

## COMMITTEE REPORT

**COMMITTEE:** Legislative Committee  
**CHAIRPERSON:** John Lang  
**DATE/TIME** February 11, 2021 at 2:30 p.m.  
**PRESENT:**

☒ John Lang    ☒ Hendrica Regez    ☒ Scott Toot    ☒ LaDon Trost (3:58 pm)  
☐ Darcy Wild    ☒ John Schultz    ☒ Diane Gallagher    ☒ Don Zillig

A quorum was established.

Other Board Members:

Others: Patricia Allen-Stewart, Karl Brown, Representative Andrew Chesney, Shari Kochman, Dan Reimer, Senator Brian Stewart

1. **Call to Order:** Chairman Lang called the meeting to order at 2:30 p.m.
2. **Minutes Approval:**
  - a) Minutes of the August 13, 2020 Legislative Committee meeting – **John Schultz made a motion to approve the minutes of the August 13, 2020, November 12, 2020 and January 14, 2021 Legislative Committee meeting. Seconded by Don Zillig and motion carried following a roll call vote resulting in all ayes.**
  - b) Minutes of the November 12, 2020 Legislative Committee meeting
  - c) Minutes of the January 14, 2021 Legislative Committee meeting
3. **Citizens' Comments:** Patricia Allen-Stewart, Galena, commented that she is also on the Illinois' Peoples Action group and they are asking for support of the Clean Energy Jobs Act and she would be interested to know what our representatives would have to say about that. John Lang read the County's policy regarding visitors.
4. **Unfinished Business:**
  - a) FY2019/FY2020 Strategic Goals and Plans – The committee reviewed their strategic goals and plans. Promote more passing lanes for Highway 20 is ongoing. Implement 1% service tax is ongoing. There has been no action to establish Home Rule for the County. Restore funding from the distributive fund is on the watch list. There has been no action to investigate hiring a part-time or full-time lobbyist. Find options for other municipalities to supply law enforcement assistance for the County is in place with mutual aid.
5. **New Business:**
  - a) Introductions – John Lang thanked LaDon Trost for making the contact with Senator Stewart and Representative Chesney to attend this meeting. Lang added that we are totally grateful to Senator Stewart and Representative Chesney for being here today. They have represented Northwest Illinois very well. They have been responsive to the County.
  - b) Overview of legislation from 101<sup>st</sup> General Assembly – Senator Stewart commended Lang, the committee and administrative staff for what they do each and every day for the citizens of Jo Daviess County. Regardless of a pandemic or not the work that the elected officials do and administrative staff work is always a superb job and the citizens of Jo Daviess County ought to be proud of the work that this committee and

the administration puts forth every single day. The 101<sup>st</sup> General Assembly adjourned on March 8<sup>th</sup>. They ramrodded a budget through the end of May in a couple of days. We didn't go back until a lame duck session in the second week of January where once again some critical legislation was ramrodded through in the last minute without adequate input from the citizens or any of the groups of legislation. It was a very unusual legislative year of course because of the coronavirus. Andrew Chesney added that a lot of what they had scheduled was put on ice amidst the pandemic. There was a very abbreviated not only lame duck session but for planning purposes the majority party really picked out just a few items that they felt were necessary. Other than that they didn't really see any bills get much movement beyond that. There were four pillars of legislative black caucus that were put forward and were also being discussed and debated. There were some things both the majority and minority party could get along on and come to an agreement on. One of those things that Chesney was working on was the cap of payday loans and title loans that would cap at 36%. He thought that was much needed. Chesney was pleased to see that the County Board passed the resolution to encourage the governor to veto HB3653. That bill is going to have a catastrophic effect on all of our communities. We didn't see much beyond the legislative black caucus agenda and the budget, which is all that we have worked on in the last year. All of the bills that Chesney and Stewart filed were sent back to their respective rules committees and are likely to be refiled in the 2021 session.

- c) Thoughts on the new legislative session – Senator Stewart commented that the 102<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly was sworn in last month and work has begun. It is going to be an interesting session from the fact that the Senate passed a rules last year that allowed Senate hearings to be conducted remotely via Zoom. Those hearings have started this week to talk about specific pieces of legislation for this year. It is way too early in the session because the bill filing deadline to file any new legislation is still about two weeks out. We don't quite know what all is going to be filed. Stewart can tell you that there has been 1,760 House bills filed already, 197 Senate bills filed already on a variety of topics. Where those bills will go certainly remains to be seen and how the legislative session shapes up remains to be seen. They cancelled the majority of February. The next month or upcoming months will probably be done via Zoom. How we go back to Springfield and how that will be facilitated remains to be seen. From a bill perspective it is hard to comment on them because we haven't seen most filed. There was a bill filed a couple of weeks ago in this session that would eliminate school resource officers so schools would be prohibited from having school resource officers who are vitally important to the safety and wellbeing of our students and faculty. There was also a bill introduced to raise the minimum wage to \$20 an hour. We already know what the devastating effects are going to be with raising the current minimum wage. We could probably give you more specifics in a couple of months if you want to have us back then. It is too early to get into the details of them all right now. Representative Chesney added that they all just met yesterday to discuss and vote on the house rules. There is a trend and some movement on leadership term limits. Legislative term limits are generally four to six years. We actually have organic term limits. The hang-up we have is on leadership term limits. That's where you saw Madigan, Durkin who has been in the assembly for 24 years and leader for only eight, the house Republicans have established leadership term

limits within our caucus and we did so several years ago. One of the positives that came out of the house rules was the established house rule that would prohibit a legislator from serving as speaker of the house for more than ten years. While it can be changed, and Chesney feels it will be changed, it is a signal in the right direction. In Chesney's chamber, we did see the end of Madigan's leadership. He served just over 50 years in the Illinois General Assembly and roughly 40 years as the speaker of the house. While he is still a member he is expected to resign probably in the next couple of weeks. Chesney differs greatly from Speaker Welch, but will give him and his leadership team the benefit of the doubt until they give him a reason not to. On the Senate side we really do not know what the rules of engagement are on the bills. Generally in February they are down in session already working on bills and on committees. They have allowed for some remote engagement with committees. We can do teleconferences and move some bills through the process; however, what the overall calendar looks like is still greatly fluid. Senator Stewart added that the senate has similar rules that they adopted senate term limits as it relates to leadership, but these are just rules. Rules can be changed at any time or legislative session. A simple motion to suspend the rules will suspend the rules. We need to codify those term limits and make that the law and not a rule. It is a lot harder to change a law than it is to simply suspend a rule.

d) Jo Daviess County legislative priorities

- i. Designate EMS an essential service – John Lang commented that we would like to see EMS designated as an essential service. One of our board members lead a committee that did an extensive report on the EMS services. We have volunteer staff and many times calls go unanswered because those volunteers are unavailable. Lang looked at possible legislation that could be modified to help with that. It is 55ILCS110. That is a regional ambulance service law. We could use some state support that would help fund EMS services. Senator Stewart commented that he is a strong supporter of public safety. If there are ways that we can help you from a legislative prospective we would be strong supporters to help spearhead things if that would help Jo Daviess County and other rural counties. Stewart imagines this would help some of their colleagues across the state and thus help pass a piece of legislation. Chesney agrees with Stewart on this view. If there are specific pieces of legislation that we like they can certainly look at filing a bill to advance those conversations.
- ii. 1% service tax – John Lang commented that this may not be the year to introduce this bill. He would like to see it in the next session in 2022. The County Board voted to use this 1% service tax only for EMS services in the county. Chesney is very reluctant to move forward on this during this session. It is something that we need to get on the other side of this pandemic and open the state back up first. Until that happens you are going to see a great lag in our hotels and motels.

- e) The effects of HB3653 on law enforcement – The County Board voted to support the governor vetoing this bill. Senator Stewart commented that the premise of some of these bills was predicated by issues that occurred in our country last year. The attempt at some of this legislation that was introduced was aimed to fix one-half of 1% of what the issues are in some of those areas. HB3653, the unfunded mandates

the burdens that this will put on cities and counties and their taxpayers is going to be quite significant. The unfunded mandates and additional training will need to come from an increase in property taxes. The bill does nothing to address the financial implications of this. The other thing that it does is completely eliminate cash bail. This will simply allow dangerous criminals to be put back out on the street which poses extreme danger to the witnesses, victims and the community at large. The passage of this bill is going to put unforeseen consequences on our communities and make them less safe. It puts our officers in dangerous situations because it prevents a lot of things that they are allowed to intervene in. It is just a bad bill all the way around. The consequences will remain to be seen, but Stewart feels it will have a significant impact on public safety. Chesney shares the general sentiments of Senator Stewart and the broad consensus of the general caucus. While we support body cameras and additional training the challenge is how to pay for them. The areas Chesney could not support is the elimination of cash bail and the catch and release that is going to be practiced in Illinois. It's been tried in other states and been rolled back. You will not find any law enforcement officer and certainly not management that are in support of this. The Cook County State's Attorney is the only prosecutor that was in support of this. All other State's Attorneys in the state filed in opposition of this. The anonymous complaints are another issue. The piece that gives him the most hesitation and most frustrating for Chesney was the lack of coordination with law enforcement. Every law enforcement group that exists in Illinois are all adamantly against this. Their position is that it is going to make each of our communities less safe. All of the chief prosecutors except for one say this is going to make our communities less safe.

- f) Other bills from the lame duck session that could be in the new session – There were a number of bills that were introduced in the lame duck session that did not become laws. Lang asked if you foresee them coming up in the regular session now. Stewart commented that anything is on the table and can be reintroduced. It will remain to be seen what is going to happen to some of that legislation and making sure that it gets a fair shake. It is still another two weeks before the bill filing deadline. Keep in mind that a bill can be amended at any time and run back through.
- g) State Board of Education teaching standards – Senator Stewart commented that they are really tying the hands of the educators as to what they are wanting them to teach or how they are wanting to indoctrinate the students. There is another part in this bill that will require sex education taught to kindergarteners. This is changing the whole teaching standards for our youth. He hopes JCARE takes a serious look at what they are doing with these new teaching standards. Chesney shares these concerns. We are getting far away from reading writing and arithmetic. One thing we haven't highlighted enough is school attendance.
- h) Committee members suggestions for other legislative issues–Hendrica Regez had a few requests for bringing more economic opportunities to our county. One is in Wisconsin and some of our towns. UTV's are allowed on the roads and it would benefit our tourism industry and make some people really happy if they were allowed on all county roads. Regez asked for support of HB4346 if it gets reintroduced. Regez also asked for support of the Clean Energy Jobs Act and try to get one of the workforce development hubs to be built in our county. She would also like support for bringing passenger rail back to Galena as well as supporting any bills relating to

fostering local food systems. Lang expressed his concerns with UTV's on the roads. Senator Stewart gave a general fyi on HB4346 that it has been introduced the last couple of years and he doesn't see it going anywhere. It is not necessarily that entities are not supportive of the concept, but Law enforcement entities are opposed to having unlicensed, unregulated vehicles on the roads because of traffic accidents and fatalities and unlicensed, unskilled drivers. With those associations being opposed he doesn't see it going anywhere. Chesney does agree with Regez on the UTV issue. He would like to see a compromised agreement. The challenge we have is law enforcement is pretty locked in against this and added to that is the Secretary of State's office. It would be awesome for tourism and to come up with some sort of sensible solution.

6. **Citizens' Comments:** None.
7. **Board Member Concerns:** Don Zillig commented on the 1% service tax and prevailing wages. He thanked Chesney for his help in the past and is hoping that they can get some of these minor things done as well. Scott Toot thanked Senator Stewart and Representative Chesney for taking time out of their busy schedules to be at this meeting with us today. Regez echoed that. Chesney thanked the committee for the invite and commented that he viewed Jo Daviess County as his second home. Not always have we agreed but the County Board members have been very diplomatic about trying to come up with solutions. As long as we put all of these ideas forward and we have the interest of the taxpayer and the public in mind a lot of this stuff can get done. Senator Stewart agreed with Chesney and thanked the committee for participating today and for your input and comments. It is an honor to represent Jo Daviess County. Diane Gallagher commented that she encourages anyone to ask their school district to borrow a Social Studies textbook. It was a shock to her how different it was and how emotionally labeled the wording is. Lang extended a heartfelt thank you to Senator Stewart and Representative Chesney for giving their time and sharing their insights. He suspects they will be hearing from us after we know what bills have been introduced.
8. Next regular meeting will be held on Thursday, March 11, 2021 at 2:30 p.m.
9. Meeting adjourned at 4:06 p.m. following a motion made by Don Zillig. Seconded by Hendrica Regez and motion passed following a roll call vote that resulted in all ayes.