



## WASHTENAW COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

### WORKING SESSION

September 22, 2011

The meeting was called to order by Chair Rabhi at 6:30 p.m. in the Board Room, Administration Building, 220 North Main Street, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

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

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Comms. Judge, Peterson, Ping,

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Verna McDaniel, County Administrator; Kelly Belknap, Interim Deputy County Administrator; Brian Mackie, Prosecuting Attorney; Tina Gavalier, Finance; Ken Schrader, ITS; Cheryl Perry, County Administration; Jason Brooks, Clerk's Office; various citizens; and members of the press.

#### Roll Call

#### Citizen Participation

Thomas Partridge, Washtenaw County, City of Ann Arbor resident, Democrat, encouraged the board to increase revenues. He posited that the board should pass a resolution to raise existing property taxes. Mr. Partridge then let it be known he supports a resolution that would allow County Government to pass additional taxes.

#### Commissioner Follow-Up to Citizen Participation

None

#### Discussion Items:

##### ***Interim Deputy County Administrator – Interim Deputy County Administrator, Kelly Belknap***

Kelly Belknap gave the presentation (on file in County Clerk's office).

Comm. Bergman stated that not all substance abuse dollars were redirected.

Comm. Rabhi inquired about the nature of the collaboration between Washtenaw and Livingston County. Verna McDaniel stated that she had met with the Livingston County Administrator and the IT Director to discuss collaboration in terms of sharing fiber optics. She reported that the Livingston County employees had indicated there may be an opportunity to collaborate with Wayne County as well.

Comm. Prater inquired about the specifics of the compensation packages that 93% of the County employees have. Verna McDaniel assured the commissioner that was information she could provide him.

Comm. Bergman raised a question about whether fiber optics are underground or on telephone poles. Verna McDaniel replied that it was her belief that these wires were housed underground.

Comm. Gunn stated that non-union employees have the same health package as union employees. Comm. Prater responded that it was his understanding that the Sheriff's department had a different package. Verna McDaniel confirmed that the Sheriff department does indeed receive a different health package.

Comm. Sizemore asked Verna McDaniel to explain the decision making process the County was going through concerning Headstart so that citizens could understand what the County was doing in regards to that program. Verna McDaniel explained that the County is not recommending elimination of Headstart but that the County could no longer

act as the grant fiduciary of the program. She went on to say that the grantee process is such that if an entity such as the county indicates to the Federal Government that it no longer wishes to be the grantee then the Government will take over and determine who else in the community can act as a Grantee for the program. Comm. Sizemore indicated that he would like to receive an update in a couple of months about where the program stood.

Comm. Dan Smith asked Verna McDaniel to expand upon the IT collaboration efforts being made. Verna Mcdaniel reported that the County shares servers with the City of Ann Arbor. She expressed a hope that the County could provide better services by linking all of the municipalities and maybe even some of the Counties eventually. Verna McDaniel went on to say that the County was committed to staying up to date with its IT efforts and was actively looking to partner with other communities in an effort to save costs. Kelly Belknap stated that the County has reviewed options about replacing or possibly updating the current J.D. Edwards system. She reported that this was not going to be a quick project so it would probably need to happen in an off year, not a budget year. Verna McDaniel added that the County could possibly gain some new revenues by leveraging its capacities to utilize cloud technology.

Comm. Dan Smith asked what was happening with the conversation about public safety consolidation. Verna McDaniel responded that those were conversations regarding the consolidation of police services. She went on to say that the Washtenaw County Sheriff Department remains open to those options.

Comm. Conan Smith stated that the board had put a couple of big questions to administration in the hope that administration would determine which businesses the County should not be in, in the future. He wanted to know what the County was eliminating from a business unit perspective. Verna McDaniel responded saying that Headstart was a program the County is withdrawing from. She went on to say that the County does not need to be in the business of education as a grantee. Comm. Conan Smith stated that the board had asked administration to evaluate whether the County was really the right provider for many of its services. He went on to say that in the case of Headstart it seems as though the County was simply not the right provider. Verna McDaniel stated that one of the ways that the County was trying to improve services for its residents was by consolidating the Office of Community and Economic Development. She went on to say that the County had chosen the City of Ann Arbor to house the County servers because they had a good facility set up to do so and the right service provider means a more efficient process. Comm. Conan Smith stated that he had noticed that the County seemed to be mostly out of the planning business, he wondered if the County would be almost completely out of that business at the end of this budget cycle. Verna McDaniel affirmed that the County would. Comm. Conan Smith reported that the County had in the past been very adept at winning funds for farmland preservation, he wondered if that was something that Parks and Recreation still did. Robert Tetens, Director of Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation, stated that ALPAC would function parallel to NATAC. He went on to say that those two organizations would be focusing on their specialties and at the same time making recommendations to the Parks committee. Comm. Conan Smith inquired about whether or not Parks and Recreation would maintain some of its planning capacities, because he remembered that the organization excels at winning grant money for land preservation. Bob Tetens said that a group called Preserve Washtenaw had been formed to take over land preservation efforts in the County and that they would be responsible for winning land preservation grants now. Comm. Conan Smith questioned whether Parks and Recreation would be able to support getting money from the state for farmland preservation. Bob Tetens responded that those efforts are already under way. Comm. Conan Smith asked Verna McDaniel to talk about which programs were being funded above their base serviceability level and why the decision had been made to provide those programs with additional funding. Verna McDaniel replied that one of the County's big concerns was Human Services because of the poor economic climate. She went on to say that she recommended to the board that they fund Barrier Busters at a higher level so that it can meet the emergency needs of the Washtenaw County Residents. Comm. Conan Smith asked Kelly Belnap to provide a look at where the County's budget stood in comparison to its target number. Kelly Belknap responded that the County will end the year with a fund balance of 14%.

Comm. Sizemore wanted to know what the County was doing in regards to its relationship with SIMCOG. He went on to say that he didn't need to know that night but would like to know in the near future. Comm. Sizemore added that he would like to know more about the costs associated with part-time employees.

Comm. Gunn stated that the County used to have a planning commission but no longer did because the County did not have the jurisdiction to do planning work. She went on to say that the Natural Washtenaw millage included an item for the purchase of farmlands.

Comm. Rabhi stated that he was impressed with the work that ALPAC was doing to develop criteria for assessing land that was being considered for purchase.

Comm. Prater wanted to know if the federal grant process was going to be affected if the County stopped paying their membership fee to SIMCOG. Verna McDaniel stated that she could provide that information to the commissioners. Comm. Prater asked McDaniel about the status of legislation in Lansing to repeal Act. 88. Verna McDaniel reported that that legislation had been slowed down and that there was now some sensitivity around the issue because legislators in Lansing now understand what the money from the millage is being used for.

Comm. Turner stated that the general fund balance was going to be close to 13.1 at the end of the budget cycle. He added that emergency managers recommend that the County keep that balance at a certain level in case of an unforeseen disaster.

Comm. Bergman questioned what SIMCOG does for Washtenaw County. She then wondered if what they do can be done by someone else.

Comm. Rabhi stated a desire to have a Working Session dedicated to the issue of SIMCOG.

Comm. Conan Smith stated that he would like to learn more about the emergency financial manager scoring criteria. He went on to say that it would be important for the County to maintain enough funds to avoid being affected by a crisis like the end of County Revenue Sharing. Kelly Belknap stated that there are nine criteria that the County would be ranked on; population growth, real taxable value, large real taxable value decline, general fund expenditures as a percentage of the taxable value, general fund operating deficit, 5 year general operating deficit, size of general fund balance, major fund deficits, and general long term debt. She went on to say that the County had received scores for 2007-09 but not 2010 yet and that she would provide the commissioners with that information.

Comm. Dan Smith stated that he liked Comm. Conan Smith's idea of looking at the County's emergency fund manager scores to see how close to the red line the County is. He went on to say that he would also like to see the criteria that bond agencies use to rank the County.

Comm. Rabhi invited the commissioners to put forward items they would like to discuss in the upcoming Working Sessions.

Comm. Gunn stated that she would like to discuss a plan to restore human services funding.

Comm. Conan Smith stated that he would like to discuss the County's financial environment and determine how much flexibility the county has.

Comm. Bergman stated a desire to talk about sustainable housing needs.

Comm. Dan Smith stated a desire to talk about the Board of Commissioners budget.

Comm. Prater stated a desire to know how many people incarcerated in Washtenaw County suffered from mental illness.

Comm. Turner stated a desire to examine VEBA and defined benefits. He also requested that the board have the pension managers come before the board so that they could be questioned and so that their fees could be re-quoted.

Comm. Bergman stated that it would be important to know whether people with mental illnesses were using the jails as a way to stay warm during the cold months.

Comm. Sizemore stated a desire to examine outside professionals, he also wanted to bring an elected official in to each working session and have him/her explain their budget.

Comm. Dan Smith thought it would be worthwhile to schedule a working session for the road commission. Curt Hedger reported that the proper procedure for the Road Commission to follow would be for them to come up with a list of projects and costs and the millage that would be necessary to cover it and then submit that plan to the County Clerk who brings it to the Ways and Means meeting in October. Once that plan has been brought to Ways and Means the board can vote it up entirely, vote it down or pick and choose. The board can also have someone adjourn it to another meeting. Comm. Sizemore stated that it was his understanding that the Road Commission could just stand up during one of the board meetings and make a public comment. Curt Hedger affirmed that that was a possibility or they had the option of going through the County Clerk. Comm. Sizemore stated that he felt that if the Road Commission wanted to talk then they should make a public comment and then come to a Working Session. Curt Heder stated that was a possibility as long as a commissioner made a motion to do that. Comm. Gunn stated that she felt the board should reach out to the Road Commission and ask them what their plan was. Curt Hedger reported that the Road Commission was dropping their plan off with the County Clerk the next morning. Comm. Turner reported that when the Road Commission proposed this plan their desire was that their secretary would be allowed to present it before the Board before the annual meeting. He stated that the Road Commission just wasn't sure how to go through the proper process for this. Comm. Prater reported that the Road Commission had two 5 year plans that are active and approximately \$99 million worth of work they were looking to do over a period of 5 years. He expressed a desire to know what was in their capital plan and what was part of their preventative maintenance plan. He then went on to say that it would be important for the County to review the performance of the pension managers. Comm. Prater then expressed a desire to submit a RFP to all county vendors who have not submitted a proposal in the last 5 years. Comm. Gunn reminded Comm. Prater that the board had voted to have someone come in and review the County's contracts.

Comm. Dan Smith stated that given everything that had been proposed he did not think the board would be able to cover everything in the remaining Working Sessions, but that if the board wanted to have a fun Working Session they should devote some time to talking about Parks and Recreation because in his opinion Bob Tetens runs a great program.

Comm. Rabhi stated that he hoped to develop a list of Working Session topics and bring in to a board meeting where those topics could be announced so that people would have an idea on what the board would be working on.

#### **County Administrator's Report**

None

#### **Items for Current/Future Discussion**

Comm. Turner announced that the Literacy Coalition of Washtenaw County was having a meeting (9/26/11). He went on to say that this group needed funding and that the coordinator of the program had done an excellent job but was now leaving so the coalition could use support.

#### **Pending**

None

#### **Citizen Participation**

Thomas Partridge, Democrat, Grandfather, Father, Interested Citizen, addressed the board on what he perceived to be their need to connect with the real world. He posited that the items that the board had discussed were shell items that did not connect with the real world. Mr. Partridge stated that in the real world citizens such as himself suffered assaults and property thefts, problems which he thought plagued all of the citizens of Washtenaw County.

#### **Commissioners Follow-up to Citizen Participation**

None

**Adjournment**

Comm. Prater seconded by Comm. Rabhi moved that the meeting be adjourned until October 6<sup>th</sup>, 2011 at 6:30 p.m.  
Motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 7:53 p.m.

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Yousef Rabhi, Chair

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Lawrence Kestenbaum, Clerk/Register

By: Peter Simms, Deputy Clerk

APPROVED: September 29, 2011