the Planning Commissions and that the new members would benefit from a seminar in 2012.

Mr. Maroo also thought a zoning seminar would be a good idea.

Mr. Andersen concurred that a seminar would be useful. He suggested that the property maintenance regulations enforced by the various jurisdictions would be an interesting conversation for the Commission. Mr. Andersen also supported review of Zoning and Comprehensive Plans while the economy was slow to confirm that the regulations and plans reflect the priorities of decision-makers.

Mr. Miller asked what issues were being discussed by each of the member communities.

Mr. Hiland responded that one of the recent discussions at the City of DeKalb was related to chickens and urban agriculture. He said that the issue could prove difficult to regulate. The Commission briefly discussed the previous review of the urban agriculture topic at the June, 2011 meeting. Mr. Gentile replied that the City of Genoa had also recently revised their regulations regarding chickens and he explained that the City now allowed chickens on properties two acres or more. He also explained that a license would be issued to a property owner to allow for the chickens. The license gives the City the authority to revoke the permission if the chickens were to become a nuisance.

Mr. Fischer noted that the Village of Kingston was working on a variety of projects including reviewing its UDO, submitting for an engineering grant, and reviewing its Safe Route to School grant.

Ms. Morphey commented that the Village of Somonauk had also been submitting for grants to assist with energy conservation to replace windows and sewer plant upgrades.

Mr. Hiland suggested that grant writing information might be a valuable topic for the Commission to discuss, such as where individuals are finding grant opportunities and how to write successful grant applications.

Mr. Gregory detailed that the City of Sycamore was considering plans for the County Jail expansion and clean-up and vacation of alleys. He also observed that businesses appear to be doing some “tire kicking.” Mr. Miller felt that the topic of alley vacation might be an interesting topic for the Commission to discuss. Mr. Gentile explained that, regarding unimproved but dedicated alleys, the City of Genoa has also considered if these areas could be utilized as trails or paths which could benefit connectivity within the City. Mr. Miller suggested that “pedestrian infrastructure” could be an interesting topic for the Commission to discuss at a future meeting..

Mr. Maroo stated that the Village of Hinckley’s Plan Commission was working on an annexation request and finalizing the Safe Route to School’s improvements.

Ms. Morphey offered that one issue being discussed in Somonauk was the requirement to shovel sidewalks for snow removal. She suggested the rules and practices related to snow removal, including what responsibility private property owners abutting public sidewalks might have, would be a good topic for review. Mr. Gentile responded that legal enforcement was one issue the City of Genoa encountered when researching this topic. Mr. Hiland mentioned that the Safe Route to School program may require that the sidewalks be cleared by adjoining land owners. Mr. Andersen observed that the shoveling issue was similar to the question of landscaping in the parkway. He suggested that these issues could be included in a conversation about property maintenance requirements.

Ms. May highlighted many issues that the Village of Lee was working on, including the Village’s review of its Zoning Ordinance and possible water system upgrades. She asked if any of the Commissioners’ municipalities had ever installed a used water tower. Mr. Miller suggested that the village may want to contact an engineering firm to create an Request for Qualifications to write a grant for improvements to the Village’s water system. He added that often the engineering firm will add the cost of their services to the grant approval.

Ms. May also inquired if other municipalities had experience changing street names. The Commission briefly discussed the challenges of renaming existing streets.

The Commissioners also discussed the lengthening of buildout timelines for approved projects, and the possible paradigm shift from the demand for larger homes to smaller, more easily maintained houses. The Commissioners attributed these changes to the economy and the environment.

The Agenda Items that the Commissioners had discussed for 2012 included the following items:

- a.) Organizing a Zoning 101 seminar to explain to elected and appointed officials the purpose and intent of zoning regulations;
- b.) A discussion regarding property maintenance regulations, including the requirement to shovel or maintain parkway landscaping;
- c.) A discussion about where to find and how to apply for community improvement grants; and
- d.) A discussion about the use or vacation of public owned easements and infrastructure.

**7. Municipal Development Projects/Issues --** The Commission agreed that this was completed in conjunction with the 2012 Agenda items discussion.

**8. Next Meeting Date --** The Commission agreed that the next RPC meeting would be on March 22, 2012 at 7:00 pm in the Conference Room East.

**9. Adjournment --** *Ms. Morphey moved to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Andersen, and the motion carried unanimously.*

Respectfully submitted,

Derek Hiland  
Vice Chairman, DeKalb County Regional Planning Commission

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