



## WASHTENAW COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

### WORKING SESSION

March 17, 2011

The meeting was called to order by Chair Rabhi at 6:32 p.m. in the Board Room, Administration Building, 220 North Main Street, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Comms. Bergman, Gunn, Judge, Peterson, Ping, Prater, Rabhi, Conan Smith, Dan Smith, and Turner

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Comm. Sizemore

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Verna McDaniel, County Administrator; Bill Reynolds, Deputy County Administration; Janis Bobrin, Water Resources Commissioner; Bob Tetens, Latitia Lamelle, Parks and Recreation; Tony VanDerworp, Economic Development and Energy; Patrick Barrie, Hazelette Crosby-Robinson, WCHO; Kelly Belknap, Jennifer Watson, Finance; Caryette Fenner, CSTS; Ben Toole, ITS; Joanna Bidlack, County Administration; Jason Brooks, Clerk's Office; various citizens; and members of the press.

#### **Roll Call**

#### **Citizen Participation**

None

#### **Commissioner Follow-Up to Citizen Participation**

None

#### **Discussion Items:**

##### **Discussion on Intergovernmental Collaboration**

Local officials attending: Todd Campbell, Saline City Manager; Michael Moran, Ann Arbor Township Supervisor; Robert Heyl, Salem Township Supervisor; Paul Uherek, Salem Township Treasurer; Peter Murdock, Ypsilanti City Councilmember

Citizens Research Council Memorandum and Washtenaw County Collaboration Efforts presented in the packet are on file in the County Clerk's office.

Comm. Rabhi stated that the first question is whether the County wants to collaborate.

Comm. Conan Smith stated that deciding the context of service provision should be a priority. He added that the optimal level should also be examined.

Comm. Bergman stated that she would like to collaborate but added that it should be cost neutral for the County. Comm. Conan Smith stated that certain collaborations will have an upfront cost but may lead to lower costs in the future.

Michael Moran stated that the Washtenaw Metro Alliance was successful because the County was able to provide support. He added that the Urban County is another example of a success that has not been cost neutral. He stated that WATS, and the CJCC have been other good examples. Moran added that the Water Resources office is now vetting proposed township development. Comm. Bergman stated that then was then and added that everyone is facing different times. Comm. Rabhi stated that he would like to make sure collaboration is beneficial for both parties.

Comm. Prater stated that change is constant and not always easy. He added that the comfort level changes as new ideas come up. Comm. Prater added that good management is necessary. He stated that performance management and data gathering needs to be completed to be successful. Comm. Prater stated that the citizens are the ones that need to be served by government. He added that the Board comes together and wants to do one thing and that is ensuring quality of life.

Moran stated that a timeline needs to be put in place to get a project off of the ground rather than just deciding to end a project when a bill comes in.

Comm. Gunn stated that there is value for the County and the local jurisdictions through tax revenue. She added that it will take planning to decide what will work best for everyone.

Comm. Turner stated that ideas on sharing services are brought by local school districts through the ISD. He added that he would like to see more discussion with the township supervisors. Comm. Judge stated that the CEO group serves this purpose and added that she feels that a board appointee may be helpful. She stated that there has been work done on healing relationships between local jurisdictions and the County over the last few years. Moran stated that Comm. Judge is correct and stated that the CEO meetings have been beneficial to all. He added that the Board of Commissioners rules do not allow for much of a dialogue. Moran stated that the decision was also usually made before the comment session.

Comm. Dan Smith stated that there is usually a cost savings implied through collaboration. He added that achieving cost savings can be difficult in collaboration. Comm. Dan Smith stated that service levels have been built up over the years by individual units of government and will not be sustainable at the same levels.

Comm. Peterson asked what some of the local communities see in some of the interactions with the County. He stated that collaboration does not immediately lead to cost savings. Comm. Peterson added that collaboration can also be about sharing space and equipment.

Todd Campbell, Saline City Manager, stated that this is about providing residents with a high quality of life. He added that he believes collaboration is vital at all levels. Campbell reported that communities in recent times have been able to try new things and added that work has gone well with the Sheriff's Department and all other police agencies. He stated that having a strong assessor has been critical. He added that it gets to the point where you can not to more with less but only less with less and stated that a lack of communication is sometimes the problem. He added that people are often willing to dialogue.

Comm. Prater stated that he views collaboration as more than dollars cost versus dollars saved. He stated that it is often about services being delivered more efficiently. Comm. Prater added that the most difficult thing to deal with is the different responsibilities of different agencies.

Comm. Judge stated that SEMCOG has staff dedicated to collaboration and stated that the SEMCOG staff time may be used to collaborate. She stated that using a SharePoint site to display items for collaboration may be helpful.

Comm. Bergman stated that a forum will be held at the WCHO about a Medicaid matching program that may benefit many residents. She distributed a handout on physical and mental health.

Comm. Ping stated that services provided by the County need to be communicated. She added that the City of Saline now contracts with the County for soil erosion.

Comm. Rabhi stated that the marketing of County services came up at the Retreat.

Patrick Barrie stated that citizens often need to go through many channels of government to have their needs met and added that there needs to be a way to cut down on bureaucracy.

Comm. Turner stated that he has heard that it is nice to be able to speak in an open forum this evening. He added that these conversations need to be happening without the rules. Comm. Turner stated that he would like to have quarterly meetings.

Paul Uherek stated that it was three days before he was able to get out of his driveway last snowfall. He added that it would be useful for the County to ask Salem Township representatives and residents why they do not want to collaborate.

Peter Murdock stated that the City of Ypsilanti has been collaborating with other organizations for decades. He added that the City is running out of rabbits to pull out of a hat. Murdock stated that he is not sure that collaboration will be the total answer.

Comm. Conan Smith stated that reducing cost and duplication of service and mandates came up in the Board priorities discussion. He added that he would like to see money freed up for discretionary activities as well. He asked if this is a parallel on the local level. Campbell stated that payroll is not contracted out. He added that he heads up HR with his Administration Assistant. Campbell stated that collaborating on this may actually lead to a cost increase in the case of the City of Saline. Comm. Conan Smith stated that there are reasons for not collaborating as well and getting to the crux of these issues will be necessary.

Moran stated that some things at the Washtenaw Metro Alliance did not save money. He added that these things were worth doing and stated that this collaboration put them in a better position overall.

Comm. Dan Smith stated that most of the low hanging fruit is already gone. He stated that the large items are going to be difficult. Comm. Dan Smith gave the example of a countywide fire department as something that would be a huge item. He added that he is only using this as an example.

Comm. Conan Smith stated that he has heard that the opportunity for dialogue needs to exist. He added that it may be worth it to do a catalogue of ideas coming out from groups like CEO's and Eastern Leaders. Comm. Conan Smith added that he would like the Board to be actively involved in all of these groups.

Comm. Bergman stated that the Community Health Collaborative needs to reach out and put more muscle into those activities.

Comm. Judge stated that she would not like people not to collaborate with the County because a road is not plowed.

Campbell stated that federal and state legislators tell communities how they need to do things without asking. He added that it would be helpful to invite government leaders to these meetings. Comm. Rabhi responded by stating that he wants to make sure things are not handed down to local communities.

Comm. Peterson stated that communities feel like they get lost in the process. He added that acting as a liaison is a role with obligation. Comm. Peterson stated that the County needs to be thoughtful about providing services to citizens of Washtenaw County. He stated that there needs to be a process when a complaint occurs.

Comm. Prater stated that groups and what they are attempting to do should be catalogued. He added that the charge of local governments should also be examined.

Moran stated that success of collaboration also needs to be examined. He added that there is a lot of local governance that does not engage with the County. Moran added that a phone list may be helpful.

VanDerworp stated that when the Governor reorganized the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth, he did not realize the obstacles in the way of providing services at local Michigan Works offices. He stated that obstacles are often hit in collaboration attempts and stated that this may be a time to put the obstacles on the floor.

Comm. Rabhi stated that he would like to hear more ideas and next steps moving forward.

Comm. Gunn stated that a list of numbers to provide to local officials would be helpful. Comm. Peterson stated that it would be helpful to solicit suggestions from local governments and how the County can better work with their communities. He added that it will be important to orient those numbers with operations. He stated that he would also like to see an orientation for new officials. Comm. Peterson stated that he would like to see the phone list updated every six months.

Comm. Conan Smith stated that it would be great for a commissioner to volunteer to work with Administration to sketch out some of the things that have been talked about and to put some resource allocation predictions behind them. Comm. Peterson stated that it will take someone to put a plan together. He added that he is happy to see local representatives at this meeting and added that he would like to see more at the next meeting. Comm. Judge stated that the Board would have to vote on creating something new in County government. She added that the Metro Alliance and CEO groups are also formed. She stated that finding out if other entities do something better may also be an option. Comm. Rabhi stated that some of this work can be done as a part of the budget principles.

Comm. Dan Smith stated that he has had discussions with Robert Heyl on potential collaborative efforts. Heyl stated that he would like to talk more with Comm. Dan Smith. He stated that one-on-one discussions with commissioners can also take place.

**County Administrator's Report**

None

**Items for Current/Future Discussion**

None

**Pending**

None

**Citizen Participation**

None

**Commissioners Follow-up to Citizen Participation**

None

**Adjournment**

Comm. Peterson seconded by Comm. Turner moved that the meeting be adjourned until April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2011 at 6:30 p.m. Motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 9:39 p.m.

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Yousef Rabhi, Chair

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Lawrence Kestenbaum, Clerk/Register

By: Jason Brooks, Deputy Clerk

APPROVED: April 6, 2011