Ad Hoc Committee, Government Services Project
Tuesday, July 19, 2011 8:00 a.m.
Lincoln County Service Center, Rm. 156
Merrill, Wisconsin 54452

MINUTES

1. Call meeting to order

The meeting was called to order by committee Chairman Bailey at 8:00 a.m. Besides Mr. Bailey in attendance were committee members Dan Leydet, Bill Zeitz, Arlene Meyer, Bob Lee, and Randy Scholz. Also in attendance at various times during the meeting were Corporation Counsel Nancy Bergstrom, County Treasurer Jan Lemmer, and County Clerk Sheila Pudelko. The meeting was facilitated by Art Lersch, UW-Extension.

2. Approval of minutes for the June 14, 2011 meeting.

Supervisor Meyer made a motion to accept the minutes as presented. Mr. Scholz provided the second. All ayes.

3. Public Comment

None

4. Department Head Interview (Corporation Counsel)

Mr. Scholz began the discussion by mentioning that all but about $10,000 of the approximately $182,700 in tax levy that the department uses is tied up in staff salaries and benefits. Corporation Counsel Nancy Bergstrom then provided the committee with a brief history of the corporation counsel position and how its work duties have increased and evolved over the 22+ years of her tenure. She then provided a brief overview of her current responsibilities, emphasizing that they vary significantly from day to day. Primary duties include but are not limited to advising the County Board and department heads on a wide variety of legal matters, dealing with child placement issues, and reviewing/providing advice on all county contracts. Mr. Scholz mentioned that the corporation counsel office provides all these services and much more for $46.24 per hour, far under what a private attorney would charge. It was also pointed out that outside attorneys would not have the advantage of knowing much about how Lincoln County government does business.

Ms. Bergstrom also mentioned that she is working with Mr. Scholz on ways to minimize county reliance on outside labor council (something that the county currently only rarely uses) and is

exploring additional ways that her one staff person can provide more upstairs counter assistance and limited clerical support to other departments. When asked what county wide cost savings or revenue generating ideas she has, Ms. Bergstrom reiterated an idea found in her department head survey responses that the county should explore additional potential opportunities to consolidate department head positions.

5. Department Head Interview (County Clerk)

Sheila Pudelko gave an overview of the numerous services provided by the clerk's office. Those services range from but are not limited to administering elections, completing the county directory, issuing marriage licenses, conducting bi-weekly mailings to County Board supervisors, ambulance billing, dealing with property insurance, managing delinquent property issues, preparing County Board budgets, and issuing student work permits.

Currently, the office is looking at issuing passports-which could be a significant source of revenue to the county-and ATV/snowmobile/boat license extensions. ($3 to $7 of revenue generated per license). Along with Pine Crest and the Finance Department, Ms. Pudelko also reported that the clerk's office is exploring how medical billing could be consolidated within the county government structure.

Other cost savings measures already instituted by the clerk include hand tallying election results, consolidating committee meeting information mailings (to county supervisors and other committee members), billing towns for their share of election related expenses, much more electronic communication with municipal chairs (savings in mailing costs), and no longer publishing proposed ordinances or resolutions before board or committee meetings unless a public hearing is required (so they are published only after formal approval). Regarding the issuing of renewal licenses and passports, Ms. Pudelko indicated that she has calculated that minimal staff time would be needed to do the work, meaning that potential revenue benefits would outweigh any administrative costs.

6. Department Head Interview (Treasurer)

Mr. Scholz began the discussion by reporting that all but approximately $10,000 of the $129,000 the department receives in tax levy dollars are used up in wages and benefit costs for department personnel. Then, Jan Lemmers provided a summary of department services. Although the department does many different things, its primary function is to receive all money that comes into the county, including property tax payments. Department staff also reconciles the tax roles. The department also works closely with Finance to manage the county's investment portfolio. For the collection of property taxes, it also collaborates with the Land Services Office, which maintains all property tax records. Staff assist front counter customers on a regular basis. Ms. Lemmer indicated that the way in which the office conducts money transactions is efficiently done through appropriate use of up-to-date technology. During discussion, a request was made

by Supervisor Zeitz that the Treasurer and Finance Director provide to the committee the state statute that lists the types of investments local/county governments can make.

7. Overview of draft County Board Survey Results Report

Lersch stated that 15 of 22 County Board supervisors returned completed surveys. Both the names of those who completed the survey and those who did not are contained in the report, something committee members verified they wanted. He indicated that a completed final report of the results will be submitted to committee members at their next meeting. He also highlighted a few main points from the results. Those were:

- Of the potential policies that the county could implement to help address fiscal stress, respondents favored most (in order) consolidating departments, contracting out/privatizing services, targeted budget reductions, intergovernmental sharing of service delivery, delaying capital expenditures, eliminating services, and creating or expanding enterprise funds.
- Increasing user fees, using a hiring freeze (at least in its present format), and laying off workers were the least favored amongst those items receiving positive (majority "yes" votes).
- Delaying routine maintenance expenditures and across the board budget cuts are tactics not supported by the vast majority of supervisors who completed surveys.

Lersch asked whether the committee wanted him to follow-up again (for a second time) with those who did not submit a completed survey. Committee members agreed by consensus that he should not do so.

8. Continue discussion of reports issued to the Ad Hoc Committee, Government Services Project

Committee members stated that no further discussion of the reports was needed at this time.

9. Continue to determine timelines for Administrative Coordinator and Ad Hoc Committee conversations with department heads based on their survey suggestions.

By consensus, committee members agreed that the department heads of UW-Extension, Forestry, and the Register of Deeds should appear before the committee at the next meeting.

10. Discussion on next steps in developing committee recommendations to the County Board

Lersch explained that the procedures developed during the June 14 meeting could be modified at almost any time depending on committee needs. He also stated that he would begin developing a list of key ideas brought forth by department heads during their discussions with the committee.

11. Updates on state budget issues

Lersch provided committee members with the most recent WCA summary of items passed in the state budget that could affect county government operations. He also distributed a Milwaukee Journal Sentinel article outlining Walker Administration plans to deal with state budget/fiscal issues that may arise if the Federal Government does not fashion a debt ceiling agreement. He explained that the Legislative Fiscal Bureau has not yet issued its state budget summary.

12. Agenda Items for Next Meeting

The following items were identified by committee members.

- Department Head Interview (UW-Extension)
- Department Head Interview (Forestry)
- Department Head Interview (Register of Deeds)
- Overview of final County Board Survey Results report
- Continue discussion of reports issued to the Ad Hoc Committee, Government Services Project
- Continue to determine timelines for Administrative Coordinator and Ad Hoc Committee conversations with department heads based on their survey suggestions
- Discussion on next steps in developing committee recommendations to the County Board
- Updates on state budget issues

13. Next Meeting Date

The next meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee, Government Services Project was scheduled for **Tuesday, August 23, 2011, Room 156, Lincoln County Service Center.**

14. Adjourn

Motion made by Supervisor Zeitz and seconded by Supervisor Lee to adjourn. Motion carried all ayes. The meeting was adjourned at 10:54 a.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Art Lersch, UW-Extension, Lincoln County