

Cook County Board of Commissioners
February 15, 2006

As the meeting opened, the standing portion of the chamber was crowded with young people from Thornton Township High School dressed in bright orange sweatshirts identifying them as members of **Students Against Violence (SAVE)**. They were introduced and several of them spoke, describing SAVE's history, goals and membership.

When their presentation was over, Comr. Anthony Peraica (R-16, Riverside) attempted to introduce the subject of **violence at the County Jail**. However, President John Stroger (D-4, Chicago) told him he was out of order and proceeded to ignore him while telling Comr. John Daley (D-11, Chicago), the chair of the Finance Committee, to proceed with the Finance Committee meeting which regularly precedes the Board meeting.

(Throughout the morning, **bouts of sparring continued to erupt between Stroger and the two commissioners attempting to replace him as board president**, Peraica and Forrest Claypool, D-12, Chicago.)

Most of the Finance Committee meeting proceeded smoothly, though there was a fairly lengthy discussions involving bids. It centered around the third bid (second rebid) for a **contract for pharmaceuticals**. President Stroger felt that two bids were enough, but a lawyer from the State's Attorney's office said a second rebid was not unusual. When Chief Health Officer Dr. Daniel Winship expressed support for the rebid, President Stroger asked him if he worked with the purchasing agent (both Dr. Winship and the purchasing agent assured him that they worked together). Comr. Peraica worried that with four bidders involved, there could be a possibility of litigation. Finally, Comr. Peter Silvestri (R-9, Elmwood Park) moved to defer the item. Comr. Daley explained that a vote to defer would stop the bidding process, and Comr. Earleen Collins (D-1, Chicago) said it would be a good thing because it would give the commissioners a chance to study the problem in executive session. After some further discussion, **deferral was approved** on a voice vote.

The Finance Committee adjourned at 11:10 a.m., and the short Zoning and Building and Roads and Bridges agendas were approved without discussion. During consideration of the regular Board agenda, Comr. Peraica again brought up **problems at the Jail**. He mentioned the recent escape of six prisoners (they were later recaptured) as an example of the need for greater security, but President Stroger noted that the escape had been an inside job. When Undersheriff Zelda Whittler, who was at the microphone, attempted without success to enter the conversation, President Stroger told her not to let Comr. Peraica bother her—in the process calling her “honey” and giving rise to much laughter.

Comr. Mike Quigley (D-10, Chicago) wanted the Sheriff to **brief the commissioners and added that in his opinion the Sheriff had handled the escape well**. Meanwhile Comr. Peraica reiterated the commissioners' need to know the state of conditions at the Jail.

A request from Jerry Robinson, Superintendent of the Juvenile Temporary Detention Center, to extend a contract for the purchase of fruit juice products for the center, gave rise to discussion of another aspect of the corrections problem. Comr. Quigley asked if it was true that **second helpings were being withheld at the Center** and was told that this was done for purposes of discipline.

Comr. Claypool then urged that Stroger's "cronies" working at the Center be removed. Stroger told him to stop playing politics. Comr. Collins said her committee would go over a report on conditions at the Center, while Bobbie Steele (D-2, Chicago) added that a public meeting was not the place to discuss it. Peraica and Stroger continued their argument, with Peraica asserting that the Center was "a mess" and Stroger maintaining that most staffers there did well and many of the complaints were "old stuff". He repeated his assertion that his opponents were playing politics.

The seemingly never ending question of **what to do with the old County Hospital** surfaced briefly when requests having to do with work on the Hospital Campus were under consideration. Comr. Jerry Butler (D-3, Chicago) expressed the opinion that lovers of architecture must not be allowed to run the commissioners' business. Comr. Larry Suffredin (D-13, Evanston) spoke in favor of **adopting a codified version of the County's Ordinances and Resolutions** utilizing subject matter divisions and a convenient numbering system.

A resolution memorializing the late **Coretta Scott King** was read into the record.

Public speakers included George Blakemore, who spoke on Black History month. He urged that black children be better educated, opposed the proposed closing of some Chicago schools, and scolded the black commissioners for failing to work together for better education for blacks. Ryan Noyes spoke in favor of improving freight haulage by rail as a means of bettering the environment. Victor Crown urged an end to the shredding of city documents, but President Stroger told him the rd had nothing to do with that. Before the meeting adjourned, President Stroger introduced a group of children who had been observing the work of the Public Defender's office. The meeting adjourned at 12:50 p.m.

Observed and reported by Daphne Daume