



John C. Ackerman

Tazewell County Board

*Continuing a Family Tradition of Community Service*

November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2009

## \*\*\* News Update \*\*\*

### [Last Night's Tazewell County Board Meeting](#)

As many of you have already heard about in the morning news, we had a very important Tazewell County Board Meeting last night. Not only was it time for us to pass the 2010 Budget (the final version of which will be posted on the website in the coming days) but we also had on the agenda a decision to make on the Video Gaming Ban that has gathered much conversation over the past month.

For a full recap of last night's meeting, please look on the website under the County Board Agenda tab. If you want to review my Position Paper on the Video Gaming Ban, you can go to the "In The News" tab on the website.

I want to discuss two important parts of the meeting that I think are being overlooked today. The first is the reason the ban was sent back to committee so quickly last night. As the meeting got closer to starting, it became more and more clear that the individuals supporting the ban did not have enough votes to get it pass the County Board. With very little hope of seeing the ban pass, they decided it was best to send it back to committee rather than see it fail. County Board Members Russ Crawford, Mel Stanford and Jerry Vanderheydt did a great service to the citizens of Tazewell County by taking the time over the past few months to research and discuss the results of this research with other Board Members. In large part because of their service as well as the great organization and discussion brought by the business community and the Veterans groups in the County, enough members of the County Board decided now was not the right time for this ban.

The second item that is not being discussed much today was a procedural motion that was made right after the vote to send the Video Gaming Bill back to Committee. Last week, County Board Chairman Dave Zimmerman decided not to allow discussion at the meeting from the public on this subject. I called him and asked him to reconsider this decision over the weekend, but the answer was still no. I believe strongly that we should never tell the public that we are not interested in what they have to say and that was the message we were sending by not allowing public input at our meeting. Beyond this belief in allow public input, I was also bothered by the fact that one of the reasons stated for the ban by Chairman Zimmerman was that the State did not give time for public input and forced this upon the people. To me at least, by not allowing public input at the County Board Meeting in which we would be voting on this ban, we were doing the same thing.

With that in mind, I took the rare step to use Roberts Rules of Order to Suspend the Standing Rules of the Tazewell County Board to allow for public input on the issue of Video Gaming. This motion to allow those in attendance the opportunity to discuss their thoughts and concerns with us was seconded by Member Jan Donahue and overwhelmingly approved by a vote of 20 to 1. I also want to mention that Members Mel Stanford, Russ Crawford, Jerry Vanderheydt, Paul Hahn, and others were as passionate as I was about giving the people the right to be heard and it was with their assistance that this was able to happen. This was a strong message sent to those in attendance that we on the County Board do care about public input. I will always support open dialog with the people that have elected us to represent

them and will never support any effort to deny people the right to communicate with their representatives.

With this measure going back to committee, it is my hope that when this comes back to the board at a future date it will be after the state has had time to finalize the rules for operation of these machines. I also think this gives the opportunity for those that supported the ban to provide the leadership they had been discussing by working with the municipalities in the county and seeing what support is out there for a ban.

Chairman Zimmerman had mentioned that he received calls from several municipal leaders that they are going to be looking at Banning Video Gaming in their communities and this will give them the opportunity to do that. I am not sure which communities he is discussing, as I understand from taking the time with Members Stanford, Crawford, and Hahn to visit with the leaders of the communities in District Three and understanding that at this time none of them are interested in this issue. I have also had conversations over the past few weeks with leaders in a majority of the rest of the county and have found the same response with all but the City of Delavan. Anyhow, this is a great opportunity for those that wish to have a Ban on Video Gaming to provide leadership by working with the municipalities.

As always, I consider it an honor and a privilege to serve you on the Tazewell County Board and if I can be of any assistance to you, please do not hesitate to contact me.

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