

Madison County Board appoints two "essential" positions in controversial meeting

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE - A new IT director and county administrator were appointed at a special Dec. 8 meeting of the **Madison County Board**.

Douglas Hulme, a former deputy treasurer, was appointed as the **Madison County Administrator** with a salary of \$120,000 a year. He was appointed with 15 members for and 13 members against his hiring. **Rob Dorman** was appointed as the county's IT director with a salary of \$108,000 annually. He was appointed with 16 members for and 12 members against his hiring. Both appointments and the entire meeting was shrouded in controversy, however.

Thursday evening's special meeting was called by newly-elected **Madison County Board Chairperson Kurt Prenzler (R)** following a meeting held on Monday, Dec. 5. The legitimacy of that Dec. 5 board meeting was called into question by **Madison County State's Attorney Tom Gibbons (D)**, who said he was of the opinion the meeting was not legitimate because it seemed to be chaired by outgoing board member **Stephen Adler (R)** instead of the acting Madison County Board chair or an interim chair chosen by the board. Because of this, Gibbons said none of the actions taken at Monday's meeting were legally binding, including the swearing-in of all newly-elected board members and the appointment of **Candace Gilstrap** as interim **Madison County Treasurer**.

Prenzler, however, claimed the meeting was completely valid. He argued this point during the opening moments of Thursday evening's meeting when the entire meeting's legitimacy was questioned by board member **Jack Minner (D)** who directly challenged Prenzler on the issue. Many board members called for a special provisional meeting to be held next Monday - a move championed by Gibbons. That meeting would require the approval of at least one third of the board. One third of the board to Prenzler means 10 of 30 request such a meeting. To Gibbons, one third requires three of nine board members to request the meeting, since the swearing-ins of new board members was held at a meeting he believes was not legally-binding.

The legality of both the Monday and Thursday evening meetings was one of many issues several board members voiced to Prenzler. During the floor debate regarding Hulme's appointment, Minner said the board had not officially removed former **Madison County Administrator Joe Parente**. Prenzler said he received Parente's letter of resignation and worked out a severance package for him, which included four months' salary and health insurance following his departure.

"Parente called Hulme and I into his office and gave me his resignation," Prenzler said at the meeting. "He signed it willfully and freely. We have his valid resignation, so the office is vacant."

After debate regarding the vacancy of that post had finished, board member **Nick Petrillo (D)** objected to the appointment of Hulme based on his qualifications. Requirements for that position require a Master's Degree in Public Administration, or another relevant field. Hulme has a Master's of Business Administration, which Petrillo said was not an equivalent field to public administration. He also questioned Hulme's experience. The county requires seven years worth of experience in a similar position.

During that debate, board member **James Dodd (D)** asked **Madison County Assistant State's Attorney John McGuire** if the meeting was valid. McGuire stated the opinion of Gibbons as well as the Illinois **Attorney General's Office Opinions Bureau** was the meeting was in fact invalid.

"I'm not here to hurt you," Dodd told Prenzler. "I'm just trying to help you."

Again, Prenzler assured the board the meeting was valid as it was called by him and board members were given proper notice through the office of **Madison County Clerk Debra Ming-Mendoza**. Ming-Mendoza confirmed proper notice was given for the meeting. Prenzler said the meeting was essential because the Madison County government has not been running properly since Nov. 8, the day after the elections. The rest of the board was in agreement with that fact.

Before the meeting, Prenzler told Riverbender.com Thursday's meeting was required in order to appoint Hulme and Dorman to positions in the county, which have been vacated, but are incredibly important to the day-to-day operations of the county. Those appointments, along with several others, were tabled at the Dec. 5 meeting and scheduled to have action taken at the regular county board meeting set for Dec. 21. The appointments of a county administrator and IT director could not wait, Prenzler assured.

When the issue of Dorman's appointment came to discussion, board member **Arthur Asadorian (D)** requested a closed session to discuss personnel. A majority of the board approved it, and they went into a closed session lasting approximately 15 minutes.

As the board returned to open session, the debate regarding Dorman's appointment had not yet ended. **Michael Parkinson (D)** requested to amend Dorman's appointment with an extensive background check. **Madison County Sheriff John Lakin** said such a background check may not be within the ability of the **Madison County Sheriff's Office** to conduct unless Dorman requested or required further clearance. Parkinson dropped his request for the amendment.

Board member **Michael Walters (R)** spoke against the constant interrogation by board Democrats of every decision and appointment made by Prenzler. Walters said nine

people have been appointed between March 2013 and Jan. 2016 with no debates, questions or even a notice of salary. He called for the board to work together in the future, saying Prenzler had every right to appoint the people he wanted.

Gibbons could not be reached for comment regarding that meeting's validity. McGuire refused to comment on it following the meeting.

