

Approved 10/28/20
MINUTES
Ways and Means Committee
August 26, 2020
@ 2:00 P.M.

MEMBERS PRESENT:	Steven Rieker – Chairman; Sharon Williams – Vice Chairman; Jennifer Groves Allison, James Fennell, Rachel Reliford (<i>via teleconference</i>), Phillip Salzer, William Watkins, Jr.
MEMBERS ABSENT:	
STAFF PRESENT:	Scott Sorrel - County Administrator; Shauna Musselman – Assistant County Administrator; Jennie Cordis Boswell - State's Attorney's Office; Andrew Rand – County Board Chairman; Randy Brunner –Chief Financial Officer; Julie Ciesla, Kim Hudson – Finance; Jessica Thomas – County Auditor; Rachael Parker – County Clerk; Tom Bride – Election Commission; Beth Crider – Regional Office of Education; Dave Ryan – Supervisor of Assessments; Nicole Bjerke – Treasurer; Michael Brooks – VAC; Karen Raithel – Sustainability & Resource Conservation; Brian Asbell, James Middlemas – Sheriff's Office
OTHERS PRESENT:	

Call to Order

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

A motion to allow the participation of Ms. Reliford via teleconference was made by Mr. Salzer and seconded by Mr. Watkins. The motion carried unanimously (5-0).

Approval of Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes of July 29, 2020 was made by Ms. Williams and seconded by Ms. Groves Allison. The motion carried unanimously (6-0).

(Mr. Fennell enters meeting.)

Informational Items/Reports/Other Minutes/Updates

County Auditor

Ms. Thomas noted the discussion at the last committee meeting regarding the process of submitting procurement card expenses for approval, and advised that guidelines for that process are available in the Auditor's Office. Mr. Rieker commented that the external auditor had noted in their report that there is not a direct line of approval for elected offices/officers, and the process should be revisited in order to clarify that specific approval process.

County Clerk

➤ **Collections and Transactions Report**

Ms. Parker directed committee members to the submitted report, and commented that the office continues to keep pace with projected revenues.

Peoria County Election Commission

Mr. Bride advised that approximately 20,000 vote-by-mail applications have been returned from a total of nearly 70,000 mailed to voters at the end of July. He added that approximately 25% of those returned were on-line requests with the remaining being returned via mail. He remarked that as a comparison, 10,000 vote-by-mail applications were mailed in November 2018, and 6,500 were mailed for the most recent election.

Mr. Bride advised that secure ballot drop boxes will be available at all early voting locations as well as the site of the Election Commission. He also remarked that the Election Commission website will implement the ability for a voter to track their ballot.

Mr. Bride stated that first ballots will be mailed on September 24, 2020. He stated that the mailing will be printed, assembled, and mailed by a vendor chosen by the Commission and located in Phoenix, Arizona. He emphasized that the company has an excellent reputation, has been in business for many years, and assists many large and small jurisdictions.

Mr. Rieker recommended that with the heightened concern over election processes for the upcoming election cycle, the county assemble a communication plan regarding election safeguards via television and other social networks. Mr. Bride stated that the Commission has planned a roll out of educational components for the November elections.

Mr. Bride advised that there are no current plans to move polling locations; however, the Commission will contact polling places that are private entities to determine their comfort level in remaining a polling location. He stated that if necessary, any movement of polling areas will be communicated to the affected voters at least a month prior to the election.

Finance

Mr. Brunner advised that 2021 budget requests have been received and departmental budget hearings have begun.

Regional Office of Education (ROE)

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

- There have been no denials of grant applications thus far, and are partnering with Unity Point to write a Systems of Care grant.
- Peoria Public Schools are beginning the school year remotely, Dunlap School District has begun full in school participation, and the remainder of Peoria County, including Peoria Regional High School, has begun hybrid programs.
- Positive COVID cases have been found in nearly every school. Approximately 40% of children are asymptomatic and cases are found solely through contact tracing.
- The ROE has received school supplies and equipment offered by Midstate College upon their closing.

Supervisor of Assessments/Board of Review

- Tax Cycle

Mr. Ryan advised that assessment notices are currently at the mailers and will go out earlier than anticipated. He stated that assessments will be published in the newspaper on September 2, 2020 and Board of Review filing deadline will be October 9, 2020. He commented that nearly every township is seeing a flat or decreasing EAV, with the only township seeing a positive equalization factor being Elmwood Township.

Mr. Ryan noted positive feedback on the current policy of automatically renewing specific homestead exemptions as a means of limiting the need to travel to the courthouse or other locations.

Treasurer

Ms. Bjerke advised that of a total 83,373 property tax bills, 76,917 first installments have been received and 25,388 second installments have been paid. She stated that 18,000 escrow payments for the second installment are anticipated within the next several days. She advised that off those that remain unpaid, 627 are trustee parcels. She stated that the Trustee's annual surplus sale this year is a sealed bid auction rather than an in-person auction, and the sealed bids must be turned into the Treasurer's Office by August 28, 2020.

Ms. Bjerke advised that 2,352 batches have been processed: 2,152 by the Treasurer's Office and 200 by the City of Peoria. She noted that the City processed 416 batches in 2019. She added that 1,083 batches were submitted by banks and 165 batches were submitted by Township Collectors. She remarked that a batch received from a Township is a maximum of 50 payments. She commented that this year has seen a significant increase in credit card payments.

Ms. Bjerke advised that the second property tax installment due date is September 9, 2020. She stated that beginning August 31, 2020 the office will temporarily relocate to the vacant Recorder of Deeds Office to allow for improved social distancing.

Veteran's Assistance Commission

Mr. Brooks advised that as Walk-In Wednesday, held on the last Wednesday of each month, draws 30-50 individuals, the service is being canceled for the remainder of the year to assure the safety of both veterans and staff.

Mr. Brooks advised that the Commission approved salaries for employees on June 18, 2020 and the Executive Board has approved the 2021 budget.

Mr. Brooks advised that \$22,581,525.00 in VA compensation has been brought in thus far in 2020, and the Commission is on pace to bring in a total of \$34 million in veterans claims for the year. He noted that the 2019 total was just over \$28 million. He commented on several large lump sum payments (back pay related to appealed claims) including \$243,000.00 and \$177,000.00 claims dating back to 2014 and 2012 respectively, and which are related to Agent Orange. He stated that there are currently 358 active claims awaiting a decision, and 176 active appeals.

Mr. Brooks advised that the Vietnam Traveling Memorial Wall will visit East Peoria from September 23 – September 27 and will be located on W. Washington Street.

Resolutions

- **Monthly Delinquent Taxes**

A motion to approve was made by Mr. Fennell and seconded by Ms. Williams. The motion was approved unanimously (7-0) with Ms. Reliford voting aye via teleconference.

- **Refund of Raffle License Fee**

A motion to approve was made by Mr. Salzer and seconded by Mr. Watkins. Ms. Parker advised that the County Clerk's Office has been contacted by several organizations that were unable to hold scheduled raffle events due to COVID-19 restrictions and inquired about receiving a refund of the raffle license fee. She advised that as state statute does not allow an extension of the expiration time frame, she is requesting authorization to refund the license fee via resolution. She stated that to date, two requests for refund have been received, both in an amount under \$30.00.

The motion to approve carried unanimously (7-0) with Ms. Reliford voting aye via teleconference.

- **Provision of "Property Assessed Clean Energy" (PACE) administrator services for Peoria County**

A motion to approve was made by Mr. Watkins and seconded by Ms. Groves Allison. Ms. Raithel presented an overview of the program, noting that PACE is a voluntary energy conservation program that would provide up to 100% low cost, long-term financing for approved energy efficiency projects for commercial entities.

Ms. Raithel advised that staff received two responses to an RFP for Program Administrator and after a review of both proposals, recommend retaining The Illinois Energy Conservation

Authority (IECA), a not-for-profit organization, as Program Administrator. She commented that IECA has experience in developing PACE programs for several Illinois counties, offered robust training and marketing outreach, and has a larger contingent of organizational assistance. She remarked that as Program Administrator, IECA will collaborate with the County to develop program elements, procedures, administrative fees and forms for County consideration and then implement the approved program.

Mr. Rieker noted that the program applies to commercial properties only, providing those businesses with an alternative source of funding, and with payments being made via the tax submission on the property tax bill.

The motion to approve carried unanimously (7-0) with Ms. Reliford voting aye via teleconference.

Miscellaneous

Mr. Rand initiated a discussion on the efficiencies and process of utilizing township tax collectors. Ms. Demetreas remarked that the volume received from township collectors has been decreasing each year, and cited the increase of online banking as one potential explanation.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned by Chairman Rieker at 3:20 p.m.

Recorded and Transcribed by: Jan Kleffman