

**FINANCE COMMITTEE  
MINUTES  
November 2, 2005**

The Finance Committee of the DeKalb County Board, met on Wednesday, November 2, 2005, @ 7:00p.m., in the DeKalb County Administration Building's Conference Room East. Chairman Jeff Whelan called the meeting to order. Members present were Sue Leifheit, Michael Haines, Dennis Sands, Ruth Anne Tobias and Jerry Augsburger. Mr. Metzger was absent. Others present were Ray Bockman, Gary Hanson, Pat Vary, Anita Turner, Diane Strand, Ken Johnson, Steve Slack, Chris Rickert, Steve Kuhn, Roger Steimel, Howard Lyle, Kevin Hickey, Sheriff Scott, Sharon Holmes, Margaret Whitwell, Christine Johnson, Joan Berkes-Hanson, Greg Millburg, Julia Fullerton and Sally DeFauw. Chairman Whelan welcomed Mr. Haines to the committee, who is replacing Steve Faivre.

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**

**Moved by Ms. Sands, seconded by Ms. Leifheit, and it was carried unanimously to approve the minutes from October 5, 2005.**

**APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

**Moved by Ms. Tobias, seconded by Mr. Augsburger, and it was carried unanimously to approve the agenda as presented.**

**FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE ACT POLICY**

Mr. Gary Hanson, DeKalb County Deputy County Administrator, passed out an amendment to the County's Family Medical Leave Act. He has crossed out the words that are being changed and underlined the new language. County employees are eligible to take 12 weeks off for family and medical leave currently for qualifying circumstances on a calendar year basis. He said that what the County did not foresee is that an employee could time their needs to be off for the last three months of the year and then again for three months off in the beginning of the new year. People have been able to do this, that is, some of them have taken up to 24 weeks off, he said. Earlier this year the nursing home changed their policy to a floating 12-month period, so he is suggesting this for the rest of the county.

The other change is that when a person is off for worker's compensation, and when you are off for 3 days or more, it will be considered a leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act, said Mr. Hanson.

The committee asked Mr. Hanson if this is new? Mr. Hanson said no, but it is new to us, the County.

**Moved by Ms. Tobias, seconded by Ms. Leifheit, and it was carried unanimously to be forwarded to the full board for approval.**

### **PUBLIC HEARING – PROPERTY TAX LEVY**

Chairman Whelan called the public hearing to order for the purpose of the property tax levy. He asked if there was anyone in the audience who wanted to be heard on this issue? Chairman Whelan asked that people take 3 minutes to voice their concerns. Ms. Donna Butron, Kingston, Illinois, asked to be heard. Ms. Butron said that with all the gas prices going up, with the Governor's newly imposed Children's Insurance Act, and with this new 10% increase in the County's budget, she feels that if the County's citizens have to live within a tight budget that she feels the County government should too, until the economy calms down and levels out. The farmers are still out in the field to harvest corn that is going to bring in about \$1.34 a bushel. She finds it really hard that the County is asking for a 10% increase in taxes as well as putting a referendum on the ballot for open space. Her brother that lives in DuPage County just finished paying \$70.00 a year for their open space tax for DuPage County Forest Preserve. When a Forest Preserve requires more money they then require more power, and when more power comes then they take more farmland. When she spoke to a couple of people they told her that when people come and move out to DeKalb County that they want open space, and with the new zoning laws she feels that it will restrict her value. Now the pocket book will be bigger for the Forest Preserve and whose land are they going to come and take? She wishes that the county board would not accept the increase of 10% and definitely not the referendum for the Forest Preserve Open Space Referendum.

Mr. Haines wanted to make a point of clarification for the members in the audience that this is the public hearing for the County Board Budget and that the hearing for the Forest Preserve District budget will be held on Tuesday, November 15, 2005. They are two separate budgets, he said. The Forest Preserves money is levied separately from the County's budget. He also wanted to clarify that the money would only be coming from a willing seller, there would be no taking of land.

Ms. Burton said that she understands that this is how the current county board feels, but not everyone will be on the county board in 5 years from now because once you open the "Pandora's box" everyone will have to live with it including the people of the county.

Mr. Steve Kuhn, Sycamore, Illinois, cautioned the county board to be judicious and look at the budget and be careful. He also said to look at the referendums that are out there. How many taxes can you put out there?

Chairman Whelan, having heard everyone, closed the public hearing on the property tax levy.

#### **PUBLIC HEARING ON PROPOSED FY2006 BUDGET**

Chairman Whelan called the public hearing to order on the proposed FY2006 budget. No one asked to be heard.

Chairman Whelan closed the public hearing on the proposed FY2006 budget.

#### **OPEN DISCUSSION ON PROPOSED BUDGET**

Chairman Whelan asked Mr. Sands to let the committee know his feelings about the proposed county budget. Mr. Sands said that the 7.9% proposed increase in taxes is a lot of money. We need to reduce the budget back to 5%. This is our job and we're required to make tough decisions. He feels that we should not rely on the taxpayers, we can rely on new construction and new sales tax money, he said. He feels that the county should set aside for the jail expansion or construction if we don't cut taxes.

Mr. Haines said that taxes are what the citizens of the County use to get the services for everyone in the County. They are not only for the wealthy, he continued. Taxes are voluntarily paid to help us get services and protect ourselves. As the county grows, how can we have it both ways? That is, we have a larger county, more people, more stores to shop in, but our taxes go down. He doesn't understand that equation, it's a hard one to pull off. At some point as the county gets bigger and better, in order to maintain the quality of life that we have come to

realize, we have to ante up and meet the agreement that we have all entered into, which is to provide services for all of us.

Mr. Haines would also like the record to show that he is both a homeowner and he owns farmland. In the last four (4) years, his home taxes have gone up each and every year, as Mr. Sands has pointed out. But my farmland taxes have gone down 10% every single year. It's important to understand that in four years it's gone down by 40% on farmland property taxes.

Mr. Augsburger said that he has confidence that our County Administrators are well aware of the needs and services of the County and have not frivolously approved everything in the budget request. He also is a taxpayer and owns farmland.

Ms. Vary said that the 4.6% increase is there to try and finance all of the services that increase because of that new construction. It is not something extra, it is there to finance because we need more services, fire, police, etc. That is what the new construction money is there for. With the Opportunity Fund - where is that money going? It is being set aside to help create things to generate new money like experimental programs. This year it will go to the Sycamore Campus property; drug court; which will help to decrease crime and help to decrease the jail population, and for the lobbyists at the federal level to help get money earmarked for us. She also said that no one has mentioned that we paid off some debts off early last year. She is willing to pay taxes for education, health insurance at the state level for every child and for services. Ms. Vary also said that part of the reason that our taxes go up is because the federal government has cut taxes, those then go to the state level to fund, which in turn goes to the local level.

Mr. Steimel said that he wishes that the formula he would like the county to follow is that we provide the services needed with using the existing tax rates that we have. The fastest growing services that we have in this county is law and justice. He would like to put the emphasis on the jail referendum, we don't want anything to upset the public because we need a positive vote on that. He is asking that we use the sales tax monies wisely. We have \$350,000 for health insurance, we have \$800,000 for bridge repair, \$400,000 for election equipment for the handicapped and these are some things that we have included in the budget.

Mr. Steimel also said that with the sales tax monies to help build the new building for the home health care and new offices for housing other county offices - it will cost \$2,000,000. He feels that we should put that on hold. The \$19,000 that we pay for rent is a good deal, and the Veterans don't know what is going to happen yet on the referendum.

Mr. Hanson said that the \$2,000,000 from the health department is most of their share. Another \$600,000 would be used from the sales tax money to fund the home care portion.

Ms. Dubin said that she also is concerned about the 3 referendums and if DeKalb comes out with a school referendum, ours may not go through. The jail referendum is very important and she feels that we also need to emphasize this referendum. This budget is visionary, it also looks at what the county will need down the line like the home health care building.

Ms. Tobias pointed out that the property tax rate went down this year and the assessed value of homes has increased. We are building wealth for citizens this year for the future and we need to look at future building and space needs. We have done really well in managing the employee growth.

Ms. Turner asked Mr. Sands that he wants to cut the budget by \$375,000, where do you suggest we cut it from, and if we cut that money now it is her understanding that we will never get it back.

Mr. Sands said yes, that's correct. He also said that he would be willing to sit on a sub-committee of the Finance Committee to discuss where to cut the budget. He would just like to see us give the taxpayers a break.

Mr. Slack said that he stands behind the home health care building and that the jail referendum is important.

Mr. Haines said that he is new to the board and understand where the \$2,000,000 comes from, that is, sales tax and anticipated revenues. However, where does the \$375,000 figure come from? Mr. Hanson said that to reduce the tax levy from 7.9% to 5% it is a reduction of \$375,000.

Ms. Leifheit said that if we do cut the budget by \$375,000 we would not have a balanced budget. It will impact our services, and if you cut this amount, it is lost forever.

**After further discussion, it was moved by Mr. Augsburger, seconded by Ms. Tobias and it was carried to forward the FY2006 budget to the full board for approval. Mr. Sands voted no.**

#### **ELECTED OFFICIALS SALARIES**

Mr. Bockman's recommendations for the elected officials salaries are on a handout that are highlighted with boxes around the figures (see page attached). He did research by looking at the current compensation levels from larger and smaller counties than ours.

**Moved by Mr. Augsburger, seconded by Mr. Sands and it was carried unanimously to forward this recommendation to the full board for approval.**

#### **OLD BUSINESS**

Mr. Sands said that with the \$120,000 budgeted to pay for the lobbyists, did anyone find out what the City of DeKalb and the City of Sycamore are paying the Daley Group? Mr. Bockman said that he did not know but that he believed it was talked about at the Executive Committee. It was agreed to bring the issue back to the Executive Committee and see what they lobbyist is charging them. Mr. Bockman said that he believed that the Daley Group is lower than \$120,000.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

**Moved by Ms. Tobias, seconded by Ms. Leifheit, and it was carried unanimously to adjourn the meeting.**

Respectively submitted by,

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Jeff Whelan, Chairman

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Mary C. Supple, Secretary