

Minutes of A Special Meeting of the Finance Committee

The Finance Committee of the McLean County Board met on Tuesday, April 26, 2016 at 4:30 p.m. in the Circus Room, Bone Student Center, 100 N. University St., Normal, IL 61761.

Members Present: Chair Ben Owens; Members: Erik Rankin, Chuck Erickson, Catherine Metsker, Carlo Robustelli, Richard Buchanan, and David Selzer

Members Absent: None

Other Members Present: Members McIntyre, Soeldner, Harris, Gordon and Caisley

Staff Present: Mr. Bill Wasson, County Administrator; Ms. Hannah Eisner, Assistant County Administrator; Mr. Don Knapp, First Assistant Civil State's Attorney; Ms. Julie A. Morlock, Recording Secretary;

Department Heads/Elected

Officials Present: Ms. Kathy Michael, County Clerk

Others Present:

Chairman Owens called the meeting to order at 4:30 PM

Mr. Owens stated there were several members of the public who requested to speak. He asked them to state their name for the record and informed them they would each have 5 minutes to speak.

Richard Greenfield stated he was an election judge at the Bone Student Center. He stated that they did not suppress any votes and there were always Democratic and Republican ballots. He indicated this was the first time required to follow SB172 and allow same day registration which led to many students voting and utilizing this option. He stated that now that we know same day registration is going to be popular in McLean County, we need to make sure we have resources to address the needs of voters at a reasonable cost.

Zachary Braun thanked Ms. Michael for putting information in the Vidette about registration and voting. He indicated that this was the response they had hoped to get. He asked that everyone stop blaming others and the system and work together so the process could be more efficient in the Fall. He stated that both College Democrats and College Republicans are willing to work to get the word out and to serve as election judges to help.

Mark Adams indicated that he was at the Bone Student Center on election day and everything seemed to be going fine until about 2:00 when the lines started getting long. He said that he hoped they would increase resources so that there was not a 2-4 hour

wait. He said that many are willing to wait the time but many have other obligations and cannot wait that long.

Mr. Joseph Gorski, President of College Democrats stated that he had been informed that this would be an open dialogue to share ideas, concerns and solutions and upon arriving he was disappointed to learn it was not going to be set up the way he had thought it was going to be. He stated that students are an important part of the community and was concerned that there seem to be efforts to limit the amount of engagement or comment at the meeting today. He stated that he hoped in the future the Board could make efforts to include all parties including student leaders and the County Clerk to discuss these important issues.

Trevin Gaffney stated that there was so much confusion about the process on March 15th and not just among students but adults as well. He stated that he hoped they could allocate the appropriate funds for the process and work together to make the process more efficient.

Austin Bertsche, Vice President of College Republicans stated that there was only one voting machine for the same day voters to use. He stated that there should have been more than one machine since it was covering the ISU students, two precincts and general voting for McLean County.

Michelle Cook, retired Air Force Colonel and Vietnam Vet stated that she has worked 11 elections and values the privilege of voting. She stated that Ms. Michael's office does a lot of training before primary and general elections, asks for input after each election from each election judge, and put into place in the next election. Her office is organized and does lots of training and works around the clock to make sure they are as ready as they can be for the election. She stated that she will take your suggestions and all you have to do is call her office.

Adeline Schultz stated that she was at the Bone Student Center and there was no ballot shortage. She discussed the misunderstandings about lines for vote and suggested some of the things that could be done in the future to help students and other voters. She said that both parties need to work together to prevent these things from happening again.

Andrew Dolton – thanked everyone for showing up as it shows a sign of good will. Disappointed that the County Clerk will not be partaking in dialogue today but glad to hear she is taking steps to address issues on March 15th for November election. He stated that they were not there to talk about excuses but about things we can work on in the future.

Chairman Owens indicated that now he would open it up for discussion among Committee members and staff. If members have questions for the people who had spoken, he asked that they direct them to the students who represented the College

Democrats and College Republicans. He also indicated that the County Clerk could choose to be recognized and speak.

Mr. Buchanan said the Senate Bill was not innocent. He stated that the State Legislature mandates to local government but they do not always include funds to cover the mandates.

Mr. Rankin said that overall in McLean County the voting process went well and he is glad that there has been an outreach to American Democracy Project and the Vidette about voting procedures. He said that in every job there is an evaluation process where you analyze what worked and what didn't. He said that he was concerned about the negative comments that are dismissive of the Senate Bill and the blame cast on the Bill. Mr. Rankin went through a social media message that Ms. Michael had posted on the County Clerk's site regarding the election issues from March 15th, the Senate Bill and the difficulties it caused. Mr. Rankin stated that same day registration is growing in the nation and is important because it allows all voters access to the ballot. He said the pro argument is that this allows more people the opportunity to vote and provides those who have moved the chance to still vote. He stated that those against it say there is no safe guard against voter fraud. He provided proof of eligibility voters had to show to vote as evidence that should not occur. He then discussed the costs of same day registration reported by other states. He stated that same day registration will require more work, but it can be done with proper planning. He stated this is about voting and not about one political party or another.

Mr. Selzer said that he thinks this impacts everyone and not just students. He said it takes money from somewhere to fund this and that the Committee cannot determine how many machines or judges are needed as that is for the Clerk to say. He said that he agrees with County Clerk's post, repeal SB172 immediately. He said the Clerk is doing her best and no one is answering her question of how to pay for it. He said there were many opportunities for early voting and early registration that the students could have taken advantage of. He asked them what would be a reasonable waiting time. He asked why we were not putting effort toward making sure that all 18 year olds are registered upon turning 18. He said he felt we have done the best we could with a new mandated, unfunded law.

Mr. Buchanan asked for a response to the question as to how long was a reasonable waiting time. Mr. Owens asked the college representatives to come forward to answer question. Mr. Gorski said employers are only obligated to give 2 hours to go and vote. Mr. Buchanan said voting is not just a right or privilege but an obligation.

Mr. Robustelli stated that everyone is frustrated, but we need to turn that into a dialogue to improve the process in the future. He stated that he is also frustrated about the focus being on the Senate Bill and it being unfunded. He pointed out that there are 286 unfunded mandates in County government. He said this should not be an excuse as to why we can't do better as he does not think we can eliminate lines, but we can do

better. He stated that as an elected body we need to have done all we can on behalf of the constituents. He stated it is time to stop arguing and work to collaborate. He stated that he is also frustrated with the failure to put forth a plan with a budget and asked that a plan be brought forth so they can work on how to pay for it. Mr. Robustelli asked for suggestions on improvement of the process.

Mr. Bertsche said that at ICC they had early voting several days over a period of a few different weeks and the flyer announcing early voting also told them where to vote if they could not vote on Campus. He also suggested more machines. Mr. Gorski said they had been communicating with Clerk and among themselves about getting the word out about early voting and helping to get students registered before the day of the election. He stated that they need more early voting opportunities over a longer period of time. Mr. Rankin stated that he wanted to clarify that the Clerk was mandated to have early voting open during spring break and that we can't craft legislation around each campus.

Mr. Buchanan asked to address a question to County Clerk. He asked her if she was going to develop a plan for staffing and a budget to improve the process in November. Mr. Owens pointed out that March 15 was the election; April 5th was the next Finance Committee meeting, so she has not had a lot of time to put together information to bring to the Committee. Ms. Michael indicated she had a response for Mr. Buchanan. Ms. Michael said that she was working on staffing numbers and a detailed budget that she would bring to the June Finance Committee. She said SB 172 was a great concept but it causes issues and no one was really ready for it. She said that they would try to do better and they had already reached out to Administration at ISU to increase locations for early voting on campus. She said that even if you register early you are going to stand in line to vote. She pointed out that in her report to the Committee she tried to show all the attempts they made to reach out to the public before March 15th but indicated that they would try to do better. She stated that it is a worthy cause, but asked how much money she should continue to ask for from the tax payers to reach out to the students. She stated that she does not know how much it is going to cost because she does not know how many judges or machines it will take.

Mr. Robustelli questioned the lack of numbers. He said that he was getting the numbers from the Pantagraph and thought that she had accounted for cost because there was detail in the report. Ms. Michael said that they could not give specific numbers but approximates as they are not sure how many judges or machines will be enough.

Mr. Erickson said that McLean County was not the only County that had problems around the State. He said that we are human beings and all we can do is learn from it and do the best that we can to improve. He said he had people telling him that we are going to be short on election judges and that we need to work on this as that is not a quick fix because they will need training and we will need to account for paying for the judges. Ms. Michael is not being obstinate; it takes times to figure out how to address issue. He said he is not passing blame but stated that it is just common sense that that

there are going to be lines in November and so if you can register or vote early then you should.

Mr. Buchanan said he had an objection to a previous statement that painted the set-up of the meeting in a negative way because usually if you allow everyone to speak you do not accomplish much. He asked everyone to not get caught up in the process, but work to resolve issue.

Mr. Rankin said that no one wants to be negative, but his is hearing negative comments when we discuss long lines and being short on election judges. He said that we need to have a report after every election that says what worked and what didn't and action items for those things that did not work. He said we should spend money on this because it is civic engagement and is not a waste of taxpayer money to pay for election judges and equipment for election process. He said that he knows the audience and if same day voter registration is in place the vast majority of 18-22 year olds are going to sign up to register and vote on the same day. He stated that he realizes that Senate Bill presents a headache, but we need to stop making excuses and do better next time.

Mr. Erickson stated the shortage of election judges is not a negative comment but a fact. He said that Mr. Rankin started the meeting negatively with the social media statement. As County Clerk, Ms. Michael has the right to comment on a bill and Member Rankin has the right to critique it. That is how things get done in a democracy, talk about, debate and find a solution. Mr. Rankin said that he read the social media posts because members of the crowd did not have them, so he wanted them to know what he was referencing. He agreed with Mr. Erickson that the post was out there and was a critique of Senate Bill 172, so he responded in kind. He said that the idea behind the Bill is very good as it hopes to increase voter turnout, but it is an unfunded mandate. He reminded everyone that there are hundreds of other unfunded mandates. He stated that the conversation has been mostly positive and we want to encourage students to come out and vote by telling them that we are working to make sure there are enough election judges, and equipment to help reduce the wait time.

Mr. Selzer he read through the numbers of voters and how long it took to vote at several precincts. He stated that at some point we, as voters, have to own part of the problem. He said that we need to remember that there are thousands of voters in the County who did not have a problem. Mr. Selzer challenged people in the room to become election judges to help out during election times. Mr. Rankin said that students acted within the letter of law. Mr. Selzer agreed but said that Ms. Michael did as well and that everyone needs to step up to solve problem. He stated that we now know the problem and we will fix it.

Ms. Metsker said Senate Bill 172 had been discussed enough and that we need to move ahead. Ms. Metsker indicated that most precincts are predictable and that Ms. Michael knows how to deal with those precincts, but this one was not predictable and

that she is confident that Ms. Micheal's focus will not be on Whiteoak Township that has 800 voters but is going to be on these precincts and will try to make it the best she can.

Mr. Robustelli indicated he felt that we had made some strides at the meeting. He asked that the students continue to work with Ms. Michael and her staff and asked Ms. Michael to continue to report to the Committee about the progress that is being made. He stated that we need to move on from what happened in the past and turn our focus forward. He indicated that he is willing to help in any way he can. All members indicated they were willing to serve as election judges.

The Members of the Committee thanked the people for coming.

Mr. Owens asked if any other Members of the Board wanted to make a comment.

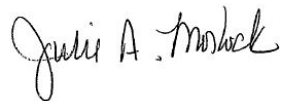
Ms. Harris stated this was a huge transition as voting has been done structurally the same way for years, so we anticipated that there would be problems. She was heartened by the passionate response from the students about voting. Ms. Harris stated that they all want to do all they can to help with this process and will work to find the money to try to help with the situation. She stated that they all share your passion for voting.

Mr. Owens stated that he appreciated all those who helped set up the meeting and showed up for the meeting.

Chairman Owens asked if there was any further business or communication to come before the Committee; hearing none, he adjourned the meeting

Meeting adjourned at 6:29 PM

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Julie A. Morlock".

Julie A. Morlock
Recording Secretary