

Government Operations Committee

Regular Meeting Minutes
Thursday, April 15, 2010 9:30 AM
Tompkins County Public Library

Approved 5/20/10

Present:

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Michael Lane	Chair	Present	
Carol Chock	Member	Present	
Dooley Kiefer	Member	Late	9:40 AM
David McKenna	Member	Late	9:38 AM
Pat Pryor	Member	Present	

Staff: C. Covert, Clerk of the Legislature; D. Squires, Finance Director; J. Mareane, County Administrator; P. Younger, Deputy County Administrator; S. Reistetter, Project Assistant for Workforce Diversity and Inclusion Committee; M. Lynch, Public Information Officer; S. Dewitt and E. Cree, Election Commissioners; S. Currie, Library Director

Guests: S. Shackford, Ithaca Journal

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 9:37 a.m.

Changes to Agenda

The following resolution was added to the agenda:

- Authorizing the County Administrator to Sell Real Property on Dates Drive in the Town of Ithaca, Including the Biggs B Building and Approximately 8.99 Acres of Land, to Cayuga Medical Center

At this time, Ms. Chock thanked Ms. Younger for the submission of the Google application and all her hard work on it.

Mr. McKenna arrived at this time.

Report from the Committee Chair

Mr. Lane announced the list of the Local Assessment Review Board hearings in each of the municipalities were distributed to Legislators by the Assessment Department. He also updated the Committee on the discussion held at the last meeting and on an action taken through the Assessment Department in consultation with the County Attorney. It was determined that an error was made in the assessment for the Perry City Quakers property and a refund was granted.

Ms. Kiefer arrived at this time.

Report from the County Administrator

Mr. Mareane said he would further discuss the resolution added to the agenda at the appropriate time. He provided an update for the Committee on the lean-office training initiatives for streamlining operations. Approximately \$50,000 was set-aside in the Contingency Fund to begin a series of these initiatives. He has been working with the Human Services Department Heads in identifying candidate projects. It appears there are two projects that may be ready to begin this summer: one in the Health Department and the other in the Office for the Aging. There are two other projects that have also been identified and will likely follow: Personnel Department staffing of the new payroll process and the one-stop employment center to address the increased demand with less staff. Mr. Mareane said he hopes to discuss this topic further and bring forward a request at the next meeting.

Mr. Mareane announced Tompkins County's solid waste management practices are featured in the new United Nations publication. Tompkins County is one of two communities in the United States profiled.

Mr. Lane spoke briefly about the lean-office initiative and said Tompkins Cortland Community College is very supportive of it. He expressed a slight concern and said he does not want to see public service excluded. Mr. Mareane said he will be asking for approximately \$20,000 for the first four pilots. The funds will be used to pay the consultants, Hawthorne Group, who are the facilitators for the process out of Syracuse.

Report from the Director of Finance

Mr. Squires announced that tours of his Department for Legislators are scheduled for April 19 and April 21. The County's annual audit is now underway and his staff is in the process of gathering information. In addition, some of his staff has been involved and are working with the consultant on the payroll conversion process. Mr. Squires distributed and reviewed the list of the foreclosed properties that staff toured and inspected at the end of March. Since that time, there were two redemptions. Eighteen parcels remain on the list with high probability that two or three will be redeemed prior to auction.

In response to Ms. Chock's question, Mr. Squires said he was not sure if there were gas leases for any of the properties.

Mr. Squires reported that he and the County Attorney attended a bankruptcy hearing in regard to Lakeside Nursing Home. They have accrued \$1 million of unpaid taxes. The bankruptcy is down to the final stages and some of the creditors were trying to get the taxes reduced based upon a section of law that lets them revalue the property and the accruing of taxes. The County opposed that action and kept that from happening. He believes the County will at least be reimbursed the amount (approximately \$650,000) of taxes that was originally levied, but not the penalties or interest. Two-thirds of that amount has already been paid by the County to the school district and Town of Ithaca.

Mr. Lane asked about the County's sales tax receipts for the first quarter of 2010. Mr. Squires said the gross amount is slightly below what was received last year. A detailed report will be received next week on the County's share. The month of February showed a 3.5% increase and January showed a negative 3%. Mr. Mareane commented how the County needs to see some growth in excess of 3% to meet the budget target this year.

Ms. Kiefer asked if there were any environmental concerns with the foreclosed properties; Mr. Squires said he was not aware of any. However, there is an inventory of abandoned tires on three of the parcels.

Report from the Public Information Officer

Ms. Lynch spoke about the public outreach for Census. A press release will be sent out reminding people that April 16th is the last day for mailing in forms. Beginning next week there will be a new message informing people of what to do when Census enumerators arrive at someone's house. The Public Information Advisory Board will be meeting next Thursday and will continue the discussion on Board of Elections voting machines including highlighting the demonstration session being held in Lansing on April 20th.

Mr. Lane said he had reported at the last Legislature meeting that post offices would make Census information available; however, he learned from the Village of Freeville Clerk that the post offices have backed down on having that information available.

Administration

Resolution (DOC ID: 1940): Authorizing the County Administrator to Sell Real Property on Dates Drive in the Town of Ithaca, Including the Biggs B Building and Approximately 8.99 Acres of Land, to Cayuga Medical Center

Mr. Mareane spoke about the proposed sale of the Biggs B building to Cayuga Medical Center. The discussion about the disposition of the Biggs parcel goes back to when the County made a decision to vacate the building upon the move of the Health Department to Brown Road. At that time it was discussed that one way to help offset the cost of that location was to sell our holdings in the campus area around Biggs. The entire campus is about 35 acres. As the idea of selling the parcel was discussed by the Planning Advisory Board and Committees of the Legislature a decision was made to break the parcel up into three separate parcels as outlined in the map distributed to the Committee. The one piece labeled Office Building with 8.99 acres is the proposal being presented for sale to Cayuga Medical Center. The other two pieces include 26.0 acres of vacant land and the K-House building on 0.77 acres. The guidance given on the 9-acre parcel was to approach Cayuga Medical Center and commence negotiations, on the two parcels the guidance was to ask the State Police who occupy the K-House space if they wish to purchase it. If they decline, discussions about reusing that space by a county agency and/or affiliated agency will be held and any decision about the vacant land would be discussed at a later date.

Over the last several months the County and Cayuga Medical Center have been discussing and negotiating the sale of the Biggs B building and last week reached a tentative agreement of \$1,059,000 subject to the Legislature's approval. The move of the Health Department is scheduled to take place on or before August 1, 2010. The negotiations were within the parameters of the two appraisals. Mr. Mareane said the hospital's use of this parcel is long term and strategic. In the short term the hospital will be looking for office tenants to rent the space to. They also understand the tax consequences of using that property for anything other than hospital purposes. The Town of Ithaca Supervisor has been made aware of this pending sale and is very positive about that and expressed interest in the discussions of the vacant parcel consisting of 26.0 acres. The resolution below is also to be presented to the Planning, Development, and Environmental Quality and Facilities and Infrastructure Committees and to the Legislature on May 18th.

In response to Mr. Lane, Mr. Mareane explained the County's policy authorizes the County to enter into a negotiated sale guided by appraised value. Ms. Chock asked if the resolution should include language that addresses the County's policy authorizing negotiations. The Committee agreed and Mr. Mareane said he would prepare language for the resolution at the time it is presented to the other two committees.

RESULT:	RECOMMENDED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Dooley Kiefer, Member
SECONDER:	Pat Pryor, Member
AYES:	Lane, Chock, Kiefer, McKenna, Pryor

WHEREAS, the Tompkins County Health Department currently occupies a structure commonly referred to as the "Biggs B" building that is located on a 35.76 acre County-owned parcel in the Town of Ithaca, and

WHEREAS, in anticipation of vacating the Biggs B building as a part of the relocation of the Health Department to new quarters in a renovated building on Brown Road in the Cornell Business Park, the County has contemplated the sale of the surrounding property and has expected the proceeds of such sale would be used to support a portion of the cost of renovating the Brown Road building, and

WHEREAS, upon consultation with the Planning Advisory Board as well as the Legislature's Government Operations; Facilities and Infrastructure; and the Planning, Development, and Environmental

Quality Committees, the County subdivided the parcel into three separate parcels, one of which includes the Biggs B building and approximately 8.99 surrounding acres of land (the "Biggs B Parcel"); another consists of approximately 26.0 acres of wooded land; and the third consists of the so-called K-house and approximately 0.77 acres of surrounding land, and

WHEREAS, by Resolution No. __ of 2010, this Legislature resolved that the Biggs B Parcel was no longer needed for public use and is therefore eligible for disposition, and

WHEREAS, also upon consultation with the Planning Advisory Board and appropriate legislative standing committees, the County commenced negotiations with the adjacent owner, Cayuga Medical Center, on the sale of the Biggs B Parcel, and

WHEREAS, the County and Cayuga Medical Center have agreed to the terms of sale for the Biggs B Parcel, and

WHEREAS, those terms provide for the Biggs B Parcel to be sold at a price of \$1,059,000 and for the property to be transferred from the County to Cayuga Medical Center on or before August 1, 2010, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, on the recommendation of the Government Operations and the Planning, Development, and Environmental Quality Committees, That the County Administrator is hereby authorized to execute any and all documents to complete the sale of the Biggs B Parcel to Cayuga Medical Center,

RESOLVED, further, That the sale of the Biggs B Parcel does not affect the status of the other two subdivided parcels on the site that shall remain owned and controlled by the County unless otherwise authorized by this Legislature.

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Board of Elections

Review of Department Budget and Programs

Mr. Lane said that he is asking some of the departments that report to this Committee to give an overview of their budget and programs.

Mr. Dewitt said elections are changing in many ways and one major change is the voting machines. The State in 2005 passed the new Election Reform and Modernization Act (ERMA) and that has been phased in over the years. The Department is now required to do all the programming of the machines and this year there will be 74 election districts and nine different ballot styles that will be programmed with the Election Management System received through the Help America Vote Act. At this time, he provided a detailed explanation of that process. With the lever machines, the process took approximately two hours of staff time per machine and with the new machines, the process is ten times that. The programming is the most time consuming and over time that may improve. Mr. Dewitt explained the other area that is time consuming is the audit process after an election. So far with their experience, the audits have been "spot on". Lastly the ongoing maintenance protocol of the machines is also time consuming.

Mr. McKenna stated that he has worked for the Board of Elections and was a Senior Technician. He explained the process and programming involved; however, since becoming a Legislator, he no longer works for them.

Ms. Cree explained other areas of the Department's programs including helping candidates get on the ballot, assisting fire and school districts, and voter outreach. Mr. Dewitt commented that Elections staff will always be present and doing the work on the new machines unlike with the lever machines.

Ms. Chock understands that in the past finding inspectors has always been a problem and asked if that has improved. It was noted that continues to be a problem but there is a plan being proposed. Ms. Chock also asked about the diversity training for inspectors. Ms. Cree said they are currently working

with the Human Rights Director Shawn Martel Moore, Project Assistant Sarah Reistetter, and the Finger Lakes Independent Center. Mr. Dewitt said there will be three separate trainings offered for the inspectors.

Ms. Kiefer asked if the New York State Certification of the machines has been completed; Ms. Cree responded it has.

At this time Ms. Cree explained the Department's funding sources and the centralization of elections in Tompkins County. In 2005, the Legislature approved a resolution that over a five-year period, chargebacks by towns would be reduced and eventually all expenses would be paid through the Board of Elections budget. One of the Department's largest expenses is the printing of ballots at \$.56 per ballot. The Department has six full-time staff funded through the budget and two Senior Machine Technicians that have been funded with one-time funding. A funding request will be coming forward this year for the primary elections as money was not included in the 2010 budget.

In response to Mr. Lane's question about the Department's budget, Ms. Cree believes that the Department has cut in 2010 as much as it can and explained some of those cuts. Ms. Cree spoke of the need to have the two Technician positions funded with target money and hoped that would be considered this year during the budget process.

County Clerk

Resolution (DOC ID: 1937): In Support of Bill No. A9919 that Permits County Clerks to Retain a Share of the Fees Collected for Motor Vehicles through the Department of Motor Vehicle Website

Mr. Lane said he brought forward this resolution at this time because the State Legislature is still in session. This is an effort that began in Western New York. Ms. Kiefer asked if there was a companion bill in the Senate; Mr. Lane said he would look into it. Ms. Kiefer said if not she would like to have language in the resolution that asks the County's Senators to sponsor a bill.

RESULT:	RECOMMENDED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	David McKenna, Member
SECONDER:	Dooley Kiefer, Member
AYES:	Lane, Chock, Kiefer, McKenna, Pryor

WHEREAS, County Department of Motor Vehicle (DMV) offices are required to be open for service to customers and often times must issue no-fee renewals when customers renew on-line but fail to receive their stickers, and

WHEREAS, County DMV's continue to provide in-person service to often handle complex situations for customers, while New York State DMV is able to take 100% of fees now conducted on-line, rather than sharing even the 12.7% of the fee with counties, which they presently get in-person, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, on recommendation of the Government Operations Committee That the Tompkins County Legislature supports Bill No. A9919, introduced by Assembly Member Russell, which would permit County Clerks to retain a share of the fees collected for motor vehicles through the DMV website.

SEQR ACTION: TYPE II-20

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Legislature

Long-Range Broadband Plan in Tompkins County

Ms. Younger said discussions began about a long-term Broadband Plan during the efforts in preparing proposals with the Southern Tier East Regional Planning and Development Board and Google. We learned there are different municipalities with different needs and approaches to assessing broadband. It is believed that at the County level it is time to bring together the efforts underway and the people involved. Ms. Younger said she has reviewed the FCC's national broadband plan "Connecting America" and believes many of the focus areas identified are relevant to Tompkins County and could be considered during discussions: economic development, government performance, public safety, energy and the environment, rural broadband needs, and civic engagement.

Ms. Younger said she also reviewed what the County has done in the past including the committee called the Electronic Futures Committee established approximately ten years ago. She believes that a County committee would consist of 15-20 local members that could include Information Technology managers, business and economic development professionals, telecommunication providers, higher education representatives, local BOCES, elected officials, County staff, etc. The general purpose of the special committee is to explore and promote broadband technology that enhances the County's capabilities, but also addresses some identified unmet needs.

Mr. Lane requested Ms. Younger distribute her "concept paper" to the Committee for reactions and asked that members provide feedback to Ms. Younger within the next week.

In response to Ms. Pryor about the cost for this initiative, Mr. Mareane said this will be one of the areas Ms. Younger will focus on and reminded the Committee that she is employed at half-time this year.

Ms. Chock questioned how much time and effort should go into this initiative as this is an ever-changing environment and also asked if the information collected for the Google application showed the County as being further ahead or behind. Ms. Younger said the Google application was an "eye opener" and identified how much needed information the County does not have in one central location to make strategic decisions about what the needs might be and how to address them. By having a special committee and bringing the appropriate people together it will help in the readiness for quickly responding to proposals in the future.

Ms. Kiefer spoke in support of having a special committee but requested periodic reports be given to this committee.

Committee Goals

Report or Discussion Item (DOC ID: 1823): Departmental Goals

Mr. Lane briefly reviewed the proposed goals submitted. In response to a question raised about updating policies in the Administrative Policy Manual, Ms. Younger gave a brief report and said she would provide a report and updated list of policies to be updated and familiarize the Committee members on the process at the next meeting.

Ms. Chock requested and the Committee agreed to add as a goal the following: clarify the process for appointments, liaison assignments, and creating a template.

In response to Ms. Chock, Mr. Mareane explained performance measures for 25 major programs and tracks outcomes, outputs, sufficiency's, etc. for the various programs. He said performance reviews is an initiative that he will be doing routinely for each of the Department Heads. Ms. Chock suggested for clarity that the terms be changed to "program performance measures" and "employee performance reviews".

RESULT: COMPLETED

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Information Item or Transfer

Bdgt Adj. & Transfers (Info. Only) (DOC ID: 1936): Transfer

Assessment

<u>Revenue Acct</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Amt</u>	<u>Approp Acct</u>	<u>Title(s)</u>
.54303	Office Supplies	\$50	.54332	Books

Explanation: To cover cost for 2010 RPTA Reporter thru NYS Office of Real Property Services.

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Minutes Approval

March 18, 2010

It was MOVED by Ms. Chock, seconded by Ms. Pryor, and unanimously adopted by voice vote, to approve the minutes of the March 18, 2010, as amended.

March 16, 2010

It was MOVED by Ms. Pryor, seconded by Ms. Chock, and unanimously adopted by voice vote, to approve the minutes of the March 16, 2010, as submitted.

Ms. Pryor was excused at this time.

Report from the Library Director

Ms. Currie thanked the Committee for holding their meeting at the library. She has been Director for approximately six months now and said she has been focusing on day-to-day operations, workflow, organizational culture, and is looking ahead at what it should do for the community. She spoke of the roles libraries have in technology and expressed interest and offered to be a participant in the broadband initiative. At this time, Ms. Currie provided a brief overview of the library's growth in various programs from 2009 to 2010. She referenced a national study on how libraries add to the economy and agreed to send the information to the Committee.

Other Business

Ms. Kiefer brought to the Committee's attention legislation being introduced by Assemblywoman Lifton entitled: An act to amend the environmental conservation law, in relation to allowing local governments to enact or enforce certain laws and ordinances. She would like to draft a resolution of support for the Legislature to consider. Mr. Lane requested and Ms. Kiefer agreed to circulate the legislation for the Committee to review.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 11:47 a.m.