

DEKALB COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
March 27, 2008

The DeKalb County Regional Planning Commission (RPC) met on March 27, 2008 at 7:00 p.m. in the DeKalb County Administration Building, Conference Room East, in Sycamore, Illinois. In attendance were Commission members Cookie Aldis, Frank Altmaier, Mike Becker, Dan Godhardt, Jerry Thompson, Paul Rasmussen, Rich Gentile, Becky Morphey, Bill Nicklas, Don Pardridge, Suzanne Sedlacek, Ruth Anne Tobias, Ralph Tompkins, Jerry Olson, and Bill Beverley. Audience members in attendance included Amanda Podgorny, Doug Dashner, Jim Schneider, Kate Schott, and Russ Farnum. Staff included Paul Miller and Rebecca Von Drasek.

1. **Roll Call** -- *Mr. Rasmussen noted that all Commission members were present.*
2. **Approval of Agenda** – *There were no motions made in regards to the agenda.*
3. **Approval of Minutes** – *Mr. Pardridge moved to approve the minutes, seconded by Ms. Aldis, and the motion carried unanimously.*
4. **Discussion on Ground Water Project** -- Mr. Miller briefed the Commission on the ground water project history, noting that representatives of Baxter & Woodman and Wittman Hydro Planning reviewed at the February 28, 2008 meeting of the RPC the draft Request for Proposals (RFP) prepared for the ground water project. Mr. Miller then handed out the revised RFP, titled Water Resource Management Plan (dated 3/27/08). The RFP sets forth a menu of tasks for developing a groundwater management program for the County. Among the highlights of the February presentation was the cost estimate of \$1.1 million for the project. Commission members agreed at the last meeting that potential funding mechanisms should be discussed before the RPC takes a vote on whether to recommend proceeding with the water resource protection plan RFP. The Commission was asked to make a recommendation at this meeting whether or not, given the implementation of any funding option, that the County and the municipalities within it should go forward with the water project set forth in the draft RFP.

Mr. Miller presented a memo, dated March 19, 2008, which outlined two prospective funding options for the Commission to consider. The first is a referendum to raise funds via a property tax over a period of one to three years. The second option is to create a water authority for the County which would have taxing authority. Mr. Miller stressed that the discussion for this meeting of the RPC was if or if not a groundwater study was necessary. If the answer from the RPC is in the affirmative, future discussions would determine the scope and funding for such a study.

Mr. Gentile asked if the vote was “yes” to support a groundwater study, did that also mean the Committee would be utilizing the draft RFP? Mr. Miller reiterated the RFP consisted of a menu

of options and that a vote would be to support the type of study sought in the RFP, although not necessarily every item within the RFP.

Ms. Tobias highlighted her recent participation with the CMAP Regional Water Supply Planning Session and the estimated projections of two million additional people within the Northeastern region of Illinois by 2050. She noted that DeKalb County is projected to nearly double its population to approximately 160,000 people. Ms. Tobias stated that the CMAP group in response to these projection is going to begin with promoting water conservation measures. Mr. Miller also noted recent news reports that the Chicagoland area is the seventh fastest growing major metropolitan area in the nation.

Mr. Beverley asked which counties where in the eleven county area. Ms. Tobias noted that they were Boone, Cook, DeKalb, DuPage, Grundy, Kane, Kendall, Kankakee, Lake, LaSalle, and Will.

Mr. Nicklas made a motion that it is the opinion of the Regional Planning Commission that a ground water project in line with the tasks in the draft RFP should be pursued, provided that funding source be determined prior to releasing the RFP. He also stated that there may be Federal and State funding available for such a study, and that he intended to research this option further.

Mr. Rasmussen asked if the RPC staff would write up the motion in the form of a resolution so that members could bring copies of the declaration of support to their respective boards to encourage the boards to see the unified efforts of the RPC.

Mr. Pardridge asked for a repeat of the motion. Mr. Nicklas restated that his intention was the Commission was stating to others that the RPC is interested in finding ways and means to investigate the water supply and agree that this RFP tends to focus those individuals who would preform such studies.

Ms. Aldis reread the original motion as *in the opinion of the Regional Planning Commission to pursue the RFP along the lines in the document presented tonight, provided that the funding source be identified first.*

Mr. Gentile asked if the Commission had looked into enough public information and received enough public input that has shown that the study suggested by this particular RFP was justified. He asked if the RPC had proven that the aquifers are being depleted at such a rate that this type of study is necessary. He also noted that he had a genuine concern that there is a problem but not necessarily adequate information that there is a depletion of the aquifers. He noted that he had a study from 2002 on the levels of the aquifers since 1985. He asked why the Commission not go straight into the conservation and education approach, and take additional time to really review if there is any other issue that needs to be addressed. Mr. Gentile suggested that

Communities within the County could provide enough information to determine a drop in the water table and could approach the constituents when an actual need arose.

Mr. Rasmussen responded that he felt the issue was really brought to the County and Municipalities' attention by a threat from an external organization which, if the referendum had passed, would have allowed an external group to control growth within DeKalb County. He noted that the growth was going to continue in the region, using the metaphor that his understanding of the water situation was that DeKalb County was sitting on top of a barrel and that neighboring counties were sucking at the end of a hose drawing from the barrel. Mr. Rasmussen reiterated therefore that the County and municipalities should have a mechanism in place to protect resources rather than allow an external group to have that control.

Ms. Aldis agreed in part with Mr. Rasmussen that the Commission needed to know the extent its water resources, so the Commission could plan for the resource. She questioned, however, how the information would be used, and asked if Ms. Tobias knew how the State intended to use its study. Ms. Aldis also asked how to plan for this issue without creating more regulation or an expansion of government. Ms. Tobias responded that she was unsure how the information would be used if at all by the regional planning group CMAP. She also explained that from her understanding of water law that anyone has a right to the water they pump to keep it and use it. Ms. Aldis expressed fear that this type of legislation would result in water wars.

Ms. Sedlacek agreed and noted that a DeKalb Water Authority was a viable option. She argued that the previous attempt to create a water authority only campaigned for eight weeks and that future efforts for a water authority might pass. Ms. Sedlacek also stated that she was concerned that the Commission was not already on top of such an important issue.

Mr. Gentile pointed out that the DeKalb Water Authority would not have any authority over Kane County. Then he asked what would be the benefit of a DeKalb County Water Authority. Mr. Miller emphasized that a water authority could be a funding mechanism to complete the groundwater study itself, and an on-going revenue stream to begin applying planning and management policies and regulations.

Ms. Aldis expressed concern that a water authority would never go away. Mr. Miller stated that there are other funding mechanisms to consider. Ms. Aldis reminded the Commission that a water authority would require a coalition of the willing.

Mr. Nicklas stated that the County needed to get a body of information collected so as to advance over where the County was a year ago. He noted some progress has been made and he assumed that the Commission members had briefed their respective council members. He then restated that his motion was to put this issue out into the public arena and then define how to pay for it.

Mr. Rasmussen noted there was a motion on the table.

Ms. Sedlacek seconded the motion.

Mr. Rasmussen asked that the motion be reread. Mr. Miller then reread the motion, *In the opinion of the Regional Planning Commission, the County and the municipalities should pursue a water project along the lines of the draft RFP, provided the funding for this water project is determined cooperatively.*

Mr. Beverley asked if this were passed if the RPC was passing an “opinion”, which Mr. Rasmussen affirmed stating that Commission members could then approach their councils with the resolution to allow the boards to make their decision to support the initiative.

Ms. Aldis asked how the Commission would return to Mr. Gentile comments regarding public education, and asked if the County would take charge of this type of activity.

Mr. Bockman noted that the County does not have staff to dedicate to groundwater issues anymore than the municipalities. He thanked the Commission for overseeing the water consultants up to this point and stated that he has been pleased with the results. He pointed out to the Commission that regardless of the funding recommendation, ultimately the tax payers of DeKalb County would pay for this initiative if approved.

Mr. Beverley noted that the Kendall County group was involved in the 11 County report. He stated that the City of Sandwich was not enthusiastic about funding a study since the City is in a different watershed from the rest of the County. Mr. Bockman responded that the consultants had specifically identified the southeastern part of the County as an area where not much information about ground water exists. He also stated that he understood if the City of Sandwich felt it would receive little additional benefit if it has already been involved in other area studies. Mr. Miller pointed out that the consultants would be able to incorporate Sandwich’s previous studies in the DeKalb County study.

Ms. Tobias noted that the study Mr. Beverley was referring to was done by the State Water Survey. She also noted that Kane and McHenry counties had spent the additional funds to gain more accurate information.

Mr. Beverley stated the radium is being carried by the water and that a million dollar ground water study would probably reflect the areas similar to where the radium is indicated. Mr. Miller agreed there was a lot of information available, but that the Commission needed someone to put that information together.

Mr. Rasmussen stated that what may come out of the review by the consultants is that all the information compiled about Sandwich is sufficient, he again noted that the costs were ala carte and that the Commission could consider each of the proposed costs.

Mr. Brockman highlighted that surrounding counties continue to grow and asked the Commission to consider how the County could object to a taking of water without information about the County's water resources.

Mr. Miller then reread the motion, "*In the opinion of the Regional Planning Commission the County and the Municipalities should pursue a water project along the lines of the draft RFP provided the funding for this water project is determined cooperatively.*"

A roll call vote was called. Ms. Aldis, Mr. Altmaier, Mr. Becker, Mr. Gentile, Mr. Godhardt, Ms. Morphey, Mr. Nicklas, Mr. Pardridge, Mr. Olson, Mr. Rasmussen, Ms. Sedlacek, Ms. Tobias, and Mr. Tompkins voted in favor of the motion. Mr. Beverley abstained and Mr. Thompson voted in opposition. The motion therefore passed with 13 in favor, one opposed, and one abstention.

5. Chairman and Vice-Chairman Elections --

Mr. Rasmussen announced his retirement from the City of DeKalb and the completion of his participation with the Regional Planning Commission. He emphasized that the County and municipalities work very well together and that the spirit of cooperation was unique in his experiences.

Mr. Thompson made a motion directing staff to create a resolution thanking Mr. Rasmussen for his service, seconded by Mr. Pardridge, and the motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Rasmussen thanked the Commission and briefly introduced his replacement as City of DeKalb Representative, the City's Community Development Director Russ Farnum. He then opened the floor for nominations for the Chairman and Vice-Chairman positions.

Mr. Nicklas nominated Mr. Gentile for Chairman and Mr. Pardridge for Vice-Chairman.

Ms. Morphey nominated Ms. Aldis for Vice-Chairman.

The Commission then voted between Ms. Aldis and Mr. Pardridge for Vice-Chairman, and Ms. Aldis won in the vote of 8 in favor of Ms. Aldis to 7 in favor of Mr. Pardridge.

The Commission voted unanimously to elect Mr. Gentile as the Regional Planning Commission Chairman.

6. Current Development Projects --

Mr. Beverley reported that the City of Sandwich was removing an Intersection although the proposed development was on hold.

Mr. Farnum reported that a small mixed use development was proposed at the intersection of Peace and Rt. 38. He was asked how the Fourth St. project was proceeding and stated that the City is waiting on funding to begin, but that the project was not off the table.

Mr. Schneider interjected that the foreclosure crisis was happening in DeKalb County and he wanted to make sure that the Commission members were aware of it.

The next RPC meeting is scheduled for May 22, 2008 at 7:00 pm in the Conference Room East.

7. Adjournment -- *Mr. Pardridge motioned to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Tompkins, and the motion carried unanimously.*

Respectfully submitted,

Rich Gentile
Chairman, DeKalb County Regional Planning Commission

RGV:rgv