

Community and Consumer Affairs

July 25, 2007

Committee Members: Leg. Doug Malone, Chair, Leg. Arthur Ospelt, Leg. Jack Beckwith, Leg. Shawn Doyle, Leg. Arthur Gearsbeck, Leg. Paul Santore, Leg. Kimberly Seager

Guests and Staff: Philip Church, County Administrator, David Hastings, Director of Real Property Tax, Rick Hogan, Central Services Director, John Kruk, County Treasurer, Mark See, Chief Accountant William Scriber, Board of Election Commissioner, George Williams, County Clerk, Jeanette Woodland, Administrative Secretary, Sue Pringle, Nicole Reome, Fulton Daily News, Colin Kennedy, The Palladium Times, Carol Thompson, Valley News

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Call to Order: Chairman Malone called the meeting to order at 1:04 p.m.

Minutes: Motion to accept the June 27, 2007, minutes was made by Legislator Santore, second by Legislator Malone, and passed unanimously.

Committee Business:

County Clerk – Employee recognition – Karen Doten, 15 years of service.

George Williams, County Clerk, reported on the Vehicle Use Tax and advised that there are 28 counties that are doing this in New York State. Oswego County started in 2003 and by 2006 this tax has generated \$2,548,000 in county revenues. A car or vehicle that costs up to \$3500 is taxed \$5.00/yr. and vehicles, including commercial, over \$3500 is \$10/yr. This money is not credited through the County Clerks budget but is turned over to the Treasurer. Leg. Beckwith made a motion to directly apply 100% of the Vehicle Use Tax to reducing the County Tax Levy. There being no second, Legislator Gearsbeck made a motion that we do away with this tax as he feels that the county budget is at a surplus and our taxpayers are overtaxed. Legislator Malone seconded this motion. Legislator Beckwith then amended the motion stating that he would like to send a resolution to the full legislature. He stated that if our year-end fund balance was 12 percent of our annual budget then 50 percent of that tax should go toward tax relief. If our fund balance was 10 percent, or below, we should use 100 percent and applied to the following years county tax levy to lower it. If the unappropriated fund balance if for any reason should fall below 12 percent then 50 percent of the monies would be applied to the following years budget and the other 50 percent would be applied to lower the county tax levy. If below 10 percent of county budget, which is required by the State Comptroller, then 100 percent of tax should be applied to the following years budget and nothing to the

tax levy. There was no second to Legislator Beckwith's amended motion. The committee then focused on the original motion made by Gearsbeck/Malone. Legislator Seager stated that she did not feel that everyone in Oswego County owns a car and that they therefore do not pay the user tax. There are people who can afford to own two or even three cars and can afford to pay the tax. Legislator Doyle agreed that this is a user tax and people have a choice. Legislator Beckwith called the question.

Motion that we do away with the user tax was voted upon as follows:

Ospelt	No
Beckwith	Yes
Doyle	No
Gearsbeck	Yes
Santore	No
Seager	No
Malone	Yes

Motion defeated.

Central Services – Rick Hogan, Director, requested approval for a Computer Equipment purchase for the Health Department. This request is to replace a switch that runs all computer equipment in the building as well as outdated equipment that is presently in use. Most of the money to purchase this is from a Grant and the rest is in the budget which has been allocated to purchase equipment and software. Legislator Ospelt made a motion and a second by Legislator Santore to approve the equipment purchase, motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Hogan gave the committee an update on the Fulton area wireless situation. An RFP was done with a bid of \$160,000, which is high. The County is working with that vendor to negotiate the price down. Out of the five areas that don't have the services, three can be reached. They are ERF, Fulton and the Airport. The two that cannot are Hannibal and Bristol Hill. Instead of wireless in these areas we may go with Time Warner. Pulaski is another area that we may have to use Time Warner. Mr. Hogan will keep Committee members informed.

Real Property Tax – Dave Hastings, Director of Real Property Tax, addressed a situation regarding one of his employees who was on the agenda of the July Legislature meeting to receive recognition for her 30 years of service. Mr. Hastings advised that he was unaware that the employee was being recognized as he did not receive the notification and that is why he was not at the meeting to present the award. He has since spoken with the employee and this employee would like to be recognized at the August meeting of the Legislature.

Mr. Hastings requested approval of prior owner buybacks and added that there are additional buybacks since the agenda was mailed out, bringing the number up to 12 properties with a total amount of \$86,983.97. The owner of a Constantia property (2689-

626) will be selling property to a son contingent on financing. There are a couple more properties that are being assigned to relatives. Motion to approve was made by Legislator Beckwith and a second by Legislator Gearsbeck, motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Hastings reported on the 2007 exemption from auction application cut-off date. Yearly this committee sets a final date for hearing exemption from auction requests. The regularly scheduled committee meeting is on August 22nd, which is about a week before the right to buy-back option expiration date of August 31st. Mr. Hastings suggested setting the time of 2:00 p.m. on August 22nd to hear exemption requests. A letter will be sent to Legislators to notify them of this date. A motion was made by Legislator Doyle to set the date for August 22nd at 2:00 p.m., seconded by Legislator Santore, motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Hastings requested a Budget Modification for a LGRMIF Grant award of \$42,109. Motion to approve Budget Modification was made by Legislator Santore and seconded by Legislator Santore, motion passed unanimously. Mr. Hastings advised that this would be used to enhance our web based assessment records making tax maps available to the public. This will also cut down on traffic in the office, as these maps currently are only available to the public when they come into the office.

Mr. Hastings reported that an RFP went out in January for a professional services contract for preparation of the LGRMIF Grant. Five quotes were received from a low of \$17,400 to a high of \$64,750. Recommendation was to throw out the low and the high and use the middle three. Request to grant contract to Fountain Spatial Inc. A motion was made by Legislator Santore to approve award to Fountain Spatial, Inc. seconded by Legislator Beckwith, motion passed unanimously. Discussion followed as to what enhancements would be made to the web based maps.

Mr. Hastings reported on a property line dispute in the Town of Hannibal. He stated that there has been a significant change in the property as Mr. Simmons has sold his land to a Mr. Stupp. This property runs adjacent to the LaBeef land, which has accrued a total of \$18,065.68 in back taxes. The problem is that there is a building structure that was built by Labeef on the property line. A suggestion by Mr. Hastings is to ask the new owner to submit an offer to this committee at the next meeting. A motion was made by Legislator Seager to sell the property to the new owner for back taxes, seconded by Legislator Ospelt. County Attorney Richard Mitchell advised that there could be an encroachment issue. A lot of properties are not legal and we get the money, a person bids, they buy and two to four years later we get it back. Legislator Beckwith will talk to Mr. Stupp to ask if he will pay the back taxes, if not it will go to auction on August 22nd.

Treasurer – Update on Credit Cards

John Kruk, County Treasurer, and Mark See, Chief Accountant, reported on accepting payment for property taxes and landfill payments by credit card. They have talked to financial institutions and found that there are two ways to accept payment by credit card.

1. Internet payments the County can charge a convenience fee, which is charged to the credit card holder.
2. Walk in payments, no convenience fee and the County takes the

expense of the card fees that are 2 percent of each transaction. Chairman Malone advised that he had spoken to a representative of Pathfinder bank and the bank would waive the fees. Chairman Malone asked that Mr. Kruk look into this further. Discussion followed and a motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Legislator Seager and a second by Legislator Doyle. Chairman Malone stated that he would not recognize the motion, but if they wanted to leave the meeting they could. Legislators Seager, Doyle and Santore left the meeting. A quorum still being present, the meeting continued. Heated discussion ensued. Legislator Beckwith left the meeting at 2:15. The meeting adjourned due to the lack of a quorum.