



NORTHWEST HERALD

LOCAL NEWS AND VIDEO FOR MCHENRY COUNTY, IL

December 17, 2012 ☁️ Cloudy, 35°F

New chairwoman Hill faces a mountain of work

By KEVIN P. CRAVER - kcraver@shawmedia.com



Created: Sunday, December 16, 2012 5:30 a.m. CST

WOODSTOCK – McHenry County Board Chairwoman Tina Hill sat Thursday in her new office, decidedly Spartan compared with that of her eight-year predecessor, Ken Koehler.

On her rather empty desk sat some papers, flags and mementos of the departures of other McHenry County figures – mints handed out at the retirement ceremony for two judges and a candy skeleton handed out by retired Coroner Marlene Lantz.

Hill's desk won't stay empty for long.

There's the work that has to happen through the winter and into spring to finish a complete overhaul of the county's development ordinances. The County Board has to fill four vacant seats on the Mental Health Board, not counting the County Board liaison who lost re-election and has to be replaced. And there's the meeting to assign the new County Board, with its largest number of new members in at least 20 years, to the committees in which the county's work gets done.

Hill held a list of priorities more than a page long just to be addressed when the County Board re-evaluates its strategic plan in February.

"I felt a huge responsibility shift on to my shoulders," Hill said of her election.

The County Board on Dec. 3, newly sworn in with nine new members after the November election, denied Koehler a fifth two-year term as chairman. On the second vote, Hill beat Koehler and two other challengers with 14 of the board's 24 members supporting her bid.

The very process by which Hill was chosen, and Koehler four times before her, is one of the things Hill wants to consider changing.

On Friday, she gave the new chairwoman of the Management Services Committee that sets county government's rules a directive to begin exploring whether to hold a referendum to make the chairmanship popularly elected. The issue came to a head in November with a failed referendum to

change to a county-executive form of government.

Koehler's supporters in December nominated him for his expertise in working with state and federal legislators and agencies. But Hill, first elected in 2002, is no political neophyte. She became a legislative assistant in 1992 for former County Board Chairwoman Ann Hughes when she was elected to the General Assembly, and performed the same role for three subsequent state legislators, most recently state Rep. Mike Tryon, himself a former County Board chairman.

She was appointed to her first committee chairmanship, the Management Services Committee, in 2004. In 2008, she became chairwoman of the Planning and Development Committee, which has been reviewing the Unified Development Ordinance that is in its first draft after two years of work.

But on other occasions, she stepped in to offer her assistance where she felt it was needed. She involved herself in persuading Koehler to get outside help in examining the alleged McCullom Lake brain cancer cluster – her older sister and three of her childhood friends are among 33 plaintiffs who allege air and groundwater pollution from a Ringwood chemical manufacturer caused their brain and pituitary tumors.

Hill said she decided to challenge Koehler because it was time for a change, not for any personal reasons. She credited Koehler for county government's excellent shape, and said she predicts its finances will stay "absolutely stable" with its coveted Aaa bond rating because of policies Koehler had a significant hand in overseeing.

"I think he left it in great shape. Ken accomplished a lot of things ... but it was time for a new direction. The county reins he handed over were excellent," Hill said.

Hill, of Woodstock, is married to her high school sweetheart, Alan, and they have four grown children.



Home

Local News

State News

Business

Nation & World

Sports

Entertainment

Weather

Video

Obituaries

Classified

Planit Northwest

Contact Us

Copyright © 2012 Northwest Herald.

[View Classic Mode](#)