

Legislative Committee
January 23, 2012
JAMES P. COUGHLIN CENTER

Present: Stan Kline, Bill Wingren, Pat Brennand, James Kozokowski, Joanne Sievert, Tom Ellis, Kathy Lennon, Tim Hamblin, Chuck Farrey, Al Jacobson, David Albrecht and Mike Norton

Also

Present: Representative Spanbauer, Representative Gordon Hintz, John Casper – Chamber of Commerce, Representative Michelle Litjens, Representative Dean Kaufert, Representative Penny Bernard Schaber, Melissa Kok – Representing Senator Ron Johnson, Mark Harris – County Executive and Christian Gossett – Winnebago County District Attorney

Excused: Tom Widener

Absent: Patrick O'Brien, Ken Robl, Nancy Barker, Jef Hall

The meeting was called to order at 8:37 A.M. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Chairman Kline had those present introduce themselves.

There was a motion made to approve the minutes from the November 28, 2011 meeting. C. Farrey made an observation that in the minutes, not everyone was identified as to who they represented. This matter was cleared up by the Chairman. The motion was seconded. Carried by Voice Vote.

5. UPDATE ON LEGISLATIVE MATTERS:

Representative Dick Spanbauer of the 53rd Assembly District discussed with the committee the merits of LRB3474/1 regarding the realignment of highway signs. This bill deals with the cost of removing/relocating signs because of highway improvements or a new highway. The current legislation is the state pays for the full cost of relocation or removal. This bill would have the counties pay the difference if is no ordinance in place regarding the removal of signs. Executive Harris told the committee that there is a number of pending legislation that puts the costs from the state to local government. It was decided to bring this forward for the next meeting, as the Planning & Zoning committee is currently re-writing their ordinances for the county. Representative Spanbauer stated that there is a big session coming up in the legislature. Wednesday Governor Walker will deliver his State of the State.

Representative Schaber of the 57th Assembly District told the committee that she is on the Transportation Committee. There will be a bill introduced from that committee regarding Fox Valley Transit. She told the committee that Appleton will lose 20% of their funding, which would be a huge blow to their budget. She discussed this problem with the committee.

Representative Hintz of the 54th Assembly District asked that 2 items be passed out to the committee for informational purposes. These items were not included on the agenda, so were not discussed. Mr. Hintz told the committee the mining bill will be coming up for a vote. Wisconsin has lost more jobs than any other state. There has been 6 straight months of job losses in Wisconsin. Some states have started to add jobs. He talked about the Well Woman program being given to another contractor. He thanked the local health officials who helped with this matter

Representative Kaufert of the 55th Assembly District commented to the committee that the legislature is beginning to wind down. There are only a few sessions scheduled from now until April. He feels a limited number of bills will pass this legislative session. He thinks the mining legislation and the wetlands bill will make it through. In April, nomination papers will be taken out. Mr. Kaufert feels people will be cautious from now on – pending recall elections and the lack of jobs issue in Wisconsin. He does feel some jobs have been created, and the focus needs to remain on creating more jobs. Representative Kaufert told the committee that the Governor had lifted the temporary cap on family care and expands it to counties not included at this time. This cost will be around \$80 million dollars. The department of Health and Human Services believes they have found efficiencies and working with the family care organizations, they have better way to deliver services that will save money. They believe they have found the \$80 million.

Michelle Litjens of the 56th Assembly District discussed with the committee that when the recall process started – all business activity moving into Wisconsin stopped. She told the committee that

Medicaid was the only thing in the State budget not cut. She told the committee that she is sponsoring a bill that would require state agencies to come up with contingency plans in case of not getting federal funding.

10. **DISCUSSION/ACTION ON A RESOLUTION SUPPORTING A BILL ESTABLISHING A PAY PROGRESSION FOR ADA'S** – Christian Gossett – Winnebago County District Attorney

Mr. Gossett told the committee discussed the LaFollette Study which looked into staffing issues with Assistant District Attorneys. What they came with is there is an 18.4% turnover per year of assistant district attorneys in the State of Wisconsin. That is equivalent of 100% turnover every 5.5 years. In the past decade – the pay progression stopped – no pay raises. In Winnebago County – there are 9 assistant district attorneys – 3 have less than one year's experience. Often time paralegals make more money than an assistant district attorney. There is no career potential in the State of Wisconsin. Every year, the average years of experience keeps dropping. In Winnebago County, we should be around 17-18 years of experience. Right now we are between 7--8. This number is thrown off because Winnebago County has 1 ADA with 27 years of experience and 1 with 19 years.

The bill makes a 17 step annual process that is merit based. The average for ADA's is around \$100,000 with out benefits. Most ADA's in Winnebago County average under \$55,000. The lack of experience of ADA's in Wisconsin is a safety concern.

After discussion with the committee, Bill Wingren moved and Chuck Farrey seconded to table this item until more information can be provided. AYES – 9, NAYS – 3. Passed.

9. **DISCUSSION REGARDING THE PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE STATE MINING LAWS**

Representative Litjens told the committee that there are currently 4 amendments filed to this bill. There has been one mine started in Wisconsin in the last 52 years. Minnesota and Michigan have active mining in place. The average time for permitting mines in those states are 120 – 180 days. In Wisconsin, the bill would require 350 days. The mine would need approval of the EPA. The bill would require that the mine owners have a 20 year bond for reclamation.

Iron County average salary is \$22,000. It as the second highest unemployment rate in the state. This area needs jobs. Many businesses in the State of Wisconsin would be impacted by this mine.

Representative Schaber feels the bill should be sent back and redone. She is on the committee and has attended all the public hearings. She has many concerns. This is a policy setting bill for any mines to follow this one. The community will get 3 upfront payments of \$50,000 to allow the community and the mine to do planning, sign contracts, etc. At this time – the community would get 100% of these payments. In this bill, the payment would be changed to 50%. The state would get 50% and the community would get 50%. Ms Schaber feels that not all the interested parties have been included in this bill. Native American tribes can stop this bill from going forward at any point. Nothing has been addressed in this bill regarding any burial remains found.

There needs to be safeguards regarding the environment. The mine will be creating jobs, however the majority of those jobs will be filled by people with experience, not the local unemployed population. One area of concern is mitigating the land – as the bill is written now that land can be anywhere in the state, not the actual land that was mined. Many issues need to be brought to the table and worked out before going forward with this bill.

8. **DISCUSSION/ACTION ON RESOLUTION REGARDING A "WHEEL TAX"**

Some information regarding a wheel tax from State Representative Dean Knudson was passed out to the committee. Currently Milwaukee, Beloit and Mayville as well as St. Croix County have wheel taxes. . Because of bill AB295 – these communities will have to have a referendum at the next general election in order to keep their wheel tax in place. Any community looking to have a wheel tax would also have to have a referendum and that would need to spell out what the money raised would be used for. After discussion among the committee, B. Wingren moved and it was seconded by D. Albrecht to table this item until more information on this item is researched. CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE.

Melissa Kok from Senator Ron Johnson's office told the committee that the First Year's Report from Senator Johnson is on his website. He covers his activities for his first year, bills he co-sponsored. She

also told the committee that the State of the Union address was coming up shortly. Supervisor Farrey asked if Ms Kok could find out some information regarding a Social Security audit that Senator Johnson talked about doing when he was campaigning for office. Ms Kok will check and see what information she can find.

6: **UPDATE FROM COUNTY EXECUTIVE**

Executive Harris discussed with the committee about the \$3 billion dollar deficit. This is the largest deficit the state has ever had. Even though the budget is balanced, with generally accepted accounting practices, we have a deficit.

There were tax cuts in the last budget. These cuts will mean some services now provided will be lessened or eliminated.

Respectfully Submitted By:
Bill Wingren
Secretary

Recorded By:
Jean Mahy
County Clerk's Office