

COMMITTEE REPORT

COMMITTEE: Legislative Committee

CHAIRPERSON: John Lang

DATE/TIME December 18, 2019

PRESENT:

John Lang Hendrica Regez Scott Toot LaDon Trost
 Ron Smith John Schultz Diane Gallagher Don Zillig

A quorum was established.

Other Board Members:

Others: Representative Andrew Chesney, Connie Marney, Rose Noble, Dan Reimer and Sheriff Turner

1. **Call to Order** – Chairman Lang called the meeting to order at 11:01 a.m.
2. **Minutes Approval:**
 - a) Diane Gallagher made a motion to approve the minutes from the August 22, 2019 and the October 16, 2019 Legislative Committee meetings. Seconded by John Schultz and motion carried.
3. **Citizens' Comments:** Ken Zender, an advocate for passenger rail from Rockford to Galena. Currently there are discussions going on about the feasibility study for the upgrades necessary for passenger rail service from Rockford to Galena. Because Galena is a tourism area Zendar asked the committee for support on this issue as the Governor's office, IDOT and Amtrak are all in discussion at this time about continuing the feasibility study.
4. **Unfinished Business:**
5. **New Business:**
 - a) Introduction of Representative Chesney – John Lang introduced Representative Andrew Chesney as well as Connie from Senator Stewart's office.
 - b) Introduction of Board Members, County Officials and Guests – John Lang had those in attendance go around the table and introduce themselves.
 - c) An overview of the past legislative session by Representative Chesney – Representative Chesney thanked the committee for the invitation to attend this meeting. It was a year of firsts and was probably one of the more ambitious legislative agendas that we saw come out of the General Assembly in some time. From socialist views to taxation to a new direction that Illinois is being sent on. There were a number of topics that were discussed. Probably the one that has gotten the most of the attention is the gasoline tax which is an overall taxation and how it is implemented. Monies from the motor fuel tax that are going to the municipalities are simply just not adequate. Some of the things they have addressed is how they can get these dollars to extend further. Some of the bills that Chesney has presented would give a little bit of relief to prevailing wage. Prevailing wage disproportionately impacts rural communities and rural counties. We simply don't have the tax base as our counterparts in the suburbs and in the Chicagoland area. If we are unable to reach an agreement on prevailing wage at a minimum we should have a prevailing wage that is reflective of our

communities and not tie to some of the larger more urban areas. They will continue these discussions but Chesney is not hopeful with the political makeup in the General Assembly that those types of bills will get much consideration or much movement. Chesney got to see \$90 billion dollars spent in about three hours. A couple of the highlights were the budget and the gasoline tax and how they were all compacted in the final days of the session. Both Republicans and Democrats supported the gasoline tax and all of the associated fees. Chesney did not support the budget because he does not feel it addresses any of the underlying challenges and pressures that are going to be presented in the upcoming years. It also included a legislative pay increase which he does not support and donated back. We have a highly contested ballot referendum question and \$15 minimum wage also came up and the disproportionate impact that will have on the rural communities from Highland Community College to the local Sheriff's office. The only way that we can offset \$15 minimum wage is to raise property taxes or taxes in general, cut services or a combination of both. In Highland's case a third option is to raise tuition. Watching how these laws get implemented and how we navigate them in our little communities is going to be challenging. Connie Marney had nothing more to add at this time. She is here as a representative of Senator Stewart's office if there is something that the committee would like her to take back to Senator Stewart. She thanked the committee for the invitation to attend this meeting to hear our concerns.

d) Legislative issues in the coming session – Representative Chesney – Chesney commented that the appetite for taxation is certainly not put on hold. There is just a fundamental disagreement on what revenues we have and if they are adequate to appropriately fund the state. One of the areas discussed early on was the ballot referendum for a progressive income tax and that will be left up to the voters to decide what type of tax structure we will have. He cannot comment on the ballot referendum question but can comment on tax structure that would be associated with the ballot referendum question and those would include tax increases. There will be two different sides of that argument as to how those interact and if those will be good or bad for the state. Those are some of the revenues that will be discussed in 2020. The gasoline tax will continue to go up .01 for an additional five years. There is also some discussion on another round after five years for additional capital spending that could be put into place, but those are in the beginning stages of debate. They have seen a lot of discussion on social media and throughout the state on corruption and ethics. The agendas did get sidelined to address some of the underlying concerns that we have been talking about for decades. There is a strong interest in making ethics reforms. They have expanded abortion rights to nine months, legalized marijuana, and expanded gambling which are all pretty heavy lifts. You will probably see some Second Amendment issues and how they are going to work with the Foid cards. The highlight for 2020 will be ethics reform. Perhaps some of the pension pressures, but probably not. There was considerable discussion on the legalization of marijuana and mental health concerns.

e) County Legislative Issues

- i. Review proposed language on the 1% service tax – John Lang commented that everyone has a copy of the bill that Representative Chesney has introduced on the 1% service tax. It is a modification on the bill we had. It comes back to the voters to vote on it. Once it is voted on it could become law. Representative Chesney added that when he originally filed the bill and presented this to this committee

this included all of your additional interest groups that were strongly opposed to this. One of the recommendations was to remove opposition or at least lessen the opposition was to make it specific to Jo Daviess County. Rose Noble added that with her board they had some individual concerns but as a board whole they have voted to support the idea of the proposed 1% tax the way that it is outlined to go to referendum to allow the citizens to choose. Chesney continued that they tested the waters and had to bring back some amendments. There is a pretty rigid timeframe to move these bills. How we are going to discuss this with some of the conservative members is that we are allowing local voters to have a say on what their taxation looks like. We are not simply allowing this through the County Board. We are simply allowing this ballot question to come before the voters which Chesney does think will have great success to pass. This is Chesney's top priority bill.

- ii. State items that have a financial impact on the County – IMRF rate increase, distributive fund shortfall and others – Dan Reimer explained the distributive fund shortfall. Overall income tax coming back to the local level has increased, even though 5% was withheld. It is a huge item in our general fund budget. John Lang added this is one of the things we would like to see fully restored. Reimer also explained the IMRF rate increase which affects PTELL counties of which we are one of forty counties.
 - iii. Other legislative issues that affect the County or office holders – Don Zillig asked if Senator Stewart is involved at all in the conversation with the 1% service tax. Representative Chesney responded that he is fully aware of it and will pick it up in the Senate. We will file it as a house bill and he will pre-file it in the Senate. Hendrica Regez thanked Chesney for the article about the good things that are happening in your district and she hopes Jo Daviess County will be listed soon too. Regez asked Chesney for any support that he can give in any way on the passenger rail feasibility study and the Clean Air Energy Jobs Act HB3624 and SB2132. Regez updated on the Volkswagen settlement and the uv energy charging stations. The EPA says that the settlement provides that if there is enough demand they will look at it again in the future. There is also underground funding available for electric school buses. Please keep your eye on these items and lend your support to rural opportunities. Diane Gallagher commented that there is a lot of support for the Census 2020 effort locally. Chesney thanked Gallagher for her leadership on the Census 2020 committee. Scott Toot thanked Representative Chesney for coming to our meeting on behalf of the entire County Board. Please keep up the excellent work. Sheriff Turner echoed Toot's comments. Don Zillig thanked Connie Marney for attending and representing Senator Stewart.
- f) Discussion and possible action on establishing meeting dates and start time for the FY2020 Legislative Committee meetings
- i. Review possible 2020 meeting dates – John Lang put together three possible Legislative Committee meeting schedules for consideration. **Don Zillig made a motion to schedule Legislative Committee meetings on the third Wednesday of the month. Seconded by John Schultz and motion failed. Scott Toot made**

a motion to schedule Legislative Committee meetings on the second Tuesday at 2:30 p.m. Seconded by Diane Gallagher and motion passed.

ii. Set meeting time at 11:00 a.m. or 1:00 p.m. – See prior item.

6. **Citizens' Comments:** Rose Noble commented that they were happy to see an economic development plan rolled out. She is a little disappointed that tourism was not mentioned in that plan. Especially with the City of Chicago and Galena and Jo Daviess County being a big draw for visitors throughout the region. Anything we can do to have our civic leaders push to keep that conversation is kept in the loop at all times and as part of economic development.

7. **Board Member Concerns:**

8. Next regular meeting - Thursday, January 8, 2020 at 2:30 p.m.

9. Meeting adjourned at 12:18 p.m. following a motion made by John Schultz, seconded by Don Zillig.