

COUNTY BOARD STAFF COMMITTEE
Minutes – January 14, 2014

Call to Order. Chair Podzilni called the meeting of the County Board Staff Committee to order at 4:00 P.M. in Conference Room N-1 on the fifth floor of the Rock County Courthouse-East.

Committee Members Present: Supervisors Podzilni, Brill, Jensen, Mawhinney, Peer and Yankee.

Committee Members Absent: Supervisors Arnold, Bussie and Kraft.

Staff Members Present: Randy Terronez and Nick Osborne, Assistants to the County Administrator; Jeff Kuglitsch, Corporation Counsel; Dave O'Connell, Human Resources Director; Chief Deputy Barbara Tillman.

Others Present: Cathy Idzerda, Janesville Gazette; Mary Vukovich, Cynthia Bloom, Lora Schansberg, Leslie Smyth-Ayen, Susan Smyth, John Weber, Jim Hay, Kelly Holman, Brandi, Malcook, Erin Wilson, Santo Carfora, Neil Deupree, Anissa Welch, Linda Graf, Jodi Timmerman, Mike Guisleman.

Approval of Agenda. Supervisor Yankee moved approval of the agenda as presented, second by Supervisor Brill. ADOPTED.

Citizen Participation, Communications and Announcements. Chair Podzilni welcomed everyone and asked if anyone would like to speak regarding health care benefits for County employees in same-sex relationship.

Jim Hay, Janesville, spoke in favor of providing insurance benefits for all County employees. He said from his experience as chair of the Membership Ministry at First Congregational United Church of Christ in Janesville he helped guide the church through the study process of becoming Open and Affirming (ONA), which was approved last spring. ONA means the welcoming into full membership persons of every sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, marital status, and family structure. He added that during the study he was surprised by the number of people who knew someone in their families or friends who were gay or lesbian but had never talked about it, and the number of 70 and 80 years old people in the church who were supportive of ONA.

Santo Carfora, Janesville, spoke in favor of approval of the resolution. He said he believes it is the right thing to do and by not providing health insurance benefits to same-sex couples would cause an unjust financial burden to county employees as well as having an impact on their morale. He said he also feels by not providing these benefits it will limit the applications from highly qualified people. He does not think it is our place to judge one's sexual orientation and by not providing benefits to same-sex couples this is exactly what the County is doing by not offering these benefits.

Susan Smyth, Janesville, said this is the Civil Rights issue of our time. She said the recognition of same-sex marriage is coming our way and hopes our elected officials can put personal prejudice away and vote in favor of this resolution.

Neil Deupree, Janesville, said we cannot keep values out of the discussion. He said love plays into believing that committed relationships are love. He said there should be just and equal benefits for all county employees.

Erin Wilson, Janesville, said there is no difference, a family unit is a family unit.

Chair Podzilni said the County health insurance is self insured by the County and the estimated cost to include same-sex health benefits is \$100,000 - \$150,000.

Linda Graf, President of AMHS-HSD, said she is in favor of this resolution and that she found a letter going back to 2007 when the union started to address this issue. She added that this is an issue of fairness.

Mary Vukovich, Janesville, said as for this coming out of tax payer money, she has been a tax payer for over 10 years and her partner, a business owner, pays taxes. She said this is asking for employee benefits that are fair and equitable for all employees. She said our families are no different from other families. The counties around Rock County offer these benefits. She asked how the County can recruit employees when it says we do not discriminate while we do because we do not offer the same benefits to all our employees. She asked the Committee to look outside their homes, to be more open and caring.

Chief Deputy Barbara Tillman said she has been with the County over 30 years and it was an uphill battle for her as a woman in law enforcement, and that part of her job is handling human resource issues. She said she works to fairly represent employees in Rock County and suggested the Committee look around at other large businesses in Rock County and they will find that many of these businesses offer benefits to same-sex partnerships. They treat everyone fairly and with respect and suggested we treat them the same way.

Mike Guisleman, Janesville, said he is strongly in favor of this resolution.

Anissa Welch, Janesville, said she is an employee of Rock County and is also on the Milton City Council. She said as an elected official sometimes our values get in the way, but part of being an elected official is to see the big picture of how does my decision affect my district and the community. She said approval of this resolution is the right thing to do. We want businesses to be here so when we vote on policies we have to offer what is best for the community.

Emily Miller, a Rock County employee, said these people are doing the same job and should be offered the same benefits.

Bills/Encumbrances - 2013.

County Board	\$	1,578.45
Corporation Counsel		943.50
Human Resources		6,238.60
Risk Management		183.06

Bills/Encumbrances - 2014.

County Board	\$	18,958.00
--------------	----	-----------

County Administrator	4,422.50
County Board	4,500.00

Transfer None.

Pre-Approved Encumbrances

County Board

JP Morgan Chase Bank NA	\$	600.00
-------------------------	----	--------

Supervisor Mawhinney moved approval of the above Bills and Encumbrances, Transfers and Pre-Approved Encumbrance Amendment for the County Board Staff Committee, second by Supervisor Brill. ADOPTED.

Resolutions.

To Ratify the 2014 Labor Agreement between Rock County and AFSCME, Local 2489

“NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Rock County Board of Supervisors assembled this ____ day of _____, 2014 does hereby ratify the terms and conditions of the 2014 labor agreement with AFSCME, Local 2489.”

Mr. O’Connell said this is the first of eight labor contracts.

Supervisor Mawhinney moved approval of the above resolution, second by Supervisor Peer. ADOPTED.

Approving Health Insurance Benefits for Employees in Same-Sex Relationships who meet Eligibility Requirements

“NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the County Board of Supervisors duly assembled on this ____ day of _____, 2014, hereby goes on record in support of allowing access to and offers health care, prescription drug coverage, dental insurance, and other employee benefits to domestic partners of County employees in the same fashion such benefits are extended to spouses of married County Employees. Such benefits shall be provided to the extent allowed by the IRS and otherwise allowed by law, specifically including any amendments or new enactments of Wisconsin laws relating to domestic partners, civil unions or same sex marriages; and should such amendments or enactments occur, such benefits shall be extended as slowed therein; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the County will extend health care, prescription coverage, dental insurance, and other employee benefits to all qualifying domestic partners of County employees according to the following guidelines:

1. The definition of domestic partnership of same gender couples used by the County of Rock will be that used by Wis. Stats. Sec. 40.02(21d) and 770.01(1).

2. The County of Rock shall require verification of current valid domestic partner registration pursuant to Wis. Stats. Chapter 770, the Domestic Partnership Act, or the documentation required by any subsequent change in state law.
3. The provision of these benefits will be extended to the dependents of those same gender domestic partners as they would be to the dependents of legally married employees under the then current provision for dependent coverage in the relevant benefit program.
4. The benefits provided to domestic partners and their dependents shall be as nearly equal as possible to those offered to legally married partners, including non-insurance benefits such as funeral leave for the death of a domestic partner and use of sick leave to care for a domestic partner.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this resolution shall become effective on March 1, 2014.”

Supervisor Mawhinney moved approval of the above resolution, second by Supervisor Jensen.

Mr. O’Connell went over a handout on health insurance for domestic partners that other jurisdictions in and around Rock County have. He said this resolution is similar to City of Beloit’s and that he feels the additional cost estimate of 1% is a little on the high side. He said the Affidavit of Domestic Partnership from Dane County, which is part of the handout, is a little different from what we would have. He handed out Rock County’s current policy on Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action and a copy of Wis. Stats. Chapter 770, Domestic Partnership. He said there have been 55 people on the registry since 2009 and he recognized the names of only six of them.

Supervisor Yankee asked if there was something similar to divorce for domestic partnerships. Mr. O’Connell said this is covered under 770.12 terminating a domestic partnership.

Supervisor Mawhinney urged the Committee to support this resolution and thanked all present for coming and speaking on this issue.

Supervisor Peer said he has questions on the administration of this policy and that it leaves a great many gaps. He also questioned where the opposition was. He said he does not feel it is fair to make a decision on this with so many of the Committee members absent. He said what is right is not always popular and what is popular is not always right. He said we must keep in mind the consequences and balance of approving this resolution. He said he does not know what the answer is and that he has many questions. He said he appreciates their service to our community and to be proud of what they do.

Chair Podzilni said regardless of the vote tonight, this resolution will go on to the County Board.

Supervisor Jensen said she feels this is the right thing to do, that things change and we must change with them.

FAILED on the following 2-4-3 vote: Yes – Supervisors Jensen and Mawhinney; No – Supervisors Brill, Peer, Podzilni and Yankee; Absent – Supervisors Arnold, Bussie and Kraft.

Semi-Annual Out of State Training and Conference Reports. The Committee accepted the reports.

Approval of 2014 Wisconsin Counties Association Dues. Supervisor Peer moved approval of the 2014 Wisconsin Counties Association dues, second by Supervisor Jensen. ADOPTED.

Adjournment. Supervisor Peer moved adjournment at 5:05 P.M., second by Supervisor Brill. ADOPTED.

Respectfully submitted,

Marilyn Bondehagen
Confidential Administrative Assistant

NOT OFFICIAL UNTIL APPROVED BY COMMITTEE.