



HAMILTON COUNTY  
**First  
Suburbs  
Consortium**

# Membership Meeting

October 29, 2013  
6:00 PM – 8:00 PM  
Blue Ash Fire Department North Station  
10647 Kenwood Road  
Blue Ash

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## Meeting Summary

### Attending

1. Natalie Wolf, Amberley Village \*
2. Stiney Vonderhaar, Evendale
3. Jim O'Reilly, Wyoming \*
4. Tom Moeller, Madeira \*
5. Mark Weber, Blue Ash \*
6. Gerri Harbison, Montgomery \*
7. Sheri Carbo, Office of Governor Kasich
8. Sharon Chaney, Golf Manor
9. Donna Falk, Golf Manor
10. Alan Zaffiro, Golf Manor
11. Barry Strum, HCDC
12. Dan Pillow, Addyston \*

\* executive committee member

- Andy Dobson, RPC
- Todd Kinskey, RPC
- David Meyer, Hamilton County
- Christian Sigman, Hamilton County

### I. Welcome and Introductions

Meeting began about 6:15. Mark Weber introduced himself, welcomed everybody, and led the Pledge of Allegiance. Christian Sigman was moved ahead on the agenda so he could make it to another meeting later in the evening.

### 2. Treasurer Update

(not presented)

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### 3. David Meyer, Director of Utility Oversight

Sanitary Sewer Overflow 700

- area that drains to it encompasses 13 jurisdictions, most are FSC members
- if you are in the watershed, Dave will be contacting you to get involved in the watershed action plan process
- fixing SSO 700 problems = huge opportunity for communities to make improvements, think strategically about watershed plans, making use of money and technical assistance that will be available
- rate increases coming to help fund improvements necessary for Consent Decree

Jim O'Reilly:

MSD agreement is due to expire in a few years, has been effective for 50 years

- what will discussion/negotiation of new agreement be like
- is County capable of taking over the utility and running it independently of Cincinnati
- will we simply renew what's there, or try something different
- Smaile Commission: at that time, County was nowhere near able to run MSD, so commission recommended to continue existing agreement
- Situation is different today, but if takeover is to occur, County needs to staff-up, quickly

Dave:

Most of the MSD consent decree work has been inside Cincinnati, hasn't spread around to County yet

- sees benefits to Cincinnati continuing to manage MSD under continued version of the current agreement
- a bigger question: would it be an overall benefit to have CWW and MSD under the same administrative umbrella?

### 4. Christian Sigman

Christian presented an overview of the proposed 2014 Hamilton County Budget. Funding discussions lead to examining the impact of the Recession on County operations, what is left after the massive budget cuts and layoffs, and how to proceed from here from an organization and policy standpoint.

#### Budget and Finances

- County began to see impact of Recession about six months before municipalities because of how revenue comes in
- Christian had never experienced or imposed mid-year reductions before, had one in 2008, and two in 2009 (unprecedented)
  - economy was so bad at that point that people didn't object much—clearly the economy was in free-fall
  - as cuts continued year after year departments and elected officials had more complaints
  - afterward, groups did collaborate to make ends meet
- overall, one-third of County workforce and total budget gone (for good?)
- after five years of cuts and austerity, "organization has to be taken care of"

- Employee raises this year (first time in five years)
- pent-up needs, things that had to be ignored/passed over, basic infrastructure and technology needs

The only way County gets revenue is through economic growth -- can't issue bonds like a municipality or other organizations

Three-option budget last year to start discussion about choices, looking ahead, and making future investments

- two of them included tax increases, which were DOA with the Commissioners
- useful, because they made a strong statement about what they were *not* going to do
- Three options again this year, to continue the discussions, and make the BoC think and decide on policies regarding revenue

### **Shared Services**

Cincinnati is very good at providing many services, doesn't really need to collaborate with anybody

- working with the other 48 jurisdictions, smaller communities could really get some much-needed assistance with service and capital operations
- co-location of planning/zoning/building departments has been studied for a couple of years is very likely to happen in 2014—lots of benefits to “one stop shop”

### **dunnhumby and Data**

- “Everything we do in government is either people or places”
- Lots of opportunities for mining our collected data to identify trends, make predictions,
- These data sets selected for comparison before and after the Recession
  - delinquent water bills
  - food stamp applications
  - 911 calls
  - property vacations
  - foreclosures
- Will use the information and knowledge to build a model, or an early-warning system, for property foreclosures and resulting neighborhood decline
- using dunnhumby because County lacks staff and expertise, and dh is very excited to work on this program
- can tell us what we don't know from our own data sets

Tom Moeller: When will results be available? (A few months—will be a big rollout)

- Lesson: "Don't be afraid to ask the private sector to help."
  - will help out, because a government organization is not a competitor
  - lots of resources, training, and other programs out there for the asking

Mark Weber: How does the County advance, with so much less staff and resources compared to pre-Recession?

- hardest part of Christian's job is to get BoC to think about what impact they can have, what do they want to leave as a legacy, where do we want to go as a County, etc
  - set sights on bigger picture

- get them to think, and state, what their priorities are, and follow-through
- expertise in certain functions is not spread around
  - Blue Ash: crack economic development staff, rivals Cincinnati
- County talking with Chamber about how to work with all the communities in the region -- there are needs other than downtown and riverfront development
  - shared services again
- so how do we do this? getting the \*region\* moving in a direction with a purpose, what is our vision, what are our priorities

Jim O'Reilly: Government Reform Task Force --Christian and staff supported the group a few years ago

- how many "silo" expenses that aren't necessary exist in the County?

Christian: Easy answer is those are independent office-holders and BoC has no control over them

- real answer is to keep showing people the dollars and sense benefits to sharing/outsourcing certain functions
  - email handled by outside consortium of school districts and local governments
  - more and more departments using County Administration Human Resources
  - expertise and experience in HR for departments when issues come up that they can't handle

Todd Kinskey: idea of a vision, a legacy, has been very helpful, after years of panic and uncertainty (even prior to Recession)

Christian: getting point across to Commissioners to not promise a certain vision and mission, if you aren't going to fund it

- decision came down to, either halt budget cuts and stabilize, or close up shop and get out of the local government business
- lots of "non-essentials" that if stopped would create havoc
  - Coroner lab for example—nothing in state law requires a local office, but would be very difficult living without one
  - Can say the same for many other departments and services

Sheriff's recent audit: great example of huge potential for improvement by updating technology

- web pages and online infrastructure in great need of overhaul, but staff and expertise isn't there any longer
- rollover in elected officials means lots of arguments and decisions need to be made over and over (investing in people, buildings, technology is a good thing, saves money and builds strength over the long run)

## 5. Other Business

Mark

- talking with Gerri today, what do we want to be when we grow up?
- FSC is treading water, no real movement or direction or anything going on
- improve our individual communities while working together to improve all members
- how can we make FSC stronger, and relevant to how policy is decided in Hamilton County?

Todd

- FSC does have some weight already, ask elected officials to show and they do
- need to get better turnout to meetings
  - phone calls may be effective, email overload results in invitations and reminders being overlooked
- Planning Partnership model of going out and interviewing them, building program from one-on-one talks
  - something ExCom should look at doing
- Natalie Wolfe. thinks interviews, getting out and talking with communities is a good idea, find out what is happening, what they think of the organization,

Stiney Vonderhaar: collaborate with Muni. and Twp. Associations, bring in bigger speakers and co-host larger meetings

Dan Pillow: wants FSC to be active in his community—example of old UC studio demographic study

Mark: housing is huge issue—where are people going to live in Blue Ash as they age and don't have kids living at home? four bedroom houses aren't the kind of housing they need

Individual communities are so focused on operations, mired in making ends meet, fixate on the Argument of the Day, but aren't looking ahead to legacy

- FSC can serve as this long-range thinking group, a "legacy lab" cooking up ideas
- wide-ranging discussion about the organization, where it is going, what it should be doing
- 2014 is when we figure this out

## **6. Adjourn**