

## **PUBLIC SAFETY & JUSTICE COMMITTEE**

**April 7, 2010**

**Call to Order.** Chair Collins called the meeting of the Public Safety and Justice Committee to order at 5:00 P.M. on April 7, 2010 in Conference Room N-1 on the fifth floor of the Rock County Courthouse-East.

**Committee Members Present:** Supervisors Collins, Beaver, Brill, Wiedenfeld and Knudson.

**Committee Members Excused:** None.

**Staff Members Present:** Jeff Kuglitsch, Corporation Counsel; Jenifer Keach, Coroner; Lori Stottler, County Clerk.

**Others Present:** J. Russell Podzilni, County Board Chair; Sandra Kraft, County Board Vice Chair; Supervisors Peer, Mawhinney, Thomas, Wopat; Rock County Citizens - Tony Farrell Sr., Ronnie E. Thomas, Bill Breidenstein, James Keach, Gene Wendt, Wanda K. Sonnentag, Thomas J. Brien, Rob Wilkinson.

**Adoption of Agenda.** Supervisor Knudson moved approval of the agenda as presented, second by Supervisor Brill. ADOPTED.

**Citizen Participation, Communications, Announcements, Information.** Chair Collins asked that comments be kept to three minutes.

Mr. Tony Farrell Sr., 2600 Meadowview Dr., Janesville, said he has been a volunteer in the Coroner's Office since 2008 and has not experienced any feelings of discrimination. He feels Ms. Keach is well qualified for the position and is recognized by her peers. He feels everyone should have the opportunity to vote and suggested a referendum question may be the way for citizens to make their feelings known.

Ms. Jenifer Keach said she is against the Medical Examiner position. She feels the Coroner's Office has done well over the past five years and that she has made positive changes. She asked if staff would have jobs or if they would have to reapply, and if services would change? She feels by bringing this up year after year it is a bad commentary on the Board's confidence in the public.

Mr. Ronnie Thomas, 2120 Garden Drive, Janesville, said he has not missed voting at many elections. He has followed Ms. Keach's career the past years and feels if it is not broken, don't fix it.

Mr. Bill Breidenstein, 1810 Kensington St., Janesville, had served on the County Board from 1972 – 1988 and not once during that time has this issue been brought up. He agreed, if it is not broke, don't fix it. He feels this would be taking one more thing away from the people.

Supervisor Lou Peer, 945 West St., Beloit, said this has nothing to do with the person. His point is that if something serious happens it can be handled in a good, efficient manner. He would like to be proactive to ensure we do not have any problems and if there are problems they can be handled efficiently.

Supervisor Marv Wopat, 35 W. Maple, Milton, said we all know Ms. Keach's qualifications. It makes no difference what has been through prior to this. We should not be taking the vote away from the people. We need to make sure people are getting help and respect.

Mr. Thomas Brien, 807 Kellogg Ave., Apt. 3, Janesville, said we need to keep this as it is. There are no qualifications written for a medical examiner. He asked how this person would be chosen? This would take the power from the people and give it to a few.

**Resolution.**

**Abolishing the Office of the Coroner and Establishing a Medical Examiner System.**

**“NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Rock County Board of Supervisors duly assembled this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2010 does hereby abolish the position of the coroner and establish a medical examiner system, effective January 3, 2011.”

Supervisor Beaver moved approval of the above resolution, second by Supervisor Brill.

Supervisor Brill said this resolution takes it to the County Board for input from 29 people.

Supervisor Knudson said each time this has come up he has felt the need to keep things as they are. He feels it should be up to the people.

Supervisor Wiedenfeld agreed with Supervisor Knudson and said it would not be wise to take voting rights away from Rock County citizens.

Supervisor Beaver said she feels this needs to move on for all to decide. It is nothing personal against Ms. Keach. Her constituents have asked her to do this.

Supervisor Brill said this resolution moves it on to the next step of the process and public input will be heard there.

Defeated on the following vote: Yes – Supervisors Beaver and Brill; No – Supervisors Collins, Knudson and Wiedenfeld.

**Committee Requests and Motions.** None.

**Adjournment.** Supervisor Wiedenfeld moved adjournment at 5:27 P.M., second by Supervisor Brill. ADOPTED.

Respectfully submitted,

Marilyn Bondehagen  
Secretary II

**NOT OFFICIAL UNTIL APPROVED BY COMMITTEE.**