

## **Minutes of the Rules Subcommittee**

The Rules Subcommittee of the Executive Committee of the McLean County Board met on Thursday December 8, 2016 at 3:00 p.m. in Room 400, Government Center, and 115 E. Washington Street, Bloomington, Illinois.

Members Present: Chairman Soeldner Members Erickson and Gordon

Members Absent: Member Rankin and Caisley

### Other Members

Present: Members Schafer, Buchanan, Cavallini, Metsker and Wollrab

Others Present: None

Staff Present: Mr. Eric Schmitt, Administrative Services Director, Ms. Samantha Walley, Assistant State's Attorney, Civil Division, Ms. Julie Morlock, Recording Secretary

### Department Heads/

### Elected Officials

Present: Mr. Glen Ludwig

Chairman Soeldner called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. He invited Mr. Glen Ludwig to address the Rules Committee.

Mr. Ludwig thanked the signers of the letter presented to the County Board for recommending the meeting of the McLean County Rules Committee. He advised that his background is in Ag-Business. As an attendee of many of the County Committee and County Board meetings he has compared these meetings with those of the City of Bloomington and the Town of Normal, finding County Government meetings not to be as comfortable for the public to attend as those of the City and Town. Most of County business is done at the Committee level. By only attending the County Board, one does not have the background needed to fully grasp the content of the meeting. Mr. Ludwig advised the following:

- less notice be required when requesting to address the meetings
- feedback would be greatly appreciated.
- the County Board Rules has no reference to the Open Meetings Act
- County Government be nonpartisan
- less members on the County Board with some at large
- consider term and/or age limits

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He thanked the Committee.

Chairman Soeldner presented the Review and Consideration for Adopting Amendments to Chapter 20 of the McLean County Code – County Board Rules. He presented a letter sent by Member Metsker to be entered into the minutes.

Chairman Soeldner began with the “meeting time and place” board rule 20-11C.

Mr. Gordon advised that after 20 years he has grown comfortable with the 9:00 am meeting time. He stated that after much thought and consideration of communications, maybe it is time for another experiment with the possibility of a 5:00 pm meeting time with an explicit sunset provision of 6 months to one year.

Mr. Erickson stated that he did sign the letter presented to the County Board. He noted that some conversation has not been so much about what is best for the County Board but rather what gets put in the newspaper. This is not productive. Using vacation time for a County Board meeting is a weak argument. This is not the rationale for moving the meeting times. What is the most convenient time for people to make a meeting is the rationale for changing the meeting time. Mr. Erickson noted that sometimes there is truth in the issues being the determining factor in County Board attendance. He stated that we are not the City of Bloomington or the Normal Town Council. The County has a Committee structure where most of the business is handled and then forwarded to the Board for approval. It is not productive to encourage people to attend a County Board meeting. We are more of a Legislative body, encourage them to attend and be heard at a Committee meeting. Mr. Erickson stated that he will not support a 5:00 p.m. meeting time. If we are going to move the meeting time, it has to be 7:00 p.m. The goal is to provide the most convenient time for the largest number of people.

Chairman Soeldner stated that it is his opinion to keep the meeting time at 9:00 a.m. He will support the will of the majority. We do need to encourage people to attend the Committee meetings. He believes that it will put an undue burden on staff to move the meeting time to 7:00 p.m.

Ms. Wollrab stated that she agrees with member Erickson, the goal is to provide the most convenient time for the largest number of people. 7:00 p.m. is not her favorite time. As a public body the final analysis gets done at the County Board, but the work is done at the Committee level. The Board meeting should be just as public and just as available as

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any of our other meetings. In the spirit of this the evening time is more available. She is most in favor of the 7:00 p.m. time but is open to other options.

Ms. Schafer stated that the 7:00 p.m. time is her least favorite time. The meetings only last at times, 7 minutes. It doesn't make sense to make staff and department heads return to work for this short time. She is favor of 9:00 a.m. The 5:00 p.m. time makes more sense if you are going to move the time to the evening. To attend a meeting, no matter the time, people have to make priority choices.

Mr. Cavallini stated that he is a creature of habit. The 9:00 a.m. is of great help for the staff and it's nice to have staff here and available to the Board. He hears there is a ground swell on the part of the public for an evening meeting, but do we have evidence of this. He suggests some type of survey to see what the public supports. Mr. Cavallini stated that no one in his area is requesting for the meeting time to be moved. He wonders if Counties with evening meetings have a larger attendance than those held earlier. More research needs to be done before any type of change is made.

Ms. Metsker stated that because of the newspaper communication she has heard from a number of people who believe that it makes it inaccessible to the public to have the County Board meeting at 9:00 a.m. She cannot support the 9:00 a.m. meeting.

Mr. Gordon stated that the County Board meetings are pretty low on the public's radar. He agrees that anything that comes to the Committee or to the Board, if the public cares about this particular issue, attendance is greater. There is not a perfect solution. He is in favor of Mr. Cavallini suggestion and maybe use the website and local media to conduct a public opinion survey along with informing the public the importance of Committee meetings. He would support a 7:00 p.m. motion.

Mr. Erickson stated that if the issue is that it is going to be costly to move the County Board to 7:00 p.m. he would like to see the costs broken down. Ms. Wollrab agrees that we are trying to find the best time for the public. If staff is required to work extra once a month this is what the job entails. The cost would be minimal.

Ms. Schafer stated that, using this same logic for moving the Board meeting time to 7:00 p.m. to accommodate the public, then should Committee meetings be moved to 7:00 p.m. as well?

Chairman Soeldner stated that he believes administration has stated that the costs would be minimal.

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After continued discussion, Mr. Gordon asked what the Committee's next step would be.

Chairman Soeldner stated that unless there is a motion to make a change, the County Board meeting will remain at 9:00 a.m.

Motion by Gordon/Erickson to recommend to Executive Committee a change in the County Board Meeting time from 9:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Motion carried.

Chairman Soeldner continued with the possibility of a rule change on 20-13 G 1 (C) concerning the amount of time to appear at the meeting – Agenda items, submit request to appear 24 hours in advance. Request to appear on items not on the agenda 120 hours.

Mr. Gordon stated that the request that came to the Board he believes had a miss phrasing which has influenced some of the thinking and discussion. According to what is on the screen now “requests to appear that are not directly related to an item on an agenda” compared to the letter sent to the Board which read “request to appear that are related to an item not on the agenda”. We need to respond to how the rule acutely reads being mindful of the intent.

Mr. Gordon asked the reason for the 120 hours. Chairman Soeldner responded that it was to allow enough time to direct the requestor to the appropriate Committee. Mr. Knapp added that most public bodies have differentiation between agenda and non-agenda items. The theory of giving time for non-agenda items is that it provides staff time to prepare in case information needs to be gathered.

After discussion it was the consensus of the Committee that a blanket email be sent to all Board members asking them to supply input as what they would like to see on a possible trifold so that staff can prepare a public guide to speaking before the County Board and Committees for prominent display on the website and on General Code's site. A guide on how members voted will be considered as well.

Web updates and possible social media is not considered as a possible rules change.

Mr. Wasson noted that he will amend the Executive Committee packet to include any action taken at the Rules Committee meeting.

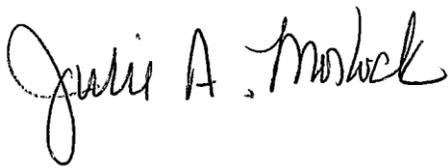
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Chairman Soeldner asked if there was any other business before the Committee, hearing none, he adjourned the meeting at 4:29 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Julie A. Morlock". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial 'J'.

Julie A. Morlock

Recording Secretary

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John McIntyre, McLean County Board Chair  
James Soeldner, McLean County Board Vice-Chair

Gentlemen:

At the November 2016 County Board Meeting you received a letter from five County Board Members, including me, requesting consideration for changes to enhance communication and increase transparency with the public. I appreciated the prompt attention to this letter and the opportunity to meet with both of you prior to the Rules Committee meeting. I continue to believe the McLean County Board must adjust to meet the needs of the changing constituent base. Therefore, I am writing to request the McLean County Board Rules Committee:

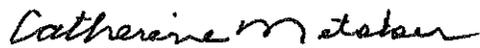
- Change the public comment timing rules
  - Move the Board Meeting times from morning to late afternoon or evening
  - Improve the McLean County website to make it more user friendly and provide more information
  - Work to develop a presence on social media
1. Change the public comment timing rules – I believe requiring individuals to provide five days' advance written notice to speak at a County Board meeting is impractical. I also believe 24 hours' advance notice to address an item on the agenda is unnecessarily restrictive. Although a County Board Member can request a member of the public be allowed to speak without advanced notice, this procedure is cumbersome at best. Since there is a public comment time limit currently in the rules, and the Chair has discretion regarding repetition and digression, I believe providing the public a sign in sheet prior to the board meeting (15 minutes) is a workable option.
  2. Move monthly McLean County Board Meeting time – Since the meeting time pilot conducted in the "the late 1990's", much has changed. Our constituents' demand and desire greater access. Pilot results from 15-20 years ago should not be a reason to maintain a morning meeting time. Additionally, increased labor costs for department employees to attend is minimal and can be mitigated using a variety of options. I have had numerous people express their amazement and frustration with 9:00 am monthly board meetings. I can assure the Rules Committee my support has nothing to do with trying to meet an election promise. Please move the monthly board meetings to a time more convenient a majority of the public – late afternoon or evening.
  3. Improve the McLean County website – I support improving the McLean County website to make it more user friendly, and requiring all departments to make information accessible to the public. My constituents should not be required to come to Bloomington and meet with county staff to obtain information on an upcoming meeting. For instance, the only way my constituents can review a Zoning Board of Appeals case is to come to the Building and Zoning Office from 8:00 am – 4:30 pm. This is an unacceptable practice in today's electronic media driven age. In addition, several times I personally identified vital Zoning Board of Appeals case information missing from the Building and Zoning Office web pages. The

information was only added after prompting. In contrast, the County Clerk's web pages provide downloading of much public information. This office also has links to state and organizational websites used by the public.

4. Develop a social media presence – I am well aware additional fiscal demands may be required to develop and maintain a presence on social media. However, the County Clerk's Office and Animal Control have developed and successfully maintained social media presences without additional funding. I recommend every department develop a social media execution plan complete with implementation timelines which will not require additional tax payer funding.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Catherine Metsker".

Catherine Metsker  
District #1 McLean County Board Member

Cc: All McLean County Board Members