

Freedom Matters

A Weekly Newsletter

Dane County, Wisconsin

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We are a free people in a republic, under a constitution which limits the powers of government to those necessary to secure the unalienable rights of each person to their life, liberty and property. Yet, when a legislature is in session, no one's life, liberty or property is safe. It's the curse of a democracy. That's why we have a republic instead. *Freedom Matters* dedicates itself to the fight to restore our republic. Most of the press and courts fail to do so. They've forgotten that freedom matters.

Ordinance Amendment #4 Update. OA #4 requires a rezone to build a farmhouse, or in its proposed amended form (Sub 1), requires a Conditional Use Permit to build a farmhouse. The Dane County Towns Association recommends that towns veto OA #4. Towns may still do so, because the public hearing on it was again held open on September 25. OA #4 is a bad idea that should be killed.

Dane County's One-County Regional Planning Commission Has No Plan to Quit.

By Bob Bowman

State law, enacted in 1999, terminates Dane County RPC by Oct. 1, 2002. In 1999, over half the municipalities in Dane County voted for it to be terminated.

In the two years since then, its staff has dwindled to less than half, and its duties to less than a third. But its budget has hardly changed. In 1999, its budget was about \$1.5 million. For 2002, its request is for \$1.3 million annualized (i.e., nearly \$900,000 dollars to fund the last 9 months of its existence.

Its budget is in the hands of the Dane County Board, which should act to reduce it, as a responsible elected body. We have a national emergency, a recessionary economy, reduced tax projections, and the consequent need to rein in the county budget. Even our County Executive is rumored to know it.

Why does the RPC need more than \$500,000 for 2002? In 1999, it lost the following duties:

- *farmland preservation planning, which the county took over.
- *transportation planning, which Madison took over.
- *80% of its planning area, withdrawn from it by 34 municipalities.

What ongoing duties are left to RPC? First, water quality issues, which reduce to requests for expansions of urban service areas. Second, phasing out any remaining grants.

Hence, the only tasks which RPC should be budgeting for 2002 are essential water quality duties, plus an orderly phase-out and an appropriate disposal of its records. But that is not what RPC is doing.

Why not? RPC has no legal existence, after its sunset date, set in state law as Oct. 1, 2002, and reconfirmed by Governor McCallum. As an agency run by its board of commissioners, RPC's lawful, clear and unmistakable duty is to phase itself out, ensuring that it has properly disposed of all its assets and records, and has retired all its debts and obligations, etc., by its sunset date. Failure to do so would seem like misconduct in office, opening the responsible parties to personal liability.

A Multi-County RPC. State law provides for the counties of Dane, Columbia, Green, Jefferson, Rock and Sauk to join in a multi-county RPC, as the proper type of Regional Planning Commission. This is stymied so far by County Executive Falk's insistence that Dane County control such an RPC. The Dane County Towns Association proposes an RPC in which each county has an equal voice. That's how the South East Wisconsin RPC is organized. For a regional commission, nothing else makes sense. We already know that a Madison-run RPC is a disaster.

The Proper Role of an RPC

by Michael Byrne

The planners of the Dane County RPC are not planning sensibly for themselves. So, why let them plan for us?

For 2002, they plan work on agricultural issues, water quality, hydrologic modeling, and management re lakes, watersheds, air quality and energy. That's highly scientific work.

Where's RPC's expertise for this? Its staff is five planners, an environmental engineer, a graphics specialist, and two program assistants). That's a political staff, not a scientific one.

Those who voted to terminate RPC saw it as the puppet of politicians who were anti-growth, anti-property-rights, and anti-local-control, touting the unworkable left-wing anti-automobile new urbanism seen in RPC's Vision 2020, or in the wish to "encourage transit-oriented development ...particularly along rail corridors." Mass transit rail is a failure everywhere, for cities like Madison, and imposes a crippling tax burden.

If RPC were practicing sense, it would be against mass transit rail and in favor of bus mass transit. Instead, it is an intrusive agent of the radical socialist agenda driving Madison politics. In light of this, consider the the following lament from the Dane County Executive's office.

"Dane County currently has fifty percent of the six county area's population and fifty-five percent of its equalized property value. Yet if there are six counties participating in the new RPC, Dane County's representation could be a small minority (11%) of the Commission."

In truth, less than half of Dane County's population (i.e., only the University-dominated Madison isthmus) subscribes to the County Executive's anti-automobile rural-cleansing new-urbanism agenda, so in no way should it control the new RPC.

It should not control even the rest of Dane County.

Readers' Bulletin Board. e-mail us your comments. Include your name, for publication by *Freedom Matters*

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