

COMMITTEE REPORT

COMMITTEE: Legislative Committee
CHAIRPERSON: Don Zillig
DATE/TIME: September 21, 2016 @ 11:00 am
PRESENT:

Don Zillig Merri Berlage Brad Petersburg Steve McIntyre
 Terry Stoffregen Ron Smith Randy Jobgen

A quorum was established.

Other Board Members: None

Others: Gary Diedrick

1. **Minutes Approval** - Chairman Zillig explained that he had passed out the minutes from the August 17th Meeting as he felt that meeting did not follow our normal procedure due to the attendance by Senator Tim Bivins & Representative Brian Stewart.

a) Terry Stoffregen made a motion to approve the minutes from the August 17, 2016 Legislative Committee meeting. Seconded by Brad Petersburg. Motion carried.

2. **Citizens' Comments:** None.

3. **Unfinished Business:**

a) **MFT Funding** - Chairman Zillig discussed that he had sent correspondence (third time) to both Senator Bivins and Representative Stewart concerning the money, \$795,000, spent for the two crossing gates that the BNSF placed on Frentress Lake Road. The Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC) replied to Senator Bivins & Representative Stewart with misleading statements to justify the gates. Chairman Zillig sent a response to the information given and asked Senator Bivins and Representative Stewart to address the issue with Governor Rauner and/or the Chairman of the ICC, Brian Sheahan. As of today he hadn't received a response. Chairman Zillig felt that the ICC spends the money because they have it. He pointed out that the railroads donate to the various politicians. Senator Bivins received \$500.00 in 2015 and \$300.00 this year. He also stated this is a "drop in the bucket" compared to other donations received and Senator Bivins was probably unaware of the money when he stated, at the August 17th meeting, that he didn't receive any money. Chairman Zillig stated the tax money used from Motor Fuel Tax could better be used for the repair of roads & bridges.

PROPERTY TAX REDUCTION FOR VETERANS - Chairman Zillig advised that there appears to be some confusion regarding property tax homestead exemptions for Veterans. Steve McIntyre advised that if a Veteran was disabled due to a service related disability, they would be eligible to some amount of tax exemption. The exemption varies in accordance with the percentage of disability. Steve found this information under the following web-site, <https://www.illinois.gov/veterans>, under State Benefits for Veterans, Housing, Property Tax. The percentage of disability is given to a serviceman when they are released (discharged). There appears to be some exemptions (example: Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Agent Orange, etc.). These exemptions may show up some time later and must be approved by the Veterans Administration and be re-classified. All the attendees agreed that this was a great law. It appears that some of the confusion was the interpretation of the new law

by the County Assessment Office; it should be noted that this was a fairly new law enacted in 2015.

- b) **Prevailing Wage** – Zillig commented that Representative Stewart has introduced the same bill three years in a row and it dies in the Rules Committee. He also said it appears the possibility of getting the bill passed even with the \$20,000 limit is doubtful. He also referenced the bill in the “Legislative Looking Glass” report that was passed out.
- c) **Enterprise Zones** – Zillig reported that, according to Merri Berlage, because of all the restrictions, Prairie Ridge received but chose not to use the Enterprise Zone benefits
- d) **Consolidation Report** – Zillig reported that the County proposed consolidation of the various townships in Jo Daviess County and the majority of the townships opposed the consolidation. Only one was consolidated with another township and that was due to their small population figure.
- e) **“But For” Clause Legislation** - Discussion regarding Lisa McCarthy’s efforts to change legislation to make Illinois more attractive to businesses was discussed. Zillig referred to the “Looking Glass” report that shows the bill, HB4636, was re-referred to the Rules Committee on April 8, 2016. Zillig went over the roadblocks in getting the businesses the incentives offered by the surrounding states as opposed to the incentives offered by Illinois. He gave an example using Hirschbach Motor Lines, a company that received incentives from Iowa that had moved from East Dubuque to Dubuque, and had even employed more than they previously stated they would. He also reiterated what Dan Reimer, County Administrator, has said about losing \$100,000.00 in lost revenue due to a lack of incentives to attract construction projects. Chairman Zillig brought up the Thompson Prison opportunities or lack of the same. Steve McIntyre advised that the real estate firm of Ruhl & Ruhl, an Iowa based firm, was appointed to handle the situation. No Illinois firm was involved. This appeared to promote people to live in Iowa. McIntyre also reported that there is not a lot of temporary housing available in Illinois (Thompson). Per McIntyre, this makes it difficult as people have to have a rental until they can sell their current home. Zillig questioned whether the majority of the workers would live in Clinton, Iowa. McIntyre said he didn’t know.
- f) **Zoning Issues and Discussion** – Steve McIntyre said in Savanna they had developed 22 lots with water & sewage waiting for building. McIntyre talked about getting tax revenue from developing an area rather than the land being undeveloped. He said we have an opportunity as a new Zoning Administrator will be selected and we want to be sure that the new Administrator is very receptive to people that want to come into the county and get things done. McIntyre said he wasn’t being critical of the current Administrator but he has gotten the impression from clients that have told him the reason they aren’t doing something is because they feel that they are not being received in a positive manner. He said others have told him when they try to do something in the City of Galena they do feel they have a positive experience. McIntyre said he also had positive experiences when dealing with the Galena Zoning Administrator. He said they responded saying “that’s a great idea, let’s see what we can do” and when they called the County Office they did not receive positive

vibes but rather were advised of zoning ordinances. McIntyre gave an example of redrawing lines of a parcel that was being divided. He stated that he believes we must create a positive attitude in the Zoning Department. The Zoning Department, like all County Departments, needs to reflect Jo Daviess in a positive manner. McIntyre, once again, stated he was not being critical of Linda Delvaux, Building & Zoning Administrator, and said she does an outstanding job. Zillig added her job, as the Zoning Administrator, is pretty much a thankless and unappreciated job.

4. **Citizens' Comments:** Gary Diedrick thought that there were methods to work around the "Prevailing Wage" issue with a group out of Springfield and possibly Lisa McCarthy would know more about it.
5. **Board Member Concerns:** Brad Petersburg felt that we continue to address what appear to have no chance of being changed. He gave the "Prevailing Wage" issue as an example. Steve McIntyre asked should we pick certain bills to champion. Don Zillig mentioned the "But-For Clause" project that we should push. McIntyre said there is a county, Woodbury, in Iowa, near Sioux City, that wanted to encourage organic growers in their county. They exempted the growers from property taxes for a number of years and wrote off the uncollected tax as a budget item. Woodbury also took organic foods from the growers to various county venues, schools, prisons, etc. They created a whole marketing concept of "Sioux City Sue". Zillig agreed with Petersburg as did the other members of the Committee on the Prevailing Wage Issue. He said 32 states have Prevailing Wage Legislation. He also said he felt that we probably should drop issues whereas the possibility of passage is slim. McIntyre talked about suspending zoning ordinances for a year. He brought up the tax dollars that "Dollar General" probably brought to the city of Elizabeth. He said Elizabeth does not have zoning ordinances. Zillig said McIntyre's proposal is something that could be brought up at a Board Meeting. Petersburg asked if Lisa McCarthy is, or could be, involved with zoning requests. Zillig read various e-mails that he had sent to the State Attorney's Office concerning Municipal Taxes on Utilities. No reply was received at this time. McIntyre reiterated the need for income due to new construction. He gave figures showing the decline in the various areas in Jo Daviess County.

The next meeting of the Legislative Committee is scheduled for Wednesday, October 19, 2016, at 11:00 a.m.

Meeting adjourned at 12:00 p.m. following a motion made by Terry Stoffregen, seconded by Steve McIntyre and motion carried.