

Tompkins County Council of Governments
August 28, 2008
Scott Heyman Conference Room
3 p.m.

Members Present: T/Caroline – D. Barber
T/Ulysses – D. Austic, E. Thomas
T/ Danby – R. Dietrich
T/Newfield – R. Dolge
C/Ithaca - S. Thayer
T/Ithaca – H. Engman

Municipalities not in Attendance:

T. Lansing, T/Newfield, V/Cayuga Heights, V/Dryden, V.Freeville, V/Trumansburg;
V/Groton, T/Groton, T. Ithaca; Tompkins County; T/Enfield

Others: L. Shawley, Danby; S. Whicher, County Administrator; M. Pottorff, Legislature Office; P. Dougherty, Town of Enfield Deputy Clerk; M. Lynch, Public Information; D. Herbest, Ithaca Times

Call to Order

Mr. Austic, Chair, called the meeting to order at 3 p.m.

Request for Proposals – Animal Control Services

Mr. Austic reported a meeting was held this week by the subcommittee to review the proposals for animal control services and stated while both of the facilities could probably provide adequate minimum services, there were missing components from each of the responses. A recommendation was made by the group that neither proposal be accepted at this time, but that TCCOG representatives meet with both to clarify the following points:

- * What would the effect on the budget be if one or more towns do not participate?
- * What would the effect on the budget be if the costs of humane investigations are removed since these are properly the responsibility of the County?
- * Would a different allocation among municipalities, proposed by TCCOG be acceptable?
- * There are many additional questions for the Pet Playhouse and a site visit is recommended.

In addition, TCCOG needs to know from a representative of each town if either proposal would be acceptable and, if not, what changes would be necessary to make it acceptable. Mr. Austic said under Agriculture Law, humane investigations are the responsibility of the County.

Mr. Whicher stressed the importance of addressing how to allocate the \$300,000; and whether it would be possible to bring this back to ten individual municipal boards and come up with the same answer. He offered a suggestion -- that the Legislature pass this and that costs be billed back to municipalities using the selected formula. He said the County could simply be used as only a billing vehicle.

Mr. Barber once again suggested that TCCOG work on a process (formula) and just let the numbers fall where they do.

Mr. Dietrich said \$300,000 is a reasonable cost and thinks enforcement probably generates one-half to three-quarters of the cost. He said he would like to see enumeration somehow tied into the formula.

Mr. Engman said the formula is key before and during initiating an enumeration. Previously the Recreation Partnership formula was suggested because it had worked well; however, that suggestion was rejected. He suggested coming up with a plan to transition to a standard enumeration method. At this time there was discussion of various ways to perform enumeration including performing a written enumeration or including this in the animal control contract. Members discussed various obstacles that had been encountered when enumeration had been conducted; it was stressed that public information is very important.

Goals for Next Meeting:

Present an allocation formula for a vote.

Everyone was requested to send enumeration information to Ms. Shawley. Mr. Dietric and Ms. Shawley will develop a formula based on a combination of population/enumeration; those not having current enumeration will begin with a 12% increase over the last enumeration. A suggestion was made that there be a 20% penalty for each year enumeration is not done. Ms. Shawley said she needs final enumeration figures from the Towns of Dryden and Ithaca.

Mr. Austic will appoint a subcommittee to conduct interviews with the responders to the RFP. If anyone has questions they should submit them to Mr. Austic. Vendors will also be asked if they would include a three-year enumeration in the contract.

SMSI

Mr. Whicher provided an update on the SMSI health insurance project and said soon stakeholders information sessions will be taking place. They will begin with the unions and then move to town boards and others. This group will be asked to formally sign up in 2009 for the consortium. In November, 2009, staff will sign up and full implementation is scheduled for 2010. He said the product will be at least the same or better than presently is offered. Mr. Whicher said anyone who needs to have their municipality receive information sooner rather than later should let him know.

Mr. Whicher will invite Steve Loccy to the next meeting.

Gas Well Drilling

Mr. Whicher said the issue of gas well drilling is becoming a very serious issue that could have a tremendous impact on the County's infrastructure. These groups are exempt from any local law but the municipalities do have control over the water. There are important steps the County and municipalities need to take:

1. Get a baseline water well samples of community wells and thoroughly document results (thousands of wells) as well as an identification of the aquifers;
2. There is a need for a real campaign about a severance tax at the State level; and
3. Implementation of an impact/mitigation fee

This item will be placed on the next agenda for discussion.

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Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Michelle Pottorff, TC Legislature Office