

Legislative Committee
Monday, March 28, 2011
JAMES P. COUGHLIN CENTER

Present: Stan Kline, Bill Wingren, Pat Brennand, Ken Robl, James Kozokowski, Joanne Sievert, Harvey Rengstorf, Tom Ellis, Tim Hamblin, Jef Hall, Jerry Finch, Tom Widener, Patrick O'Brien, Chuck Farrey, Claude Thompson and David Albrecht

Also Present: County Executive Mark Harris, Representative Spanbauer, Gregg Underheim – Congressman Petri's Office, State Senator Randy Hopper, Representative Kaufert, Representative Hintz and Supervisor Eisen

Excused: None

Absent: Kathy Lennon, Nancy Barker

The meeting was called to order at 8:33 A.M. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

There was a motion made to approve the minutes from the January 24, 2011 meeting. This motion was seconded. Carried by Voice Vote.

IMPACT & RAMIFICATIONS OF THE BUDGET REPAIR BILL & UPCOMING BUDGET – Winnebago County Legislators

Chairman Kline asked if any of the legislators knew if the Budget Repair bill was in effect. State Senator Hopper told the committee that the administration is moving forward as if the law is in effect, but is aware of the legal challenges. Mr. Hopper told the committee the way the budget process works is the governor will present the governor's budget and pass it on to the legislature. The legislature will then begin work on the budget. Never in the history of the state has the state just passed a governor's budget without making changes. The challenge is now to work together to do the best for all of the State. Mr. Hopper told the committee that the agency briefings will begin tomorrow in Madison. Public hearing on the budget will be on April 7, 8, 11 and 13th. Senator Hopper asked the committee what kind of changes Winnebago County is looking to get in the budget.

Representative Spanbauer encouraged the governor to take the fiscal parts of the bill out of the bill. He felt that the situation could have been handled differently, and wrote a letter to the governor detailing a plan he felt that would work better in the current economy.

Representative Kaufert told the committee that the agency briefings were starting. He told the committee the agency briefings are a good way to find out what is in the budget. There are only 4 public hearings scheduled around the state – the lowest number in history. The closest one to Winnebago County is in Stevens Point.

The budget will wipe out structured deficit in Wisconsin. Mr. Kaufert believes that this will put us on better ground for future growth. The state cannot sustain the level of current spending. Revenue is at 2006 levels and we are spending at 2011 levels. There is no doubt that this time is going to be painful. Everything is up for scrutiny.

Representative Hintz told the committee that there are fewer places in this budget to cut. He feels looking for trade offs may be the way to go. Mr. Hintz feels that the tools the governor gave, may work better on paper than in reality. Opposition to the budget bill is not just from the democrats. Mr. Hintz told the committee that he is worried about cuts that will hurt the most vulnerable of Wisconsin residents. Badger Care enrollment is up. There is language in the budget that dialysis will not be covered under Badger Care. It will be up to the legislatures to decide what to fund and what not to fund. How things are being done at the state level now, are not the way things have been traditionally done in Wisconsin. It is important that core services be maintained.

Chairman Kline asked Mr. Underheim if transportation aids, particularly bus systems, with collective bargaining be taken out, will we still be getting all our transportation aids? Mr. Underheim indicated that it is not clear at this point. He also told the committee that there is a reauthorization of no child left behind. There are some questions regarding setting reasonable progress without setting unrealistic goals. 44 states have adopted voluntary standards.

Mr. Underheim told the committee that FICA tax is being lowered. .

At this point in the meeting, the Legislators took questions from the committee.

Mark Harris told the committee that there will be a \$1.4 million reduced cost to Winnebago County – however the benefit will go to Madison. 1 out of 8 employees in Winnebago County is a state employee. Collectively they will lose \$34 million dollars in take home pay. That will be a huge impact on Winnebago County. The freezing of participation in Family Care will create long waiting lists for people who need and are qualified for benefits. They will not be able to get on the program until someone on the program dies.

An unexpected impact in child support enforcement is that general purpose revenue was taken out of child support enforcement and replaced with stimulus money. Winnebago County was told that the money would be at the prior year's level however there was not enough money in the general purpose revenue fund. Those state dollars draw down federal dollars. If we lost \$500,000 in state money, you actually lose a million dollars from that budget. Another unexpected consequence of the budget is that the money that the county paid for employee pensions was matched by federal dollars. That money will now go away. It is thought by the La Crosse County executive that he believes that it is a two for one match. We lose \$2.00 in federal money for child support enforcement for every \$1.00 we save on the pension contribution.

Executive Harris told the committee the reason the county is in good condition is that they went short with all the contracts. No contracts will move forward without pension and health care concessions. There will be a zero increase in next year's salary. Most employees in the county are averaging above the state mandate for paying health care costs. The pension payment will be based on gross pay, not net as most deductions are. Most employees will see a 6% – 7% decrease in take home pay. Executive Harris then took questions from the committee.

CORRESPONDENCE – there was no correspondence to share with the committee.

NEXT MEETING DATE – The next meeting date will be Monday, April 25, 2011.

It was moved by Jerry Finch to adjourn the meeting and this motion was seconded.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:50 am.

Respectfully Submitted By:
Bill Wingren
Secretary

Recorded By:
Jean Mahy, Deputy
County Clerk's Office