

Lake County Illinois

*Lake County Health Department
3010 Grand Avenue, 3rd Floor
Waukegan, Illinois 60085*



Meeting Minutes - Final

Wednesday, September 13, 2017

8:30 AM

Lake County Health Department, 3010 Grand Ave, 3rd Floor

Lake County Commission on Government Reform and Accountability

1. Call to Order

Chair Foremen called the meeting to order at 8:35 a.m.

Present 12 - Ex-Officio Member Rummel, Member Foreman, Member Ryg, Member O'Connor, Member Osmond, Member Lamphere, Member Shaw, Member Msall, Member Magalis, Member Kim, Member Darch and Member Schaafsma

Absent 2 - Member Roberson and Member Link

Excused 1 - Member Bensinger

Others present:

Jeff Werfel, Lake County Board Member

Judy Martini, Lake County Board Member

Steve Carlson, Lake County Board Member

Linda Pedersen, Lake County Board Member

Dianne Hewitt, Lake County Board Member

Carol Calabresa, Lake County Board Member

Sanda Hart, Lake County Board Member

Barry Burton, County Administrators' Office

Dakisha Wesley, County Administrators' Office

Paul Fetherston, County Administrators' Office

DonnaJo Maki, County Administrators' Office

Jennie Vana, County Administrators' Office

Nickalus Vana, Public

Susan Hoyt, Management Partners

Kevin Knutson, Management Partners

State Representative Rita Mayfield

State Senator Melinda Bush

State Representative Sam Yingling

Michael Dobrow, Aid to Representative Yingling

Dr. Eric Zeemering, Northern Illinois University

Annie McGowan, Civic Federation

Jo-An Sabonjian, Chief of Staff for State Senator Julie Morrison

Mary Mathews, Public

Nikki Kelly-Schmeisser, League of Women's Voters

2. Approval Of Minutes

[17-0965](#)

Minutes from August 23, 2017.

A motion was made by Member Osmond, seconded by Member Shaw that the minutes be approved.

Aye: 10 - Ex-Officio Member Rummel, Member Foreman, Member Ryg, Member O'Connor, Member Osmond, Member Lamphere, Member Shaw, Member Msall, Member Magalis and Member Kim

Abstain: 1 - Member Darch

Absent: 2 - Member Roberson and Member Link

Not Present: 1 - Member Schaafsma

3. Chair's Remarks

Chair Foreman welcomed commissioners to the meeting, thanked everyone for their participation and asked for public introductions.

4. Public Comments (items not on the agenda)

There were no public comments.

5. Old Business

There was no old business to conduct.

6. New Business

6.1 Update on Commission activities since the August 23rd meeting.

Chair Foreman introduced Susan Hoyt from Management Partners, who gave an overview of the Lake County Commission on Government Reform and Accountability Background and Research Materials document that was circulated to members prior to the meeting. The document contains a list of relevant research, background materials and organizations that will assist members in understanding the issues before the Commission. The document is updated monthly. The September document included reports on Multi-Member Districts, a Comparison of Lake, DuPage, Kane, McHenry and Will Counties Board Chairs and an Amicus brief provided by Howell Shuster and Goldberg LLP for the Supreme Court Case Gill vs. Whitford.

6.2 Welcome to Legislators and Legislative Comments (Optional).

Member Schaafsma entered the meeting at 9:00 a.m.

Chair Foreman welcomed Representative Mayfield, Senator Bush and Representative Yingling. He asked them to provide their perspective on the four questions the Commission is considering: how to elect a board chairman, the size of the board, redistricting and other reform topics.

Representative Mayfield stated that representation is the key issue in considering reform. She believed a countywide elected chairman would provide the best representation of the county since the current method, board elected, required the board chairman to represent both his/her district and the entire county. She supports holding the election in a regular election cycle, not in an off year. She supports fewer than the 21 board members, but

cautions that any change in number must be sensitive to minority representation on the board.

Senator Bush, a former Lake County Board Member, believes a countywide elected chair provides voters an important opportunity to vote for the chairman. It is also the best representation for the whole county because it eliminates the potential conflict between the chairman representing both his/her own district and the entire county. Senator Bush has no specific changes in county board size in mind. However, she said it is the right time to consider reducing the size of the board without negatively impacting representation because the Lake County population is flattening and many townships (unincorporated) have been annexed into municipalities. Senator Bush said she is introducing legislation that requires all local government entities to participate in discussions to develop supportable options to reduce the layers of government and duplication of services.

Representative Yingling, a former Avon Township Supervisor, said the major issue for him is consolidating entities and reducing duplicative services, in particular the road districts and township highway commissions. He cited current state legislation (Senate Bill 3 and House Bill 607) that provide opportunities to combine some non-elected units of government. He suggested studying some east coast county centered governments, where the county provides many services.

Representative Mayfield, Senator Bush and Representative Yingling responded to questions from the Commission with additional comments.

All three legislators stated their support for the fair maps movement. Each clarified that it needs to begin at the federal level then move to the state and the county.

When asked about making some elected county officials appointed officials, Representative Yingling and Senator Bush said the expertise required for the coroner's position made it a candidate for being appointed rather than elected. Senator Bush supports appointing the assessor as a county position. Representative Mayfield did not see the necessity of appointing rather than electing any county officials because the elected officials interact well with the community.

Senator Bush said there is merit in exploring the use of multi-member districts as a way to expose county board members to a more diverse constituency than a single member district does. Representative Mayfield supports continuing with single member districts. She believes that minority candidates living in a single district are the best representatives of these communities. Representative Yingling said multi-member districts were worth considering if there was guaranteed minority party representation as in the past.

All legislators acknowledged the importance of having a voter elected chairman work

closely with his/her colleagues on the board on county issues, especially fiscal and tax issues.

Representative Mayfield, Senator Bush and Representative Yingling thanked the Commission for their work on these important Lake County government reform issues.

Chair Foreman thanked Representative Mayfield, Senator Bush and Representative Yingling for sharing their time and perspectives with the Commission.

6.3 [17-0968](#)

Presentation by Dr. Eric Zeemering, Department of Public Administration, School of Public and Global Affairs, Northern Illinois University.

Dr. Eric Zeemering began his remarks by acknowledging the importance of the Commission's reform and accountability work. He noted the importance of engaging the public in these discussions as they evolved.

Dr. Zeemering addressed three questions. He cited academic studies to answer these questions throughout his presentation.

Question 1: What evidence do we have about county government reforms? Dr. Zeemering reviewed the history of government reform movements in the twentieth century. These reforms focused mostly on municipal, not county, reform. He said county reforms tended to address financial reforms and negotiating counties' legal authority with their states rather than political reforms. The major finding concluded that a professional manager overseeing day-to-day operations has positive consequences for local government performance. The question of an at-large elected chairman versus a board elected chairman has not been singled out for study. It is documented that local governments often replicate their neighboring communities' governance models, labeled 'institutional isomorphism', when they consider reform measures.

Question 2: What advice have experts in local government provided regarding the work of governing boards? Dr. Zeemering explained that research on the effectiveness of governing bodies more frequently studies the dysfunctional behaviors of boards rather than the effectiveness of their organizational structure. These studies found that the more interpersonal, not political, disagreements there were among board members, the more unlikely the boards were to be innovative. Positive results emerged from the chairman and board's use of 'facilitative leadership', which recognizes the synergy of bringing the different strengths of individuals together to develop consensus. Research also demonstrated that county leaders frequently relied upon personal and informal resources for performing their work rather than high visibility in the public because this space frequently focused on local mayors and not county leaders.

Question 3: By discussing board structure are we enhancing the accountability of county government? Dr. Zeemering said that government reform today is prompted by a demand for better government accountability and representation. He explained that there is value in asking what is the best mechanism for greater accountability, but there is no clear evidence on what model is best. It is also important to ask what problem is being solved in this work. One study described a cycle of reform that begins with increased neutral competence to improve efficiency, then moves to more citizen based representative structures, then returns to neutral competence for improved efficiency. He stressed the importance of asking the public about their preferences when engaged in public policy decision making.

Dr. Zeemering described recent work being done on the stress created for elected officials because there are so many ways for constituents to directly interact them. He believes providing more tools to elected officials, including strategic planning, foresight exercises and ongoing performance data, will help these representatives better manage the challenge of serving.

Dr. Zeemering addressed the topic of consolidation by explaining that he avoids the term consolidation because it generates strong reactions and impedes positive discussion around change. He focuses on collaborative efficiencies and intergovernmental sharing services. These approaches increase efficiency in service delivery without requiring statutory changes and/or formally eliminating entities.

Dr. Zeemering responded to questions from the Commission with these additional comments.

He reiterated that there are no research studies that demonstrate that changing the way the county board chairman is elected or that one particular county board structure is more effective than another.

He explained that inter-governmental service sharing arrangements are efficient because they utilize the excess of service delivery capacity of some governments. However more work needs to be done on the financing of these shared services to assure there is equity in who is paying for the service.

He briefly described his experience with county centered government in Maryland and California, where some counties provide almost all local government services. He volunteered to provide an example of a county centered government to the staff.

Dr. Zeemering concluded by thanking the Commission for the opportunity to speak with them and for their commitment to studying reform measures for Lake County.

Chair Foreman thanked Dr. Zeemering for sharing his time and expertise with the Commission.

6.4 Video interview with Chair Dan Cronin, DuPage County Board Chair, 2010 to present.

Lake County Board Chairman Aaron Lawlor interviewed DuPage County Chairman Dan Cronin about his role as a countywide elected chairman. Chairman Cronin explained that the countywide elected chairman was adopted in DuPage County in 1972 to improve accountability for the chairman to voters. In his role Chairman Cronin focuses on the agenda, the budget, making appointments, maintaining internal and external relationships and countywide initiatives. He sees the value in single member districts for board representation, but finds that the six districts with three members per district in DuPage are working well. Chairman Cronin is leading on consolidating local entities through the ACT (Accountability/Consolidation/Transparency) initiative. DuPage recently got state authority to allow for closer management of the many appointed taxing districts. He said this won't save the county lots of money because the entities are not big-ticket items, but it will increase accountability. Chairman Cronin thanked Chairman Lawlor for his leadership. Chairman Lawlor thanked Chairman Cronin for sharing his time and experience with the Commission.

6.5 [17-0970](#)

Video interview with Chair Jack Franks, McHenry County Board Chair, 2016 to present.

Lake County Board Chairman Aaron Lawlor interviewed McHenry County Chairman Jack Franks about his recent transition to county board chairman. Chairman Franks said that, as a state legislator, he sponsored legislation to hold a referendum on an elected county board chair because he believes that all voters should have a voice in choosing the chairman of a major taxing authority (county). The referendum passed overwhelmingly. Chairman Franks believed the board size needs to be reduced from the current 24 members in six districts. He shared how McHenry County has improved government transparency in its decision-making through streamlining meetings on the web and electronic voting. Chairman Franks thanked Chairman Lawlor for his leadership. Chairman Lawlor thanked Chairman Franks for sharing his time and experience with the Commission.

6.6 [17-0971](#)

Video interview with County Executive Lawrence (Larry) Walsh, Will County Executive, 2004 to present.

Lake County Board Chairman Aaron Lawlor interviewed Will County Executive Larry Walsh about his role as a county executive. County Executive Walsh explained that Will County voted to have the county executive form of government in a 1988 referendum because residents believed this would be a more responsive form of government. He said that in 2012 Will County dropped from 27 to 26 seats and increased the number of districts to thirteen districts with two representatives per district. County Executive Walsh explained

the distinction between his role as overseer of twenty-six county departments and day to day operations and the county board speaker's role as manager of the agenda and appointing committees. County Executive Walsh thanked Chairman Lawlor for his interest in Will County's governance. Chairman Lawlor thanked County Executive Walsh for sharing his time and experience with the Commission.

At Chair Foreman's request Lake County Board Members in attendance introduced themselves: Linda Pedersen, Diane Hewitt, Judy Martini, Steve Carlson, Carol Calabresa and Jeff Werfel.

6.7 Presentation by Senator Karen McConnaughay, Former County Board Chair, Kane County, 2004-2012.

Senator Karen McConnaughay addressed the Commission via the web. She reflected on her role as the third countywide elected Kane County Chairman. The countywide elected chairman position resulted from a 1990 citizen initiated referendum. She also served in the role of county administrator because Kane County has no administrator. In hindsight, she believes it was a mistake not hiring a county administrator especially when dealing with other county elected officers. Kane County reduced the size of the county board from 28 to 26 members during her tenure as chairman.

Senator McConnaughay said she is a proponent of a countywide elected chairman because it is more accountable to voters. It is extremely important for the county board to define the responsibilities and authority of the chairman at the beginning of the chairman's term. She gave the example of two lawsuits that emerged during her chairmanship partly due to a lack of clarity in the chairman's authority.

Senator McConnaughay said that the county is the government best suited to provide leadership in the consolidation effort because counties are so involved with all the local entities including making many of the appointments to their governing bodies.

Senator McConnaughay responded to questions from the Commission with additional comments.

Her experience as a county board member for twelve years was useful background for the chairmanship because it prepared her for the administrative duties associated with the job. She found that being elected as a countywide chairman was significantly different than representing a district. The elected chairman role gave her more credibility working with other county elected officers. She restated that it was critical that the chairman and the board be very clear about the chairman's responsibilities to avoid misunderstandings. It was also important that the board allow the chairman some flexibility in his/her position.

Senator McConnaughay thanked the Commission for their important work on Lake County government reform issues.

Chair Foreman thanked Senator McConnaughay for sharing her time and perspective with the Commission.

6.8 [17-0973](#)

Purpose of Commission meeting on October 4, 2017 from 8:30 a.m. to Noon.

At Chair Foreman's request Susan Hoyt, Management Partners, updated the Commission on the October 4, 2017 meeting. It is an opportunity for the Commission to discuss the topics that it has been studying for the past five months. The extended meeting time from 8:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. will provide additional time for the discussion.

6.9 [17-0974](#)

Discussion of Commission Research Agenda.

Two additional research requests were raised. These include a review of the county board structure for other AAA rated counties in Illinois and contacting the National Association of Counties (NACo) about studies specifically focused on the question of board size and election of the chairman.

7. Adjournment

Chair Foreman adjourned the meeting at 10:55 a.m. The motion carried unanimously.

Minutes prepared by Susan Hoyt and Sonia Hernandez.

Respectfully submitted,

Chairman

Vice-Chairman

*Lake County Commission on Government
Reform and Accountability*