

EEHW COMMITTEE MEETING
Thursday, January 15, 2015
5:30 P.M.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Tim Dudley, Chair
Linda Little
Matt Brown
Merv Jacobs
Jerry Potts
Gary Minich

COUNTY PERSONNEL PRESENT

LouAnn Hollon, Animal Control
Matt Snyder, ROE
Deb Garrett, Environmental Mgmt
Kris Horton, Animal Control
Jennifer Hoffman, P&Z
Diana Heyer, Health Department
Greg Collins, Vet Administration
Lauri Rasmus, Environmental Mgmt
Paula Cross, Environmental Mgmt
Jeannie Durham, County Board Office

MEMBERS ABSENT

Kevin Bird

The meeting was called to order by Chair Tim Dudley at the Macon County Office Building.

MINUTES

Jerry Potts made a motion to approve the December 18, 2014 meeting minutes, seconded by Merv Jacobs, motion carried with 5 votes in favor, 0 opposed and Linda Little voting present.

CLAIMS

Linda Little made a motion to accept the report of the claims as presented, seconded by Gary Minich and motion carried 6-0.

ZONING - None

SUBDIVISIONS – None

REPORTS

Regional Office of Education –

Matt Snyder distributed the quarterly report. There are currently 89 employees mostly through grant funds. There are alternative schools and the Baby Talk Program. They are also involved in some school improvement grants throughout the state. They are currently the fiscal agent for a grant in East St. Louis and Kahokia and are working in those schools. People in those areas have been hired to go into those schools and try to help as much as possible with some federal money.

There are 119 who have gone through the Adult Education Program. Futures, an alternative high school where students go, has 147. They have to have 10 credits to enter and they can get done with 18 credits which is the state minimum in a year. They get the diploma from their home high school. This is more for truancy issues and not expelled or suspended students. Every quarter there is a graduation. Kids move in and out. There is room

for about 100 plus 20 special education kids. There were 2 graduations with almost 50 graduates.

Milligan Academy is the safe school for suspended and expelled students. Right now there are 43 students enrolled. There have been 61 in the program this year.

Heartland Vocational is at Richland and is an area vocational center with 342 students per semester enrolled there.

There are 2 teachers at St. Mary's Adolescent. 133 students have gone through there. Students range from 1 day stays to 10 day stays with most of them on the mental floor with depression and other mental issues.

GED is the big issue right now. One person passed the GED in Macon / Piatt Counties last quarter. There were about 12 in the whole year. Usually there are about 300. The GED test changed to a computer based text. The price went way up. Statewide the numbers went from 19,000 GEDs issued in 2013 to 1,900 in the State of Illinois in 2014. Mr. Snyder said he is on a task force of 20 people from ROEs and community colleges around the state. There are two other tests being looked at. The GED was farmed out to a private company and became a "for profit". It has become a huge issue nationwide. Two other companies now have tests that are much cheaper. Illinois is looking at giving 3 options for this test including some pencil/paper options because the computer option is difficult for many people to navigate. There will be suggestions and recommendations that go to the state. The State is also looking at an adult diploma which would be different. Some states are doing this where they can utilize some of the credits earned in high school along with portions of the test to get an adult diploma instead of a high school equivalency. There are a lot of things going on with that because of the numbers. The drop off that has occurred is staggering.

A new assistant has been hired and professional development has really been stepped up because it has changed quite a bit for teachers with the common core things that are going on.

Funding is going well. The County facility sales tax continues to flow bringing in about \$800,000 a month which is distributed out to the schools where it is being used for construction. There is a lot of construction and things happening in the local schools.

Jerry Potts asked about the GED costs. Mr. Snyder explained that it went from \$50 to \$120 and with the pass rate so low, people have to retake it. It is 4 sections @ \$30 per section. There is a new test which is \$52 and can be retaken for free. Missouri and a number of states are using it. McGraw Hill has thrown in a new test called the Task Test which is much cheaper. Mr. Potts asked if those are equivalent to GED. Mr. Snyder confirmed and explained that they are changing the name from GED to High School Equivalency. The test is computer based which is a huge issue and everything, including the registration, is done online and a credit card is required. This clientele does not have credit cards, so it is just not working.

Environmental Management

Deb Garrett explained that they had the annual reports for their programs. The Christmas Light Recycling program is in its 4th year and is such a great program because it doesn't cost the department anything. The proceeds this year will be donated to the local chapter of the American Red Cross.

Laurie Rasmus reported that for the past 5 years a Rain Barrel Sales Program has been offered to residents to harvest rainwater from their roofs to conserve water. 186 barrels have been sold from the beginning of this program. Each barrel turns over water 10 times making a total for those 186 barrels, depending on the year they were sold, have collected 300,000 gallons of water. This program gives a good platform to meet with the public.

The Enforcement Program offered by the department serves as a delegated partner to the IEPA and the program involves regular inspections of the County Landfill as well as the 5 closed landfills, the 2 compost sites and in response to open dumping. For doing this work, the IEPA has again awarded the department a \$46,000 grant.

The new website developed this past summer, Maconggreen.com has had good response from the public. People that have attended the collections have said they found out the information because of the website. She encouraged everyone to take a look at it.

Paula Cross explained that they get a lot of phone calls from citizens wondering how to recycle things. In 2013 and all of 2014, a phone log has been kept which tracks what people are most concerned about so the programs can be adjusted to accommodate the most people.

1,375 calls were logged in 2014. Paint and electronics are the most frequent. The data has been used to improve the public outreach on topics that people seem to be most concerned about. It has been done through the Maconggreen.com website, email & postcard notifications and message boards at the rural recycling trailer locations. In 2013, there were 642 calls about paint, but only had 335 cars come through the paint collections. There was not a lot of information out there for people to follow up on. In 2014, there were only 361 calls about paint, 641 cars came through. Paula said she hoped the results were due to the improved public outreach. A whole year's schedule was posted on the website and in other places. The calls on electronics keep going up every year. In 2013, there were 256. In 2014, there were 353. People want to know what to do with their electronics and we try to keep them informed. There are plans for 3 electronic collections this year. That seems to be one of the highest concerns for people.

Animal Control

Kris Horton distributed the monthly report and explained that new things are going on now. New accounting software is being implemented in cooperation with the Treasurer's Office and they are working on doing a better job of keeping track of payments. It's a whole new system with new cash boxes.

There are three new wardens in place as some of the old ones are transitioning to the jail. She said they are all starting at about the same time.

A new volunteer program, in conjunction with the Foundation, is being started and updated because of the growth at the animal shelter. The program needed to be updated with lanyards, sign in sheets, incentives for regulars, etc...

Chair Dudley said the report looks like it's been a really good last couple of months on adoptions. Kris said it was partly due to the Home for the Holidays Program, but it grows each year. She said it has also not slowed down as much as you would think for this time of the year. That started in 2009 and this year the adoptions were well over 100. The adoption pricing has gone to a set \$75 for all animals. It has been broken down by cat or dog, size, etc...The Foundation ran a lot of specials this year and it does a lot better when reduced a little so they've decided to keep it a little lower and more uniform.

Linda Little asked if the contracts with municipalities kept going until one side or the other wants to renegotiate. Kris said yes.

Health Department

Dianna Heyer reported that the flu is wide-spread in Macon County and across Illinois and other states. There are a lot of sick people right now and it is recommended that everyone 6 months and older get a flu shot especially those with chronic health conditions or health / care providers. There is still flu vaccine available and it is not too late to get it and it is encouraged.

Planning & Zoning –

Jennifer Hoffman reported that 2014 was finished with 16 new residences and 210 building permits. Last year was heavy on rezoning especially in the special use & variance area where there were 36. That is double from the prior year. A lot of them were controversial. Construction season is in the slow season and they are working on rewriting the zoning ordinance section by section. That will be taken to SRO in the future.

Veteran's Assistance –

Greg Collins said that Kathy Powless was attending the IACBAC. There have been server issues this week. It was turned in last Thursday to Decatur Computer and they said it would be ready in one day, but now it's been 7 days so the office is running behind, but that should be better on Tuesday.

Mental Health Board –No Report

Citizen's Remarks -

Michelle Huttes, President of the Decatur Macon County Animal Shelter Foundation, reported that the intake and adoption numbers have been updated through year end and it can be seen very clearly that all the numbers are going in the right direction. Tremendous improvements have been made. The intake to adoption ratio, in 2007 was 16%. That is 16% of all the animals that came in were adopted out. Last year, it was 43%. That is phenomenal improvement. Michelle said she would like to give some of the credit to the Animal Shelter Foundation because they hand out spay & neuter certificates to the public so they can have their pet spayed or neutered at no cost. In 2007, less than 70 were handed out. Last year, there were around 300. That is making a huge impact on their intake and a lot of specials were run last year on

adoptions. When they run an adoption special, many times, the Foundation is making up the cost. Over 50 veterans were able to adopt at \$0 because the Foundation pays that entirely for veterans. Over 100 seniors received half price adoptions because the Foundation pays the difference for seniors. There were between 600 & 700 other adoptions that the Foundation helped to sponsor. 2015 does not have the budget to continue those types of adoptions, but with their reduced adoption fee, the use of social media, and other promotions, the great success should continue.

OLD BUSINESS - None

NEW BUSINESS – None

Closed Session – None Needed

NEXT MEETING

Next regular meeting - Thursday, February 19, 2015

ADJOURNMENT

Jerry Potts made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Matt Brown, the motion carried 6-0 and the meeting was adjourned at 5:50 p.m.

Minutes submitted by Jeannie Durham