

ADDRESS TO THE LEGISLATURE

February 7, 2012
Martha Robertson

I'd like to start my report with the 2012 Committee appointments. Let me first thank the former Vice Chair, Dooley Kiefer, for all her time and wise advise, in meeting with each of you and in deciding how to organize our committees this year. There is considerable consistency with last year's appointments, by your own requests. There are some changes, but a lot of continuity.

STANDING COMMITTEES

Budget, Capital and Personnel – Jim Dennis (Chair), Nathan Shinagawa (Vice Chair), Brian Robison, Mike Lane, and Kathy Luz Herrera

- Jim has already talked about having Budget meet once a month this year, and adding a second meeting as needed.

Government Operations – Dooley Kiefer (Chair), Pam Mackesey (Vice Chair), Pat Pryor, Mike Lane, and Peter Stein

- GO should spend time this year on Technology Services, following up on our retreat in January, to develop a Strategic Plan for technology for the whole organization.
- Last year the committee considered putting information about state mandates on the property tax bills, as Fulton County and several other counties do. I'd like you to reconsider that issue this year.
- The time is coming for another Charter Review, which needs to be done every ten years. Probably after redistricting is done, we will consider a special committee to begin looking at this later in the year.

Health and Human Services – Frank Proto (Chair), Kathy Luz Herrera (Vice Chair), Will Burbank, Jim Dennis, Nathan Shinagawa

- I'd like Health and Human Services to especially monitor state cuts to agencies this year, as we're concerned that they will be in for more cutbacks.
- We should also support efforts for agencies to share space, and possibly back-office functions, wherever possible.

Planning, Development, & Environmental Quality – Will Burbank (Chair), Pam Mackesey (Vice Chair), Pat Pryor, Frank Proto, Kathy Luz Herrera

- PDEQ should focus this year on economic development and job creation, working closely with TCAD, Workforce Development, TC3, and the Southern Tier Regional Council. I will say more about this later. I've already spoken with Carl Haynes, and he's eager to have his program staff come to PDEQ and talk about their employment-related programs.
- Joe, Frank, and I were at the Chamber of Commerce's annual Economic Summit today, where we heard that the picture isn't great. We're not used to high unemployment in Tompkins County. We still have the lowest in New York State, but we've been stuck at about 5.5% since 2009. That's just not typical for us. There's a limit to what local government can do, but we must try to do more, and I'd like PDEQ to work on that this year.

Facilities and Infrastructure – Carol Chock (Chair), Dooley Kiefer (Vice Chair), Peter Stein, Leslyn McBean-Clairborne, Dave McKenna

- F&I should continue with several ongoing tasks, especially hiring new leadership in the Highway Division, and continuing work on the communication plan in Highways.
- I understand Carol is considering changes to your schedule, possibly having longer meetings once a month, or occasional second meetings, to deal with your heavy workload.

Public Safety – Peter Stein (Chair), Brian Robison (Vice Chair), Jim Dennis, Leslyn McBean-Clairborne, Dave McKenna

- It is time for the committee to focus on the Public Safety building, to review the facility needs with the Sheriff and Arel LeMaro, our Facilities Manager.

WDIC – Leslyn McBean-Clairborne (Chair), Kathy Luz Herrera, Nathan Shinagawa, Pat Pryor

- I'd like to thank Joe for assigning Paula Younger to support WDIC this year, and thank you, Paula, for your time.
- The Climate Survey is nearly ready for review, and the Diversity Plan is the next big project we look forward to seeing from WDIC.

SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Capital Plan Review Committee – Mike Lane (Chair), Martha Robertson (Vice Chair), Dooley Kiefer, Frank Proto, Carol Chock

- This is the year that COFA will move out of the courthouse, and it may be the year that we do too. Let's set a goal of being in our new space year from now.
- I hope this will be the year that we make a decision on the future location of the Community Justice Center and the future of the Old Library.

Broadband – Pat Pryor (Chair), Dave McKenna (Vice Chair)

- Members from the previous committee will continue to serve unless they indicate to Pat by February 15 that they're not able to continue.
- I expect they'll continue making progress on the goals set in their terrific report to us.

I have a charge I'd like to extend to all committees. We are in a time of continued fiscal restraint, and we have to do everything possible to make sure we're spending taxpayer money as wisely as we can. So I'm asking you all to please focus on possibilities for shared services. Consider any and all ideas, within the responsibilities under each of your committees, to collaborate with other municipalities, other levels of government, or other agencies. I hope you'll spend a chunk of time during your March committee meetings, and report back to me by April 1, with your suggestions. Thank you.

I'd like to encourage greater collaboration between committee chairs and vice chairs this year.

And at Legislature meetings I'm asking that committee reports be 5 minutes, not including questions and discussion.

CHAIR'S APPOINTMENTS

Again, there is a lot of consistency from last year. The full list is in your folders, and I'll just mention a few changes: Carol Chock will be alternate on the ITCTC Policy Committee, as Pam has a seat on that

board as the TCAT Chair. And there are a couple of appointments that are made by resolution: Peter Stein to be TCCOG alternate, and Svante Myrick to the IDA replacing Dan Cogan. That resolution is on tonight's agenda.

WHAT'S AHEAD FOR 2012?

State budget

It seems, according to our early analysis, that there will be fewer cost-shifts to local governments this year than in recent years, but the touted "mandate relief" is not all it's advertised to be. It's excellent that the Governor has picked up the message about mandate relief from his own Medicaid Redesign Team, from the Citizens Budget Commission, from dozens of state legislators who're co-sponsoring the Medicaid takeover legislation, and from NYSAC, but his proposals will not have the intended effect of reducing property taxes for years to come.

- **Medicaid** – Tom Herden in DSS has crunched the numbers, and according to him, the combination of the Governor's proposals will cost us *more* in the next few years, not less. There are a couple of reasons for this, that don't show up in the headlines.
 - The phased-in cap on growth is on the 2012 base, not the 2005 base, so seven years of growth are built into the base.
 - Even while the percentage drops from 3% to zero over 3 years, what we pay will be compounded (that is, in 2013 we'll pay 2% on our 2012 payment; then 1% on our 2013 bill, etc.). In 2013 the net savings compared to the current methodology will be only \$78,000, on the total Medicaid bill of \$12 million..
 - The proposed administrative takeover will take several years to implement, but the cap on Albany's admin reimbursement to us will start this year, before any plausible State assumption of responsibilities. By themselves, health and pension costs will rise in 2013 for the 39 people who do our Medicaid eligibility, in the neighborhood of \$90,000 next year. Tom estimates that this increase will be \$90,000 this year.
 - The net result: our Medicaid costs will increase, rather than decline, in the first couple of years of the Governor's plan.
- **Pensions** – Tier 6 may also cost us more, according to Comptroller DiNapoli, especially to get the new system off the ground. We'd have to set up and maintain two different systems, the traditional pensions and the 401-K system.
- **Early Intervention and Preschool Special Education** – The Governor has proposed some promising changes to these mandates, but the total dollar benefit to all counties statewide is about \$20 million for each program. You can do the math; the savings for us locally will not be great.

NYSAC: www.mandaterelief.com

County leaders emerged from the conference with renewed vigor to make 2012 the year State lawmakers enact mandate relief. NYSAC has launched a citizen action website designed to help New Yorkers ask their state lawmakers to enact mandate relief. The site, mandaterelief.com, includes a three-step form that enables county officials and their residents to email their State Senators and Assemblymembers. I've asked that we join other counties across the state in putting a link to www.mandaterelief.com on our home page to urge residents to spread the word!

Southern Tier Regional Economic Development Council

On the brighter side, we can and must make the most of another opportunity presented to us: the Regional Economic Development Council process. We can be proud that our Planning Department will receive \$1 million to lead an intensive, region-wide sustainability planning effort. It is very exciting that applicants in Tompkins County were awarded funding for many housing projects in the first round. In addition the award for the million-dollar revolving loan fund, for energy projects in commercial and institutional facilities, is already changing the landscape locally.

The Southern Tier Council itself also received three significant, flexible pots of money – for agriculture-based business development, development of shovel-ready sites for industry, and for downtown redevelopment – that we must take advantage of. And a new round of funding has been promised, with applications due in early summer.

Our regional council needs to work out many details for these programs, but we don't have to wait for the details. In two meetings so far, I've called together the local representatives to the Regional Council and its working groups. That group is eager to continue working together, to stimulate development of new applications for these funds, and I'll be calling another meeting of the group very shortly. You all are welcome to participate; stay tuned for more information.

We've been told that the Southern Tier region's strategic plan was excellent, but that our biggest failing in the first round was that we didn't have enough projects, not enough quality applications. We need to change that, and Tompkins County can lead the way. The creativity, energy, and initiative of our residents only need to be pointed in the right direction.

So for 2012, we have a lot to look forward to and much work ahead. Let's commit to pulling together as a group, leading when possible and following when necessary, and working together on behalf of our community.