

Legislative Committee
January 28, 2012
JAMES P. COUGHLIN CENTER

Present: Stan Kline, Bill Wingren, Pat Brennand, Ken Robl, James Kozokowski, Tom Ellis, Nancy Barker, Tim Hamblin, Chuck Farrey, Larry Smith, and David Albrecht

Also

Present: State Representatives Gordon Hintz, Penny Bernard Schaber, Michael Schraa, Dave Murphy, and Dean Kaufert, State Senator Rick Gudex, Supervisor Paul Eisen, John Casper – Oshkosh Chamber of Commerce, Melissa Konrad – Winnebago County Clerk of Courts and Sheriff John Matz

Excused: Jerry Finch

Absent: Claud Thompson, Patrick O'Brien, Bill Roh

The meeting was called to order at 8:33 A.M. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. Chairman Kline had those present at the meeting introduce themselves.

K. Robl motioned to approve the minutes from the November 26, 2012 meeting. This motion was seconded. Carried by voice vote.

UPDATE ON LEGISLATIVE MATTERS:

Representative Hintz told the committee that the legislative session is under way. The biggest questions are regarding the budget – which is set to be released on February 20, 2013. One of the major parts of the budget will be the Department of Transportation. Transportation projects are expensive. Gas prices are high and with the economy, people are driving less, so revenue the from gas tax is down. A study conducted by a Transportation Study Group – which studied: Funding transportation, what the needs are, what projects are needed, what the infrastructure costs will be, and how these items will be funded going forward. The group came up with 4 suggestions:

1. No new revenue – delay of projects
2. Higher gas tax
3. Higher vehicle registration fees
4. Assessment based on miles driven

No one is happy with these choices – which scenario is chosen will be revealed in the budget. There will be increased Transportation funding, which more than likely come out of the general fund.

Mr. Hintz told the committee that no budget repair bill will be needed. Since there is a surplus in the budget, there could be an income tax cut.

There are 25 new members in this session of the Assembly.

Representative Hintz told the committee that he spent a weekend in Iron and Ashland counties with a group of legislators. They received a lot of good information on the mining proposal and concerns about the watershed.

Representative Schaber discussed with the committee her take on the mining proposal. She told the committee that this summer she was on a special legislative council that discussed interventions for people with Alzheimer's. This is becoming an issue that every county is going to have to deal with. It will need to be clarified what the duties of the county and law enforcement will be.

Ms Schaber is on the Transportation Committee and has asked for an informational meeting to make sure that the 441/Highway 10 project is included in the budget. This meeting will also discuss the revenue stream coming into the transportation budget and the suggestions that have been made for that revenue.

Representative Schaber is also on the Tax Exemption Committee and that committee will be going over previously given tax exemptions – find what works and keeping them in place and eliminating the ones that don't work.

Representative Kaufert told the committee there may be an income tax cut because of the surplus. Mr. Kaufert feels that Speaker Voss will make an effort to change the atmosphere in Madison.

Mr. Kaufert is Chairman of the Tourism Committee and is excited about promoting Wisconsin and the Fox Valley area.

Mr. Kaufert told the committee that every legislator will be going through the Wisconsin State Statutes trying to find outdated, not necessary regulations that are no longer needed.

With some extra money in the budget, Mr. Kaufert feels the State should be looking at some early intervention programs such as Safe Streets.

Representative Kaufert is also on the Transportation committee and is very interested in the 441/Highway 10 Project. He feels that there are problems with the Transportation Fund that are going to need to be looked at.

Mr. Kaufert told the committee that he is planning on visiting the area of the mining proposal, but feels that something will get done regarding this proposal.

State Senator Rick Gudex told the committee that his first week in office was spent in training. He announced that his office is up and running. He has been placed on the Economic Development Committee and there is nothing on the docket for that committee at this time.

Mr. Gudex is very interested in funding education in Wisconsin. He discussed with the committee that future jobs will need educated people to fill the manufacturing jobs of the future.

Mr. Gudex discussed his feelings on the mining proposal. He is glad that water quality is being addressed. He and Representative Schraa visited the area that is being proposed for the mine.

He told the committee his big challenge will be having patience on how things work in government. Coming from the private sector, things tend to move much faster than in government.

Representative David Murphy told the committee that one of big issues in Madison is the payroll situation at the University of Wisconsin. Mr. Murphy is the Vice Chair of the Colleges and University Committee. \$33 million dollars were paid out in benefits for people no longer employed. Some are recoverable, but most will not be. \$28 million dollars was spent of software 6 or 7 years ago for the UW system. That system has been scraped and they are looking at spending \$80 million on new software. This would be approximately \$1000.00 per person.

Mr. Murphy talked about the Right the Rules website and toll free number for people to give input on rules that the public thinks may be obsolete.

Mr. Murphy stated that he is against any new taxes. He doesn't feel the Governor will support any new taxes as well. He stated that he is against raising vehicle registration as a way to fund the transportation fund. He stated that neighboring states will not be included in vehicle registration. People who are in neighboring states and use our roads will not be helping to pay for that usage.

Mr. Murphy told the committee that he will be visiting the proposed mining site. The equalized property value in Iron County is about \$900 million dollars. The investment in the mine would be about \$1.2 billion. The investment would be more than the equalized value of the entire county. The population of Iron County is 5800, with the second highest unemployment rate in the state. It has been stated that Iron County has only one export – their children.

Minnesota has a \$1.1 billion dollar deficit. Taxes were raised to solve their budget crisis and it did not work.

Representative Schraa told the committee that mining can be done in Wisconsin responsibly. He was disappointed about the number of legislatures that had actually gone and toured the mining site. Mining had been done in that area from the 1880 to 1960. There is no poisoning of the Bad River water shed.

Mr. Schraa is on the small business development committee and is happy to be on that committee as he comes from a small business background. He and others are in the process of setting up business roundtables for small business owners. We need to find out what can be done to improve the business environment in Wisconsin. He hopes to have this meeting site up by spring and to include representatives from the area Chambers of Commerce.

Representative Schraa feels that part of the surplus in the budget should be set aside in the Rainy Day Fund.

Mr. Schraa talked about a bill to change the constitution to stop raiding funds comes before this session for the second time. If this bill is passed it will be presented as a referendum.

There was discussion with the committee and the legislators.

MELISSA KONRAD – Winnebago Clerk of Courts

Ms Konrad addressed the committee regarding the duties of her office. She supervises 44 people. 35,000 cases were filed in her office last year. She is working on better signage in the courthouse, especially for jurors. She is working with Mike Elder of Facilities on getting her office staff closer together. She also needs more room for file storage and possibly a temporary worker to scan files into the system. She talked about her take on the active shooter training held in the Courthouse. She and her staff are having discussions on ideas that will help keep staff and guests safe while in the courthouse. She has asked to be included on the County Board Annual Tour, so she can show the supervisors what her office area is like.

NEXT MEETING – Is scheduled for February 25. Chairman Kline announced that he has resigned from the County Board, as he has moved out of the county. This will be his last meeting. He stated that Vice Chair Pat Brennan will be putting together the next agenda. He thanked everyone for the great experience he has had as chair this committee. Mr. Kline was recognized by the committee with a round of applause.

ADJOURNMENT - It moved by Chuck Farrey and seconded to adjourn. The Meeting was adjourned at 9:39 am.

Respectfully Submitted By:
Bill Wingren
Secretary

Recorded By:
Jean Mahy
County Clerk's Office