

**Jackson County Board of Commissioners Meetings Minutes**  
**March 19, 2002 - Committee of the Whole Meeting**  
**Jackson County Commissioners Chambers: 5:00 p.m.**

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Chairman Rice called the March 19, 2002 Jackson County Commissioner's Committee of the Whole meeting to order at 5:04 p.m.

**ROLL CALL:**

(12) Present. Cmsrs. Mahoney-Sherrod, McNitt, Baum, DeForest, Reynolds, Herl, Elwell, Pascal, Shotwell, Brittain, Day, & Rice. (3) Absent. Cmsrs. Lacinski, Adams, & Beardslee

**SPECIAL ORDER:**

**A. Presentation from Washtenaw County on its Business Improvement Program**

Bob Guenzel – Administrator, Washtenaw County of Jackson

Verna McDaniels – Human Resources Director

Mary O'Hare – Professional Development Manager

Gordon Burger – Budget Manager/Business Improvement Process Manager

Suzanne Shaw – Chair, Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners

Adams arrived at 5:06 p.m.

The highlights of the program are as follows:

- Business Improvement is changing the Culture of the Organization
- Everything is aligned to customer service
- All Department Heads and Elected Officials have Business Plans
- Know not only what you are doing, but what you want to do
- 1 full-time position coordinating everyone
- 2-year budget with a 10-year projection
- 20-year replacement plan (roofs, carpet, etc.)
- 2-yr pc replacement plan
- Professional Development

Accomplishments:

- 4 new facilities
- higher bond rating
- 900 employees with a professional development plan
- 2-year technology plan-pc's and ergonomics

- business plan embedded in budget

Lessons learned over past 5 years:

- support from the top
- guiding coalitions, leaders within the organization
- communication
- accountability
- alignment model
- internal resources

Pascal asked where the savings come in. Mr. Guenzel replied that reorganization was the key. As people left or lay-offs occurred, the positions were not re-filled. Also offered were strategic retirement plans.

Adams asked if positions were eliminated, how did they prevent department heads from filling the positions 6-months later? Mr. Guenzel answered that they put their business plan into use for reorganization. Adams also asked if they found that with a 2-year budget they had a more difficult time holding the line at the end of the second year. Mr. Guenzel indicated that they still had to go before the Board of Commissioners for yearly approval and at that point they would make whatever budgets adjustments that were necessary.

Day asked about the number of employees now compared to 3-years ago. Mr. Guenzel responded that they now employ 1400 compared to 1360 3-years ago. Many of the new employees are due to additional grants for mental health. Day also asked how the County gets along with the City and Townships. Mr. Guenzel replied that they have implemented a police service policy. The County no longer provides General Fund Police service. The County pays 34% of the contract.

Reynolds asked where they thought Washtenaw County would be today if they had not implemented their Service Improvement Plan (SIP). Mr. Guenzel replied that it would be a mess. Employees were just doing their jobs because that was the way it had always been done. They would only be halfway where they are as far as technology. Reynolds also asked how they overcame the hurdles with the Commissioners. Mr. Guenzel said they did it slowly and with demonstrated success. Reynolds asked also if they could have achieved success if they had not had their SIP in place? Mr. Guenzel did not believe that they would have been as successful. Ms. O'Hare was a County employee, so they did have the benefit of knowing what to expect from her.

Herl inquired as to the Business Plans. How are the departments held accountable, and are the Business Plans updated? Mr. Guenzel responded that they updated each off budget year. The Business Plans are published and Administrative Services monitors the progress. The Work Plan for each Department Head is directly connected to the Business plan for the department and also holds them accountable in the evaluation process.

Mahoney-Sherrod pointed out that while Washtenaw County does have more employees, they include Community Mental Health, Community Action Agency, Workforce Development and all of the separate authorities unlike Jackson. So if we were to take all of those individual employees that we have as separate authorities or outside boards, you would see the organization of Jackson County as being more comparable in size.

Brittain thanked everyone for coming and indicated that he had sat on numerous boards with Suzanne Shaw. He referred to page 16 of the handout and asked how they determined that 74% thought that they were providing the right services. Mr. Guenzel replied that they had performed a County-wide survey about 3 years ago.

On page 17, Brittain referred to Lessons Learned and asked where they obtained their ideas. Mr. Guenzel said that they attended many conferences, obtained literature, were active in an Innovations Group and the Public Technology Institute. They also utilized consultants.

Page 13 referred to why professional development works. Brittain asked how they obtained employee involvement. Ms. O'Hare responded that they put the responsibility on the employees to provide plans. They offer 350 classes per year with an average participation of 4000 people.

McNitt asked if there was a centralized complaint process and if so, have complaints been reduced? There is no centralized complaint process; it is up to the individual departments.

Brittain asked if they demand the prevailing wage. Mr. Guenzel replied that a prevailing wage resolution has been in place since 1973 and just last year they passed a living wage ordinance.

Mahoney-Sherrod asked how this affected the not-for-profit groups. Mr. Guenzel responded that they set a threshold of 10 employees to make sure that the grass roots or smaller ones were not affected and there are also some hardship provisions.

Rice questioned at what point of the implementation process does the task force hire consultants and at what point the staff is put into place. Mr. Guenzel answered that there were 2 task forces, and then they hired a consultant and per the consultant's advice, hired Ms. O'Hare. The process is still evolving.

Elwell asked if the process would progress more quickly if the person were hired first? Mr. Guenzel replied that it depends on your organization. Washtenaw County already had great leadership in place.

Reynolds interjected that CQ1 has already been in place as a task force for many years. A consultant has already been utilized. She felt it was time to hire the SIP to push the process forward. Now we just need to understand the benefits of paying someone to make more money and improve County Quality relations.

DeForest mentioned that much of this evolved from the need for benchmarking. There were other things that needed to be in place first, and that is where the SIP idea came into play. CQ1 went to the Department Heads for support. HR is not able to handle this portion of the process; someone is needed to provide leadership for the project.

Shotwell clarified his understanding that Washtenaw County reorganized their Budget Office and came up with the Business Plan and implemented it as a financial program for the County. Then operated it with the CQ1 initiative for the professional training for the employees. Are these 2 separate programs, and do they merge? Mr. Guenzel replied that they started out separately, but the Business Improvement umbrella encompasses Professional Development and budget, overlaying the way that they function as a business agency.

Chet referred to page 6 under Fiscal Stability, additional financial resources. Did the additional resources appear because of the program, and if so, what are they? Mr. Burger responded that they appeared as a result of the focus on long-term fiscal stability, operating in a business type manner. Chet referred to page 10, departments being given the authority to manage their budgets, what is meant by that statement? Mr. Burger replied that the departments manage their own budget. Separate line items are not an issue; all that is examined is the bottom line. The Financial Office provides support and projections, serving more as consultants and information analysts to the departments in terms of helping them translate their decisions into a budget.

Rice thanked the Washtenaw County group for sharing their information. The March 19, 2002 meeting of the Jackson County Board of Commissioners Committee of the whole was adjourned at 6:38 p.m.

Jim Rice, Chairman, Jackson County Board of Commissioners  
Sandy Crowley, Jackson County Clerk  
Respectfully submitted by Erin Foster, Chief Deputy County Clerk.