

**PUBLIC SERVICES COMMITTEE
MINUTES
November 1, 2004**

The Public Services Committee of the DeKalb County Board met on Monday, November 1 2004, @ 6:30p.m. in the Administration Building's Conference Room East. Chairman Marlene Allen called the meeting to order. Members present were Pat LaVigne, Eric Johnson, Steve Faivre, Sue Leifheit and Robert Rosemier. Members absent were Eileen Dubin, Julia Fullerton and Richard Osborne.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Moved by Mr. Rosemier, seconded by Ms. LaVigne, and it was carried unanimously to approve the October 2004 minutes.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Moved by Mr. Johnson, seconded by Ms. Leifheit, and it was carried unanimously to approve the agenda.

CORONER'S AND ESDA UPDATE

Mr. Dennis Miller, DeKalb County ESDA Director, said that there is a larger increase over last year's figures. He said that they had 401 deaths last year and so far this year to date they have 390 deaths. Another increase was seen in the cremations ordered. Last year there were 207 cremations and this year to date it is 210. He doesn't know why there has been an increase in cremations except for maybe financial reasons or that the families wish to have them cremated.

He said that the ESDA caseload is increasing dealing with weather related issues and planning for disasters and terrorism in the county.

He applied for a grant through the Homeland Security Department about one and half years ago. DeKalb County was included in the five countywide application process (Region 2), which includes Boone, Ogle, Winnebago, Lee and DeKalb. They were given \$1 million dollars and Mr. Miller divided it up five ways giving each county \$200,000. He has begun spending the money on equipment with fire service and law enforcement agencies. He just delivered 30 new generators to local fire departments in the area. He also ordered 100 hand-held radios that will be split between fire service departments and law enforcement (Sheriff's Department).

Ms. Dubin arrived @ 6:35p.m.

Mr. Miller said that since the money comes from a federal grant, the County would have to pay for the equipment first, and then get reimbursed by the federal government. The grant is for equipment only, said Mr. Miller.

Mr. Rosemier asked Mr. Miller if he grants permits for the cremations? Mr. Miller said that yes he does and he would like to raise the rate to \$25.00

per permit. Right now they charge \$10.00, which is state law. In a hardship case, the fee can be waived. Mr. Miller further explained that the county has set up an Indigent Burial Program that involves funeral homes that are contacted for burials, on a rotation basis, when an indigent person dies. He has already purchased 5 caskets at surplus prices through the state. They are housed in the basement of the Legislative Center.

COURT SERVICES REPORT

Ms. Margi Gilmour, DeKalb County Court Services Director, said that she wanted to inform the committee that she had one adult court officer position opening. This salary is subsidized by the state for about \$9,000.00 annually. The State Administration Office had notified her that any current vacancies or future vacancies would have a freeze on salaries until further notice. She really needs this position filled so she has written a letter on the situation to the Administration Office and she is waiting for their response. Judge Klein has asked that she wait to post the opening until she hears from the Administration Office. She will notify the committee in the near future what the outcome on this issue is as soon as she hears anything.

The total adult court caseload has been creeping up lately, but that the 722 cases include 250 administrative cases. There are 470 active cases, where defendants are actually reporting into her office on a regular basis. Ms. Gilmour explained that the administrative cases would involve a person that has moved to let's say, Ogle County, and they have to start reporting there on a regular basis; that case then is transferred there to Ogle County. The officer here in DeKalb County still has to monitor the file, however, and make sure that the defendant is paying his/her fee, making his/her court date, etc.

Ms. Gilmour said that the community service report is consistent and that they should be seeing a drop in the numbers due to the colder weather.

The juvenile report shows that they had 10 admissions in September. Of those ten there were 7 for the 1st time, 1 for the 3rd time, 1 for the 4th time and 1 for the 8th time. In the month of October her report will reflect two juveniles that are in residential placement.

Learning Mentor Program

Ms. Gilmour then introduced Ms. Deanna Cada, the Juvenile Supervisor, to the committee regarding the Learning Mentor Program through the Court Services Department. Ms. Cada said that in 1997 Judge Wiley Edmundson created a new type of sentence for juveniles that had to do with educational type research projects. He had the children write book reports, do historical research on the Civil War, and even one time had a student do a report on a collection of 50 various insects. He felt that this was a good way of increasing the children's self esteem, which is very important.

In 1999 the focus on juvenile justice changed, before this time it was for the best interest of the child. After 1999 they changed it to a more balanced and restored justice sort of philosophy. They then took a three-fold philosophy and applied that to juvenile justice, which was public safety, accountability and

competency development. At the time we were doing okay with public safety and accountability, but were not very strong on the competency development, Ms. Cada said. So they took this idea of children doing projects that were educational, matched that in with the competency development and came up with the Juvenile Learning Mentor Program.

What they decided to do was to match children up with members of the community; have them develop their own educational topic; research it; learn how to use the library; and then give that presentation to an audience. The goals that they set were to increase academic success by involving youth in a structured skills training activity; increase their self-esteem by exposing youth to positive learning experiences; promote positive peer relationships through association with a positive role model from the community; and to reduce delinquent behavior and promote social responsibility. What they found is that by giving these children an opportunity to meet with the community member and to see what life is like beyond the world they live in – it has been a very positive experience.

The program takes place at Northern Illinois University and a lot of the mentors are students and community leaders. It helps to build their self-esteem because of the sense of accomplishment these children feel when they finish this program. If they can get the children to “that first meeting” almost all of them finish the program.

Another great thing that has come about through this program is getting the community involved. When the community gets involved they have been able to see that these are simply children that have made a mistake. They see that the children are valuable and that they have a lot to offer the community. Her office works with the DeKalb County Community Foundation, the Big Brothers and Big Sisters Organization, NIU and their library and the Kishwaukee Education Consortium. Ms. Cada said that their volunteers have been wonderful to work with and have been great mentors for the children.

Ms. Cada said that they still have not done a program evaluation yet. NIU did a study of the program a couple of years ago, which stated that it was a really positive thing for the children. They still haven’t done anything since. She said that they do need to find out if their program is having any academic success. She hopes that they will be able to have someone come in from NIU to begin that evaluation process soon.

Ms. Cada then introduced Ms. Keri Nelson, DeKalb County Juvenile Learning Mentor Program Coordinator and Intake Officer. Ms. Nelson said that NIU does a great job of helping her find volunteers for the program. She feels that their program has the most dedicated group of volunteers. She has two ladies, for example, that have volunteered their time for over 70 hours already. Thirty-seven percent of the people who volunteer usually come back for another session, she said.

They have also experienced a lot of recognition over the year, said Ms. Nelson. Mrs. Dubin, DeKalb County Board Member, supplied their office with

an application from the National Association of Counties for the National Acts of Caring Award. In 2003 they had the privilege of traveling to Washington, D.C. to receive this national award.

The range of ages of the children that take part in their program are from 11 to 17 years of age and all of them are successful. They have had 58 children participate in the program and 87% have graduated. Her hope is that that some of these graduates will eventually mentor for other children in the future.

The committee thanked Ms. Cada and Ms. Nelson for their wonderful report on the Learning Mentor Program.

PUBLIC DEFENDER'S REPORT

Mr. Kenneth Johnson, DeKalb County Public Defender, thanked the county board and the committee for working hard on his budget appeal, he greatly appreciates it.

The numbers in his office regarding felony cases have been moving through his office faster than they ever did before, which he feels is because he office is finally fully staffed. The felony caseload has been continuously creeping up higher and higher each month, which is always a concern. It looks like there has been an increased filing on the felony level from the State's Attorney's office, which would increase his office and their workload. The additional position, if it is approved, will help with the caseload in his office.

They do have a pilot program with the collection officer that will be in the county clerk's office. They will be monitoring a small number of cases already to try and iron out a better way of handling them for payments. The compliance officer will free up quite a bit of time on Friday afternoons for his office. He feels that it is an outstanding idea that the court came up with and that this committee recommended to the full board for consideration. He feels that it will hopefully generate more revenue, too.

ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Mr. Johnson, seconded by Ms. Dubin, and it was carried unanimously to adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Marlene Allen, Chairman

Mary C. Supple, Secretary

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