



**WOODBURY COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS AGENDA ITEM(S) REQUEST FORM**

Date: November 12, 2015

Weekly Agenda Date: November 17, 2015

ELECTED OFFICIAL / DEPARTMENT HEAD / CITIZEN: Supervisor Matthew Ung

SUBJECT: Approval of a process to increase transparency in the creation of committees

**ACTION REQUIRED:**

Approve Ordinance                       Approve Resolution                       Approve Motion

Give Direction                       Other: Informational                       Attachments

**WORDING FOR AGENDA ITEM:** Approval of a process to increase transparency in the creation of committees

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:** As it regards special committees not mandated by law, a transparency problem exists—the public cannot hold the board accountable for its committees because it is almost impossible to track their existence and function. Some board members assigned to special committees are clearly noted on the website under “liaison assignments.” Others are created during the year, and unless a citizen knows the exact date a special committee was created, it is impossible for them to get easy answers to these questions: Does the committee still meet? Why? Who serves on it? What do they do? There is no rhyme or reason as to why some committees are posted online while others are not. It is extremely easy for the board to create a committee—it should be just as easy for a citizen to follow its actions.

**BACKGROUND:** This board has created special committees this year and the members, purpose, and sunset date are not always clearly agreed on by the board or accessible in a central location by the general public. Taxpayers should not have to hunt down a specific date’s meeting minutes to find out very limited details about a committee.

Examples of confusion:

- On March 17<sup>th</sup>, an informational agenda item recommended a committee of two members created by resolution. The board approved minutes stating “It was the consensus of the Board to move forward with the discussion and the formation of a working committee to consider the proposal.” On March 22<sup>nd</sup>, the Sioux City Journal reported five names who “will” serve on the panel (committee). On March 24<sup>th</sup>, an agenda item to create the committee by motion was removed from the agenda. Clearly there is confusion whether committees are established by consensus, motion, or resolution, and that confusion is passed to the general public. We need to establish a best practice.
- From a Sept. 23<sup>rd</sup> letter in the Sioux City Journal by Supervisor Taylor referencing Supervisor Smith: “*The Journal asks to know why the [space/facility study] committee formed to implement such a study hasn’t been meeting; however, the committee has never met, according to Auditor Pat Gill.*” We should not be debating “he said, she said” as it regards committees that either do or do not exist.
- At the Nov. 3<sup>rd</sup> board meeting, what was referenced as a “committee” was included within “step 2 of 7” in a motion to follow an agreement and obligate funding. It was unclear whether that committee’s creation would be returning for board definition and approval, prompting the media panel to ask who would serve on it.
- On Nov. 4<sup>th</sup>, a member of the committee dealing with rural economic development created Oct. 6<sup>th</sup> told me “they” may add another member to their committee ahead of their next committee meeting. There is no procedural safeguard to keep that from happening without the board’s knowledge/approval.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:** Committees cause employees to incur mileage and meal costs to the county.

**RECOMMENDATION.** The Auditor's Office must be empowered and directed to compile such records from the board and to make them accessible in a central location, benefiting both the board and the public.

The attached, standardized form for the creation/change of committees has been drafted in consultation with Auditor Gill and Deputy Auditor Jessen. I believe committees of all types should submit a form for board approval when created or changed. They must stipulate, according to Article VI in the bylaws, whether the committee is required by Iowa Code, created by the provisions of Iowa Code Chapter 28E, created by agreement, or created for a special purpose. (There is currently no way for either the board or the public to discern a committee's type).

The form must also satisfy the following:

- State the name.
- State the purpose.
- State the creation date.
- State the members' names or positions.
- State the intended frequency of meetings, if known.

We agreed that committees already in existence should be directed to complete these details and gain board approval within a deadline. The form must also note that special committees must be reauthorized every year or they will naturally sunset at the end of every calendar year.

**ACTION REQUIRED / PROPOSED MOTION:** "I move that:

the attached form for the creation of committees be adopted by the board and that all existing committees created for a special purpose be directed to submit the form within two weeks to remain authorized;

the Auditor's Office be directed to maintain committee information and attachments and to post the same on the Board of Supervisors section of the county website to increase transparency."

*Approved by Board of Supervisors March 3, 2015. Revised May 5, 2015.*

CREATION/CHANGE OF COMMITTEE FORM  
Form Approved by the Board of Supervisors 11/17/15

Board Approval Date:

Date Originally Created:

Ending Date (if known):

Name of Committee:

Purpose:

	Members OR Position	Entity Represented
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		
10.		
11.		
12.		

Is this Committee - X the box that applies

- Required by Iowa Code
- Created by the provision of Iowa Code Chapter 28E
- Committee Created by Agreement
- Committee Created for Special Purpose\*

The Committee plans to at least meet - X the box that applies

- Weekly
- Monthly
- Semi-Annually
- Annually
- Other/Unknown

\* Special committees will sunset at the end of every calendar year unless re-approved each year.