

Approved 4/29/20
MINUTES
Ways and Means Committee
April 7, 2020
@ 1:00 P.M.

MEMBERS PRESENT:	Steven Rieker – Chairman; Sharon Williams – Vice Chairman; Jennifer Groves Allison, Rachel Reliford, Phillip Salzer, William Watkins, Jr.
MEMBERS ABSENT:	James Fennell
STAFF PRESENT:	Scott Sorrel - County Administrator; Shauna Musselman – Assistant County Administrator; Larry Evans - State's Attorney's Office; Randy Brunner –Chief Financial Officer; Angela Loftus, Gretchen Pearsall – County Administration; Jessica Thomas – County Auditor; Rachael Parker, Mike Deluhery – County Clerk; Thomas Bride – Election Commission; Beth Crider – Regional Office of Education; Dave Ryan – Supervisor of Assessments; Chad Jones – Board of Review; Nicole Bjerke - Treasurer; Brian Asbell, Doug Gaa – Sheriff's Office; Mark Little – Chief Information Officer
OTHERS PRESENT:	

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Rieker at 2:00 p.m.

A motion to suspend the Rules was made by Mr. Salzer and seconded by Ms. Reliford. The motion carried unanimously.

Approval of Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes of February 26, 2020 was made by Mr. Watkins and seconded by Mr. Salzer. The motion carried unanimously.

Informational Items/Reports/Other Minutes/Updates

County Auditor

Ms. Thomas advised that 796 checks were audited in the period February 1, 2020 through February 29, 2020 totaling \$3,481,846.77.

County Clerk

Ms. Parker remarked that the County Clerk's Office is continuing to issue marriage licenses although the courthouse is closed to the public, and commented that the licenses expire after 60 days. She stated that those who applied for marriage licenses before the state quarantine were unaware of the upcoming situation, and state statute does allow the extension of the 60 day expiration date. She requested that the committee and the County Board consider the adoption of a resolution allowing marriage licenses issued from February 2020 to at least April 30, 2020 to be reissued, which would in effect extend the time period.

Mr. Rieker asked that a resolution be prepared for consideration at the April meeting of the committee.

Peoria County Election Commission

Mr. Bride advised that the General Primary held March 17, 2020 saw a nearly 40% cancellation of election judges due to the COVID-19 concerns; however, many of the cancellations were ultimately filled by students. He stated that the election had a 22.18% turn-out, a decrease from the election in 2012. He noted that a considerable increase was seen in vote by mail and early

voting as compared to both 2016 and 2018. He advised that approximately 12.5% of voting was via vote by mail, while nearly 25% voted early. He noted that there has been discussion of the potential for a large increase in vote by mail, and he anticipates some type of legislation in Springfield addressing the issue.

(Ms. Groves Allison enters meeting.)

Finance

Mr. Brunner advised that external auditors have begun fieldwork, and stated that the auditors will perform their work almost entirely remotely.

Regional Office of Education (ROE)

Ms. Crider provided an update on the activities of the Regional Office of Education:

- The educational system has been nearly completely converted to remove learning in the wake of the COVID-19 quarantine.
- Thousands of meals and other necessities are distributed weekly in all districts.
- Superintendents Zoom calls encompassing all of Peoria County are held three times a week. As it appears unlikely that school will resume this school year, discussions have focused on the process for graduation, prom and other events that occur at the end of a school year.

Supervisor of Assessments/Board of Review

- Tax Cycle

Mr. Ryan advised that the final abstract has received approval by the Department of Revenue, allowing the abstract to move to the County Clerk and Treasurer. He stated that the office's decision not to require seniors and disabled individuals already receiving specified homestead exemptions to renew their applications for 2020 has been well received.

Mr. Ryan advised that staff is anticipating and discussing potential questions and concerns from commercial property owners regarding 2020 assessed value. He stated that there has not yet been a definitive plan forthcoming from either the state or other assessors regarding the issue.

Treasurer

Ms. Bjerke advised that the Treasurer's portion of the external audit has been completed and provided to the auditors. She stated that mobile home owners have been provided the option of either mailing taxes to the office or utilizing the Circuit Clerk's drop box.

Ms. Bjerke advised that current available cash balance stands at \$5.2 million, with the upcoming payroll totaling \$1.5 million. She stated that \$5 million in funds will be pulled from the investment account, which currently stands at approximately \$24 million.

Veteran's Assistance Commission

No report. No questions or comments from committee.

Resolutions

- **Monthly Delinquent Taxes**

A motion to approve was made by Mr. Salzer and seconded by Ms. Reliford. The motion carried unanimously.

- **Property Tax Ordinance**

A motion to approve was made by Ms. Williams and seconded by Mr. Watkins. Ms. Bjerke advised that the Treasurer's Office has been contacted by both commercial and residential taxpayers regarding real estate taxes, particularly in light of lost income and jobs due to the COVID-19 pandemic. She stated that after reviewing the options available by state statute, she recommends splitting the first tax installment into two separate and equal payments, with the first payment due June 9, 2020 and the second payment due August 9, 2020, with no penalty

involved if payments are made by those two due dates. She commented that this option provides the best compromise between taxpayers and the taxing districts, both providing relief for the unexpected financial burden placed on residents and commercial businesses of Peoria County but still allowing the taxing districts to receive timely distributions. She also noted that escrow companies will make their payments on June 9, 2020, which will assist with taxing districts receipt of timely distribution. She remarked that approximately 23% of taxes are paid through escrow. She added that the recommended resolution addresses the first installment only, although the second installment may be further reviewed dependent on the length of pandemic quarantine restrictions.

Mr. Rieker stated that communication to residents and commercial entities should be framed in a way that stresses that the division of the first installment is an action being taken by Peoria County to provide relief to those in hardship circumstances, and those with the ability to pay the entire first installment should make every effort to do so.

Ms. Bjerke advised that if approved by committee and the County Board, a press release will be issued to the media regarding the schedule and a web page will be added to the Peoria County site specifically regarding this issue.

Ms. Bjerke noted that the recommended second payment due date of August 9, 2020 falls on a Sunday, and recommended revising the date to either August 7, 2020 or August 10, 2020. After a brief discussion, a motion to amend the resolution to revise the due date of the second equal payment to August 10th was made by Ms. Reliford and seconded by Ms. Williams. The motion to amend the resolution carried unanimously. A motion to approve the resolution as amended carried unanimously.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned by Chairman Rieker at 2:47 p.m.

Recorded and Transcribed by: Jan Kleffman