



Efficiency commission accused of being inefficient

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THE STATE JOURNAL-REGISTER

Posted Mar 13, 2011 @ 10:39 PM

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Sangamon County's planned Citizen's Efficiency Commission probably will have to break up into smaller groups if it wants to operate efficiently, a University of Illinois Springfield business professor said.

The goal of the 23-member panel, which is to be created after the April 5 election, is to find ways for local governments in Sangamon County to work together and save tax money.

But it's probably too big to live up to its name, said Dyanne Ferk, associate dean of the business college at UIS. That means subcommittees might have to do much of the spadework, she said.

"The literature on the performance of groups is that if you get over 12 people, they aren't very productive in reaching a decision," Ferk said. "With 23 people, it will take a while to get a consensus."

Voters approved creation of the Citizens Efficiency Commission in November. It will be made up of representatives from all of the taxing districts in Sangamon County, and members will look for more efficient ways to deliver government services. Suggestions could include joint purchasing or even governmental mergers.

Diversity important

Ferk said she has served on search committees at the university that contained more than 20 people. When she's on a committee that large, she said, she tries to form subcommittees that report back to the full committee.

The efficiency commission similarly could break into subcommittees based on common interests, such as infrastructure or human services, she said.

Victoria Clemons, executive director of Downtown Springfield Inc., made a similar suggestion.

Clemons said Downtown Springfield has 25 people on its board, and most of the work gets done by smaller subcommittees.

"It works really well for us. It always has," Clemons said.

Clemons added that she understands why the county set up the commission with representatives from so many different governmental bodies.

"I completely understand the need for diversity. I think that's important," Clemons said.

To start in April

County officials want to wait until after the April election to put the efficiency commission together so that newly elected officials will have a say in who will be on the commission.

All recommendations will have to be approved by the elected bodies that would be affected.

Sangamon County Board member Andy Goleman said he's not concerned about the size of the commission. There are 29 people on the county board, he pointed out, but committees do a lot of its work.

"My hope is that we'll have some strong leaders from throughout the county who can work together," Goleman said. "It's really going to be up to them if they want to form smaller subcommittees. I suppose that's a possibility."

Four commission members will be selected by the city of Springfield and four will be appointed by the county. The Springfield Park District, the Metro Sanitary District, the Springfield Mass Transit District, and the governing boards of Abraham Lincoln Capital Airport and the Prairie Capital Convention Center will each appoint one member.

Village boards will appoint two members collectively, townships will appoint two collectively, and another two will be appointed collectively by school districts in Sangamon County.

The remaining four commission members will be appointed collectively by community college districts, fire protection districts,

library districts and water districts.

Goleman said the county settled on 23 commission members because it wants all taxing bodies in the county to be represented.

“We want them to have a say,” Goleman said.

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