

## Minutes of the Legislative Subcommittee

The Legislative Subcommittee of the McLean County Board met on Tuesday, April 28, 2020 at 2:30 p.m. in Room 400, Government Center, 115 E. Washington Street, Bloomington, Illinois.

Members Present: Chairman Jim Soeldner, Members George Gordon, William Caisley, George Wendt, Carlo Robustelli, Gerald Thompson, and Elizabeth Johnston (All Via Remote Attendance)

Members Absent: None

Other Board Members Present: None

Staff Present: Ms. Camille Rodriguez, County Administrator; Ms. Cassy Taylor, Assistant County Administrator, Ms. Jessica Woods, First Assistant State's Attorney – Civil Division (Remoted attendance); Ms. Julie Morlock, Recording Secretary

Department Heads/  
Elected Officials Present: None

Others Present: None

Chairman Soeldner called the meeting to order at 2:30 p.m. and declared a quorum.

Mr. Soeldner presented the minutes from the February 19, 2020 meeting for review and approval.

Motion by Robustelli/Johnston to approve the minutes of the February 19, 2020 meeting.  
Motion Carried.

Chairman Soeldner confirmed there were no members of the public to appear.

Chairman Soeldner presented for action a request to approve the 2020 Legislative Program for McLean County.

Ms. Rodriguez indicated that she had provided a summary memo in the packet. Mr. Soeldner indicated maybe they should go line by line. Mr. Thompson indicated he was concerned about the additions that had been suggested as he felt they were outside the scope of what the County should be working on. Mr. Wendt indicated he agreed and said he felt should pass the way it was presented with no new changes. Mr. Robustelli asked him to clarify if he was wanting to go with the one from last year. Mr. Wendt indicated he felt should approve as presented.

Ms. Taylor came forward and went over the topics that had been approved and then brought forward the ones where there were still questions.

Ms. Taylor indicated the Criminal Traffic Assessment Act had been discussed at the last meeting and tabled for approval and Administration has not received any additional proposed

language. Mr. Soeldner asked if she recalled what the conversation was at the last meeting regarding this topic. Ms. Taylor indicated there was concern we were changing the Act itself and the amounts of money that would be received by the County and the State. She indicated the recommendation was to be budget neutral or in favor of the County and there is no current legislation that we are aware of to amend the Assessments themselves.

(13:49) Mr. Caisley indicated he did not feel the court system should be utilized as a means of financing county government as operations of the county should be paid by the taxpayers not through fees. Mr. Soeldner indicated he did not see where we specifically address that in our document and asked Staff if they were aware of anything in our program that addresses this. Discussion about whether this is a new topic or part of one already in the program. Mr. Caisley stated this was a new topic to get rid of all court costs that aren't court costs and provided examples.

Caisley indicated he wanted to make a motion that all court costs be directly related to the court system and the cost of operating the court system and the other offices that relate to the court system including the sheriff office circuit clerk office, state's attorney office. Mr. Gordon not sure where motion ended but is the public defender's office to be included. Mr. Caisley said you can include the public defender.

Mr. Robustelli said he appreciated where Mr. Caisley is coming from with unnecessary fees, and he has raised this before. He said we are statutorily required to do certain things and the State has not provided revenue to do those things but asked where the funding would come from to offset reduction in fees. Ms. Taylor indicated that would require a further analysis.

Mr. Soeldner asked if tabled to a stand up would give staff time to look at numbers. Mr. Robustelli asked if there is legislation being discussed at the State level regarding this matter because generally all other topics on the agenda are items currently being discussed, so should we do analysis and bring up later. Mr. Soeldner said if vote is defeated then would recommend that we get analysis and include sooner rather than later.

Motion by Caisley/Wendt to propose legislation where all court costs related to traffic offenses be directly related to the local court system.

Motion Carried. Soeldner, Robustelli, Gordon voted no.

Mr. Soeldner asked Mr. Caisley to get with Staff about numbers. Ms. Taylor asked if this was an addition piece of information. Mr. Soeldner confirmed.

Mr. Soeldner moved to the next topic to be discussed – Fair Maps Initiative. Ms. Johnston had a suggestion to add more detail to the topic but did not want to change the recommendation. Mr. Thompson stated he agreed with the intent but was not sure this was the roll of county government and their legislative agenda. Mr. Gordon understood where Mr. Thompson was coming from as we should not spread ourselves too thin, but felt fair maps affect county and other levels of government. Mr. Gordon also asked if they could change the word "political" for "partisan" in second line. Mr. Johnston was ok with that change. Mr. Thompson stated while he understood it affects county government, he questioned whether it

was the role of county government to seek this type of information. He stated based on past experience he felt we need to maintain our focus on topics. Mr. Caisley stated he felt we do have an interest in this topic but did not feel we would get it through the legislator. Mr. Wendt indicated he agreed with Member Caisley.

Motion by Johnston/Gordon to Topic- Fair Maps Initiative- Our neighboring state of Iowa utilizes an independent legislative agency to draw district lines and must disregard partisan objectives and conduct public hearings to ensure Fair Maps. Their Legislature is required to vote up or down on the agency's maps without amendments. Other states utilize nonpartisan, independent, or bipartisan commissions. This will promote fair and independent district maps and ensure more meaningful elections. Keep same recommendation.

Motion Carried. Members Johnston, Robustelli, Wendt, Gordon voted yes. Members Soeldner, Thompson, Caisley voted no

Mr. Soeldner asked they go to the next item for discussion. Ms. Taylor indicated the next topic for discussion is the Response to Trauma and Abuse. Ms. Johnston stated that she was looking for was the response to childhood abuse that is happening already. She indicated that abuse is going up and should ask for more funding to assist with this problem. Mr. Thompson stated he felt the situation is serious but was not sure it was our role to take the lead on this matter as he felt we are spreading our interests thin. Ms. Johnston stated she felt our position was to work with the State government on these types of matters and felt we should support State legislation because of long term impact on our community. Mr. Wendt indicated the State would have to borrow the money to give to us for this matter and then our children and grandchildren would have to pay back.

Mr. Gordon indicated we already have some County effort invested in childhood abuse and neglect, such as Child Protection Network and CASA, so acquiring additional state funding has the potential for reducing childhood trauma and abuse which could have a positive ripple effects on both county social and financial matters. Mr. Caisley felt this was similar to action in McHenry County to transfer the functions from DCFS to county government. He stated while he felt we might do a better job we have to have some source of revenue to support it and while McHenry County received funding from DCFS, he was not sure if that would work for our County. Ms. Rodriguez asked for clarification if the recommendation was to increase funding for child protection services or prevention. Ms. Johnston she indicated she took out prevention from her statement and it was about responding to the trauma and abuse and neglect of the children. She indicated this is about them not being able to respond in a timely manner and so children are left in vulnerable situations.

Motion by Johnston/Gordon to update the language to read: Topic- Childhood Trauma and Abuse- Childhood trauma is one of the most significant contributing factors to poor physical health outcomes, emotional dysfunction, and educational disruption which impact our community generation after generation. As a preventative effort, we need to address issues with DCFS in investigating and protecting children. The work is difficult, the pay is low, the department is consistently understaffed, and resources are stretched too thin to be effective,

leaving vulnerable children in unsafe environments. Recommendation – Identify and increase funding for child protection services in order to meet the needs of children impacted by abuse and neglect.

Motion Carried. (49:37)

Ms. Taylor indicated that the next topic would be the information we received from Mr. Robustelli.

Mr. Robustelli proposed adding **Topic - Local Government Coronavirus Assistance Funding** Local governments are poised to lose significant revenue from the Coronavirus pandemic and are on the front lines of providing services and support to residents during the mandated government stay at home orders. Revenue losses have the potential to force local units of government to cut staff and reduce services which will just amplify the impact of the Pandemic on our local community. **Recommendation:** Support federal and State legislation that provides additional budget relief to County Government units to protect jobs and critically important public services.

Motion by Robustelli/Johnston to add **Topic - Local Government Coronavirus Assistance Funding** Local governments are poised to lose significant revenue from the Coronavirus pandemic and are on the front lines of providing services and support to residents during the mandated government stay at home orders. Revenue losses have the potential to force local units of government to cut staff and reduce services which will just amplify the impact of the Pandemic on our local community. **Recommendation:** Support federal and State legislation that provides additional budget relief to County Government units to protect jobs and critically important public services.

Motion Carried. Member Wendt voted no.

Mr. Robustelli proposed adding **Topic - Vote by Mail applications sent to every registered voter by election authorities** Voters should not have to choose between putting their lives at risk and exercising their right to vote in the upcoming election. To ensure public health it is critical that election authorities have the resources they need to protect vulnerable populations from the coronavirus pandemic. **Recommendation:** Support Federal and State Legislation that requires all election authorities to send vote by mail applications to all registered voters and provides funding to do so.

Mr. Robustelli stated there was an article in which the County Clerk supported this. He said this is an item that has been discussed at federal and state level and voters should not have to choose. He stated he felt election official should have the resources they need to protect the vulnerable population from the coronavirus, so would recommend we support federal and state legislation that requires all election authorities to send vote by mail application to all registered voters and provides funding to do so. Mr. Soeldner asked him to confirm this is to send an application to everyone and if they send in then they would receive a ballot in the mail for voting. Mr. Wendt he indicated he felt it would be a waste of taxpayer money and time as there is already a system in place for people to request a ballot. Mr. Soeldner asked

if there was discussion regarding cost. Mr. Robustelli stated he did not have figures on that because part of his recommendation was that funding be included. Mr. Wendt discussed cost of postage and mailer and time of staff to put this together and where the funding would come from would be the taxpayers as he worries about the debt we will be in from this situation and we do not have to add this cost to the already mounting costs. Mr. Thompson indicated he is opposed to this because of same reasons that Mr. Wendt just stated. Mr. Soeldner indicated he would support topic so they could have discussion at full board. Mr. Caisley indicated he felt it opens the way for election fraud and not sure it would increase participation and felt would need to look at other states to see if increased there. Ms. Johnston stated she did not feel it will be gone by November and if there was a way for voters to get a ballot then she supported it. Mr. Robustelli stated this is an extraordinary set of circumstances and he felt people should be given this option. Mr. Robustelli went over numbers of registered voters and cost to mail to voters, and he stated we have spent greater amounts in the past for election services. Mr. Wendt agreed this would increase chances of voter fraud and he still felt the State would need to borrow money for this and there already exists a simple way for people to get ballot and vote.

Motion by Robustelli/Johnston to add **Topic - Vote by Mail applications sent to every registered voter by election authorities** Voters should not have to choose between putting their lives at risk and exercising their right to vote in the upcoming election. To ensure public health it is critical that election authorities have the resources they need to protect vulnerable populations from the coronavirus pandemic. **Recommendation:** Support Federal and State Legislation that requires all election authorities to send vote by mail applications to all registered voters and provides funding to do so.

Motion Carried. Members Soeldner, Gordon, Robustelli and Johnston voted yet and Members Thompson and Caisley and Wendt voted no.

Mr. Soeldner indicated that in the future we would work to get this completed in earlier in the year, but there will probably always need to be updates as things change throughout the year. Mr. Gordon asked if the Committee was ok changing wording under Behavioral/Mental Health Funding to read "Restore previous funding sources and identify new funding sources for critical mental health services." Committee was ok with that.

Motion by Robustelli/Johnston to recommend approval of the 2020 Legislative Program as amended.

Motion Carried. Members Wendt and Thompson voted no

Chairman Soeldner asked if there was any further business for the Committee to consider; hearing none, he adjourned the meeting at 3:47 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Julie Morlock*

Ms. Julie Morlock  
Recording Secretary