

WILL COUNTY BOARD
DEMOCRATIC CAUCUS MEETING
MINUTES

October 20, 2011

8:45 a.m.

Will County Office Building

302 N. Chicago Street

Conference Room B

Joliet, IL

AGENDA

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Adamic called the meeting to order at 8:57 a.m.

ROLL CALL

Present were: Babich, Brooks, Deutsche, Howard, May, Stewart, Traynere, Winfrey, Zigrossi and Adamic.

Absent were: Wilhelmi.

Also Present: County Board Chief of Staff Bruce Friefeld.

Present from State's Attorney's Office: ASA Melanie Manning.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mr. Babich led the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion was made by Mr. Stewart, second by Ms. Zigrossi, to approve the minutes from the September 15, 2011 meeting. All in favor. MOTION CARRIES.

DISCUSSION OF OCTOBER 20, 2011 COUNTY BOARD AGENDA

Mr. Adamic stated there would be presentations from Metra and Pace at the beginning of the meeting.

PROCLAMATIONS

Mr. Adamic stated there would be an honorary Resolution recognizing October as Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

LAND USE & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Mr. Howard arrived at this juncture.

Mr. Stewart noted that some local ministers were not happy about Case 6014-S.

Ms. Winfrey explained the request involved the sale of package liquor at 1705 New Lenox Road, Joliet. A large group of people from Mt. Olive Missionary Baptist Church had attended the public hearing because they assumed the business' retail outlet would sell liquor to the public. Connoisseur Encounters uses the internet to sell high-end cases of wine. It is not a typical package goods store selling beer, wine and liquor. The company will host an open house so residents and officials can tour the facility and learn more about the operation.

Mr. Stewart stated it was not spelled out well enough. Some local ministers believed the business was a typical liquor store.

Ms. Winfrey stated it was not.

Mr. Palmer agreed. The business is moving to Joliet Township from Manteno, and while sales are done using the internet, the company needs an actual point of sale. The product will be stored at a different warehouse on Laraway Road.

Ms. Winfrey indicated the store would have limited hours of 10 a.m. until 6 p.m. The store is inside an industrial park and is not visible to passers-by. The main traffic would be the FedEx truck picking up and delivering packages, and the Limestone Brewery truck dropping off supplies. It is a pick-and-ship operation that would have minimal impact on the surrounding area.

Mr. Adamic noted if it complies with the county's rules and regulations the board members would not be able to stop it. The public must be educated, however.

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Mr. Adamic asked if Resolution 11-376 must be approved today.

Mr. Rafac replied the levy traditionally was approved during the October meeting so the county could publish in early November.

Mr. Friefeld stated the Resolution did not involve the approval of the levy. It was an estimation of the aggregate levy. The levy could be raised above the estimated figure but not above 5%.

Mr. Rafac stated the Resolution on the agenda extends the amount that was levied last year into this year.

Ms. May asked for the dollar amount.

Mr. Rafac replied it was the same.

Mr. Adamic commented that he thought it was less.

Mr. Rafac stated it was slightly less.

Mr. Palmer stated the revenues come from different sources.

Mr. Rafac agreed. Some go up. For example, there is a road project that needed funding. Most everything else went down slightly. The variances are very small.

Mr. Adamic asked if approval of the Resolution would handcuff the board members.

Mr. Rafac replied no. Changes still can be made to the budget. After today the publication option is lost unless everything was delayed until late November.

Mr. Adamic stated there didn't seem to be enough votes to go to the maximum.

Mr. Rafac stated the allocation across those funds is up to us.

Mr. Adamic asked if approving the Resolution today would prevent the board members from approving the County Executive's proposed budget.

Mr. Rafac replied no.

Ms. Deutsche arrived at this juncture.

Ms. May suggested the agenda should have been worded differently. It sounded as if that was the dollar amount.

Mr. Rafac stated most taxing bodies have levied above 5% because that gives the maximum flexibility when the revenue comes in, especially during periods of heavy growth.

Mr. Howard asked the origin of the amount of the levy.

Mr. Rafac replied the total was not to exceed the amount levied last year -- roughly \$111.64 million. Based on the discussions, it appeared that they would rather the figure be a little below last year's number rather than a little above.

Ms. Zigrossi stated the decision was not unanimous.

Mr. Howard asked why 0% was not chosen for the levy.

Mr. Rafac answered the levy was essentially a 0% change from the total amount extended last year. There is no way to hold every individual tax payer harmless. An aggregate rate had to be applied. Most residential home owners saw a decline in their property values, so most people will experience a reduction on the Will County line of their tax bill. If a home owner did not have a reduction in the assessment, or if the assessment increased, that home owner will pay more in taxes to Will County. The tax rate had to be increased to keep the revenue constant.

Mr. Howard commented he would rather see hard numbers on the budget. Residents might say, "That is typical government. " Government asks for a certain amount of money and then matches expenditures to that dollar figure instead of cutting the budget and tightening belts.

Mr. Rafac stated the other side believes the county should take a realistic look at revenues and then match expenditures to that figure. Historically the county has operated with a no staff reduction approach unless it was driven by work load.

Ms. Tatroe stated there must be a Resolution before the County Board because there must be a decision regarding the publication of the black box. It is not set in stone. It can be changed. If the black box is not published than the levy cannot be more than 105% under the Truth in Taxation law.

Mr. Adamic asked if there could be a black box publication if the board members approved the estimated levy.

Ms. Tatroe answered it would depend on the estimated levy.

Ms. May asked if the Finance Committee meetings actually could be Committee of the Whole meetings so all of the board members could participate in the discussion.

Mr. Friefeld suggested that the issue be discussed with Mr. Kusta, chairman of the Finance Committee. Or perhaps the structure of the meetings should be changed so that everyone was allowed to speak during the session.

LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE RESOLUTIONS

Mr. Smetana noted that Resolution 11-368 involved a temporary use permit for dog shows. The location of the site is Green Garden Township, not Lockport.

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Ms. Zigrossi mentioned there were opposing comments regarding the levy amounts for Resolution 11-376. The Democrats who attended the meeting would have kept the dollars the same but wanted to see the recapture as far as new construction added to it. The Republicans prefer zero increase and zero dollars. The OPEB funding still remains an issue.

Mr. Howard noted an e-mail has been circulated saying there has been a discussion about the possibility of raising the percentage on farm land by 30%.

Mr. Friefeld commented that was an error.

Ms. Zigrossi stated the rate is a function of the formula. If the equalized assessed valuation goes up, the rate will drop. If the equalized assessed valuation goes down, the rate will go up.

PUBLIC WORKS & TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

Mr. Babich provided an overview of the Resolutions.

Mr. Howard asked for an explanation of the \$64,000 reimbursement for the BP pipeline.

Ms. Manning replied the county is paying the company because BP moved the pipeline.

PUBLIC HEALTH & SAFETY COMMITTEE

Ms. Traynere asked about the issue involving a proposed rate increase for Camelot and Camelot Woods Subdivision.

Ms. May explained Camelot Utilities wanted a 220% rate increase. Residents say their water bills are about \$189 every two months, and the utility company has not explained its calculations.

LEGISLATIVE & POLICY COMMITTEE

Mr. Palmer stated there is a proposal to remove the tax exempt status from not-for-profit hospitals. The county has a good relationship with area hospitals, and the board members should support it.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Ms. Traynere asked for an explanation of Resolution 11-410 that set the number of Assistant State's Attorneys.

Mr. Friefeld answered that the County Board is required by law to set the number of the Assistant State's Attorneys. The Resolution reaffirms the existing number.

Ms. Traynere asked for an explanation of Resolution 11-415.

Ms. May commented that she voted against the measure in the Executive Committee because no one could explain the exact amount of the increase.

Mr. Palmer indicated the retirees were low income. Regarding Resolution 11-397, the replacement hires for Workforce Services and EMA, the positions were critical. The request for the replacement maintenance worker was denied but will be reconsidered later.

Ms. May asked for an explanation of the county employees' cellular telephones and the policies regarding their use.

Mr. Palmer replied the policy was being considered.

Mr. Friefeld stated the employees who use county cell phones to make personal calls make a payment to the county. The issue involving the cellular phone carrier was not related to that policy.

Mr. Adamic stated the Resolution 11-418 simply declared there was a vacant seat in County Board District 2. It did not fill that empty seat.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Ms. Traynere, second by Ms. Winfrey, to adjourn the meeting at 9:35 a.m. All in favor.

MOTION CARRIES.