

Waukesha County Board of Supervisors

Minutes of the Executive Committee Monday, November 18, 2024

Chair Heinrich called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

Present: Supervisors Jim Heinrich, Keith Hammitt, Christine Howard, Jacob LaFontain, Larry Nelson, Gary Szpara, Peter Wolff

Also Present: Chief of Staff Sarah Spaeth, Legislative Policy Advisor Sarah Fraley, Administrative Specialist Barbara Hollander, Supervisors Joel Gaughan, Supervisor Steve Styza, Supervisor Darlene Johnson, Supervisor Darryl Enriquez, Director of Administration Andrew Thelke, Financial Analyst Josh Seljie, Senior Financial Analyst Tyler Livesey, County Executive Chief of Staff Shawn Lundie, Representative Dave Maxey

Approve Minutes of October 14

MOTION: Wolff moved, second by Hammitt to approve the minutes of October 14. Motion carried 6-0

Next Meeting Date

- December 9

LaFontain arrived at 8:34.

Standing Committee Reports

Executive Committee members gave updates on their respective committees. Heinrich shared what he has been doing as chairman.

Discuss And Consider Resolution 179-R-003 Resolution Addressing State Funding Inequities Impacting Waukesha County

LaFontain presented that this resolution requests the State of Wisconsin to address the state funding inequities impacting Waukesha County by providing additional financial support to Waukesha County. He said that based on feedback from other supervisors and constituents when the county sales and use tax was being proposed, they feel they are being taxed enough. This resolution is to open up the lines of communication with the Waukesha delegation for the county to reclaim more of the tax levy, and to have the State of Wisconsin distribute some of the billions of dollars they have in surplus to pay for their state-mandated services. The hope is that other municipalities see this resolution and take action also.

Discussion ensued with concerns being voiced that the state should be covering state-mandated services, how much impact the resolution will have at the state level, and the reference to Milwaukee County in the resolution.

Gaughan stated his concern with the reference in the second to last paragraph which states Waukesha County's financial strain is directly related to policies implemented by Milwaukee County. He has no problem asking the state to compensate for state mandates, but not asking to be compensated because of Milwaukee's policies. He further stated that this language distracts from the larger purpose of getting the state to pay for its mandates. Enriquez and Johnson concurred.

Hammitt suggested the resolution be distributed personally to the legislatures, and that if all supervisors get behind the resolution, it will send a very strong statement.

Szpara said that Milwaukee could be advocates with us, so maybe we don't want to mention Milwaukee in the resolution if we hope to collaborate with them. Spaeth said she has spoken to their lobbyist, and they want to focus on getting more money for criminal justice funding and courts, and that is what a lot of counties are talking about. They view it as a regional problem and not a county-by-county problem. We could partner with them on courts funding.

Nelson said we should focus on what will help us in the legislature. The resolution is not the place to make political points and arguments. He said he agrees with Gaughan. We are going to need support from both parties all over the state of Wisconsin and a cleaner resolution would be strategically more effective.

MOTION: Howard moved, second by Hammitt to amend the resolution to eliminate the verbiage "directly resulting from policies implemented by Milwaukee County" from lines 3 and 4 of the second page. LaFontain said he thinks that's fair. Motion carried 7-0

MOTION: LaFontain moved, second by Hammitt to approve Resolution 179-R-003 as amended. Motion carried 7-0

Discussion with Representative Dave Maxey

Representative Maxey participated in a discussion consisting of questions asked by the committee. The topics included shared revenue, unfunded state mandates, county sales tax percentage and state surplus.

Maxey said on January 6, he will introduce a bill that will allow counties to implement sales and use taxes at incremental rates of 0.1%, 0.2%, 0.3%, 0.4% or 0.5%. He thinks everyone he has spoken to in the legislature is on board. He stated he is against the suggested Wisconsin Counties Association 1.5% sales tax. That would put Waukesha at 6.5%. He is concerned that Waukesha will lose businesses, and his goal is to keep the sales tax lower than our neighbors. At 5.1%, Waukesha County could raise \$10 to \$12 million and he questioned why we should go to 5.5%. Heinrich said Representative Duchow might be doing something similar. Maxey said her bill allows municipalities to raise it to anything.

In answering Wolff's question, Maxey will not support the Waukesha County 0.5% sales tax if the bill introducing incremental increases does not pass. In responding to Hammitt's suggestion, Maxey would support an effort to get his colleagues to look into funding state mandates.

LaFontain voiced his concern about the \$4.6 billion in state surplus and stated we wouldn't need a sales tax if surplus was shared with Waukesha County. He questioned why the state does not fund their own mandates. Maxey said he did ask for that last session and the governor didn't like it. LaFontain mentioned the jail population being over operating capacity due to out of county inmates, and the shortages in the District Attorney's office as other examples of needing the state surplus.

Nelson suggested that with the record number new legislatures that maybe the incremental sales tax proposal will have bi-partisan support. Maxey said he is reaching out to Winnebago for support because they are one of two counties that would support this. He cautioned that passing this bill is an uphill battle. He would like to see the County and Towns Association get on board with this also. Maxey suggested that if any of the supervisors have any leverage, including with Racine which recently approved a county sales tax, to make contact and ask for support for this bill. As far as the new legislators, Maxey said most of them are not Republicans.

Maxey said a good start would be requesting funding state mandates. He will figure out what that number is and ask that language be drafted. Spaeth added that historically asking for funding of state mandates hasn't worked.

Maxey would like to see other counties reduce their 0.5%. He stated his opinion that when counties get money, they spend it. He would support 5.1% for Waukesha County and if that doesn't work, going up in smaller increments.

Szpara voiced his concern that when the legislation is introduced to change the 0.5% sales tax that the percentage may actually increase. He mentioned that the Wisconsin Counties Association is pushing for 1.5%. Maxey said counties want more flexibility to go even higher, but believes if Waukesha County could incrementally raise their county sales tax, they would do so conservatively. He is not in favor of the higher percentage (0.5%), but wants the county to have flexibility.

Nelson mentioned that the proposed 0.5% was a three-pronged proposal, which included aid to municipalities. Maxey said he is concerned about the future turnover of the county board and although they would be getting money now if that were in effect, what happens in 2027?

In answering LaFontain's question, Maxey said he would reluctantly support a bill that states up to 1.5% only because he knows Waukesha County would not take advantage of the maximum percentage. LaFontain added that the county will still get the same argument in asking for state aid; that we are not taking advantage of the full 1.5%.

Heinrich brought up other funding concerns the County has such as circuit courts and DA's office, and that the percentage the county is paying is going up. He said the state should be paying their fair share of that. Heinrich mentioned his concerns about the case load in the district attorney's office as we are short 10.5 district attorneys. He suggested Maxey put some concentration in this area.

Maxey encouraged board members to continue to contact their legislators and the governor's office about their concerns.

Heinrich summarized the areas he wants Maxey to work on: proposal of step increase for sales tax, unfunded mandates, funding of the courts, getting fairer shared revenue amount, and transportation aid.

Discuss and Consider the Following Appointments:

179-A-021 James Heinrich Reappointment Of Waukesha County Board Chairman To The Bridges Library Board

179-A-022 Betsy Forrest Reappointment Of Waukesha County Representative To The Bridges Library Board

179-A-023 Larry Nelson Reappointment Of Waukesha County Board Supervisor To The Bridges Library Board

MOTION: Howard moved, second by Hammitt to approve the above-listed appointments.
Motion carried 7-0

MOTION: Howard moved, second by Wolff to adjourn at 10:22 a.m. Motion carried 7-0

Respectfully submitted,



Christine M. Howard
Secretary - Executive Committee