

COMMITTEE REPORT

COMMITTEE: Special Social and Environmental Committee
CHAIRPERSON: Don Hill, Chairman
DATE/TIME: April 8, 2021 5:30 p.m.

PRESENT:

☒ Don Hill	☐ Bob Heuerman	☒ Janet Checker
☒ Bill Bingham	☒ Hendrica Regez	
☒ Robert O'Connor	☒ Scott Toot	

A quorum was established.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Darcy Wild, John Lang, and John Schultz.

OTHERS PRESENT: Dan Reimer, Brandon Behlke, Rich Machala, Nicole Hermsen, Chris Allendorf, Ben Moch, Lynn Berning, Angie Kaiser, Melisa Hammer, Ken Voight, and Dan Tindel.

1. **Minutes Approval:** None.

2. **Citizens' Comments:** John Lang, Grants Administration Oversight Committee Chairman, explained the purpose of having the Grants Administration Oversight Committee, which was formed over 4 years ago. The County is ranked by all the grants that the County receives. The transit grant is the largest grant the County receives. The entire transit grant is 25 printed pages. Over a year ago the grants committee became aware that there were reporting problems to the County from the Workshop. In May 2020 the County extended their contract with the Workshop on a probationary basic in hopes that the problems would be resolved. In the meantime, Rich Machala was able to get the County caught up on the reporting with the State of Illinois. Ultimately the County hired Nicole Hermsen given her past employment history and experience with grant compliance.

Don Hill read emails he received from Dan Tindel and Todd Holland. Tindel expressed a few of his concerns – what the cost would be to finding a new vendor, concern regarding losing the dedicated employees of the workshop (seniors, veterans, etc.) Tindel also stated in his email that the transit helped with preschool transportation with the ARC. Tindel is concerned that the transit services would be disrupted or discontinued within the County. The second email Don Hill read was from Todd Holland, fleet manager for the Jo Daviess County Transit and a 14 year employee of the Workshop, he stated some observations he has made over the past very challenging year: the department has implemented new routes to safely deliver groceries and meals to people quarantined at home, the department has researched and purchased sanitation equipment which allows for timely sanitization of the vehicles saving time and money, separation barriers were installed to separate the drivers and passengers entering the vehicle, proper social distancing, multiple temperature checks of all maintenance workers, drivers and employees, all while losing half of the drivers to retirement.

3. **Unfinished Business**

4. **New Business**

- a) Discussion and possible action to approved Jo Daviess County Transit Procurement Policy. Nicole Hermsen went over the 64 page Jo Daviess County Transit Procurement policy. Dan Reimer went over Section 7 of the Jo Daviess County Transit Procurement Policy on the County purchasing limits. **Hendrica Regez made a motion to approve the Jo Daviess County Transit Procurement Policy with the amendment of 7.1.4 stating that any individual obligations of more than \$20,000 per year require the approval of the Social**

& Environmental Committee and then moved to the County Board for approval. Seconded by Janet Checker and motion passed following a roll call vote resulting in all ayes.

- b) Discussion and possible action to approve Jo Daviess County Transit Title VI Policy. – Nicole Hermsen went over the Title VI Policy. **Scott Toot made a motion to approve the Jo Daviess County Transit Title VI Policy. Seconded by Bill Bingham and motion passed following a roll call vote resulting in all ayes.**
- c) Review minutes and timeline leading to the determination of Probation of Jo Daviess Transit/Workshop. Discuss probationary Period Review of Jo Daviess Transit/Workshop. – Nicole Hermsen went over the timeline and minutes leading to the determination of probation of Jo Daviess County Transit/Workshop starting with February 26, 2020. Rich Machala went over his findings which included PPP loan discrepancies, Workshop insurance issues- the Workshop was charging more than they were actually paying, grocery expenses – the Workshop submitted inaccurate information, COVID Policy refusal to send information, and inaccurate documentation. It was very difficult to get any information that was needed. Nicole Hermsen stated that there was a 10 day delay in getting the December expenses signed. The discrepancies were because the Workshop wanted to pay bonuses to their employees but according to IDOT, bonuses are not eligible to be paid using federal funds. Scott Toot asked if the County is found to be in violation by IDOT what the ramifications would be on the County grants received. Melisa Hammer said if the County is found in violation with the State of Illinois and they were to put a stop on our grants, any grant, all grants, it would result in the loss of funding from the State of Illinois which would be over \$17,000,000. Bob O'Connor stated that any expenditure over the grant amount would be put on the tax payers of Jo Daviess County. Hendrica Regez asked if the errors in reporting could be due to a software computer program. She suggested maybe a third party could observe the workflow.
- d) Discussion for recommendations to the County Board:
 - 1. Continue with the Workshop as Operator under a final probationary period. If the Workshop does not meet reporting, compliance and budgeting requirements, notice of termination would be initiated which would allow the County to find another operator or have the County prepare to become the operator.
 - 2. Serve the Workshop notice of termination of the agreement with the County and prepare to become the operator.

Hendrica Regez asked what the consequences would be if the County were to become the operator. Dan Reimer answered in part that it would require a plan. The employees would become County employees. Scott Toot reiterated that if we lose the grant funds Jo Daviess County would loss the transit system. John Lang was hoping that the contract with the Workshop would work out but he feels like it's time to give them the 120 days' notice and prepare to become the operator. Angie Kaiser addressed Hendrica Regez's question and stated that if the County were to take over as the operator the Transit would simply become another department Jo Daviess County. The department would be employed by the County therefore taking out the third party. John Schultz asked if the Workshop was benefitting financially for being the operator and what would the increase of expenses be for taking over as the operator. Dan Reimer suggested that if there was going to be a probation period that there be goals listed for the Workshop to follow.

Hendrica Regez made a motion to continue with the Workshop as operator under a final 120 day (August 19, 2021) probationary period. If the Workshop does not meet reporting, compliance and budgeting requirements, notice of termination would be

initiated which would allow the County to find another operator or have the County prepare to become the operator. Seconded by Janet Checker and motion fails with a 3-3 vote.

Bob O'Connor made a motion to serve the Workshop notice of termination of the agreement with the County and prepare to become the operator. Seconded by Bill Bingham and motion passed following a roll call vote resulting in all ayes.

- e) Review, discussion, and possible action on the Jo Daviess County Operator Agreement.
Unnecessary due to prior motion.

5. **Citizens' Comments:** John Lang complimented Nicole Hermesen and expressed confidence that she will be able to make the transition work.
6. **Board Member Concerns:** Bob O'Connor wanted to reassure the public that the County is not trying to get rid of the transit service, in fact they are trying to enhance the service.
7. **Adjourn:** Motion to adjourn was made at 7:07 p.m. by Scott Toot, seconded by Bill Bingham. Motion passed following a roll call vote resulting in all ayes.

Next regular meeting will be on Thursday, April 15, 2021 @ 6:30 p.m.