

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: SUPPORT SERVICES - *CLERK OF THE BOARD*

DATE: MARCH 6, 2013

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

SUPERVISORS TAYLOR
STRAINER
MCDEVITT
MASON

OTHERS PRESENT:

JOAN SADY, CLERK OF THE BOARD
KEVIN B. GERAGHTY, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD
PAUL DUSEK, COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR
FRANK THOMAS, BUDGET OFFICER
SUPERVISORS DICKINSON

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

SUPERVISOR LOEB
FRASIER
VANSELOW

KENNY
MONTESI
WOOD
AMANDA ALLEN, DEPUTY CLERK OF THE BOARD

Mr. Taylor called the meeting of the Support Services Committee to order at 8:30 a.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Strainer, seconded by Mr. McDevitt and carried unanimously to approve the minutes from the prior meeting, subject to correction by the Clerk of the Board.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Joan Sady, Clerk of the Board, who distributed copies of the meeting agenda to the Committee members, a copy of which is on file with the minutes.

Mrs. Sady began by thanking the Committee for their attendance. She proceeded to review her agenda, which consisted of a request to fill the vacant position of Legislative Office Specialist #3, as well as a request for discussion regarding a suggestion that the Clerk of the Board's Office provide abbreviated minutes to include a brief description of the request and the resultant committee action in lieu of the detailed minutes currently prepared. Mrs. Sady apprised that she had recently received notice from a member of her staff indicating that they had accepted another position within the County's employ, thereby prompting her request to fill the position which was to become vacant on March 15th. In discussing this issue with Paul Dusek, County Administrator, she said Mr. Dusek had questioned whether a change in the procedures used might alleviate the need for a full time position, possibly reducing it to part time or eliminating it altogether. Mrs. Sady expounded that currently, the four members of her Office staff provided detailed minutes for each of the approximately 17 meetings taking place each month and she said it was the decision of the Committee, and ultimately the Board of Supervisors, as to whether this practice continued, or an alternate approach was adopted to abbreviate the meeting minutes.

Mrs. Sady reminded the Committee that early in 2012, her Office staff had been reduced by one position following the retirement of a long-time staff member, and although she and her remaining staff had continued to meet their deadlines, they had struggled to do so since then. She added that even at the current staffing level, she was not comfortable that every task assigned to her Office was being completed and she did not feel that her Office could continue to function as it was if another position was lost; therefore, she said, if the Committee chose not to fill the Legislative Office Specialist #3 position, as requested, procedural changes would become necessary.

With respect to Mr. Dusek's suggestion regarding abbreviated minutes, Mrs. Sady advised that it was certainly possible to shorten the minutes so that they would only include pertinent action, but not any of the discussion currently outlined, as she was only legally obligated to provide a record of the action taken at Committee/Board meetings, which could be provided in many different forms. She said she had contacted several other counties for examples of the minutes they produced and she circulated the information she had received amongst the Committee members; *a copy of these documents are on file with the minutes*. Mrs. Sady noted that if the Committee preferred to proceed with a new procedure

entailing abbreviated meeting minutes, the digitally recorded audio from each meeting could be made available for any Supervisor or Department Head wishing to listen to them. She concluded that she did not have any statistical information to provide relative to how many Supervisors actually read the minutes of the meetings, or what significance they had on decisions made, but she noted that converting to abbreviated minutes would present a definite change from the format currently offered.

Messrs. Dusek and Mason entered the meeting at 8:34 a.m

Mr. McDevitt commented that although he did not always read them, he preferred the complete version of the minutes currently offered because he said he felt they presented a more accurate accounting of the Committee meetings for reference by Supervisors and members of the public not able to attend. He stated that he preferred the procedures currently in place and supported Mrs. Sady's request to fill the vacant position.

Mr. Dickinson noted that the Town of Lake George had recently begun to research the possibility of using a voice recognition software to assist with meeting transcriptions and he questioned whether this technology had been considered for use at the County level. Mrs. Sady advised that she was unaware if such research had been performed on behalf of the County, but noted that she had looked into the possibility herself and had found the software difficult to work with because it only recognized one voice and did not correctly transcribe words if they were not clearly pronounced directly into the microphone. She added that she had spent more time correcting the words the software deciphered than she would have if she had listened and transcribed them herself. Furthermore, Mrs. Sady indicated that she did not feel the software would be appropriate for use in Committee meetings as there were typically many people speaking, including members of the public that did not always speak directly into the microphones. She noted that the software she had attempted was a free trial version and there might be better technology available. Mr. Dickinson then asked how many staff members the Clerk of the Board's Office currently employed and Mrs. Sady replied right now there were five, including herself, and she noted that one of those five positions would soon become vacant. Mr. Dickinson inquired as to whether five positions were sufficient to support the needs of her Office and Mrs. Sady replied that the current staffing was sufficient to support the legal needs of the Office, but reiterated that she was not comfortable that all of the other responsibilities of her Office were being sufficiently maintained, due to the reduction in staffing. Mr. Dickinson stated that he was in agreement with Mr. McDevitt's comments, noting that although he was aware that digital recordings would be made available, he preferred having the ability to pick up meeting minutes and review them at his leisure, as necessary. He concluded that he was in favor of filling the vacancy and continuing the procedures currently in place.

Mrs. Wood commented that she also preferred to fill the vacant position and proceed with the current minutes format. She said she had noticed that a number of Committee Chairmen used the minutes as a reference when making their reports at the monthly Board Meetings, and advised that the documents produced by Mrs. Sady's staff provided a transparent record of governmental actions for the public. Mrs. Wood further noted that Mrs. Sady's Office had assumed a number of responsibilities in accordance with the County's Bicentennial celebration and in association with the past eliminations of the Human Resources Department and the Information Desk.

Chairman Geraghty opined that it was very important to fill the upcoming vacancy as the person filling that position covered the desk at the front of the Office which welcomed visitors to the Board of Supervisors and also covered the phones for the County Administrator's Office, when necessary. He stated that not having a person at the front desk would severely disrupt the flow of operations in the Clerk of the Board's Office.

Mr. Kenny said he was possibly one of the most conservative members of the Board of Supervisors and

was typically in favor of reducing the County Budget whenever they were able to do so; however, he stated, he could not support this idea. He apprised that in December he had spent five consecutive mornings reviewing minutes from Occupancy Tax Coordination and Tourism Committee meetings dating back to 2004 in search of an obscure fact that would have been impossible to find without the minutes in their expanded form. Therefore, Mr. Kenny stated, he was in favor of retaining and filling the position.

When asked for his input on the matter, Mr. Dusek advised his feeling was that the decision to fill or reduce the position pivoted on whether the Committee wanted to maintain the current minutes format or change to abbreviated versions. Since it appeared that the Committee preferred to maintain the current procedures, he said the position would need to be filled and he added that Mrs. Sady might also require an additional part-time position in the future.

Mrs. Sady commented that her Office was very different than any other County Department and it was difficult to find someone with experience in the minute taking field; she added that once a candidate for the position was found, it would take about two months to properly train that person. Mrs. Sady stated that her staff was comprised of some very capable people with unique talents that did an outstanding job for the County. She apprised that about three years ago, at the request of then Supervisor Fred Champagne, who was now retired, she had embarked upon research to determine whether minutes of an abbreviated format were appropriate for Warren County, during which she had spent an entire day at the Washington County Board of Supervisors reviewing the procedure they used. Following her research, Mrs. Sady said she had presented her findings to the Board of Supervisors and it was determined they were not in favor of the idea at that time. She concluded that from her prospective, her staff provided a thorough record of actions and discussion at Committee meetings which were frequently used by both Supervisors and Department Heads for reference and she was happy to continue those procedures.

Mr. Dickinson opined that Mrs. Sady should fill the vacant full-time position in her Department and he said he supported the idea of adding another part-time position, as well, to provide commensurate coverage for the Office in the event of an absence or another resignation.

Motion was made by Mr. McDevitt, seconded by Mr. Strainer and carried unanimously to approve the request to fill the vacant position of Legislative Office Specialist #3 and refer same to the Personnel Committee. *A copy of the Notice of Intent to Fill Vacant Position form is on file with the minutes.*

There being no further business to come before the Support Services Committee, on motion made by Mr. Strainer and seconded by Mr. Mason, Mr. Taylor adjourned the meeting at 8:44 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Amanda Allen, Deputy Clerk of the Board