

**\*\*\* SPECIAL \*\*\***

**WILL COUNTY BOARD**

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING**

**MINUTES**

**November 18, 2009**

6:00 p.m.

Will County Office Building  
County Board Committee Room  
302 North Chicago Street  
Joliet, IL 60432

**CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Bilotta called the meeting to order at 6:08p.m.

**ROLL CALL**

**Present were Members:** Adamic, Stewart, Goodson, Seiler, Wilhelmi and Bilotta.

**NO QUORUM**

**Absent were Members:** Kusta, Dralle, Gould, Maher, Singer, Weigel and Moustis.

**Also Present:** J. Traynere, B. Smith, D. Rozak, H. Brooks, M. Johannsen and B.

Friefeld.

**Present from State's Attorney's Office:** M. Manning.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

No minutes were presented for approval.

**OLD BUSINESS**

**NEW BUSINESS**

**Public Hearing Re: Video Gaming**

Mr. Bilotta stated that video gaming was brought forth in the capital bill; there was a provision to allow local government including counties to opt out. This is the second of two public hearings. We are here to take your input; we are not here to answer questions. We have several people here tonight; it is great to see the attendance. We encourage the members of the union - if you all want to speak; you are able to do so.

Mayor Cook applauded the county for having the public hearings and getting the public input of the residents of Will County. He is President of the Will County Governmental League

and Chairman of the Chicago Metropolitan Mayors Caucus representing 273 municipalities in northeastern Illinois. He is here today not in favor and not opposed to any efforts of banning video poker. He is asking the county to wait and see. It is important for the working men and women to have the bonds sold and the capital be allocated to these projects. People across the county are in desperate need of jobs and this capital bill brings jobs to the area. A change in bond rating will save the taxpayers \$16 million. If municipalities and counties continue to oppose prior to those bonds being sold that could lower the bond rating – costing millions of taxpayers' dollars. Local government should have local control but it is important we wait until we see what impact this will have in our communities. The rules are not set; we do not know what the full impact on municipalities will be. Getting these bonds sold in a timely fashion and getting people back to work and getting this economic development; a true economic development stimulus – road projects in our communities is so important. He urged the county to take a wait and see approach.

Mr. Rich Pope, Jr. Trustee with the Fraternal Order of Eagles, spoke on behalf of all their members. As a social club we are trying to function with what we get out of the machines; we use the money from the machines to pay our bills. The smoking ban took a toll on members. If we are penalized by taking the machines out, we will not be here anymore. We will not be able to help people through our fundraisers. Please consider and give us the right to use these machines to make ends meet.

Mr. Wilhelmi arrived at this juncture.

Mr. Blue representing the Illinois Church Action on Alcohol & Addiction Problems addressed the committee. We are asking you to do what has been done by 30 communities in the State of Illinois and reject the availability of video poker. He provided a handout including a two-page list showing 29 communities and 3 counties that have banned video gaming. We hope that Will County will be a part of that; 37 other communities and counties are discussing it right now. We have come to identify video poker as an especially addictive form of gambling; it is attractive and the graphics will get better. The maximum bet is \$2 per hand; we have been told a skilled poker player can play as many as 30 hands at a time. There is no provision restricting local governments from receiving projects from the capital projects fund even if that governmental body has banned video gaming in their area. We are asking you to make a very bold decision; we hope that you will reject this when you vote on this.

Mrs. Traynere arrived at this juncture.

Mr. Calvin Johnson stated he has no financial interest in any retail establishment. He is here as a concerned citizen. If allowed this will have very negative consequences on our

communities; the social costs outweigh the increased revenue. Video gambling diverts money from household purchases and hurts other businesses. He urged the board to follow the wishes of the majority of the voters and ban video gambling.

Ms. Mary Goines with the Illinois Liquor Beverage Association thanked the committee for the opportunity again to speak. We hear video poker being referred to as the crack cocaine of gambling; it is video gaming and possibly in each venue there would be one poker machine - the rest would be black jack and other types of gaming. Twenty one years ago the state approved gambling; for us to continue to talk about when we have horse racing, off-track betting, lotteries, casinos, bingo, Las Vegas nights at churches it is not something new to this state. So far, 1% of the people who can have gaming have opted out; it will take more than that to kill this bill. If it does get killed it would end a lot of jobs. With the economy the way it is, we need jobs. The only way to get the jobs is to have the money for those jobs. Here is an opportunity for us to put people to work in Will County.

Ms. Greta McDonald, United Methodist Pastor stated we have a stance against gambling. We believe it is most detrimental to people who can afford it the least; we are always concerned about the expansion of gambling. It is an unwise way for the state to balance their budget.

Mr. Tom White indicated we have been to Springfield over the last few years trying to get the capital bill. No matter what the funding stream is, no one likes it; everyone wants the roads fixed – no one wants a motor fuel tax. Somehow we have to fund this; we have to put men back to work. This is the only answer they could come up with and he believes it is a fair answer. No matter how we do this, there will be people against it. He urges the county board to move forward and get Will County roads improved; let us get these people back to work.

Mr. Tom Furello stated he is here on behalf of the International Union of Operating Engineers, Local 150 representing more than 23,000 workers in our jurisdiction. It is necessary for everyone to take a step back and consider what this funding will do for infrastructure and employment in Will County. Prior to passing the capital bill the state neglected infrastructure for years, which requires immediate action. On top of aging infrastructure, unemployment is the highest it has been in decades. While video gaming was not our first choice of a funding mechanism, the tax will provide a huge portion of the funding. Until someone comes up with a more popular alternative revenue stream, please do not oppose video gaming in Will County.

Mr. Mark Poulos, Executive Director of the International Union of Operating Engineers Local 150 Food Bank indicated the food bank over the course of the last year was started as a non-profit to connect local members that have been out of work with food for their families. As

noted, there is no restriction on funds if the county opts out of video gaming; that also presumes there will be funds available. What we are talking about is simply jobs; this county has the highest unemployment rate we have seen in decades. For the first time in almost a decade our elected officials threw us a lifeline; first with the capital bill and then with a \$31 million public works bill. But local politicians are second-guessing their statewide officials at the expense of the working men and women of the State of Illinois. The key component to fully funding is to include video gaming. We already have gambling around the state, specifically in this county. Opting out will remove over 40 establishments in Will County alone. No revenue stream is perfect but a revenue stream that creates jobs is a needed source in this economy.

Mr. Charlie Hanus, President of Will Grundy Central Trades and Labor Council, representing over 45,000 trade unionists in our area. We have been going around over two years with the capital bill; we finally get it passed on a bi-partisan basis in Springfield, it has a revenue stream. It needs Will County to stay in it and support the video gaming. We cannot wait any longer; we need to get people back to work and we need your support on this.

Ms. Janice Gintzler a member of ICAAP indicated she wants the capital bill; we need to improve our roads and we need people back to work. Gaming ruins people's lives as well; we passed gambling in the state and what did it get us. In a recession, people do not gamble as much as they did – there is not as much revenue. Once you allow it; it is hard to take away.

Mr. Bilotta indicated the committee would take a break to allow time for everyone in attendance to sign in for the record.

After the break, Mr. Bilotta asked if there was anyone else that would like to speak.

**Other New Business**

**ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE CHAIRMAN**

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

**ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting ended at 7: 09 p.m.