

**JO DAVIESS COUNTY BOARD
SPECIAL MEETING AND PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES
FEBRUARY 5, 2014**

CALL TO ORDER: Chairperson of the Jo Daviess County Board, Ron Smith, called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, February 5, 2014, in the second floor large courtroom, Jo Daviess County Courthouse, Galena, Illinois.

ROLL CALL was answered as follows: Present-Merri Berlage, William Bingham, Richard Dittmar, Robert Heuerman, Randy Jobgen, Steve McIntyre, Margie Montelius, John O'Boyle, Steven Rutz, Ron Smith, Terry Stoffregen, RJ Winkelhake and Don Zillig. Present: 13. Absent-Brandon Behlke, Gerald Bennett, Jody Covert and Dan Hughes. Absent: 4.

THE PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE was led by Chairperson Smith.

There was no consent agenda to be approved.

There were no citizens' comments at this time.

There was no unfinished business brought before the board at this time.

READING OF THE MEETING NOTICE INTO THE MINUTES

Chairperson Ron Smith, read the meeting notice that was published in the newspaper regarding the Special Meeting for the assessment re-districting on Wednesday, February 5, 2014 at 7:00 p.m. in the large courtroom on the 2nd floor of the Jo Daviess County Courthouse, 330 N. Bench St., Galena Illinois.

NEW BUSINESS – PUBLIC HEARING regarding a proposed eight (8) district Multi-Township Assessment District plan for Jo Daviess County.

Ron Smith thanked everyone for attending the hearing.

At this time Donna Berlage, the Chief County Assessment Officer, gave a presentation on the establishment of Multi-township Assessment Districts which included the benefits, statutes regarding the creation of the districts, maps showing the number of inhabitants and the equalized assessed valuation of each township, current township assessor wages and the recommendations for the proposed Multi-township Assessment District Map.

State's Attorney John Hay gave a presentation on the legal aspects of creating multi-assessment districts.

John explained that on November 13, 2012, the County Board approved the proposed 5 multi-township assessment district map. State's Attorney John Hay, whose term of office began on December 1, 2012, was asked if the formation of the districts was properly approved. John said since he wasn't in office when the districts were approved, he needed to research the issue and get information from the Department of Revenue. John contacted the Department of Revenue and they were not able to answer some of his questions. John contacted the Appellate Prosecutor's Office and asked if they would research the issue and form an opinion.

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John stated the Appellate Prosecutor's Office formed the same opinion that he did after reviewing the process that led to the approved 5 multi-township assessment districts. Both John and the Appellate Prosecutor's Office feel there were procedural issues that were not followed according to State Statutes when these districts were approved.

John said he felt the best way to address this issue was to ask the County Board to reconsider the multi-township assessment districts by starting from scratch and to follow proper procedures.

He said with this proposed eight (8) district plan the County is requesting more concise language from each township by asking them to approve a resolution adopting the eight (8) district plan as presented or offering an alternative map.

He stated that all townships must agree with any changes and the deadline for returning the form is May 1, 2014.

The meeting was open to public comments and/or questions at this time.

There were no public comments.

Chairperson Smith opened the hearing for comments or questions from County Board members.

RJ Winkelhake asked if all townships were represented at this hearing. Supervisor of Assessments Donna Berlage said she believed that a few townships were not in attendance.

Rick Dittmar asked what would happen if the Elizabeth-Hanover-Rice-Woodbine district did not agree on the new proposal. John Hay stated that the districts would remain in their present forms.

Steve Rutz thanked Donna Berlage for preparing the plans. He said that he isn't sure that reducing the districts from 11 to 8 is solving the problem. He stated that there are still only 7 assessors at this time and may be fewer by 2017.

RJ Winkelhake said a priority to consider is completing the assessing work in a timely fashion in order to get tax bills sent and taxes collected so the process is not delayed and taxing bodies are able to receive revenue sooner so they would not have to spend reserves or borrow money.

Ron Smith said it is important that the Townships and County work together to make the taxing cycle an efficient process for all involved. He encouraged all participants that may have questions now or in the future to call. He feels this is a team effort.

John Hay stated that proposed single districts have the option of suggesting to combine with another township. John also said he would answer any concerns or questions involving the proposed districts.

Margie Montelius said she was concerned about the number of parcels in some of the new proposed districts. She wondered if it would be too much work for one assessor. Donna Berlage stated that some present assessors are contracting with other districts and assessing many more parcels in conjunction with the parcels of their own district.

CLOSURE OF PUBLIC HEARING

Chairperson Smith closed the public hearing at this time.

CITIZENS' COMMENTS

There were no citizens' comments at this time.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned following a motion made by Randy Jobgen and seconded by Steve McIntyre.

The motion to adjourn carried by voice vote.

Chairperson Smith adjourned the meeting at 7:39 p.m.

Jean Dimke, Jo Daviess County Clerk