

PROCEEDINGS OF THE COUNTY BOARD

AT A SPECIAL MEETING OF THE COUNTY BOARD MEMBERS OF CHRISTIAN COUNTY ILLINOIS, BEGUN AND HELD AT THE CHRISTIAN COUNTY COURTHOUSE IN TAYLORVILLE, ILLINOIS, AND BY TELECONFERENCE ON **April 29, 2020**

ATTEST: MICHAEL C. GIANASI, COUNTY CLERK

The following proceeding had and entered at large upon the records of said Board, which is done accordingly in the following words and figures to wit;

In accordance with Executive Order 2020-07, issued by Governor JB Pritzker, this County Board meeting is being conducted by teleconference with remote participation by County Board members.

Chairwoman Becky Edwards called the meeting to order at 6:32p.m.

ROLL CALL

The roll call by County Clerk Michael Gianasi showing all members present except Donna Hibbetts and Mike McClure did signify a quorum and was declared. Mike McClure joined in later.

FINANCE COMMITTEE MINUTES AND DISCUSSION-Minutes read by Clark Pearce

PROJECTED LOSS OF REVENUE FOR COVID-19

Treasurer Betty Asmussen presented two reports of the projected loss of revenue in the General Fund due to the pandemic closures. The anticipated revenue including real estate taxes based on a 10%, 15%, and 20% revenue loss of current expenses verses 2020 budget were respectfully as follows: -\$735,989, -\$1,005,582, and -\$1,275,176. The second report, based upon the same percentages, but without the loss of real estate taxes were as follows: -\$542,403, -\$715,203, and -\$888,003. Additionally, no COVID-19 expenses have been included in the budget. She explained this projection is conservative and the 2020 budget is already at a \$196,000 deficit. Why the projections can't be any more exact are due to most State reimbursements are at least a three to four months behind. Some counties are looking at a 40% loss.

FURLOUGHS

It was noted that many counties have or are in the process of furloughs or layoffs due to the revenue projections.

Committee Chair Clark Pearce commented that he was not interested in doing furloughs for about a \$45,000 savings. He has concerns that some will work and some will not. Mike McClure and Tim Carlson also showed no interest in furloughs. Judge Brad Paisley commented that there are no good options and maybe holding off awhile until more numbers are available. He noted some of the changes from the Chief Judge of the Circuit would begin May 15th. Becky Edwards echoed the not yet thoughts for furloughs and suggested to bring back employees a few days a week but continue to pay five days.

Vicki McMahan commented that the committee should at least look into how furloughs might work. At that time Rhetta Barke, the designated labor attorney for the county, explained a plan that several counties are exploring or have already implemented. The differences in furloughs vs layoffs are that a furlough is a temporary reduction in work hours; benefit time is frozen; there is no loss in insurance benefits; the employee is still employed and ready to work when work is available; and no IMRF is lost when worked at least one day in the furlough month. A layoff is a separation of employment; benefit time must be paid out and insurance could convert to COBRA. Attorney Barke explained how there is a supplemental \$600/week benefit by the federal government in addition to the normal Illinois unemployment calculation. Numbers have proven that with a salary up to \$59,000, the employee would make more money at this short term absence than their normal weekly salary. This would be a voluntary choice to the employee if offered by the elected department head. This would be a positive action towards the general fund revenue loss. Additionally, the stimulus checks are arriving to fill any delay in processing. The purpose in addressing this now is that May will most likely prove to also be a slow business month.

Becky Edwards noted that the employee may have to wait longer to receive any unemployment check due to the volume of claims and they need to know that. Clark Pearce gave his thoughts that maybe we should wait another month and come back with a plan. He polled the committee members: Mike McClure-not mandatory; Vicki McMahon-voluntary furlough ok; Venise-voluntary furlough ok and she thanked Mr. Barke for explaining the benefits to the committee; Tim Carlson-against; Clark-not in favor of furloughs. No motion was made. No action necessary. Clark commented that some employees have been working through the closure. We cannot furlough all employees so the projected \$45,000 savings is as if all employees were furloughed.

CONTINUE FULL PAY TO FULL TIME EMPLOYEES

Since the first notice of the “stay at home” order, all employees have been paid their normal base pay. Only essential employees worked and primarily on a reduced schedule with rotating days for staff. Offices were open but again with minimal staffing. The “stay at home” purpose was for less people together. The most current order continues through the 30th of May by the Governor and through the 15th from the Chief Judge. It was determined to maintain the coordination with the Chief Judge. A motion was made by Mike McClure and seconded by Venise McWard to continue building status of closed to the public except by appointment through May 15th. The motion carried. A notice will be sent out to the department heads to share with their employees. Staffing is determined by each elected office heads. *A motion was made by Clark Pearce and seconded by Mike McClure to continue building status of closed to the public except by appointment through May 15th and to continue to pay the employees..*

Discussion: Phil Schneider asked for clarification on the motion and Becky Edwards responded that the motion is to keep the building closed until the 15th and to continue to pay the employees. Phil also asked about involuntary furloughs. Becky responded that their conclusion was to not furlough anyone and take a thirty day pause to determine what an involuntary furlough would look like. Phil then clarified that he was asking about voluntary furloughs and not involuntary furloughs. Clark said that the committee agreed that a plan was needed for the next month in case furloughs were needed. Vicki McMahon stated that there was discussion about involuntary furloughs with the labor attorney but no mention of involuntary furloughs from her. Attorney Rhett Barke summarized his discussion from the finance committee meeting regarding furloughs. Dale Livingston asked if the elected officials can do what they want. Attorney Barke stated the board controls the money and the elected office holders manage their employees. Dale then asked about why this meeting was taking place and that offering voluntary furloughs could save the county money and some employees would be better off. Chairwoman Edwards continued that the motion on the floor was not about furloughs but rather the continuation of the building closure to the 15th and to continue to pay the employees. Mike McClure said that he made the statement at the committee meeting that if an employee is uncomfortable in coming back to work. Treasurer Betty Asmussen discussed her employees may be interested in taking the voluntary furlough to collect the unemployment.

A roll call vote being called upon polled the following: Becky Edwards, Ray Koonce, Dale Livingston, Mike McClure, Vicki McMahon, Venise McWard, Clark Pearce, Phil Schneider, Matt Wells, Molly Alaria, Tim Carlson, Craig Corzine, Linda Curtin, Charles DeClerck, (14) aye; (0) nay; Donna Hibbetts, (1) absent; Brian Wilbur, (1) abstain; The motion carried.

PART TIME STAFF

Regular part time staff will continue as required (example court security) and to be paid for hours worked. Vince Harris noted he had reduced the hours of all his part time staff to only hours worked. Animal Control/Zoning is open half days except by appointment. Mike McClure stated that anything related to furloughs was up to the department heads.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Chairwoman Edwards called for public comments. Janet DeClerck stated that the unemployment process was not difficult to complete. She also stated that a furloughed employee that is recalled may state that they do not feel comfortable because of the virus, then their job is not guaranteed. Attorney Rhette Barke responded that there are some scenarios where that is not true. Dale Livingston asked and received clarification that the department heads can furlough employees if the employees asks. County Clerk Michael Gianasi stated that he would base his offering of furloughs on the workload of the office.

ADJOURNMENT

With no other unfinished business to come before the Board, a *motion was made by Mike McClure and seconded by Ray Koonce to adjourn until **Tuesday, May 19, 2020** for the regular County Board meeting at 6:30 p.m.* The motion carried.