

CHAMPAIGN COUNTY BOARD
COMMITTEE MINUTES

BUDGET PROCESS SPECIAL COMMITTEE

Wednesday, April 26, 2006

Brookens Administrative Center, Lyle Shields Meeting Room

1776 E. Washington St., Urbana

3:30 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Busey, Gross, McGinty, Knott, Tapley, Welch, Wysocki

MEMBERS ABSENT: Frerichs

OTHERS PRESENT: Captain Kris Bolt (Sheriff's Office), Kat Bork (Recording Secretary), Andrew Buffenbarger (Nursing Home Administrator), Nancy Crawford (Mental Health), Linda Frank (Circuit Clerk), Joe Gordon (Court Services/Probation Director), John Hall (Planning & Zoning Director), Roger Holland (Court Administrator), Denny Inman (County Administrator of Facilities), Stephanie Joos (Animal Control Director), Bill Keller (EMA Director), Duane Northrup (Coroner), Julia Rietz (State's Attorney), Randy Rosenbaum (Public Defender), Mark Shelden (County Clerk), Greg Vasen (IT Department), Dan Walsh (Sheriff)

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Wysocki called the meeting to order at 3:31 p.m. The Recording Secretary called the roll. Busey, Gross, McGinty, Knott, Welch, and Wysocki were present at the time of the roll call. Wysocki declared a quorum and proceeded with the meeting.

DISCUSSION REGARDING ESTABLISHMENT OF BUDGET PRIORITIES FOR FY2007 BASED ON BUDGET PROCESS QUESTIONNAIRES COMPLETED BY COUNTY OFFICES/DEPARTMENTS

Wysocki explained the purpose of the meeting was to continue the process to identify goals and objectives for use in the FY2007 budget process. At the previous meeting, the department heads were asked to answer a questionnaire to provide historical budget information as well as the functions of the offices. The responses were collected and organized into binders by Busey and have been distributed to the department heads. Wysocki encouraged the department heads to read the materials from other departments. This meeting was to begin to identify the particular strengths and move towards a broader picture of where the County should be in three to five years. Wysocki asked Welch and Gross to be scribes for the group and list strengths and weaknesses/challenges on large pads in front of the room for the beneficial of all present.

Tapley entered the meeting at 3:34 p.m.

Wysocki said the strengths that are repeated throughout several departments should be the focus to show strengths in the County as a whole. Walsh said the County employees were repeated as a strength by multiple department heads. Busey added that departments placed importance on seasoned employees as a strength. Tapley said a recurring theme was the need for or use of technology. Several departments specified a resistance to change as a challenge in their departments. Shelden said some people view the way County government is organized with its combination of department heads and elected officials as both a challenge and a strength. Northrup mentioned a frequent challenge for departments is the increased cost of conducting County business because of new state mandates without additional state funding. Tapley added that almost every department felt

they were understaffed. Busey noted several departments said there seems to be an increased public expectation, partially due to technology, that services are readily accessible and this is not always easy to deliver. This constitutes an increased demand from the public with regard to services. Along those lines, Rietz stated that no one was willing to see an established program go away to fund a new program; the public simply expects the previous services to continue as before. Wysocki noticed some departments lost federal or state funding that paid for staff and now the department is struggling to decide whether to cut the service or try to absorb the cost themselves. There are fewer outside dollars and this is having an impact. Busey asked if it would be more useful to regularly assess the services provided in order to replace a current service with a more valuable one. Gordon spoke about when his department has had to reassess and make a shift because of the loss of funding and personnel. He received a lot of feedback from attorneys who opposed the intensive probation services being eliminated. Rietz observed the public often wants a department to continue to provide an established service even when it has been proven the department cannot afford to do so. The other department heads agreed wholeheartedly. Knott suggested a challenge is for the department heads to work with a 27-member County Board because of its size and the turnover due to elections. Gross felt this could also be a strength. Busey said the size of the County Board creates the opportunity to bring a diversity of opinions and ideas to the table. Gross said Court Services listed the nice, new facilities at the Courthouse as a strength. Knott said the facilities are also a challenge because there are continuous space needs and the cost of utilities. Knott stated the Physical Plant is grossly understaffed since its number of staff has not increased when the County has significantly increased the square footage of buildings to maintain. The County Facilities Committee has repeatedly raised the problem of constructing new buildings and then not maintaining them. Knott did not think it was because of a lack of effort on Inman's part, but because there has not been funding for additional Physical Plant staff. Rosenbaum suggested a combination strength and challenge is training with new equipment, such as the JANO System and the new election equipment. This causes the challenge of trying to fund the necessary training.

Busey offered two opportunities that were not listed in any individual department's material but could be considered from a global perspective. The County has the opportunity in this community through two strong higher educational organizations to do more development with regard to recruiting and utilizing interns. Recruiting interns is not done collectively at the present time. Another opportunity is to create a speakers bureau with the seasoned employees at the County, especially in management. The County could put together a group who is very knowledgeable about core services that might be of use to the schools or different civic organizations and would be a chance to promote County government.

Holland said a strength that is the County is fairly transparent in its operations and is moving towards further transparency. Shelden said a weakness has been the communication gaps either between the County Board and departments or amongst the departments. Open communication between departments and the public is of great importance. Knott encouraged education on the role of County government within the larger community. Walsh said there has been tremendous cooperation between departments in specific areas, such as the tax cycle group and the justice system group. The justice system group developed the concept of a continuous jury system to manage the jail overcrowding. Northrup said a challenge was that most major changes do not end up being cost saving in the long run. Northrup agrees the continuous jury system will benefit the public by moving the cases, but it will not translate into savings for the County's budget. Welch noted the effects of some changes are not seen right away. Busey said this budget process theory is to develop performance management indicators to document the value of the services provided so public can see the actual cost of the service and decide whether or not the service is worth the cost. Holland said the County should not let cost savings stifle ideas. Welch commented that some services were beyond dollars and cents. It would be interesting to see the cost of providing mandated services compared to the cost of providing non-mandated services. Gross was struck by how much effort was involved in providing the mandated services, such as the costs of employee benefits, operating the buildings, utilities costs, etc. Shelden spoke the concern for setting the budget priorities. He felt sometimes departments do not suggest changes because they have been told there is no money available, only to see another department receive funding for a similar project. He said the departments are often operating in isolation when working together as a team would produce more beneficial results.

Wysocki asked for suggestions about where the County should be in the next three to five years. McGinty said a greater access to technology as it evolves for both the departments and the public would be an important factor. Tapley recommended a long-range plan for the network so the County can operate with a plan mind instead of managing from one year to the next. Rosenbaum suggested identifying mandated versus discretionary services. Busey recommended developing better communication with the Illinois General Assembly to make certain the legislators understand the County's concerns. Rietz advocated evaluating the County's philosophy on grant funding and to consider alternative sources of revenue. Busey suggested looking at revenue generation as a global effort, such as increasing fees in departments to generate enough revenue to operate County government. The County should also look into its uncollected obligations. Shelden said more technology would be needed. Having information available on the Internet could result in fewer phone calls to an office. Holland noted electronic filing is the wave of the future.

Busey asked if there should be a goal to address the challenge of the disjointed nature of County government and communication. Holland suggested a group of departments who are mutually affected by an issue talk amongst themselves. Busey noted all departments are affected by the issues of technology and facilities and asked if it would be beneficial to have meetings about those issues. Several department heads voiced support for that idea. Keller said the County needs to better educate the public about what services are supplied by County government. This will demonstrate to the public what their tax dollars are spent on. Many people are unaware of how much the County does. Tapley said the efficiency ratio used in banks could possibly be developed to measure local government efficiency and as a way to benchmark the amount of work being done. Shelden recommended public relations on the positive aspects of working for the County.

Northrup asked what kind of goals the County Board has as a whole. He wondered if there was a goal concerning the costs of providing health care. Busey said she believed the County Board has made fringe benefits for County employees a priority. The increasing costs of health care and insurance were discussed. Wysocki stated the County Board, and the Finance Committee in particular, are interested in strategic planning and hearing from department heads where they want to be in five years in order to develop a plan of how to get there. The Budget Process Special Committee members stated their appreciation to department heads from the questionnaire responses. These will serve as an important education tool for County Board members.

OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

ADJOURNMENT

Wysocki adjourned the meeting at 4:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kat Bork
Administrative Secretary

Secy's note: The minutes reflect the order of the agenda and may not necessarily reflect the order of business conducted at the meeting.