

Government Operations Committee
 Regular Meeting Notes – FINAL
 Wednesday, March 1, 2017 3:30 PM
 Legislature Chambers

Attendance

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Daniel Klein	Chair	Present	
Carol Chock	Vice Chair	Present	
Dooley Kiefer	Member	Present	
Rich John	Member	Late	3:38 PM
Will Burbank	Member	Present	
Catherine Covert	Clerk of the Legislature	Present	
Jay Franklin	Director of Assessment	Present	
Joe Mareane	County Administrator	Present	
Sarah Cantatore	Compliance Officer	Present	
Rick Snyder	Finance Director	Present	
Loren Cottrell	Deputy Director of ITS	Present	
Greg Potter	Director of ITS	Present	
Scott Doyle	Planner, Tompkins County Planning Department	Present	
Maureen Reynolds	County Clerk	Present	
Marcia Lynch	Public Info. Officer, County Administration	Present	
Ed Marx	Planning Commissioner	Present	
Paula Younger	Deputy County Administrator	Present	
Martha Robertson	Legislator	Present	

Call to Order

Mr. Klein, Chair, called the meeting to order at 3:33 p.m.

Changes to Agenda

The Committee agreed to add to the agenda the resolution entitled Authorization to Accept a Grant from the New York State Department of State Municipal Restructuring Fund to Undertake a Shared-Services Fast Track Project - County Clerk.

Comments from the Public

There was no member of the public who wished to speak.

Minutes Approval

February 1, 2017

Ms. Kiefer requested that a discussion of the policy on minutes be held at a future meeting. She would like minutes to include enough information for people who are not in attendance. The current policy requires the minutes to be action only and she does not find that helpful.

RESULT:	ACCEPTED [3 TO 1]
MOVER:	Will Burbank, Member
SECONDER:	Carol Chock, Vice Chair
AYES:	Klein, Chock, Burbank
NAYS:	Kiefer
ABSENT:	John

County Clerk

Resolution No. - Authorization to Accept a Grant from the New York State Department of State Municipal Restructuring Fund to Undertake a Shared-Services Fast-Track Project - County Clerk (ID #6887)

Ms. Reynolds explained the resolution and said it allows the grant funds awarded to be used to partner with two towns in Cortland County and Cortland County to expand their use of Tompkins County's Electronic Document Management System (Laserfiche). It will also upgrade and expand the County's systems and increase the number of licenses that can be purchased to accommodate additional users.

Mr. John arrived at this time.

In response to Ms. Kiefer's question about the term "Fast Track", Mr. Mareane explained it is a term used by the State and how it is used.

Following a question about the bidding process and the vendors, Ms. Reynolds explained the process and said they are required to use approved vendors through New York State, Challenge Industries falls under the list of preferred source offerings, and because the software already exists and is being used this allows for additional licenses to be purchased. Mr. Potter clarified the equipment for this project was done through a bidding process. He further explained that that an RFP process was done for this proposal that can be used for this project as well as for Assigned Counsel. Mr. Potter recommended language about the contractor not be added to this resolution at this time as the Request for Proposals for a multi-year contract is in process and will be coming forward at a later date relating it to the Assigned Counsel software and professional services efforts through the Public Safety Committee.

In response to Mr. John concerning a question relating the records that can no longer being shared between the County Clerk's office and the Assessment Department, Mr. Franklin said when the new system was put in place the old records would no longer link perfectly with the old system. There is some duplication of work happening with data entry.

RESULT:	RECOMMENDED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Will Burbank, Member
SECONDER:	Carol Chock, Vice Chair
AYES:	Klein, Chock, Kiefer, John, Burbank

WHEREAS, the Tompkins County Clerk submitted a Project Charter to New York State to apply for grant funding through the New York State Department of State Municipal Restructuring Fund to undertake a Shared-Services Fast-Track Project, and

WHEREAS, the County Clerk's Office has been notified of an initial grant award in the amount of \$30,512 with a maximum award of \$603,039, and

WHEREAS, this Municipal Restructuring Fund Shared-Services Grant represents a project for the Tompkins County Clerk's Office to partner with two towns in Cortland County (Harford and Virgil) and Cortland County to expand their use of the Tompkins County Electronic Document Management System (Laserfiche), and

WHEREAS, funds within this grant will be for additional Laserfiche software licensing to accommodate the additional users, the scanning of Cortland County, Town of Harford, and Town of Virgil records, (using Challenge Industries as the vendor), the upgrade and expansion of the County's data storage capacity, redundancy, disaster recovery, and a direct point-to-point dark-fiber connection between the Tompkins County and Cortland County data centers, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, on recommendation of the Government Operations Committee, That the County Administrator or his designee be and hereby is authorized to execute all contracts related to this award,

RESOLVED, further, that the Director of Finance be and hereby is authorized and directed to make the following budget adjustment for 2017:

BUDGET ADJUSTMENT

APPROPRIATION:	A1410.54442	Professional Services	\$309,500
	A1410.52230	Computer Software	\$108,516
	A1410.52206	Computer Equipment	\$175,523
	A1410.51000202	Deputy County Clerk	\$ 9,500
REVENUE:	A1410.43089	Other State Aid	\$603,039

SEQR ACTION: TYPE II-20

* * * * *

Planning and Sustainability Department

Proposed Foreclosure Parcel Sales (ID #6883)

Mr. Doyle requested direction on two parcels withheld from previous auctions and said he would like to offer to sell them to the interested municipalities (Ulysses and Freeville). The memorandum distributed to the Committee provides summary details of the parcels and Mr. Doyle said these are the only two parcels currently the County has that have been removed from auctions. The two parcels are 1284 Taughannock Boulevard (2012 auction) in the Town of Ulysses, tax parcel no. 27.-4-6 and Brooklyn Road (2016 auction) in the Village of Freeville, tax parcel no. 1.-2-1.2. Both municipalities are interested in purchasing these parcels with the deed restrictions being recommended.

Ms. Thomas said that until the State can take over ownership of the parcel, the Town of Ulysses would like to purchase it. There have been taxes paid on that portion and she understands they will have to pay back some of that in an arrangement that won't jeopardize the Town's budget. The parcel is in a unique designated area and the Town would like to keep the land preserved. It is important that it is in a conservation zone that offers protection. It is also is a scenic route as well. She said the Town is very interested in moving forward.

Ms. Chock said she supports this action and understands the County cannot continue to hold on to the property. Mr. Marx said the State parks did not agree with the title on the parcel and there is no guarantee when the State would consider purchasing it. He said it is not recommended the County own small parcels to have to monitor. Ms. Chock reiterated her support and said she would also agree to half the cost of taxes owed and to waive the fees.

Mr. John spoke of his visits on the Black Diamond Trail and said he supports the County's trail programs and hopes it continues to grow. He also spoke in support of this proposal.

Mr. Burbank also spoke of his visits on the Black Diamond Trail and further commented that almost all the land between the City and the falls is privately owned and posted. He asked if the Town took over ownership would there be any opportunity for public access. Ms. Thomas said it is the Town's intent to have public access.

Ms. Kiefer said she supports both recommendations; however, she does not support Ms. Chock's proposal to reduce the amount. She asked Ms. Thomas how much time the Town would like to pay back what is owed. Ms. Thomas said as much time as possible would be helpful and commented that \$9,000 is lot to the Town. A ten-year period would be acceptable.

In response to Ms. Chock's question about the potential development on the Freeville parcel, Mr. Doyle said there is potential on a portion of it. Mr. Marx said the Village is interested in this parcel to protect it and possibly for infrastructure.

Mr. John said he has driven by the property regularly and does not believe it is a useful parcel.

Mr. Snyder noted that these parcels are being sold considerably less than the assessed value. As Finance Director, he would prefer to get full value of all fees and taxes on property. His advice to staff was to sell them for what was owed. Mr. Doyle had commented that it was for the protection of the property, but Mr. Snyder continues to question where the remaining balance would come from.

Mr. Doyle believes the County is getting something from this in value. He views the foreclosure parcels collectively and that during the 2016 foreclosure process for example some are sold higher and some lower and he believes this comes as part of that balance. Mr. Marx also clarified that with respect to the parcel in Ulysses, staff recommended it be sold but the Committee agreed to withhold it at the Town's request. He said there are mutual benefits to both municipalities and the County for keeping these parcels protected.

Mr. Klein reminded the Committee that these actions will be coming back to the Committee.

Ms. Kiefer asked how the assessment would change if the properties were sold with deed restrictions. Mr. Franklin said the Freeville parcel is valued as not a buildable site. The Ulysses parcel is a good building site and has value. If both parcels were sold with deed restrictions it would reduce the value.

Mr. Burbank supports having the Town of Ulysses work on something that is easier on the Town to pay back what is owed as it will be a great asset for the public. Ms. Thomas believes the Town Board would be honoring the County's designation of unique natural areas and the land would continue to be protected.

Mr. Klein agrees these actions are a benefit for the whole County and supports what is outlined as presented to Committee.

* * * * *

Assessment

2017 AEM Program (ID #6835)

Mr. Franklin provided an overview of the 2017 Annual Equity Maintenance (AEM) Program as detailed in the memorandum distributed to the Committee. This was a clean-up year and he said Lake properties were reviewed and hopes in the future to have a consistent view of those parcels. He spoke of the properties on the east side and the railroad rights of way. Other areas looked at included the Towns of Caroline and Enfield, South Hill and East Hill, and the Forest Home area. Department staff is learning about solar projects and the technology and set ups. Broadband installations are also being looked at. One of the challenges is that there are no permits to follow-up on. Valuing “big box” stores is another area that they are trying to learn more about.

Mr. John reiterated his comment about the inability to share information between the Assessment Department and the County Clerk’s office due to new technology. Mr. Franklin said with the loss of integration of certain real property information needed it now takes additional staff time to do the researches and input the sales. Mr. Potter explained how that functionality was lost and said if requested it can be looked into. Mr. John asked that further discussion be held with appropriate staff to review options for a solution.

* * * * *

RPTL 485-g Infrastructure Exemption - Discussion (ID #6863)

Mr. Franklin said he raised this issue last March and noted that the Village of Dryden is the only municipality that has adopted it; however, as the Department was unaware of the Village’s action, this exemption has not yet been administered by the Department. He explained the exemption and said it allows for three-year abatement in assessment when a developer goes in and puts in the infrastructure of roads, sewer, electricity, etc. This exemption if adopted would provide a three-year abatement in increased assessment for that developer and after the lot is sold that exemption is removed the property would go to full value.

Ms. Chock believes this exemption makes sense, but would like to know how this fits with other exemptions.

Mr. John asked if the staff of the Planning and Sustainability Department has had an opportunity to weigh in on this exemption. Mr. Franklin said he has not had a discussion with the Planning Department staff.

Ms. Robertson believes this could be an important piece that could help a developer when considering a project. The Town of Ithaca Supervisor, Bill Goodman, has expressed support of this exemption. The issue of sprawl is a concern, but she believes this is important to look into it further as the County’s tools are limited and this could send a message.

Mr. Burbank agrees Mr. Marx of the Planning and Sustainability Department should weigh in on this too.

Mr. Klein summarized the Committee's discussion to have the Planning and Sustainability Department look at this including the concern with sprawl.

* * * * *

Resolution No. - Appointment to Temporary Hearing Panels - Assessment (ID #6820)

RESULT:	RECOMMENDED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Rich John, Member
SECONDER:	Dooley Kiefer, Member
AYES:	Klein, Chock, Kiefer, John, Burbank

WHEREAS, the Department of Assessment and the Tompkins County Legislature both agree that the fairest and most equitable way to value property for assessment purposes is on an annual basis at full market value, and

WHEREAS, Real Property Tax Law 523-a permits the Tompkins County Legislature to appoint up to six Temporary Board of Assessment Review members to serve on Administrative Review Panels, and

WHEREAS, Real Property Tax Law 523-a permits the compensation of Temporary Board of Assessment Review Members, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, on recommendation of the Government Operations Committee, That six Temporary Board of Assessment Review Members, namely Linda Santos, Robert Walpole, Josh Lower, Michael Cannon, Judy Malys, and James Lane, be appointed to serve on Administrative Review Panels,

RESOLVED, further, That Temporary Board of Assessment Review members be compensated at a maximum annual compensation of \$250.

SEQR ACTION: TYPE II-20

* * * * *

Other Business

Ms. Chock said she would like to discuss at a future meeting an overview of what tools are available for potential exemptions that would help promote energy efficiency, solar, wind, geothermal, etc., both at the County and State levels.

Mr. Franklin said he would put together some information for the Committee.

Information Technology Services

Tompkins County Public WiFi Access (ID #6885)

Mr. Potter provided a brief overview of the County's WiFi access points and said in 2013 the Information Technology Services (ITS) Department rolled out the project across the County's network with the intent of providing WiFi wireless access to County employees only with the exception of the Legislature Chambers space. He said there are currently 23 WiFi access points in 12 locations and ITS also expanded the WiFi public access points to two other locations (Old Jail and Public Health). All three public access points require a password. He explained some of the problems that have been identified

with the public access points and the impact it has had on the bandwidth across the network.

Ms. Chock asked about allowing access for only a certain period of time per day. She would like to have public access available, but she understands the concerns. Mr. Potter said the management of turning on and off the public access points and setting standards can be complicated. His recommendation would be to leave them on.

Mr. Cottrell explained some of the options available including providing public access through a contract with Finger Lakes Technology Group. He said they are looking for direction from the Committee on how far should the County go to provide WiFi public access to the public.

Ms. Kiefer commented that she is not interested having the public WiFi accessible from Dewitt Park.

Mr. John asked how necessary it is for the County to provide public internet access and if it costs money it may not be a good thing.

Mr. Burbank believes that so much of the County's information is electronic that the County should be paying for that service at a minimum of where public meetings are held.

Mr. Potter said improvements can be made to the current system, which is a low-cost solution.

Ms. Chock said she would like time to think about this more. It is how people communicate now and she would like to know about available technology to prevent some of the issues that have been happening.

No consensus was reached and no change is being recommended at this time. The Committee will continue discussion on this topic.

* * * * *

Finance Department

Discussion about credit card acceptance by the County

Mr. Snyder said he does not have a formal report to present on the proposal to accept credit card payments, but hopes to have one for the next meeting. He noted that a Request for Proposals or Request for Qualifications would not be required because the vendor is an existing vendor and there are no additional costs for equipment, training, etc.

Mr. Snyder also said in response to questions raised, the Information Technology Services Department has not reviewed the proposal. Because of the existing relationship with the vendor, he does not anticipate the review to take long.

The current maintenance fee for the software is \$10,000 per year and that fee would not increase if this service was provided.

Mr. Snyder further commented that there is no difference between credit and debit card use. The vendor said it is the same for all transactions.

He said a formal report is being prepared and his staff is leaning towards the current vendor.

In response to Mr. Klein concerning the implementation plan and what needs to be in place, Mr. Snyder suggested the Committee wait until the report is compiled in a final format as he believes it will help answer many questions that have been raised. If the Committee agrees with going forward it should also be presented to the Legislature as well.

Ms. Chock asked about the ability of a bank making payments by an electronic check to an entity. Mr. Snyder said he would have to look into that question.

Mr. Klein reminded the Committee that Mr. Snyder was only looking into payments by credit card at this time.

Reports

Director of Finance

Mr. Snyder reported he is working through five audits. He also commented that the next staff person leaving in his office is at the end of March.

Committee Chair

Mr. Klein had no report.

County Administrator

Mr. Mareane said he will be providing a brief report next month on performance measures; the Request for Proposals are out for that and he will have results soon.

County Attorney

Mr. Wood was not present.

Public Information Officer

Ms. Lynch had no report.

Other Business

Ms. Kiefer referenced the resolution received from the Town of Caroline concerning the Governor's characterization of high property taxes and asked if the Committee would consider proposing such a resolution.

Following a brief discussion, the Committee took no action.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 5:45 p.m.

Information Item - Budget Adjustments - County Clerk (ID #6870)

RESULT:	COMPLETED
----------------	------------------