

AUDIT/FINANCE/PURCHASING/BUDGET COMMITTEE

September 10, 2020

Present via phone: Clark Pearce, Mike McClure, Vicki McMahon

Absent: None

Present Venise McWard, and Tim Carlson (in person),

Others present: Mike Gianasi, Betty Asmussen, Molly Alaria, Scott Woods, Tiffany Senger, Evan Young, Heather Hampton-Knodle, Bruce Barry and Jan Bland. Becky Edwards, Mike Havera, Laura Cooper and others noted online.

The Audit/Finance Committee met on Thursday, September 10, 2020 at 6:30 p.m. via freeconfercecall.com and at the Christian County Courthouse, Taylorville, Illinois. The purpose of the meeting was to review by department and discuss budget proposals, agenda items and any other matters properly brought before the committee. Attendance was taken, and Finance Chairman Clark Pearce noted a quorum.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Vicki McMahon made a motion immediately to move public comments to the beginning. Venise McWard seconded the motion and a roll call vote polled 3-2: aye Venise McWard, Vicki McMahon, Tim Carlson and nay Clark Pearce and Mike McClure. The motion carried.

Jeff Nolan from the audience distributed papers to committee members and spoke for 3 minutes contending the validation of eminent domain possibility with passing the CEDS plan. Committee member Mike McClure noted his understanding it was only a method to obtain a grant. Becky Edwards responded to Nolan question that the speakers this evening could answer any questions.

Taylorville Mayor Barry spoke to the committee not as public comments but as a speaker. He has attended other county meetings and no wind farms were mentioned as being considered in the plan. Christian County was asked to join the other five counties in replacing the West Central Group. He urged the board to approve in order to give the other little towns in the county a chance to apply for EDA grants.

Another caller asked about the minutes of August 2019 and paying an annual fee. [Minutes were incorrect.]

Another caller questioned speakers getting more time than public comments and that this strategy was just being pushed through.

Chairman Pearce read a letter just received from Congressman Rodney Davis in support of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy six-county consortium. A CEDS plan "is a vision for economic growth and to bring tax dollars back into the community." "In 2018 the City of Taylorville and the Taylorville Development Association received a \$537,288 grant from the EDA to improve Taylorville Commercial and Industrial Park. To qualify a CEDS had to be in place.....It is important to note that adopting a CEDS does not usurp local planning and zoning decisions."

CLAIMS

A motion was made by Venise McWard and seconded by Tim Carlson to approve the claims as presented for September. A roll call vote polled all ayes and the motion carried.

COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Evan Young, County Board Chairman from Montgomery County spoke to the committee to encourage their participation and approval of the CEDS. This is a useful tool necessary to obtain EDA grant funding. He gave the example of Litchfield federal funding for water and power to serve their industrial park. He noted that all other counties had approved the plan as of August 18th. Vicki McMahon objected to the speaker having more than three minutes to speak. [States Attorney Havera clarified public comments are not on the agenda and speakers were invited to present information.]

Heather Hampton-Knoble, a former Montgomery County Board member and current area Economic Development Director spoke about the importance of the CEDS. This is the first check off on any application for funding that the CEDS is in place within a regional group of counties. The plan includes workforce creations; “it is how we will train our young people” to bring our young people back to the smaller communities. Montgomery and Christian counties need to work together as they share things like community colleges, roads, bridges, sewer and communication delivery systems.

- Again spoken, without this plan in place there is no opportunity to even apply for funding.
- Jersey County is in a hurry to complete this six county process. If not approved soon, they may leave the group. Then a new plan would need to be compiled and a new region requested.
- Money to pay for the strategy plan is expensive. We have paid our share now.
- To stop participation would eliminate us any funding until we started over again. There is an urgency to continue.

Mary Renner has been the county’s economic development director for many years and has brought funds back to the community.

- West Central failed to update the CEDS plan for many years. Several counties refused to pay the high dues when WC did not keep plans current.
- After the new plan has been established along with a region, an application can be made.
- During the public hearing for the project initiated by a local government, any negative comments from that hearing could cause the application to fail. The hearing would stop any proposal to move forward, so the citizens have a say so in the projects applied for.
- Additionally, new requirements to file for reimbursement for COVID money may include having a CEDS plan.

With no discussion, Mike McClure made a motion to pass the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy plan and was seconded by Clark Pearce. A roll call vote polled the following: aye-Mike McClure and Clark Pearce; nay-Vicki McMahan, Tim Carlson and Venise McWard. The motion failed 3-2.

ACCEPT DONATION FOR 911 SYSTEM UPGRADE

Chief Deputy Scott Woods presented a resolution to accept a donation from the Macon County Public Safety Training Foundation to upgrade the 911 system. He explained that Mr. Howard Buffet has been a friend and an auxiliary deputy with Christian County for several years. The donation is to pay the Sheriff’s portion (general fund) for the 911 system over a four to five-year period contract. It was noted that Mr. Buffet has purchased other things over the years that have been beneficial the deputies and the committee was appreciative of his efforts. A motion was made by Venise McWard and seconded by Tim Carlson to approve R2020 SF xxx to accept the funds to upgrade the Sheriff’s portion of the 911 system. A roll call vote polled all ayes. The motion carried.

BUDGET REVIEWS

Sheriff-An adjustment was requested for the new jail administrator at about an 11% increase. Cecile Polley was praised for his accomplishments and changes made at the jail since February. However, the adjustment was requested to allocate salary to the administrator that was at a higher rate of pay than a Correctional Officer with two days of overtime. A motion was made by Venise McWard and seconded by Vicki McMahan to increase the Jail Administrator’s salary by 5% as an adjustment. The roll call vote polled ayes: Tim Carlson, Vicki McMahan, Venise McWard and Mike McClure; nay was Clark Pearce. The motion carried.

Public Defender-Tiffany Senger the new PD, explained that several items needed to be reorganized by type of expense. With a new assistant public defender, the caseload now peaks at 700 from a few years ago at 400. The supplies and office equipment were separated which gave a different picture. The dollars were the same.

The Chief Probation Officer salary increase question had a response sent to the committee by the Chief Judge. The explanation still left an unanswered interpretation from the statute. The Committee has requested further discussion with Chief Judge Koester to clarify certain parts of the statute. The motion was made by Venise McWard and seconded by Vicki McMahon to table and then rescinded to move that the Chief Judge meet with the County Board to discuss the interpretation. A roll call vote polled all ayes. Laura Cooper that her increase is a promotion or an adjustment and the annual increase based on the comp plan.

Respectfully submitted,

Clark Pearce
Finance/Audit Committee Chairman
