

**DEKALB COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
July 26, 2007**

The DeKalb County Regional Planning Commission (RPC) met on July 26, 2007 at 7:00 p.m. in the DeKalb County Administration Building, Conference Room East, in Sycamore, Illinois. In attendance were Commission members Frank Altmaier, Rich Gentile, Jim Knox, Becky Morphey, Bill Nicklas, Don Pardridge, Paul Rasmussen, Roger Steimel, and Jerry Thompson. Audience members in attendance were Chris Greer (NIU Geology), Larry Thomas with Baxter & Woodman, Jack Wittman (WHPA), Doug Dashner with the DeKalb County Farm Bureau, and Jim Schneider. Staff included Paul Miller and Rebecca Von Drasek.

1. **Roll Call** -- *Mr. Rasmussen noted that Dan Godhardt, Cheryl Aldis, Mike Becker, Suzanne Sedlacek, Jerry Olson, and Ralph Tompkins were absent.*
2. **Approval of Agenda** – *Mr. Nicklas moved to approve the agenda, which was seconded by Mr. Steimel, and the motion carried unanimously.*
3. **Approval of Minutes** – *Mr. Gentile moved to approve the minutes, seconded by Mr. Pardridge, and the motion carried unanimously.*
4. **Regional Water Planning** - The Regional Planning Commission previously agreed to oversee an investigation into the County's groundwater with the goal of identifying whether or not there is a problem associated with ground water as a regional resource and, if so, what the problem is, what possible solutions exist, and which solution(s) would best solve the problem. The cities of DeKalb and Sycamore, along with DeKalb County, have allocated funds to pay for the services of an expert in groundwater and hydrology to begin working with the County on this issue. Staff invited Larry Thomas of the engineering firm Baxter-Woodman, and Jack Wittman of the hydrology firm Wittman Hydro Planning Associates, to speak to the Commission.

Mr. Rasmussen provided the Committee with printed material from a website as a follow-up to the presentations at the Regional Water Supply Planning Group meeting on July 24, 2007. The packet included a brief explanation of the State's current projects reviewing water supply issues.

Mr. Miller provided the Committee with an e-mail from Dr. Colin Booth, a hydrogeologist with Northern Illinois University, which outlined his proposal to serve as an advisor on the ground water project the RPC was undertaking. Dr. Booth also suggested that Chris Greer, a PhD. Candidate in Geology at NIU, would be able to work well with the RPC, since he is proposing to conduct a study on the shallow Troy Valley aquifer that exists on the west side of the County.

Mr. Thomas began the presentation by emphasizing Baxter & Woodman's past history of working with NIU. He highlighted the scope of current local and state water studies, and

the types of water resources (i.e. aquifers, lake) utilized around the Chicagoland area. Mr. Thomas pointed out that various political, economic, and social concerns can complicate decisions and policies regarding water supply. He stated that it is difficult to separate land planning from water use. Questions regarding groundwater have internal and external elements which need to be considered prior to data collection, and approaches to ground water studies can vary. As an example, he cited the studies done by Kane County, which spent two million dollars to generate new data on the location and quality of groundwater, while McHenry County spent \$350,000 on a ground water study that used existing data.

Jack Wittman of Wittman Hydro Planning Associates began his part of the presentation by describing DeKalb County's groundwater aquifers, three that are deep bedrock aquifers (St. Peters, Galesville, and Mt. Simon), the sandstone aquifers including the shallow Troy Valley. He highlighted the recharge area and the users of the various aquifers. Also, he pointed out the instances of shift where the layers of various materials change throughout the County.

Mr. Wittman indicated that he believes that by performing data collection the County would benefit from a trend analysis which would tell officials where the water is today, and how have things changed over time. By asking clear questions, Mr. Wittman asserted, there should be better answers to invest in future infrastructure and mapping out steps to protect an important resource.

Mr. Thomas resumed by suggesting a hypothetical course of action, which included the creation of a advisory committee. The newly created committee would draft the scope and prospective budget items which decision-makers would then choose from. Mr. Wittman then emphasized that if a regional committee, such as the RPC, already existed, a new committee may not be necessary.

Mr. Nicklas then asked Mr. Thomas and Mr. Wittman if they felt they could provide the RPC with a preliminary plan of action, asking questions like What do we know? What information is available? and What do we need to know?. Additionally, Mr. Nicklas also asked the consultants to anticipate options or action plans if the findings indicate a need.

Mr. Rasmussen asked for policy recommendations, maybe not a one-size-fits-all solution for the entire County, but various steps that the County can take to be prepared for future groundwater issues.

Mr. Thomas suggested that the County attempt to balance it's use and supply of water. Such a balance would have implications for future developments.

Mr. Altmaier then asked what would be the ballpark for funding possible action steps. Mr. Wittman replied that it is too early to determine. If the consultants advise steps be taken, then communities will need to be prepared to use bond measures in the future. Additionally, if the Committee hopes to have a better handle on how far off a problem may be (if any), Mr. Wittman alluded to shared vision modeling and the ability to run a

program that allowed various actors to visualize their growth combined with the various resources needed to sustain the locations.

Mr. Rasmussen indicated that the County and municipalities would like to be in a sustainable situation with respect to growth and groundwater, and need to know what other jurisdiction have tried to create the necessary balance.

Mr. Thompson announced a contribution of \$500 from the Village of Malta to add to the funding being provided by the County and the cities of DeKalb and Sycamore to finance the beginning of the groundwater project. He then asked the consultants to explain actual actions taken by other jurisdictions. Mr. Thomas pointed out that McHenry County had hired a full-time water resource manager and that they have also supported conservation and educational programs. Mr. Thompson asked why reclaiming wastewater and replenishing the aquifers was not being done locally. Mr. Thomas explained that altering groundwater for the better or worse was not allowed by Illinois regulations. Mr. Thomas went on to say that federal grants were another option to assist in the progress. Mr. Wittman also had some examples of projects including a communication system between wells to prevent over taxing the aquifer.

Mr. Wittman emphasized that every question could have many different solutions. He noted that as discussed earlier, DeKalb County will have numerous issues, the responses to which will vary by location. For example, ethanol plants require a considerable amount of water, and consideration must be given to where they are appropriate and where they are not. Additionally, since Kane County is already funding a extensive study, some information will be made available because the boundaries of the study included the townships on the Kane County border.

Mr. Thomas indicated that he would send a copy of the consultants' PowerPoint presentation to staff for distribution to members of the RPC. The consultants concluded by suggesting that, rather than choose between them, the RPC should consider contracting with both Baxter-Woodman and Wittman Hydro Planning, and the two firms would work together on a scope of activities to begin getting a handle on DeKalb County's groundwater situation. Mr. Thomas and Mr. Wittman would also work with Mr. Greer.

The Committee thanked both of the presenters and asked them to create a proposal for the creation of an action plan, including a list of questions the County should be asking to address groundwater concerns.

5. Municipal Development Projects - Included within each Commissioner packets were the current development projects.

Mr. Altmaier (Kingston) -- A new deli / butcher shop opened and a new restaurant is opening in an existing bar in the downtown.

Ms. Morphey (Somonauk) -- A new bakery is opening. The water tower contract has been awarded.

Mr. Thompson (Malta) -- The Village expects to see new sewer treatment and water tower work begin soon after the bonds are sold. The local convenience store is expanding.

Mr. Knox (Sandwich) -- The new sewer trunk line was tested and approved. A water park will likely be approved, to be located next to the Best Western hotel. The convention center is framed. The bridge and road work is continuing and new stop lights are going up on Rt. 34.

Mr. Pardridge (Shabbona) -- The new subdivision still has not begun substantial construction. The issue of a possible bingo hall on property owned by the Prairie Band of the Potawatomi Nation continues to be a matter of speculation. Mr. Pardridge noted that the tribal leader, Tracy Stanhoff, has recently resigned.

Mr. Nicklas (Sycamore) -- A new water tower is going to help with water pressure issues. The proposed treatment plant is percolating through the EPA approval process. There is also a lot of activity on Bethany Road Corridor.

Mr. Gentile (Genoa) -- A 104-acre industrial park is under review.

Mr. Steimel (DeKalb County) -- There are no new developments to discuss in the unincorporated area, reflecting the slow-down in the housing market. Mr. Steimel stated that it remains advisable for the County to progressing slowly and carefully in its negotiations with the Prairie Band of the Potawatomi.

Mr. Rasmussen (DeKalb) -- Renovation of the downtown is the number one priority. First, Second and Locust Streets are almost ready to go with improvements in landscaping and parking.

6. Adjournment -- *Mr. Nicklas motioned to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Gentile, and the motion carried unanimously.*

Respectfully submitted,

Paul Rasmussen
Chairman, DeKalb County Regional Planning Commission