

**GRAND VALLEY METROPOLITAN COUNCIL
LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE MEETING**

**January 11, 2006
8:30 a.m.**

40 Pearl St. NW Ste. 410
Grand Rapids, MI 49503

MINUTES

1. Call To Order

The meeting was called to order at 9:30 by Chairman Rick Root.

ROLL CALL

Present:

Jim Day	Kent County
Mike DeVries	Grand Rapids Township
Erika Rosebrook Dibble	Ottawa County
Don Hilton	Gaines Township
Bill Holland	Georgetown Township
Gayle McCrath	Grand Valley Metro Council
Rick Root	City of Kentwood
Don Stypula	Grand Valley Metro Council
Joe VanderMeulen	City of Rockford
Ted Vonk	Kent County

2. Meeting Time Change

Legislative Committee Chairman changed the time of future meetings to 8:30 a.m.

3. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the November meeting were reviewed.

MOTION – To Approve the Minutes of the November, 2005 GVMC Legislative Committee Meeting. MOVE - Hilton. SUPPORT – Vonk. MOTION CARRIED.

4. Updates on State Legislative Issues

Tom Frazier of the MTA was conferenced in and asked to give the committee an update on what is happening in Lansing.

Mr. Frasier stated not a lot is known about the budget. The Revenue Estimating Conference will be held tomorrow. It was just announced there is a \$220 million surplus from last years' budget. The House and Senate leadership are already planning on how to spend it, with part going to cut the small business tax. New tax cuts are also being proposed. We will keep an eye on the issue. While we want to stimulate the economy, we also want to monitor the effects it will have on programs.

Mr. Frasier stated they are following the telecommunications issue. This is an issue progressing at both the state and federal levels.

He added they are also keeping track of the Governor's task force on government services and finance. They are expecting to issue a report next month. There is consensus on the problems caused by PA 312 – binding arbitration; employee legacy costs; unfunded mandates; and funding of court system.

Absentee Ballot issue – A Wayne County Circuit Court judge ruled the Detroit clerk could not mass mail absentee ballots to those over 65. Bills are proposed in both the House and Senate that would address the issue. The Senate bill would mandate the creation of an absentee list. The House bill states clerks may send absentee ballots to those 65 and over.

Transportation – HB 4315-17 County Road Commissions and expanding membership. It passed in the House and Senate and is now in conference committee. The question is who would have authority to increase the membership, the Road Commission or the County Commission?

Zoning – There is an effort to consolidate zoning laws on HB 4398 and planning laws in SB 683.

Wind Turbines – The house is taking up legislation which would preempt local zoning and takes away local authority regarding placement of wind turbines. The key player is Howard Walker.

It was noted that Tom Fehsenfeld has a business connection to green energy and should be called in to comment to the group.

Don Hilton suggested bringing in Cliff Bloom.

The Michigan Chamber is again bringing up term limits. It would not alter the total number of years, but let the individual decide where the years would be served. The proposal would require financial disclosures, reduce pay for not attending session and put a 2 year ban on lobbying. It would also require a taxation bill to be in possession of both chambers for 10 days. Chamber timing on the issue is to move it in February.

Tipping Fees – Legislation is being proposed again to raise tipping fees as a way of curtailing out of state trash. Fees would go from 21 cents to \$7.50 per ton. Most of the money raised would be returned for recycling or solid waste programs on the local level. Some of it would go to the general fund.

5. Other

Bill Holland stated Georgetown would have a \$380,000 loss if franchise fees are eliminated and asked for the survey GVMC promised at the last meeting on figures regarding franchise fees for all members.

He stated those funds are also used to fund public TV and would have a huge effect on our members.

Don Hilton stated the MTA has also been working on the issue.

Don Stypula stated he would forward communications from John Pestle on his telecommunications work to all as he received them.

Ted Vonk discussed reviewing the legislative priorities and policy statements. In the past they have been updated each year according to what members view as the most critical issues. This would give the committee more focus on what it should be addressing.

General discussion on reviewing the legislative priorities.

Legislative Committee Chairman Rick Root stated that should be on the next agenda.

Don Stypula stated he would contact members to get their input via e-mail and possibly conference call.

6. Policy Discussion

Don Stypula distributed a draft report on the Governor's task force and reviewed the issues.

Rick Root asked if there will be action taken from this report or if it will just be a dust collector.

Don Stypula reported he expected solid recommendations to be made by legislators, but it could go either way.

7. Ballot Proposals

Don Stypula asked the committee what direction should be taken on ballot proposals regarding GVMC positions. At this time, we don't know what proposals will make it to the ballot, or what the specific language will be.

Erika Rosebrook Dibble stated that Ottawa County has a set of criteria which directs whether or not the County should get involved in an issue. One of the main tenets is whether or not the issue directly affects local government.

Mike DeVries stated GVMC needed to focus on its overall strategy and target issues which impact its goals. The Legislative Committee needs to review its priorities and put time and energy into those.

Don Hilton reported the overall legislative climate has changed over the years and we need to focus on those issues which are most important to our members, as well as those which have the most chance of success at this time.

Don Stypula stated that the Legislative Dinner has been cancelled in an effort to control costs, and the legislative breakfast has been moved from the Pen Club to the Sundance Grill. He suggested having a luncheon at the Capital in Lansing and inviting legislators, their staff, and legislative leadership. The luncheon would give legislators the opportunity to talk with GVMC members and let them know what they have been doing.

Mike DeVries stated if that was done, we needed to use it as a focused attempt to get our priorities across and ask legislators to comment specifically on what their position is on each issue, not in general on what they have been doing.

Don Stypula stated they could ask legislators what their core values were and how they stood on revenue sharing.

There was also concern expressed that GVMC has trouble getting its members to attend legislative functions here in Grand Rapids. We would be likely to have a very poor turnout for an event in Lansing.

Bill Holland stated GVMC could rent a bus, thereby ensuring more members would participate.

Don Stypula stated he would look into making the arrangements for the event.

8. Adjourn – 10:45