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County Budget Restores Sheriff Positions; Work On Radio System Begins; Ordinance Update

December 3, 2010

Sheriff's Department Retains Essential Staffing

The final County Budget restored sufficient funding for the Sheriff's Department to assure an adequate level of detective and community policing staff. These were both top priorities for the DCTA in the budget process. The County's Personnel and Finance Committee supported actions of the Public Protection and Judiciary Committee to restore two detective positions which had been eliminated. The Committees also worked out an agreement to authorize the Sheriff to retain sufficient deputy positions to maintain community policing and rural patrol. The DCTA is pleased that the County Board and Executive worked out an agreement that meets the needs of the entire County. The DCTA also appreciates professionalism and courtesy extended to its representatives, and indeed, the entire community, during the budget process.

Problematic CUP Inspection Fee Postponed

The County Board postponed action on a new \$55 annual inspection fee which would fund annual on-site reviews of all conditional use permits. The DCTA strongly opposes the fee, which we believe was introduced solely to generate revenue. We believe inspections should continue to be driven by complaints and concerns identifiable by local officials and zoning inspectors. Indeed, we would welcome more vigorous and timely response to complaints from Town officials. The proposal has not been killed, merely postponed. However, we believe the idea of routinely inspecting every conditional use every year will generate strong opposition if it is pursued.

County Receives New Radio Proposals; Review Underway

Contrary to Dane County's reputation for being unable to make hard decisions, the County and its communities were able to approve a compromise funding and governance structure to replace the public

safety radio communication systems in Dane County. The proposal, a modified version of the original \$30 million proposal, is expected to cost no more than \$18 million. The capital cost of the system, up to \$18 million, will be paid by County taxpayers. Operations and maintenance costs will be paid by all the users, which generated enormous controversy.

Credit for the resolution of the dispute should be given substantially to County Board Chair Scott McDonell and local elected officials who cast very difficult votes in support of the compromise. Chairman McDonell took on the issue at a point when most other leaders had pronounced it dead. Mr. McDonnell introduced a new resolution calling for a reworked version of the system. He then followed through on the resolution by working with the affected public safety organizations, the Cities and Villages Association, the Towns Association and the County Executive. The Cities and Villages Association, led by Verona Mayor Jon Hochkammer, worked diligently to get information out to the cities and villages, as we did to the Towns. Credit for making the resolution possible also lies with John DeJung, Dane County's Public Safety Communications Manager. With competent support from PSC staff, Mr. DeJung kept the process moving forward with information, guidance and support. Everyone was aware he was doing his job as directed by his supervisors. Nonetheless, he was able to remain independent, non-political, and even-tempered.

The County followed up on approval of the new system by issuing a new request for proposals. The County's Purchasing Department received responses on December 1. The responses are being evaluated by a group representing public safety associations and elected officials. That group will make recommendations on the capabilities of the vendors which will be considered along with cost information. The bid award recommendation should be made on December 17.

County Executive Race Begins As Kathleen Falk Moves To Resign

The field of candidates for County Executive stands at three as Kathleen Falk indicated she will resign on December 21, 2010. There is an understanding that she will be appointed as interim Executive as of January 7, 2011 until a new Executive can be selected in the spring election. By making these agreements, Ms. Falk saved the County \$300,000 which would have been expended on a special election.

Between December 21 and January 7, County Board Chair Scott McDonell will act as County Executive. First Vice Chairperson John Hendrick will be acting Board Chair.

As the campaign season begins, DCTA wishes to reiterate that the Association does not endorse candidates. No statements we make should be taken as endorsements or used in campaign literature. We may from time to time comment on actions by people running for office, but those statements are intended to address issues, not candidacies. The officers, directors and staff of the Association may make statements or endorsements as individuals, but their positions are not DCTA positions. The Association wishes to work constructively with the officials chosen by the people to govern Dane County.

Ordinance Amendment Activity

The County's budget process consumed enormous time and energy over the past months. Nonetheless, the County did approve Ordinance Amendment 10, making significant improvements to the LC-1 limited commercial district. We think the new ordinance will make it easier to start small businesses in the country, while retaining prudent limits on the size and scope of those operations. OA 10 was the latest effort of the Zoning Revision Task Force, chaired by Sup. Pat Downing, with input from DCTA land use adviser Renee Lauber.

During 2011, the County will be considering several town comprehensive plans and ordinance amendments. As action is required on them, we will issue informational memos.

Ordinance Amendment – Manufactured Home Communities

Work is underway to revise the zoning ordinance provisions related to manufactured home communities. Over the past 25 years, recognition of the need for better regulation of manufactured home parks has spread through the country. Wisconsin is one of many states where manufactured homes are a major share of housing. In some counties, a quarter of the population lives in manufactured homes, although many are not in manufactured home parks.

Manufactured housing parks have some negative connotations which have resulted from the failure to plan realistically for how people live. Jamming many homes onto tiny plots of land creates conflict and appearance issues. Well-run parks can provide affordable housing. We will be working on this issue through the Zoning Revision Task Force.

Please Call With Questions

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