

Menominee County Executive Committee  
Minutes of Meeting  
February 28, 2014

\*\*\*\*\***APPROVED 10.16.14**\*\*\*\*\*

The Executive Committee met on February 28, 2014 at 10:00 AM at the Menominee County Annex Building, Stephenson, MI.

Others present at the meeting were Sherry DuPont, Admin. Asst., Marc Kleiman, Mari Negro, Renee Herrild, Jodie Barrett, Charlene Peterson, Kandace Curran, Larry Schei, Jerry Piche, Bernie Lang, Diane Lesperance

**Call Meeting to order:** Com. Meintz called the meeting to order at 10:00 A.M.

**Pledge of allegiance:** was recited by all

**Roll Call:** Coms. Meintz, Nelson and Plutchak are present

**Agenda** was approved by Com. Nelson and supported by Com. Plutchak to approve the agenda as written. Motion approved 3/0

**Previous Meeting minutes:** October 9, 2013 – moved by Com. Nelson and supported by Com. Plutchak to approve the minutes of the October 9, 2013 Executive Committee meeting. Motion approved 3/0

**Public Comment:** Mari Negro, Meyer Township would like to address item F (funding for the 3 way road program). Think we should continue with this program. It's a good way for the county to give back to the taxpayer. Marc Kleiman would like to know if the board will allow the department heads to speak during the discussions, all coms. agree to allow dept. heads to speak during discussion.

**Business Items:**

- a. **35 to 37.5 hour work week:** There was a breakdown from Marc Kleiman (from Clerks assoc. survey last year) that shows what hours other counties work per week. Nelson: Delta and Schoolcraft are both at 35 hrs/wk. not 36 as shown. Marc: Not on the list, Dickinson Co. are 37.5 and Chippewa Co. are at: union employees 40 hrs/wk and non-union at 37.5 hrs/wk. Plutchak: It's my understanding that there is only one other county working 40 hrs/wk? Nelson: Marquette and Chippewa for some. Nelson: Menominee Co. used to be 35 hrs./wk. and increased to 40. Current schedule is 8-4:30 with a half hr. lunch. The old schedule was 8:30 – 4:30 with a 1 hr. lunch. One of the reasons I thought this should be addressed, at some point, we'll be removing the hiring freeze, I think for those who were present at the finance com. meeting, there's still a long term problem with debt. Men. Co. is in good financial shape as far as cash, but we probably have the most outdated courthouse and jail. Plutchak: Did you put together any numbers for cost savings? Nelson: it's between 6 and 12.5% cost savings. Some things (costs) don't reduce regardless of the hours. If we can't go where we want to go, it would allow us to at least fund if we have to hire more under the defined benefits. Brian was supposed to tell us what's happened with the 911 employees. Meintz: do you know when Delta Co. went to the shorter work week? Plutchak: If all the other counties are doing it, there's a reason why they're doing it. Obviously they found some cost savings. Meintz:

Marc how would this affect your office? Marc/Clerk: The reduction of hours? We wouldn't be able to get all of our work done. Renee/FOC: Our office is already short staffed according to the State Court Administrators office, if our hours are cut, there is no way we are going to accomplish what we need to do. We are already not able to do the things that are mandated by the state because of the shortage of people in our office. Nelson: I'm not sold on this idea, I'm saying it is a way for us, if we have to stay under the current situation, to at least be sure our current employees have their retirements paid. If we have to hire more, it's a matter of dollars and cents. Nelson: I'd like to see more information gathered on this. We have to look at the long term costs that we can control. This affects the employees. The hiring freeze, I keep hearing is a board decision...it is not, it can be done away with tomorrow if we can get the defined contributions. Renee: We did give up 1.5 people already and the state keeps adding more mandates. Everything our office does is reimbursed 66% so that saves the county money. We appreciate whatever can be done to help staff the offices so we can continue to give the taxpayers of Menominee County what they deserve. Meintz: That's important. Is there the same type of contribution efforts with part time people? Renee: Yes, right now I pay for a part time person to help out in our office with our 215 fund which the county pays nothing of that. That helps us tremendously. Nelson: if it has no real impact on the dollars and cents to the county, that's one thing. It has an impact on what we can afford to do in the future. I hope any current employees understand, this is protecting the retirement system for them. We are not taking anything away from the current employees. Meintz: All existing employees will maintain the existing retirement. We will continue to fund that to whatever extent MERS requires. We're just trying to adjust to be more in line with regular industry in corporate America today with the type of insurance plans; in all reality, government is not supposed to supersede general business in the area. We'll gather more info. and bring back to this committee again for discussion.

- b. **Extended Office Hours-1 day per week:** Nelson: I wish Brian were here. He discussed this with me. Right now we close at 4:30, most people get off at 5:00. To look at a couple of core things we do, most falls under Marc. Meintz: Do you find that this could be something we could do. Is there a good day to extend office hours? Marc: I don't think there is one specific day more than others. The Sheriff Dept. goes up to Powers with gun permits, marriage license applications, etc. and people can pick them up there. Renee: our office does have non-traditional office hours already we start at 7:30 AM and are open during the lunch hour. Nelson: I think it's something that Brian should meet with the Dept. heads to discuss. Marc: I think it's a good idea. It is something we need to discuss. Do we do something like the Sec. of State does? Would we be better off extending the work day a little longer? Diane: I think all offices are open during lunch hour...we eat in the vault, but we are there if anyone needs help. Nelson: It's a long haul from one end of the county to the other so it's a 3 hour trip to get to the Courthouse. Marc: If we were to pick a day, I would suggest we correlate with the SOS long day (Wed.) Meintz: Have Brian to discuss this with dept. heads and bring back with more information.
- c. **Retirement benefits (name and amt.) posted on County website:** I've been questioned quite a bit (especially with the info. in the paper) everybody talks about "what do you mean you've got this big retirement thing" I believe it's just as much public knowledge so the taxpayers understand what is happening with the taxes that they're paying in. It's just so the info. is out there and everyone can see it fair and even. Nelson: There were some people who disagreed with us having a problem with the retirement costs and legacy costs and the fact that we're unfunded. It was brought up to me with some saying, why don't we know? What's the problem with us knowing the real dollar amt.? It's published on sheets Brian printed off a copy today. Another thing that came up...we don't have legacy costs...yes we do, it's in the audit. That's the reasoning behind publishing this info. Brian suggested we do it without names. This was brought to me from more than one person on my end of the county. My info. was published in 2007 when I worked for DHS. Plutchak: It's already free information if a person wants to go digging for it. Everything else is on the website, why can't you find this stuff? Nelson: This is open for discussion. Meintz: I would think the retired people you'd want by name. But the current employees we would want to do by position. Nelson: My mother

draws retirement from the County. Renee: What importance is it to have a name? Meintz: Because you don't have a position once you retire. Diane: Do you feel it's so important with your retirement from the state that everyone can go on and see what you're making. If someone wants this information, they can FOIA it. Why just hand it out there. Negro: Transparency in Government. Nelson: There's options out there, why would you pay for it if it's public knowledge? Meintz: It's been a hot topic (MERS). It would be easier to explain with all info. listed on the website. You can see what is being paid out, how many people are on the retirement, what people are getting for retirement. Diane: what's the difference if our employees work for the county or Enstrom, Waupaca or where ever. They're employees, not politicians. Meintz: But they're being paid from the taxpayers. Plutchak: It would be interesting how many other board members have been approached on this. Meintz: I would like to see this go to the board with name and amount for discussion. Diane: I think I would answer some of these people back with a question...do you get a benefit from your job? This is a benefit that our employees have worked for their entire lives, just as an employee of any other company. They shouldn't be put out in public just because they work for a county, doesn't mean their information has to go on the website. Nelson: We're two different units. There should be no embarrassment. The other side is, do we just do this by position and not name. This started a few years ago when someone said a position was \$54,000 and it wasn't. Misrepresentation. Renee: Can you check with other county agencies to see what they do? Are we a county that wants to do this or are there other county/gov. agencies doing this? Meintz: We don't want to be hiding open transparency to the public. Diane: We're not hiding anything, anyone that wants it can get it. Nelson: and pay for it. Plutchak: it's information that they should have for free. Marc: right now that info. is on the website in the budget. All we have to do is add how many employees are in each department. Meintz: the idea is so people don't have to go through so many departments to get the numbers for what they're looking for. We'll get more information and bring it back to the board for more discussion.

- d. **Current employees (name, wage & benefits) on County website:** Meintz: We'll do the same for this, get more information and bring it back to the board for discussion. Marc to discuss this at the Clerks' meeting and see what other counties are doing. Brian to find out what other counties are doing.
- e. **Millage for Library (estimate .4 or less mills):** Nelson: Iron County just passed a millage for their library. We're one of the only counties that fund the library. The County Board appoints members to the library, but has no say over expenditures or pay increases, the library board does that itself. .4 mills will generate over 280,000. The library can be a stand-alone entity. That will free up the library to have their own budget per the millage. Brian will have to check on severing that. Meintz: I don't want to lose the library, my wife will kill me...this gives the library a much greater financial position to expand in directions that they would like to be at. I would like the County Board to support a millage for the library. Because the pay raises are not attached to the county, which would clear that up. DuPont: those pay raises actually follow the courthouse contract for the employees. Nelson: For the director? DuPont: No, the director has her own contract. Meintz: this is something that we want to bring to the full board for discussion. Get with the library board for discussion.
- f. **Funding for 3 way road program in 2015 budget:** Nelson: This comes from Darrell Moilanen. It's a very popular program. What it does is give back to the townships that are strapped for cash. Darrell recommends for the 2015 budget, the county set aside \$200,000 max., The road Commission will put aside \$200,000 (or we will match what they are able to put in, if not \$200,000) and the townships can put in what they can. Two years ago, the gov. said that government units and individual units working together will receive additional revenue sharing for working together. We've asked McBroom and Casperson to be here because we would like to request additional revenue sharing. We had private citizens, townships, county, city and the road commission work on this project together. The township supervisors I've spoken to, like this program. I want the board to discuss this now so when we prepare for the budget, we can put aside for this. Meintz: Every MTA meeting I've gone to, everyone has a lot of questions about doing the program again, if there is

more money available. We should discuss trying to make a commitment. Discussion to the full board to see if we can move ahead on this.

- g. Emergency Management Coordinator position at part time (24 hrs/wk):** Nelson: I talked to Brian about this, he said it would work. Meintz: I agree, at this point I think this is what we would like to do. I'm not happy with the last situation with Don Brown and the freeze out. Nelson: I look at the total cost is \$57,300 for the position and the reimbursement rate (someone disagreed with this number, it didn't include all of the costs) the actual percentage we paid out was about 31%. One of the advantages we have is that the person was so short term the retirement that was paid in doesn't get used, so the position is funded in part. DuPont: You have to keep in mind that the operating expenses are not included in the reimbursements of the grant. Nelson: We look at total costs. Would like to move forward to pursue this position at 24 hours so Brian can get this advertised.
- h. Veteran Service hours within the County:** Nelson: Mike currently goes to Hermansville. I'd like to see Mike in Stephenson. I think it would be better for us to extend that out to the veterans. That's something we can go to the veterans for. Plutchak: I agree, it's easier for him to travel then some of the veterans. Nelson: Maybe a day every two weeks, once in Stephenson, once in Powers/Hermansville? I'd like to move this to the board to see if there is support. Meintz: Is this something we can have him do? Nelson: Why not, we pay for it. A lot of Counties don't even have a veteran service officer. DuPont: He does have a laptop computer with the VetraSpecs program and access to internet via cell phone; so he can set up anywhere. He does meet with veterans who can't get to him, even at their homes. Plutchak: We should talk to him to see if this is something he thinks should be done. Nelson: maybe we won't have enough traffic, but we should try. Meintz: Move forward to the board with more information. Have Mike track how many veterans he sees out in the county and bring this back for discussion of the full board.
- i. Collection of Union dues:** Meintz: I spoke with Brian, within the contracts it says the dues will be paid. Nelson: The question was, the collection of dues, is that a one shot deal, or is this every year. With the MI Right to Work Law, did that change between 2010 and 2014? How clear was it? Pg. 19 union security: It does say that membership in the Union is not compulsory (required or mandatory). The question was, with dues now in MI, the contract calls for one thing but the law covers something else. I think the law covers all current contracts. I wasn't sure, I wanted Brian to address this issue. DuPont: that law just went into play, they can opt out of paying union dues. Meintz: I had this discussion about someone that doesn't want to be in the union, but they still have to work under the union contract. Nelson: The "written authorizations signed by each employee" allowing union due deductions... is this a one-time thing, or is it done yearly? Meintz: I've had conversations with Brian about this, he's not entirely clear...one lawyer says this another says that. DuPont: The Labor Laws spell out your exempt and non-exempt employees. Plutchak: I do know that there are a number of Men. Public School Employees that are not paying the dues anymore, they've actually quit due to the MI Right to Work law. Nelson: during the time of this contract, we're required to take dues out. Membership is fuzzy. Meintz: If you have an employee that doesn't want to pay union dues, can they be fired if they don't, during the duration of this contract? Try to get more clarification. DuPont: So we need to find out whether the law supersedes the contract or not. Nelson: and if the authorizations are done yearly or one time. Article 3 and 4 whether law or contract supersedes.

**Public Comment:** Tom Cheski – 3 way road program was a good program but it was never explained where the money came for that. Can't this be funded via a millage? This is the only state that I've ever lived in where the library is funded through the County, it's always been a millage. Veteran's service officer should probably have an office in powers or Stephenson. I question the security of the WiFi at the library, if he were to be there. Diane Lesperance: There have been messages via the county treasurer's, there have been a lot of questions being asked

about whether the libraries are run by the county or a millage. I wonder how the Emergency Coordinator position will come into play with the hiring freeze. 3-way road plan: When it first started I wasn't in favor of it, but it turned out to be a really good project. Townships that weren't able to participate because they didn't have the funding. Is there a way that we could reformat that so we can figure out a solution for them to get some funding too? Charlene Peterson: John, you keep quoting these numbers for the Emergency Manager Coordinator reimbursement position. You used the current budget not the one from the previous year when Trina gave those numbers. She quoted the reimbursement based on the 2012/13 budget and you quoted the current budget (2013/14). You questioned 31% vs 37%. I concur with her numbers. You can't add paper costs into your operations costs. Sherry said, some things are reimbursed, but not everything. I'm just pointing out you tried to play with the numbers here. Spies Library serves the City of Menominee and a good portion of Men. Township. The rest of the county, if you want to use Spies library, you can't go there to check out books. So if you run a millage, are you going to give part of it to Spies and part of it to Stephenson, Menominee County Library? Where does this come into play? Are only the other townships going to be charged the millage? It's great to come up with an idea, but for a millage; you say you don't want to raise taxes, then you say a millage for this and that, why don't we just turn all of our checks over to you? Kandace Curran: You have to remember, with the 3 way road program, now is when the townships do their budgeting, now would be the time to notify them that this would be in the works so they can put aside any money to add to the program.

**Commissioner Comment:** Meintz: There was a question on the 3-way road program. Every township did participate in the 3-way road program. Every township came up with their fair share of funding. No township got any more than another township because it was broken down with the number of miles within each township/city/village. The money was allocated evenly to do what was needed in their area. Certain townships and villages even had private money donated to help with certain projects. The millage issue has been brought up. Everyone in the county uses the roads. It's a small reimbursement that goes back to the taxpayer. Nelson: the reason why the 3-way road program wasn't done via a millage, because it's not legal to do via a millage. 2012/13 Emergency Management Coordinator position...all costs budgeted should be reimbursed. Total cost for the 3 way road is about 3% of our budget. Every township was involved. Thank you all for being here.

**Adjournment:** Moved by Com. Plutchak supported by Com. Nelson to adjourn the meeting at 11:29 AM.