

DEKALB COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
March 22, 2012

The DeKalb County Regional Planning Commission (RPC) met on March 22, 2012 at 7:00 p.m. in the DeKalb County Administration Building, Conference Room East, in Sycamore, Illinois. In attendance were Commission members Cheryl Aldis, Ken Andersen, Bill Beverley, John Fischer, Rich Gentile, Brian Gregory, Derek Hiland, Dave Maroo, Martha May, and Anita Sorensen. Staff included Paul Miller and Marcellus Anderson. Ruth Anne Tobias and Adam Orton were also present.

1. Roll Call -- *Commission members Becky Morphey, 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. Gregory, and the motion carried unanimously.*

3. Approval of Minutes -- *Mr. Hiland moved to approve the minutes from January 26, 2012, seconded by Mr. Gentile, and the motion carried unanimously.*

4. Water Sense Program – Ms. Aldis introduced Ms. Tobias, explaining that she was there to make a presentation concerning an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) program named “Water Sense”. Ms. Tobias explained that even though DeKalb County currently has plenty of water, it is important for the County to start talking about water conservation. She noted that she had served on the Northeastern Illinois Regional Water Planning Commission, which produced a Water 2050 plan that promotes the conservation and wise use of water. She highlighted that the plan had identified DeKalb County as the main recharge area for the groundwater under northeastern Illinois. She said that after the Water 2050 plan was completed, a smaller group was formed called the Northwestern Water Planning Area, which includes DeKalb, Kane, McHenry, Kendall, and western Lake Counties, as well as some of the communities in those counties. Ms. Tobias explained that the Water Sense Partner Program encourages municipalities and counties to sign on to be a partner in the Water Sense program with the EPA in promoting water conservation to their citizens. This could be done by such actions as including water conservation literature along with municipal water bills, by posting such information on government websites, and promoting the use of “Water Sense” approved appliances. She explained that there is no fee to be a partner, and that materials can be obtained for free from the EPA website. Ms. Tobias said that all that would be required of participating governments is to fill out a one-page annual report detailing what actions they had taken over the past year to promote water conservation. She mentioned that Metro West was asking all of its members to participate and that she would be presenting this program to the DeKalb County Board at its April 18, 2012 meeting.

Ms. Aldis stated that the Town of Cortland had already signed onto the program. Ms. Tobias also noted that the goals expressed in the program were consistent with the goals the County had expressed in its Unified Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Andersen commented that he originally thought this program was aimed primarily at municipalities, but now understands that it pertains to unincorporated areas as well. Ms. Tobias confirmed his understanding. She said that the program is also concerned with promoting the safety and security of the water supply, adding that both Metro West and the EPA both have materials available that communities can distribute to their citizens explaining the steps they can take. Ms. Tobias highlighted the Water Sense logo which can be placed on community web pages.

Ms. May commented that she had heard that counties like Kane County had been having trouble finding adequate water for all of the development they had been experiencing. Ms. Tobias responded that that the southeast corner of McHenry County was having that problem, but that it was working on solutions to its water problem. She added that part of the Water 2050 Plan was a water supply study, where the Illinois State Water Survey looked at region to attempt to determine its water capacity and the demand that it was placing on it.

Mr. Beverley commented that he understood there was a moratorium on adding to the consumption of the Lake Michigan water supply, and wondered if there were any restrictions on adding any more communities. Ms. Tobias responded that she was unaware of any government restrictions, but did not believe many more people would be added to it, given the costs associated with trying to connect farther communities to it. Ms. Aldis commented that she understood that there was US/Canadian agreement governing the use of the water in the Great Lakes, and that there was no more available to be used. Ms. Tobias explained that such an agreement is actually a complicated state-to-state compact. She explained that Illinois is allowed to take so much out, but is required to allow some to go back in.

Mr. Miller said that part of the goal of the Water Sense program is to get people thinking about water consumption and conservation now, instead of waiting until a major problem arises. He noted that water is rapidly becoming a major national issue, that this region needs to be aware that other regions of the country may be looking to take water from this area, and that there is always the possibility of national level legislation being passed to allow them to do so. He also said that even though DeKalb County may be in a somewhat controlling position now, there is nothing preventing state legislation from being passed that would allow the counties to the east from drawing even more water out of the aquifer beneath DeKalb County. Mr. Miller added that raising awareness among the citizenship about these issues would be a step in the right direction.

Mr. Maroo inquired if there had been any talk about getting water into the aquifer, instead of allowing it to run off into the river. Ms. Tobias responded that conservation design was a part of steps promoted by the plan.

Mr. Beverley inquired if there were any tax breaks available. Ms. Tobias responded that each municipality would have to decide on whether it wants to offer any incentives or rebates.

Mr. Miller pointed out that what was being sought was an actual resolution from each of the municipalities, adding that the Commission members should present it to their communities. Ms. Tobias added that she would be available to make a presentation to any of the municipal boards

that would like to hear more about the program. Mr. Miller also explained how the County's Unified Comprehensive Plan coincides with the Water Sense program.

5. 2012 Agenda Items -- The Regional Planning Commission discussed, at its meeting on January 26, 2012, possible topics of interest for the Commission to undertake during the year. The Commission members were requested to review the possible topics proposed at that meeting, to determine if there were any other topics they felt should be addressed, and to be prepared to vote on one or more of them as future agenda items for 2012.

Ms. Aldis inquired whether the RPC was being asked to pare down the list to two potential seminars or training programs. Mr. Miller explained that the Commission was not limited to just two topics, nor was the format limited to just a seminar. He elaborated that depending on the topic and what the commission choose, the it could be addressed through a workshop, a round table discussion, or even as a presentation by staff to the Commission.

Mr. Andersen said that he had three items he wanted to add for possible discussion. First, he asked if it would be possible to look into a transportation study to examine the feasibility of establishing a bus route to shuttle commuters from the DeKalb/Sycamore area to the Metra commuter train station in Elburn. Ms. Aldis informed him that the DeKalb-Sycamore Area Transportation Study (DSATS) was already covering that issue. Mr. Miller elaborated that DSATS is the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the DeKalb-Sycamore-Cortland Urbanized Area, which covers the Cities of DeKalb and Sycamore, the Town of Cortland, and portions of unincorporated DeKalb County. Ms. Aldis added that DSATS maintains a very informative and comprehensive website. Mr. Andersen asked when DSATS meets. Mr. Miller responded that its Technical Advisory Committee meets on the 2nd Monday of the month at the DeKalb County Highway Department and its Planning Committee meets on the 4th Wednesday of the month in the DeKalb City Annex building. Ms. Tobias noted that DSATS study will only cover its MPO area, but that the Committee should consider working with them to expand it to include the whole county. Ms. Aldis explained that the DeKalb-Sycamore area currently has two bus systems operating, the Husky Bus line serving NIU and the Transvac System. She added that Transvac, which currently operates three routes, the Blue line in Sycamore, the Green Line in DeKalb, and the Kishwaukee College Shuttle, was planning on adding a route out to Cortland. She also added that Transvac is working with DSATS on establishing a bus route to take people from an as yet undetermined site in the DeKalb-Sycamore area to the Elburn Metra Station.

Mr. Andersen inquired about the Commission members thoughts on the Energy Aggregation vote. He noted that the measure had failed in unincorporated DeKalb County and in some of the municipalities. The Commission members briefly discussed the results of the vote and expressed a general consensus that too little information had been distributed about it prior to the vote.

Mr. Andersen remarked that he had broached the possibility of the County going "home-rule" at the March 28, 2012 County Board meeting, and asked the Commission's thoughts on that idea. He explained that no formal action was taken at the meeting, but that it would be placed on the April County Board agenda for further discussion. Mr. Andersen also expressed his hope that they would be able to bring in some experienced advisors to talk with the County Board about

what it would mean for the County to go home-rule. Ms. Aldis asked Mr. Andersen to bring the results of the County Board's discussion of this matter to the next RPC meeting.

Ms. Aldis asked the Commission members which topics they would like to work on this year.

Mr. Hiland stated that he was in favor of having another "Zoning 101" seminar, noting that he had attended the previous seminar in 2006 and had found it informative and felt that it would be very beneficial the various elected and appointed officials. Ms. Aldis agreed.

Ms. Aldis stated that the process for alley vacation could be handled as a table discussion; she said that she was especially interested in the idea of using unimproved alleys as pedestrian public ways. She also expressed an interest in examining the various property maintenance codes used around the county. She said this topic could also probably be handled as a table discussion.

Mr. Beverly said that he was interested in discussing the pedestrian infrastructure topic, in particular how other communities handled sidewalk maintenance. He expressed his dislike of the method used in the City of Sandwich, namely, that sidewalks are City property but the homeowners are supposed to maintain them. He added that the City only shares half the cost of the concrete for any repairs, and no other costs. Ms. Aldis said that the Village of Cortland states that the sidewalk is the responsibility of the property owner. Ms. May offered that the Village of Lee will split the cost of sidewalk maintenance with the property owner, and gave an example of citizens working together to cut the costs of repairing some their sidewalks. Mr. Maroo noted that the Village of Hinckley handles its own sidewalk maintenance. Mr. Fischer and Ms. Sorensen said that it was the homeowner's responsibility in the Villages of Kingston and Malta. Mr. Beverly added that the City of Sandwich has a sidewalk safety policy to replace sidewalks deemed a hazard. Mr. Hiland commented that the City of DeKalb has replaced some sidewalks, but he did not know the actual regulations off hand and would have to get back to the Commission. Mr. Beverly suggested that perhaps the County could compile a listing of how each community addresses sidewalk maintenance, which could then be presented to the Commission for a round table discussion. Ms. Aldis and Mr. Gregory pointed out that there are some programs and grants out there which can provide funds towards sidewalk maintenance. Mr. Gentile noted that the City of Genoa uses a 50/50 program , and gave some examples of how it has been applied.

Ms. Aldis directed the Commission's attention back to the list of topics. After a brief discussion, it was decided that a "Zoning 101" would be tentatively set for Saturday morning, September 8, 2012 in the Gathertorium of the DeKalb County Legislative Center. Mr. Miller explained that staff will prepare the necessary materials and strongly encouraged the Commission members to promote the seminar and encourage their local officials to come out.

Mr. Andersen suggested having a table discussion about the "homeowners / private covenants" topic. Ms. Aldis said that the Town of Cortland's building permits explicitly states that approval of its building permit does not invalidate the need to seek permission from any homeowners'

association that may govern that property. Mr. Miller pointed out that this topic overlaps with the “easement” topic and he and Ms. Aldis gave some examples of these issues.

Mr. Miller offered that staff could gather information on what the various communities are or have done regarding alley vacations and present that to the Commission. He then explained that staff could also canvass the various communities for what property maintenance and sidewalk maintenance codes and regulations, and present this information to the Commission for a table discussion.

Ms. Aldis inquired whether anyone wanted to address grants. Mr. Miller explained that there are numerous companies that specialize in providing grant information.

Ms. Aldis remarked that Sustainable Designs had once held a seminar on the use of public rights-of-way and asked if Mr. Miller still had the information from that seminar. Mr. Miller said that the topic regarding use of public rights-of-way actually referred to the encroachment of property owners onto rights-of-way with landscaping features.

6. Municipal Development Projects / Issues

Ms. Aldis reported that for the Town of Cortland, the Chestnut Grove development has gone dormant. Also, Richland Trails by Cambridge Homes is done; the company is finishing its last few obligations and then leaving. She said that only about 20% of the development was completed. Finally, she noted that the Town has recently approved a TIF district, which includes the area covered by the Robinson Farm development.

Mr. Hiland reported that the DeKalb City Council approved a new Hampton Inn and Suites on Annie Glidden Road just north of the Schnuck’s Development. He also said that he had been in talks with the Greenwood Acres Drive Retirement facility to complete that project.

Mr. Andersen reported that R-Equipment, a farm implement dealership, had just received approval from the DeKalb County Hearing Officer and would go before the DeKalb County Planning and Zoning Committee on March 28, 2012. He also explained the status of the Stonehouse Park’s Amendment to a Special Use Permit application.

Mr. Gentile said that the Genoa Park District had completed and opened its fitness center, but that things had otherwise been quiet in the community.

Mr. Maroo asserted that not much is happening in the Village of Hinckley, other than its review of the Crest application for annexation.

Mr. Fischer, Ms. May and Ms. Sorensen noted that nothing new was happening in the Villages of Kingston, Lee and Malta.

Mr. Beverly said that Fairwinds Subdivision has gone out of existence, and the City of Sandwich will be completing what it can. He added that the new NB&T bank is almost completed, and that the Waves of Fun project has gone bankrupt and is attempting to sell off the building.

Mr. Gregory said that in the Sycamore Prairie Business Park, SK Tools and Smart Motion are completed and that Fullco Industries has expanded by about 2,500 square feet. He also said that the Mike Mooney automotive dealership was moving to Mercantile Drive near Meynards, and that the developer of the location of the former Buick Dealership on the west side of downtown Sycamore has come in with some conceptual plans for a mixed-use development with commercial on the main level and three stories of residential above. He explained that the restoration of the old depot, which the City is doing with DeKalb county Community Foundation, is continuing, and that the City's phase two treatment plant is to start this year. He concluded by saying that the City is looking to widening Bethany Road between Peace and Somonauk roads.

Mr. Andersen inquired about the status of the Evergreen Village buyout. Mr. Miller said that the County is still waiting for the IEMA and FEMA to give the project the go-ahead. Ms. Aldis inquired what will happen to the residents when the buyout occurs. Mr. Miller explained that the residents will receive monetary relocation assistance. Ms. Aldis also inquired about what will happen after the buyout is complete. Mr. Miller said that a final decision has not yet been made, but that it has been talked about leaving it to the DeKalb County Forest Preserve District.

7. Next Meeting Date -- The Commission agreed that the next RPC meeting would be on May 24, 2012 at 7:00 pm in the Conference Room East.

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

Respectfully submitted,

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

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