

Ad Hoc Committee, Government Services Project
Tuesday, June 14, 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 8:04 a.m. Besides Mr. Bailey in attendance were committee members Dan Leydet, Bill Zeitz, Arlene Meyer and Randy Scholz. Committee member Bob Lee was unable to attend due to a last minute scheduling conflict. The meeting was facilitated by Art Lersch, UW-Extension.

2. Approval of minutes for the May 16, 2011 meeting.

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

3. Public Comment

None.

4. Department Head Interview (Finance Department)

Finance Director Dan Leydet provided a general overview of department operations. He mentioned that 93% of department costs are tied up in the salaries and fringe benefits for the department's 5¼ FTE's. Any reduction in personnel would mean that the department would have to significantly adjust how it performs its duties. Other methods of reducing costs such as privatizing some of the tasks currently done by the department would likely result in at least a partial loss of accountability. Mr. Leydet also reported on the relatively new "embedded accountant" system the department implemented in collaboration with several other county departments. Under this system, an accountant position is housed within a department that does most of its own accounting. That department's director and Mr. Leydet jointly supervise the accountant. He mentioned that the system is working well.

Committee members asked Mr. Leydet several questions related to how the Finance Department functions and if there was any way to make it even more efficient. Mr. Bailey along with Ms. Meyer indicated that the potential loss of accountability would likely outweigh any thought of modifying department operations in any significant way.

5. Department Head Interview (Administration Department)

Administrative Coordinator Randy Scholz provided a general overview of department services. Mr. Scholz mentioned that his primary function is to facilitate collaborative service delivery efforts (etc.) amongst county departments whenever and wherever it makes sense. He reported that Service Center administrative offices are constantly exploring and at times implementing ways to share staff duties. Like the Finance Department, the vast majority of the department's budget is used to support salaries and fringe benefits of the personnel specialist, a confidential secretary, and the Administrative Coordinator. Mr. Scholz stated that the personnel specialist is essentially a stand alone position and is vital to ensure smooth county labor operations. Currently, his focus areas of work are exploring with Corporation Counsel ways to reduce outside legal fees (i.e. What makes sense for Corporation Counsel to take on in addition to her other duties?) and helping the district attorney's office address staffing related issues. Also, he is working with a committee to determine how the county's personnel regulations will have to be modified as a result of the state's likely implementation of changes to the public worker collective bargaining system. He reminded committee members that even though the office of Administrative Coordinator is mandated by state statutes, there is no requirement to hire someone for that position because the County Board Chair can fill the role if the County Board wishes. Mr. Scholz also reported that Focus on Energy is currently conducting an energy audit of county buildings.

Committee members proceeded to discuss several matters related to the Administration Department. Chair Bailey commented that the Administrative Coordinator's duties are too numerous and involved to consider transferring them to the County Board chair.

6. Department Head Interview (Maintenance Department)

Interim Maintenance Department Director Randy Scholz provided an overview of department operations. He reported that the vast majority of the department's over \$700,000 2010 budget is used for building maintenance and utilities. \$20,000 has been set aside for fairgrounds related expenses. He has proposed to the Public Property Committee that it makes more sense for the county to refill the maintenance department head position rather than staying with the interim post. Discussion ensued about whether it made sense to combine the maintenance and highway departments. Mr. Scholz mentioned that for all intents and purposes this has already occurred, with primarily highway staff working on several maintenance projects around the county.

Other ideas mentioned by committee members (along with a preliminary discussion about their pros and cons) throughout the various discussions about these three departments were:

- The necessity to create a formal CIP maintenance plan (regular schedule of when work should be done.)
- Creating a "help desk" for the maintenance department similar to the IT help desk.

- Creating a chief accountant position that would take the place of a finance director
- Continuing to cross train staff to establish a more efficient workflow model
- Outsourcing payroll
- Improving communication amongst the various county committees

7. Review and take action if necessary on draft County Board questionnaire

Changes made by the committee to the questionnaire were:

- Label each questionnaire with the name of the county board supervisor who will be receiving it
- Change the due date that completed questionnaires should be returned to the Extension office to the end of business, Friday, July 1
- Ask supervisors to state why they answered the items in question #1 the way they did and/or (if the answer is “yes”) to provide specific examples of the action they would recommend
- Slightly modify the order of the items in question #1

By consensus, the committee approved of the questionnaire with these modifications and asked Lersch to distribute it as quickly as possible to supervisors.

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

Committee members had no further questions or comments about the reports at this time.

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

Committee members by consensus agreed that the Corporation Counsel, County Clerk and the Treasurer will be the next department heads to be interviewed.

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

Lersch recommended and committee members by consensus tentatively agreed that the following steps make up the process for developing recommendations.

- Create ongoing list of committee members’ ideas based on their review of the information being presented to them (i.e. all reports, department head interviews, and through their own discussions)

- Winnow the list via consensus through discussion (based on criteria such as what will work, what will save money, what is mandated, etc.)
- Further reduce this preliminary list to a few focused recommendations that the committee believes makes the most sense

11. Updates on state budget issues

Lersch handed out summary tables outlining the budget that was being proposed by the Joint Finance Committee (Source: John Reinemann, WCA). Some general discussion took place on the timeline for state budget passage and potential implications for counties once it is passed.

12. Agenda items for next meeting

- Overview of preliminary County Board survey results
- Department Head Interview (Corporation Counsel)
- Department Head Interview (County Clerk)
- Department Head Interview (Treasurer)
- Continue discussion of reports issued to the Ad Hoc Committee, Government Services Project
- Discussion on next steps in developing committee recommendations to the County Board

13. Next Meeting Date

The next meeting is scheduled for **July 19, 2011, 8:00 a.m., Lincoln County Service Center, Room 156.** PLEASE NOTE TIME AND LOCATION CHANGE.

14. Adjourn

Supervisor Zeitz made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Supervisor Meyer. All ayes. (Approximately 10:23 a.m.)

Minutes respectfully submitted by Art Lersch, UW-Extension.