

MINUTES

GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS COMMITTEE

Approved 8/3/07

JULY 13, 2007 2:00 P.M. SCOTT HEYMAN CONFERENCE ROOM

Present: G. Stevenson, Chair; M. Sigler; P. Mackesey; D. Kiefer; M. Hattery (arrived at 2:32 p.m.)

Staff: C. Covert, Clerk of the Legislature; J. Franklin, Assistant Assessment Director; M. Lynch, Public Information Officer; G. Potter, Information Technology Services Director; P. Younger, Deputy County Administrator; S. Whicher, County Administrator; V. Coggin, Assessment Director; C. Nelson, Public Works Administrator

Guest(s): M. Robertson, County Legislator

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 2:05 p.m.

Changes to Agenda

The following items were added to the agenda:

- Resolution – Authorization to Accept a Grant from the State Archives
- Transfers – information only

Report from the Committee Chair

Mr. Stevenson updated the Committee on the real property tax exemption law for volunteer firefighters. At a previous meeting, the Committee was informed that enabling State legislation could be requested, but received information from the Assessment Department that the amount of the real property tax exemption was extremely low. Mr. Stevenson asked Senator Winner's office to clarify if both the real property tax exemption and the new income exemption could be applied for or if it was one or the other. He received information that only one option could apply and that under the real property tax exemption qualifying volunteer firefighters could only receive a ten percent exemption on their primary residence up to a maximum of \$3,000. He believes the State income tax exemption is the best option for the County. Committee members may request copies of the information if interested.

Report from the County Administrator

Mr. Whicher reported he met with most Department Heads regarding potential budget reductions for their departments. This information has been distributed to Legislators.

Ms. Younger updated the Committee on the status of two of the Committee goals. In relation to goal 3, a subcommittee on core performance has been formed including Legislators Luz Herrera, Shinagawa, and Hattery and hopes to have its first meeting July 30th. Two discussions with Department Heads have been held and she believes people are ready to get a better understanding of it.

She said a subgroup will be meeting on July 16th to begin discussing the maintenance of the Administrative Manual as referenced in goal 2. The following staff has agreed to participate: Cathy Covert, Marcia Lynch, Norma Jayne, Doreen Lauper, and Paula Younger.

Report from the Public Information Officer

Ms. Lynch reported on the Diversity Communications subgroup she is working with as part of the Workforce Diversity and Inclusion Committee. She, Kathy Luz Herrera, and Heather Stewart are

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working together as a team and as a first step will be reaching out to departments to begin developing an informal communication needs assessment. She also has an intern, a Cornell University graduate student, assisting the team.

Assessment Department

Mr. Stevenson said following discussions he had with staff (Cathy Covert, Jonathan Wood, David Squires, and Tim Joseph) this morning, County Attorney Jonathan Wood felt it would be appropriate to have an executive session to discuss the resolution pertaining to the appraisal of AES Cayuga property if the Committee agreed. An executive session was held later in the meeting.

Demonstration – Assessment Data on the Internet

At this time Mr. Franklin provided a demonstration of the Imagemate Online basic and advanced information available and highlighted the differences. He reminded the Committee that the Basic version is open to the public and the Advanced version is restricted to members of the professional real estate community.

Mr. Franklin gave an overview and highlighted the data available on the Advanced site and stated that most of this information is available to the public in the Assessment Department. In the proposal to make this information available to the public, the name of the exemption and the mailing address of the property owner would be removed. Mr. Potter noted that the company (Pictometry) that produced the images on the site are changing their contracts, which will allow local municipalities the option of purchasing the images outright, prohibiting Pictometry from reselling the images and posting them on the Internet. He said if the County offered the Advanced version he would advocate that the County have complete control, which members thought was a good idea.

At this time, Mr. Franklin gave a brief demonstration of the information available on the Basic site that currently can be accessed by the public.

Mr. Hattery arrived at this time.

Further review and discussion followed and Ms. Kiefer stated that one option could be letting people opt out of putting their information on the site. In response to a question raised by Ms. Kiefer, Mr. Potter said the information already available in the Basic version meets State requirements of the grant program.

In summary, Mr. Franklin identified what the blend would be with both versions. On the Basic site it would include adding the owner's name, documents associated with the parcel such as the sketches, tax map, etc., and links to all maps, although the link to oblique pictometry photos could be removed. The Advance version would require removing the mailing addresses and exemption names.

Mr. Hattery asked if there would be an administrative cost for maintaining one version versus the other. Mr. Potter believed there would be approximately a savings of \$5,000 per year in staff time if the two systems were collapsed.

Sustainability Team – Update

Ms. Nelson provided an update and reported to the Committee on the activities of the team. Several subcommittees have been formed and will be coming forward with policies for the Committee to consider.

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Emissions of Greenhouse Gas Subcommittee – The Planning Department has hired an intern who is working on reviewing the targeted 20 percent reduction from 1998-2008. Information on this should be available in August.

Energy Consumption Efficiency Subcommittee – This group is working on a policy to be forwarded for consideration. Preliminary reports from the energy performance contract with Johnson Controls are favorable and show substantial reductions in usage at the Public Works facility, the Human Services Building, and the Courthouse complex. The first formal report from Johnson Controls will be received in 2008.

Green Fleet Subcommittee – County Departments have been raising questions about this issue. This group began meeting about one month ago. Discussions will continue concerning process and procedures.

Waste Reduction Subcommittee – A policy is nearly completed. One major component of this policy will be to discuss waste assessments in County buildings. Discussions have already begun and it is anticipated that this process will continue through February 2008. It is hoped that employees who are interested in this will get involved in some of these sustainability issues.

Environmentally Preferable Purchasing (EPP) Subcommittee – An article appeared recently in County Corridors about this group. The cleaning department has converted to almost entirely all green products. The policy being drafted requests departments to use a minimum of 30 percent recycled content office paper. In addition, Ms. Nelson and Ms. Eckstrom met with representatives from Cornell University and the idea of building a consortium is being developed with Ithaca College, BOCES, TC3, etc. Discussions will continue.

Employee participation – Marcia Lynch as head of this group is discussing ways to reach out and solicit information from employees.

Infrastructure Design – This group has not yet met.

Natural Resources and Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan – The Planning Department continues to work out all the items in the action plan based on the Comprehensive Plan.

Ms. Nelson said she sent a letter to all employees to bring them up to date. The Sustainability Team anticipates bringing forward the 2008 action plan in December or January to the Legislature.

A brief discussion followed concerning the car-share program and it was reported that the Green Fleet Subcommittee will be discussing this issue. Ms. Robertson commented that one problem has been the insurance, however, this program may become a subset of another existing organization. Ms. Nelson also briefly reported that a consortium for bio-diesel fuel is in the process of being developed.

Assessment Department (continued)

Resolution – Contingent Fund Appropriation for the Completion of the Valuation Phase in Year 2007 of the Department of Assessment 2008 Triennial Revaluation

It was MOVED by Ms. Kiefer, seconded by Mr. Hattery, to approve and submit the resolution below to the Budget and Capital Committee for approval.

Ms. Coggin explained the resolution and understands the Committee approved a similar resolution last month; however, due to changes in staffing situations, she has submitted a revised

resolution for the Committee to consider. The resolution requests funding to fill one position rather than two as originally requested. The period of time the position is needed is through July or August of 2008.

In response to a question raised at the last meeting about this request not being handled through the 2007 budget process, Ms. Coggin said the Department has been experiencing performance questions including falling behind schedule, but believes this resolution will correct it. She said this additional position is necessary to assist in appraising all real property for the 2008 Triennial Revaluation. In addition she said there continues to be the question of whether the County Legislature wishes to continue with the Triennial Revaluation or return to annual assessments.

Mr. Hattery said he would like to discuss the question of returning to annual assessments at the next meeting. Mr. Sigler believes the same arguments are being made and would rather wait and see what the actual costs are going to be with the Triennial Revaluation. Ms. Mackesey agreed with Mr. Sigler and said she would like to hear what happened with the Triennial Revaluation from the Assessment Department before discussing it further. Mr. Franklin said following the Board of Assessment Review grievance hearings the members of that Review Board asked the Department to be given an opportunity to explain to this Committee what is going on with the cycle. Ms. Coggin noted it is difficult to find a competent appraiser to take a job for only one year.

A brief discussion followed concerning the resolution and the Committee agreed to changes and adding an explanation as recommended by Ms. Kiefer and reflected in the resolution below. A voice vote resulted as follows on the resolution: Ayes – 5; Noes – 0. RESOLUTION CARRIED.

RESOLUTION NO. - APPROPRIATION FROM CONTINGENT FUND AND INCREASE IN HOURS - REAL PROPERTY APPRAISER – ASSESSMENT DEPARTMENT

WHEREAS, consistent with the directives of Resolution No. 207 of 2006, the County is presently in the process of appraising all real property within the assessing unit for the 2008 Triennial Revaluation, and

WHEREAS, the Department of Assessment is currently experiencing a staffing shortage, and will be unable to complete the valuation phase of said Triennial Revaluation, and

WHEREAS, hiring an additional Real Property Appraiser for the remainder of 2007 (starting September 4, 2007 thru December 31, 2007) would remedy this problem, and

WHEREAS the Department of Assessment currently has a vacant un-funded Real Property Appraiser position (position ID #301) on its roster at 35.0 hours per week, and

WHEREAS, the Department of Assessment has a need to fill said Real Property Appraiser position at 40.0 hours per week, and

WHEREAS, there are no funds within the Department of Assessment's budget to pay the costs associated with this additional expense, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, on recommendation of the Government Operations and the Budget and Capital Committees, That the hours of one vacant Real Property Appraiser position (position ID #301) be hereby increased to 40.0 per week,

RESOLVED further, That the Director of Finance is hereby authorized and directed to make the following budget appropriation for 2007:

FROM:	A1990.54440	Contingent Fund	\$27,206
TO:	A1355.51000709	Real Property Appraiser	\$17,054
	A1355.54303	Office Equipment	\$ 2,000
	A1355.54412	Travel Training	\$ 1,500
	A1355.58800	Fringe	\$ 6,652

SEQR ACTION: TYPE II-20

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Explanation: This position will need to continue into 2008 and will be addressed in the 2008 budget process.

Resolution – Contingent Fund Appropriation for the Appraisal of the Town of Lansing AES Cayuga Property in Year 2007 for the 2008 Triennial Revaluation

Executive Session

It was MOVED by Ms. Mackesey, seconded by Ms. Kiefer, and unanimously adopted by voice vote, to hold an executive session to discuss contract negotiations. An executive session was held at 3:45 p.m. and returned to open session at 4:10 p.m.

Ms. Mackesey was excused at 4:13 p.m.

It was MOVED by Ms. Kiefer, seconded by Mr. Hattery, to approve and submit the following resolution to the Budget and Capital Committee for approval. Following a brief discussion and agreement with providing clarifying language as reflected below, the resolution was adopted unanimously by voice vote by members present.

RESOLUTION NO. – APPROPRIATION FROM CONTINGENT FUND FOR APPRAISAL REPORT – ASSESSMENT DEPARTMENT

WHEREAS, consistent with the directives of Resolution No. 207 of 2006, the County is in the process of appraising all real property within the assessing unit for the 2008 Triennial Revaluation, and

WHEREAS, this process includes the updating of the assessed value of the AES Cayuga Electric Generating Plant, located in the Town of Lansing and the Lansing School District, and

WHEREAS, the current assessment of AES Cayuga is the result of a court ordered settlement, being considerably lower than the Advisory Appraisal provided by the NY State Office of Real Property Services (ORPS), and

WHEREAS, in anticipation of qualifying for the \$5.00 per parcel maintenance aid upon the completion of the 2008 Triennial Revaluation, it is imperative for the Department of Assessment to obtain an appraisal report of the subject facility to resolve the gross disparity between the current assessment and the value estimate provided by ORPS, and

WHEREAS, the appraisal of this type of property is a highly specialized field, which requires the hiring of an expert industrial appraiser specializing in Power Plant valuation, at an estimated cost of \$50,000 +/-, which cost is customarily shared by the three taxing jurisdictions, the County, the Town of Lansing, and the Lansing Central School District, based upon the apportionment of total taxes collected from the AES Cayuga tax parcels,

WHEREAS, there are no funds within the Department of Assessment to pay the cost associated with this expense, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, on recommendation of the Government Operations and the Budget and Capital Committees, That the Director of Finance is hereby authorized and directed to make the following budget appropriation:

FROM:	A1990.54400	Contingent Fund	\$50,000
TO:	A1355.54442	Professional Services	\$50,000

SEQR ACTION: TYPE II-20

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County Clerk

Resolution – Grant Acceptance

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It was MOVED by Ms. Kiefer, seconded by Mr. Sigler, and unanimously adopted by voice vote by members present, to approve and submit the following resolution to the full Legislature for approval:

RESOLUTION NO. – AUTHORIZATION TO ACCEPT A GRANT FROM THE STATE ARCHIVES

WHEREAS, the County Clerk’s Office has been notified of a grant award from the State Archives in the amount of \$74,900, and

WHEREAS, the State Archives grant represents a project for the County Clerk’s Office to back file and index deed records into their Electronic Document Management System, now therefore be it

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

RESOLVED, further, That the Director of Finance is authorized and directed to make the following budget adjustment:

BUDGET ADJUSTMENT

Appropriation: A1410.43089	Other State Aid	\$74,900
Revenue: A1410.54442	Professional Services	\$74,900

SEQR ACTION: TYPE II-20

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Approval of Minutes

This item was deferred to the next meeting.

Next Meeting

Discussion followed concerning the rescheduling of the August 10th meeting. Committee members agreed to meet August 7 at 4:00 p.m. [This meeting was later changed to August 3rd at 2:00 p.m.]

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:30 p.m.