

COUNTY OF OSWEGO
COMMUNITY AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

September 24, 2008

PRESENT:

Jack Beckwith, Chair
Clayton Brewer
Mary Flett
Kevin Gardner, Vice Chair
Linda Lockwood
Phillip Vasho

STAFF/GUESTS

Arthur Gearsbeck, Legislator
David Hastings, Director of Real Property Tax
Richard Hogan, Director of Central Services
Barry Leemann, Chairman of the Legislature
Georgiana Mansfield, Deputy County Clerk
Fred Maxon, Purchasing Director
Bill Scriber, Elections Commissioner
David Turner, Dir. of Community Dev., Planning and Tourism
Don Wart, Elections Commissioner
George Williams, County Clerk
Jeanette Woodland, Administrative Secretary
Carmen, Branca, Jr., New Visions Powerline Communications

EXCUSED:

Louella LeClair

Attendance:

Committee Chair Beckwith called the meeting to order at 2:01 p.m.

Old Business:

Committee Chair Beckwith asked for a motion to approve the August 27, 2008, minutes.

Motion: Legislator Vasho

Second: Legislator Flett

Minutes were approved, with all in favor.

Committee Business:

1. High Speed Broadband – New Visions

Chairman of the Legislator Barry Leemann introduced Carmen Branca, President of New Visions. Mr. Branca gave an overview of New Visions, which is a communications company offering high speed broadband. They have a long term signed agreement with National Grid as this broadband network utilizes the electric utility to deliver its services using the wire, not the electricity. A modem is installed in the home unlike other similar services that install wiring to and into the home, which makes it very expensive. As of this time many towns in Oswego County do not have access to high speed Internet services. Mr. Branca told committee members that high speed broadband services has become a necessity for economic competitiveness, health care, education, social opportunity homeland security, and equity. Among several benefits to having this service is to eliminate Emergency Medical Services “dead zones” and 911 is notified immediately when homes whose residents have medical needs loses power. The residential cost for this service is anticipated to be under \$100 for three services including high speed Internet, telephone, and cable television which will be added in the spring.

New Visions has support in the form of a \$300,000 grant from Governor Pataki, and Governor Paterson gave \$1.3 million to expand, especially in rural areas. Mr. Branca added that tremendous support came in a letter to NYS PSC from Senator Clinton and a press release supporting powerline technology came from Senator Schumer.

Legislator Brewer arrived at 2:35 p.m.

In response to some questions that were asked Mr. Branca replied that you are not obligated to have this in your home if it goes by your house, it works the same if you have underground wiring, and it is high speed using megabits to send files where other high speed companies uses kilobits. Telephone service is unlimited calling to anywhere and you do not lose your telephone service when the power goes out. Twenty-four hour service would also be available.

Leg. Chairman Leemann advised that we needed to give Mr. Branca the okay to send out a survey to residents to see their interest level. Mr. Branca will work with David Turner, Dir. of Community Dev., Planning and Tourism, who will mail a survey out to county residents to see if there is an interest.

Motion: Legislator Gardner made a motion to survey county residents' interest in this service.

Second: Legislator Vasho

Vote: All in favor.

Motion Carried.

2. Real Property Tax Services

a. Tax Exemption Property Buybacks

Dave Hastings, Director of Real Property Tax Services, reported that since the last meeting there have been an additional 28 buybacks.

Motion: Legislator Vasho made a motion to approve the list of buy-backs.

Second: Legislator Flett

Vote: All in favor.

Motion Carried.

Seventy one properties will be up for auction on Saturday. The total amount of taxes owed on these properties is \$516,000.

b. Professional Services Contract

Mr. Hastings reported that the County received two proposals to perform property assessment services. One proposal came in at \$9,500 and the other \$10,000. Mr. Hastings advised that he would like to go with the \$10,000 proposal of Jay Franklin, who has years of experience.

Motion: Legislator Gardner made a motion to accept the RFP – Jay Franklin \$10,000 – to perform property assessment services.

Second: Legislator Vasho

Vote: All in favor.

Motion Carried.

c. Resolution Setting Equalization Rates

Motion: Legislator Lockwood made a motion to accept the Resolution to establish the 2008 county equalization rates for towns and cities within Oswego County per the figures provided by NYS Office of Real Property Services.

Second: Legislator Flett

Vote: All in favor.

Motion Carried.

3. Central Services

a. Personnel Restructuring

Rick Hogan, Director of Central Services, requested to reclassify a Computer Specialist position to that of a Senior Computer Specialist. In addition he would like to eliminate one Computer Specialist position. The recent retirement of a Senior Computer Specialist, and the demonstration of quality skills and knowledge by an employee who is in an entry level position, warrants his being upgraded to the senior level. By eliminating one position and upgrading this employee to the higher level, realizes a savings of about \$43,000 between salary and fringe benefits.

Motion: Legislator Brewer made a motion to approve the elimination of a Computer Specialist position and upgrade a second Computer Specialist position to that of a Senior Computer Specialist position.

Second: Legislator Vasho

Vote: All in favor.

Motion Carried.

4. County Clerk

a. Recording Fees – Set Date for Public Hearing

George Williams, County Clerk, reported that recording fees and cover page fees have not been increased since 1986. The County Clerks Association lobbied the New York State Legislature to standardize recording fees among counties since 1999. This was passed in June of this year and the law was signed by the Governor in July, but in order to be enacted it is up to each county to set forth a resolution to set a date for a public hearing.

Motion: Legislator Gardner made a motion to approve a Resolution to set a date for a public hearing on November 13, 2008.

Second: Legislator Vasho

Vote: All in favor.

Motion Carried.

b. Mortgage Tax

County Clerk Williams advised that the mortgage tax was last raised in 2003. He added that with the increase in wages, health services, etc. it seems appropriate to forward a resolution to increase the mortgage tax to offset the County's increased expenses related to the collection and administration of the mortgage tax retention. This increase, if approved, would result in an additional \$48,000 in revenue.

Motion: Legislator Vasho made a motion to approve a Resolution requesting that additional mortgage tax money be retained by the County under tax law §262.
Second: Legislator Gardner
Vote: All in favor.
Motion Carried.

Adjournment

Motion: Legislator Vasho motioned to adjourn the meeting at 3:05 p.m.
Second: Legislator Gardner
Vote: All in favor.
Motion Carried.