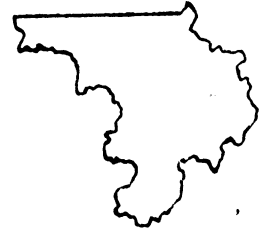




Middlesex County Advisory Board

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26 April, 1984

TO: Middlesex County Advisory Board Representatives
FROM: Diane Norris, Coordinator
RE: Legislation/Lobbying and April 4 Meeting Summary

All bills of importance to advisory boards have been filed and are now in various states of revision on their way to passage or defeat. Your influence on your representative or senator is very important at this time.

S201: This bill, modifying county budget procedures, has been filed at the request of the MCAB by Rep. Richard Moore, Rep. Stephen Doran, and Senator George Bachrach. It has been heard out of Senate Counties with a favorable report and is now in Senate Third Reading. No one is opposed to this bill but to get out of committee and onto a vote requires lobbying or it will languish and die as it did last year.

The bill is important because it allows counties to create a capital improvement fund which can be used as a stabilization fund. The levy will not be effected by one time, non-recurring expenses or receipts such as revenue from the sale of property or an extraordinary court judgment or liability.

In addition this bill gives control of the county reserve fund to the advisory board through its executive committee. No money can be transferred by the commissioners from the reserve fund to another budget item without approval of the executive committee. A full board meeting would not be necessary for each transfer request. This bill has been approved by the MCAB.

Please call/write your senator - particularly Senator Atkins - and urge passage of this bill this year.

H5604 and Court Rental: \$31,805,561 in court rental money is in the House version of the state budget. It is in line item 03302200. This is a \$20 million increase over the current statewide appropriation and will give Middlesex at least \$6 million more than the \$3 million received this year. Every representative should be urged to support this item.

H5604 approaches court rents in a different way. This bill, filed by Governor Dukakis, would increase the fees at the registries of deeds and use the increased money to fund court rental. In addition a new body politic- the five member court facility authority - would be established to take over

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twelve district courts (nine in Suffolk, the 3rd District in Middlesex and two outside this county) and to renovate and manage these courthouses. The responsibilities of this authority duplicate those of the existing Division of Capital Planning and Operations.

There is a vagueness in the language of the bill that describes what happens to debt service incurred prior to state takeover. This should be clarified to be certain the state assumes complete responsibility for all costs for buildings taken. Presently Middlesex County has requested proposals from any and all developers for use of the 3rd District Court. A lease or sale would generate more revenue for the county than the one dollar takeover.

The bill, according to Stephen Rosenfeld, legal counsel to the governor, is more responsible than simply appropriating full court rent because it provides a continuing source of court rental money. He is clear, however, that a decrease in registry activity would result in a shortfall.

Maintenance of courthouses, the very issue that mobilized selectmen and mayors to fight to give advisory boards appropriating authority for the county budget, is again in the spotlight. There is no reason to believe an independent authority, with an advisory board composed of the chief administrative justice of the trial court and two appointees of the chief justice of the SJC, will have strong incentives to put ceilings on the costs of maintenance and operation of these courthouses. The difference this time is the burden will be on the state taxpayer, not the local property taxpayer. Of course, often they are one and the same. The MCAB has taken no position on this legislation yet and each municipality will have to decide its own position.

S198: After the March hearings on the act establishing procedures for adoption of home rule charters by counties, this bill was amended to include explicit reference to the final appropriating authority of the advisory board on county expenditures.

It allows each county the opportunity to hold an election to determine if a charter commission should exist. The function of this commission is to study the present structure of counties, compare it with other forms available, and determine whether or not counties should be strengthened, made more accountable, more economical or efficient. At the same time a 15 person commission charged with making recommendations in 9 months can be elected.

Three choices for charter commission selection are outlined. A county can adopt a county executive plan, a county manager plan, or board president plan as detailed in the bill, petition the legislature for enabling legislation to adopt any alternate charter produced by the commission or maintain the status quo. The Joint Committee on Counties, chaired by Senator George Bachrach and Representative Raymond Jordan, has been extremely open and cooperative in involving advisory board input in this proposed legislation. If you have any questions on this charter reform bill please call the committee (722-1240) or this office.

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Summary of April 4 MCAB Meeting

Thirty six of fifty four Middlesex County cities and towns were present at the Concord District Court on Wednesday evening, 4 April, 1984, to appropriate supplemental and annual budgets for the county and an annual budget for the county hospital.

Supplemental: A supplemental budget of \$1,132,841 was approved. Of this total, \$1,000,025 is for life safety capital improvements at the Billerica House of Correction, the Extension Service, the Southern Registry of Deeds, the Lowell Superior Court and some district courts. Of the total, \$495,000 will be raised by taxation. This will not increase the FY'84 levy above the figure projected in the July, 1984 cherry sheets.

County: An FY'85 county budget appropriation of \$29,180,652 was voted. This is about half a million more than requested by the commissioners. It includes deletion of policy manager and executive assistants from the commissioners' office and creation of county administrator and assistant county administrator positions (no job descriptions or qualifications are available yet for these titles), creation of work release administrators and education officer in the jail budget and a part time clerk in the extension service.

Most regrades were postponed until completion of a wage classification study funded in the supplemental budget. A computer study was funded in place of a \$200,000 computer hardware request. Contract negotiations will be funded after presentation to the advisory board for approval.

A \$1,000,000 appropriation to the advisory board budget was voted to insure the cherry sheets reflect the actual anticipated county liability resulting from an anticipated refund to Medicaid.

Capital Facilities: As required by state law and advisory board directive the county commissioners presented a five year capital outlay plan for all county owned buildings. The Board voted to table the request to petition the legislature for bond authorization of \$3.2 million until the fall when the final ownership of the courthouses may be clearer. \$60,000 of the plan was voted in the FY'85 operating budget and \$1,000,000 in the supplemental.

LEVY: The estimated levy for FY'85 is \$16,850,652, \$200,000 less than this year.

Hospital: A \$15.4 million Hospital request was reduced to an authorization to spend \$12,810,184. Most reductions were in personnel outages and reduced fuel costs. As in the county budget contract negotiations will be funded when the request is approved

S-299

Comm. from Diane Norris, Coordinator, Middle
-sex County Advisory Board Re: bills of
importance pending before the State Legis-
lature & summary of the April 4, 1984 Board
meeting.

In City Council,

April 30, 1984

Placed
on
File