

**MACOUPIN COUNTY
COURTHOUSE RENOVATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE**

January 16, 2013

10:00 A.M.

MINUTES

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Julia Watson, Bob Watson, John Alexander, Doug Andrews, Don Albrecht, Shari Albrecht, Tom Carmody, Dale Chapman, Judge Ken Deihl, Vicki McCourt, Rich Walden.

COUNTY BOARD REPRESENTATIVES PRESENT: Mark Dragovich, CFO Gabe Springer, Raymond Coatney, Jeanette Baker.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT: Molly Rosentreter

GUESTS PRESENT: Bob Bell

AGENDA:

- 1) Discussion on courthouse renovations
- 2) Meeting with Bonnie McDonald of Landmarks Illinois Advisory Committee

Meeting was called to order at 10:00 A.M. by member Julia Watson who turned the meeting over to Doug Andrews. Watson stated that he has agreed to chair the committee from this point forward.

Mr. Andrews stated that the committee is present to help advise the County Board on a vision for renovating the Historic Courthouse. Andrews said he believed they will need to have some expert professional help to get that job done, with many of those already being present on the committee.

Andrews asked Sheriff Albrecht if the committee has a budget to work with.

Sheriff Albrecht stated that it is his understanding of the committee that it is an advisory committee only and is not working with a budget.

Andrews cleared up that he meant the committee needed to eventually consider a budget for the project before they can decide on individual recommendations.

Carmody asked the committee if he understood correctly that the overall project could cost as much as \$18 million dollars? Andrews replied, the budget that the architects put together for the exterior renovation only was a little less than \$9 million three years ago.

Carmody - then the interior was another \$9 million, is that correct. Andrews said that would be his guess and maybe more.

Carmody said he believed that \$ 18 million dollars in an incredible amount of money to consider and believes that in the interest of taxpayers, we are going to have to consider cutting back somewhere.

Judge Deihl said that when we met last April or May, we talked about whether we *renovate, do nothing*, or *build something new*, and after the newspaper articles came out he was surprised the number of people with opinions about what we should do. Regardless, Judge Deihl said that he believed that the people of the County need to be shown all potential options.

Rich Walden said that if we have no budget and we are an advisory capacity only, he thinks our job would be to gather information to present to county board to recommend to some type of action. Some of this has already been done in the 2009 study. Utilizing our advisory capacity, we have to come to some kind of conclusion that we recommend as action that the board can then take.

Sheriff Albrecht said he believed Walden was on the right track with the overview of what this committee is supposed to do. He has been involved on a first hand basis for the last seven and half years and involved closely with architectural studies and things of that nature. Albrecht stated that he doesn't know if we have the public support to do a full renovation on the building and believed that was one of the first things that we need to assess and determine.

Walden said that part of the committee's job may be to educate the general public as to the reason behind any action we may recommend.

Shari Albrecht said that she believes that some time needs to be spent thinking about whether or not there is there going to be a foundation and / or who may be in charge of doing a capital fundraising campaign.

Dr. Dale Chapman said that the advisory committee may recommend the pathways to be explored in terms of how you go about approaching the funding question. There are multiple lanes to at least to put educate the public about the direction of funding which could include funding through a state capital bill, federal funding, or private funding as examples.

Andrews said that the Dept of Interior has a budget this year of less than \$1 million dollars for all the states for last year.

Dr Chapman stated that the Interior Dept would be one avenue of potential funding, but as another example, the US Dept. of Agriculture has long-term low interest loans available for rural areas. This may or may not be an option, but is one worth looking into.

Andrews asked about the possibility of feasibility of setting up a 501C3 is that something that could be done for this purpose. Walden said this wouldn't be a problem but stated that we do have some alternatives - the Macoupin County Community Foundation which he and Shari Albrecht sit on the Board. Walden said that it may be possible for a fund to be established there for Courthouse Renovation. In this event, we would save the expense of going through the process of setting up another organization and having a separate governing board.

Dr. Chapman asked what the mission of the advisory committee was; are we a fundraising group or advice and council group? Sheriff Albrecht said that he believed we could get bogged down

by attempting to reach out too far. Albrecht said that he has said to the full county board and the committees in the past that we are never going to get all the money from somebody giving it to us; it will have to be a combination of funds - money given to us, grant and loan funding etc. Albrecht said the first Courthouse was paid off in 1910 and was paid for after bonds were sold. Watson said currently we should be in good shape; we don't have any major debt out there. Of course, for a bond sale, you would have to have revenue to pay back the bonds.

Walden said that you would likely have to levy a separate bond retirement fund, which he believed the county would have the authority for under state statutes to do up to certain limit.

John Alexander asked about the renovation alternatives: Is a piecemeal approach still possible time-wise? Can the courthouse be repaired over 20 years by budgeting "X number" of dollars a year for twenty years to take care of the most pressing issues or is it too late to do something like that?

Judge Deihl agreed that we have to consider if we do this in stages or in one massive project?

Sheriff Albrecht stated that the county has been approved for a grant from the Landmark Illinois Foundation. Landmarks staff were on site and they have noted that with their grant, they want to have their money go to a portion of renovations that can be measured and seen. On the day they were here the consensus was that the West Staircase would be a good place to start. That staircase could be renovated back to original condition for an estimated \$470,000. The committee was sent an email of the proposed project. There is the potential for \$100,000 from Landmarks and maybe a capital fund from the state and maybe some from the county to match. The county would probably have to come up with at least \$100,000.00 for such an initial project. Albrecht also noted that the primary entrance to the Courthouse had been at the North end but has not been used in years.

Springer addressed the committee and said that from the Board's standpoint, it may be helpful for Chairman Dragovich or Vice-Chairman Watson to explain to the committee members present today what they see as the vision for the advisory committee.

Dragovich said that he believes the feeling right now is to restore the Courthouse and that we need to consider either doing it in a phase-type process over a certain number of years or doing the project all at once. The biggest problem we have right now is that we need to do some work to preserve it; otherwise in ten years, we will probably have to tear it down Dragovich thought. Dragovich went on to say that we would ideally like for the committee to look at an overall budget, then consider and recommend how the county should proceed – a phase-in plan vs. comprehensive approach.

Dragovich said we also may need to look at whether we going to do a full historical restoration where it looks like in 1870 or make some more modern modifications which are more cost effective – the building could still look the same but may not be all be done in stone, etc.

Judge Deihl said that another major issue is the elevator, installed in 1977. The Sheriff's budget and Judge's budget have been hit the last few years to keep it working; however, we have only one elevator if it goes down there is no ADA access to floors one and two. It may be possible in renovation proceedings that we need to consider a second elevator. According to repair people the life expectancy of the elevator was originally twenty years, which would have been the 90's.

Rich Walden said that by looking at the engineer's study, in trying to do that project at \$200,000 a year you will not allow anything to get done effectively. Over time you will have to have more architectural fees which will cost considerably over the long run.

Sheriff Albrecht said that to his understanding the majority of county board believes that it is the seat of the county seat and the Courthouse should be restored and kept in use; then on the other hand, others have said tear it down and build a new functional building. Albrecht said that in Madison County, you have a courthouse and next to it they have an administrative building. Neighboring counties have used both options. He said that we may have to consider the prospect of an administrative building.

It was mentioned by Walden that the probable cost to tear down such a structure and related cleanup alone could range as much as \$3 million dollars.

Andrews asked if there was a consensus of where we go from here. Dr. Chapman said he believed there were several major components involved with moving forward: developing a process for moving forward and a "roadmap" so that committee members understand where we move to next. One of the duties or function of the advisory committee would be writing up a summary of what was discussed here and options for moving forward at the next meeting.

Springer said that it was his feeling from listening to the committee engage today, he believed it eventually boils down to what the county board eventually wants is some sort of streamlined recommendation from this committee. Springer stated that he heard issues from two primary areas: structural options (replacement vs. renovation; long-term vs. priority projects) and questions of how to finance such projects.

Andrews asked for volunteers to draft a write-up summary for preparation of the next meeting and next steps. Dr. Chapman said that he was willing to work with someone and thought there should be someone internal who has all the records. Andrews suggested that Rich Walden and Gabe Springer work with Dr. Chapman. Springer said he was happy to work with Chapman and Walden, but wanted the committee to know that he was not an appointed member of the advisory committee. The committee had no objections to Springer working with Walden and Chapman to bring back a report to the committee.

The committee decided that they'd like to meet prior to the March board meeting, perhaps at end of February. Once a date is settled on, the Board office will notify the committee of a meeting.

The second item on the agenda was to announce the meeting with Bonnie McDonald of Landmarks Illinois; Watson noted that she will be at Lewis and Clark on January 25th at 10:00 a.m. and will meet with our group in Dr. Chapman's office.

Bob Bell with Shop Local was present at the meeting and addressed the committee with ideas on how in the future he could help to produce a folder to promote the courthouse.

Motion made by Don Albrecht and seconded by John Alexander at 11:25 a.m. Motion carried.