

MONTCALM COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
Committee of the Whole Meeting
Tuesday, January 16, 2007
2:00 PM

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

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Members present at roll call: Commissioners Walker, Retzliff, Johansen, Paepke, Baker, Carr, Caris and McCrackin. Members absent at roll call: Commissioner Petersen.

Others present: Kristen Millard, Shelley Strautz, Lori Wilson, Chris Hyzer and John Berchtold.

Public comments were offered and none were given.

Commissioner Petersen entered at 1:05 p.m.

A review of the current By-Laws took place. Chairman Carr directed the board's attention to **Section 4.3 Special Meetings**. In that section it states that at least ten (10) days notice is required to hold a special meeting. Since this meeting does not meet that 10 day requirement, this meeting will be considered a Committee of the Whole Meeting as outlined in **Section 4.4 Committee of the Whole Meetings**. Therefore, no official board action can take place at this meeting, instead only recommendations to the full board will be made. Action on those recommendations will take place at the next regular board meeting.

Moved by Commissioner Johansen, supported by Commissioner Caris to recommend to the full board to amend **Section 1.5 Compensation** changing the Board of Commissioner's salary from \$7,400 to \$7,622 annually in accordance with the 2007 adopted budget. Motion carried.

Moved by Commissioner Petersen, supported by Commissioner Walker to recommend to the full board to amend **Section 6.7 Economic Development and Physical Resources Committee (2)** by adding the Planning Commission and Montcalm Alliance to the list of departments and committees that the Economic Development and Physical Resources Committee acts as a liaison to. Motion carried.

Moved by Commissioner Johansen, supported by Commissioner Petersen to recommend to the full board to amend **Section 6.7 Economic Development and Physical Resources Committee (2)** to strike the word Soil from Conservation District and also striking the word Environmental from Environmental Committee and changing it to the Solid Waste Management Committee. Motion carried.

Moved by Commissioner Petersen, supported by Commissioner Baker to recommend to the full board to amend **Section 6.7 Economic Development and Physical Resources Committee (2)** to add the Brownfield Authority to the list of departments and committees that the Economic Development and Physical Resources Committee acts as a liaison to. Motion carried.

Moved by Commissioner Caris, supported by Commissioner Johansen to recommend to the full board to amend **Section 4.3 Special Meetings** to change the reference to the County Clerk to the County Controller if the County Clerk's research is such that it is allowable. Motion carried.

Moved by Commissioner Caris, supported by Commissioner Baker to recommend to the full board to amend **Section 2.4 County Controller** to change the name of the County Controller position to County Controller/Administrator in this section and every other reference to the Controller throughout the By-Laws. Motion carried.

Moved by Commissioner Johansen, supported by Commissioner Caris to recommend to the full board to amend **Section 6.5 Specific Duties of the Health and Human Services Committee (2)** to strike Mental Health and replace it with Montcalm Center for Behavioral Health and also strike Family Independence Agency and replace it with Department of Human Service. An amendment will also be made to **Section 6.5 Specific Duties of the Health and Human Services Committee (3)** to strike Ionia Montcalm FIA Board and replace it with Ionia Montcalm Department of Human Services. Motion carried.

Moved by Commissioner Petersen, supported by Commissioner Baker to recommend to the full board to amend **Section 6.6 Specific Duties of the Law Enforcement and Courts Committee (3)** to strike the

Citizen FOC Advisory Committee from the list of committees the Law Enforcement and Courts Committee recommends appointments to. Motion carried.

Moved by Commissioner Caris, supported by Commissioner Retzloff to recommend to the full board to amend **Section 6.6 Special Duties of the Law Enforcement and Courts Committee (2) & (3)** to change the reference of Central Dispatch Authority to Montcalm Central Dispatch Authority. Motion carried.

Discussion took place on John Berchtold's recommendation to the board to set a procedure where certain measures are considered at two separate board meetings. The matters that Mr. Berchtold is referring to are: regulatory matters, ordinance, new fees, fee changes and pension amendments. Commissioner Baker feels that by adopting this type of action it provides the general public the opportunity to voice their concerns prior to the board taking official action. Chairman Carr stated that he does not want this kind of procedure to make things too cumbersome, or provide an opportunity of differing interpretations. Chairman Carr asked if it would be possible for the committees to take the lead and postpone action on those specific matters when the recommendation is made to the full board instead of changing the By-Laws. Mr. Berchtold explained that pension amendments and the adoption of ordinances require, by law, consideration at two meetings.

Moved by Commissioner Baker, supported by Commissioner Petersen to recommend to the full board to rename **Section 5.13** to **Section 5.14** and insert a new procedure as **Section 5.13** that will address setting a new procedure that will read: The board shall consider at two separate meetings the adoption or changes to ordinances and pension amendments, or any other actions as required by law. Motion carried.

Moved by Commissioner Johansen, supported by Commissioner McCrackin to recommend to the full board to amend **Section 4.3 Special Meetings** to add the words "A special meeting of the Board of Commissioners shall be held when called by the Chairperson specifying the time, place and purpose of such meeting. The Clerk shall immediately give notice to each of the members and post as required by the Open Meetings Act at least eighteen (18) hours before the time of such meeting. Motion carried.

Moved by Commissioner Retzloff, supported by Commissioner Johansen to recommend to the full board to add **Section 4.5 Emergency Meetings:** The Chairperson may at any time, upon a finding and proclamation of a peacetime or civil disaster or an attack by a foreign enemy, call a special session of the Board of Commissioners to meet at such time and manner as may be deemed appropriate, and give notice of such meeting to the members of the Board by the best available means of communication. Motion carried.

Discussion took place on the language in **Section 4.1 Organizational Meeting**. The board has taken action to have the Chairman's position be a two year term. Under **Section 1.6 Officers, Agents and Employees** the language states "The Board shall elect in odd numbered years a Chairperson to serve a two year term." The Controller will administratively correct the Chairperson's two year term so it is reflected properly in **Section 4.1**.

Discussion took place on the agenda item titled Organization Efficiencies. Chairman Carr stated that he feels the Finance Officer has been underutilized by the Board. He does not feel that the Finance Officer is able to speak freely with the board given the current structure of having him under the County Controller/Administrator. He would like the Finance Committee look into the feasibility of changing Mr. Hyzer's position to more of a "Controller" position, and changing Mr. Berchtold's position to more of an "Administrator" position. It would be his preference to have the two positions side by side, independent of one another, and have both report directly to the Board of Commissioners.

John Berchtold's is not in favor of moving Mr. Hyzer to an equal position and instead recommends making Chris Hyzer a Deputy Controller. Chairman Carr stated that he feels that the Finance Officer position needs to be freed from having to worry about what his boss will say and be able to speak freely with the Board. He explained that the County cannot afford to have their numbers person holding back information in fear of stepping on his boss's toes. He feels the Finance Officer needs to be higher level player.

Moved by Commissioner Baker, supported by Commissioner Retzloff to recommend to the full board to assign to the Finance and Personnel Committee the task of moving forward with the restructuring of the Finance Officer position to be more in line with that of a Deputy Controller. Motion carried.

The second topic Chairman Carr addressed was what he titled as Top Down Management. He feels that the board has been taking actions on things where the concept has been developed in places other than the full

board. Some of the examples are the Ambulance Centralization and most recently, the County-wide Transportation Initiative.

He stated that he would like to see project concepts come to full board so that the full board can decide if it is something worth moving forward with. He feels this would be much more efficient than having committees put work into something the board has no intention of supporting. He also feels that by using this type of management style all of the commissioners will become better informed on projects.

Commissioner Walker stated that she does not think this type of management style will work for Montcalm County. She feels the board has to be open to outside information. She does not believe the board can support concepts without all of the information.

Commissioner Petersen stated that in regards to the county-wide transportation issue he feels that the board did pledge their support to the issue when the board voted to keep the Greenville /Stanton route going.

Commissioner Retzloff stated that he agrees that projects and concepts do need to come before the board prior to time and energy being spent on the issue.

Chairman Carr stated that it is a philosophical question as to whether the committees bring issues to the board or if the board assigns the issues to committees for their review and recommendation.

Commissioner Caris stated that all issues that require funds to be spent should be put before the Finance Committee. The county-wide transit initiative was never put before the Finance Committee and he feels it should have been. He stated that while he did vote to put a band-aid on the Greenville/Stanton bus route, he does not see how anyone could take that vote as a vote in support of a county-wide transit system.

Chairman Carr stated another topic that comes to mind was Commissioner Baker's interest in offices remaining open at noon and closing early. No formal action was taken by the board, therefore he feels the Department Heads' never should have had discussion over this issue. He also stated that the board has already been down that road in years past and determined that remaining open during the lunch hour will not work for this county, therefore this is a topic that he easily could have made a decision on prior to asking department heads to discuss it.

Commissioner Johansen stated that where he feels the board has erred is in the area of reading Committee reports. He stated that while he has tried to keep the board up to speed with his committee reports, he feels that more emphasis is needed in explaining things the committee is looking at.

Commissioner Caris agreed and stated that he feels that there have been communication challenges since the committee chairmen began reading only the committee's recommendations to the board. He feels the full committee minutes need to be read so that commissioners with questions on a topic have an opportunity to ask those questions.

Moved by Commissioner Walker, supported by Commissioner Petersen to recommend to the full board to leave the style of considering projects as they currently are being done. Roll call vote: Ayes: Commissioners Petersen, Johansen, Baker, Caris, McCrackin and Walker. Nays: Commissioners Retzloff, Paepke and Carr. Motion carried.

Chairman Carr brought the topic of department head meetings and the need for board to create a clear separation from the elected officials before the board for discussion. Chairman Carr feels that re-clarification of duties between elected officials and commissioners may be needed to outline who has the authority to develop policy. He does not think the board needs to get recommendations on policies from a group of elected officials. The Board of Commissioners are elected to set policy.

Chairman Carr stated that he has been questioned by the Controller as to how the minutes of the elected officials/department head meetings should be handled and whether they should be recognized by the Board of Commissioners and placed on file, or simply ignored by the board.

Discussion also took place on whether these meeting should be allowed. Chairman Carr stated that he feels departments should come to the board on an individual basis not as a group.

Kristen Millard and Lori Wilson both defended the department heads meetings and emphasized that the meetings are in no way intended to be adversarial with the Board of Commissioners. The meetings are an avenue for department heads to get together to discuss issues going on within the county and work on

methods of providing better service to the citizens of Montcalm County. While elected officials cannot set policy, they are hopeful that their recommendations to the board would be heard since they are the ones dealing with the policies on a day to day basis. Ms. Millard stated that there are no official minutes of the meetings, only notes that are distributed so everyone is aware of what was discussed at the meeting . She stated that there is no formal organization of the group, therefore they do not fall under the Open Meetings Act and are not required to have minutes. She also stated that there will be no longer be any written correspondence that is a result of a department head meeting.

No action was taken regarding elected officials/department head meetings.

Chairman Carr addressed the board correspondence and additional correspondence lists and stated that he feels the deadline of the Wednesday prior to a board meeting is sufficient time to get items before the board. He does not want to see a large additional correspondence list when the board gets to the board meeting on Monday. He does not feel that items get the proper attention that they need when put on the additional correspondence list.

He also questioned why copies of signed contracts that are approved at one meeting are then placed on file in the next board packet. Kristen Millard stated that this is done so that she can be assured that a signed copy is placed on file.

Moved by Commissioner Caris, supported by Commissioner Johansen to recommend to the full board to encourage the Controller to limit additional correspondence to only items that require immediate action. All correspondence must be to the County Controller by 5:00 p.m. on the Tuesday prior to a board meeting. Motion carried.

Chairman Carr wants to thank Brenda Taeter for the work she did to prepare for the awards banquet. She did a very good job and Chairman Carr was thanked by many of the employees and department heads that attended the banquet.

Moved by Commissioner Petersen, supported by Commissioner Retzloff to recommend to the full board to have the County Controller/Administrator draft a letter of commendation to Brenda Taeter for the work she did on the employee awards luncheon. Motion carried.

Public comments were offered. Lori Wilson addressed the board regarding the board agendas and department heads desire to attend the board meetings for a specific agenda item. She wonders if there is a way for department heads to be notified when their agenda items is ready to be discussed instead of having to sit through the entire board meeting.

Moved by Commissioner Paepke, supported by Commissioner Walker to adjourn at 4:35 p.m. Motion carried.

Kristen Millard, County Clerk

Patrick Q. Carr, Chairman