

**Government Operations Committee
September 14, 2007
2 p.m.
Scott Heyman Conference Room**

Present: G. Stevenson, D. Kiefer, P. Mackesey, M. Hattery (arrived at 2:10 p.m.; excused at 4 p.m.)

Excused: M. Sigler

Staff: S. Whicher, J. Kippola, N. Jayne, P. Younger, M. Lynch, County Administration; M. Pottorff, Legislature Office; C. Kammen, Historian; D. Squires, Finance

Guests: J. Schutt, Groton Public Library Director; C. Griffin, Groton Public Library President; M. Rumsey, Southworth Library-Dryden Trustee; D. Parnel, Southworth Library-Dryden Director; K. Creenan, Finger Lakes Library System Director; L. Maki, Newfield Public Library Director; G. Reinbolt, Executive Director of the History Center; J. Sitter, History Center Board Chair; R. Rice, Tompkins County Public Library Assistant Director

Call to Order

Mr. Stevenson called the meeting to order at 2:05 p.m.

Changes to the Agenda

There were no changes to the agenda.

Ms. Mackesey said last year this Committee discussed appointments to the Library Board of Trustees to ensure the County was getting a cross-section of membership on that Board. She asked if a request could be made to the Library to present all applications submitted to the Legislature and not only the ones being recommended for appointment. Ms. Kiefer questioned how useful that would be as the Legislature has no role in the recommendation process for that Board. Mr. Stevenson said the Planning Department often advertises advisory board openings in the newspaper and suggested this may be something the Library could do as well. The Committee will ask Mr. Sigler to suggest this to the Library and will discuss this at a future meeting.

Public Comment

No member of the public wished to address the Committee.

Chair's Report

Mr. Stevenson said he spoke with the Sheriff with regard to making an official identification badge for members of the Legislature. He said he recently visited a large 911 Center and would have found it useful to have an official type of identification. Mr. Stevenson distributed a sample identification badge for the Committee to take a look at.

County Administrator's Report

Mr. Whicher reported books containing the proposed 2008 County Budget have been delivered to the Legislature Office. Mr. Whicher said he made some retractions in funding at the last minute that resulted in some degree of disappointment at the end but he thinks the process went well overall. He will review the budget he is presenting and all the accompanying documents at the first Expanded Budget Committee meeting on September 17th.

Mr. Hattery arrived at 2:10 p.m.

Mr. Stevenson briefly updated Mr. Hattery on the items discussed prior to his arrival.

County Attorney's Report

Mr. Wood was not present.

Ms. Kiefer said Mr. Wood had been asked to review the contract with the State with regard to court security and provide an opinion of whether the County is bound to that contract. Mr. Whicher said it is his opinion that the County is bound to the current contract for the remainder of this year. *He also stated Mr. Wood will be providing the Legislature an opinion of whether court security employees must be on the County's payroll; however, he believes that to be the case.*

Finance Director's Report

Mr. Squires reported the Finance Department is currently working on sending out certified mailings to property owners who have not paid their taxes in the last three to four years. It is a very labor intensive process and extremely important because it is a constitutional requirement to do everything to show the County has done all it can to notify property owners of their rights.

Public Information Officer's Report

Ms. Lynch reported all Legislators and department heads should have received a media release indicating the budget was being released and the news release and any public information on the budget was delayed until September 17 to give Legislators a chance to review the budget and become familiar with the documents. The public budget forum will be held on October 1 in the cafeteria at Boynton Middle School.

Ms. Lynch also reported on a successful event that recently took place at TC3 (Tompkins Cortland Community College) on emergency public communications post-September 11. She said there were several emergency responders and municipal representatives in attendance.

Rural Libraries

Ms. Maki distributed a statement in support of County funding for rural libraries. She stated rural libraries are independent bodies and all are different and reflect their communities; however the rural libraries provide similar services and have similar needs. With the help of the Finger Lakes Library System, they are able to coordinate services and they work well together to provide services throughout the County to everyone. She said over the last five years there has been an increase in the services they offer and specifically noted the increased demand for Internet access. As there are many people who do not have a computer or Internet access at home, rural libraries are often the sole source of access to online resources for members of the public.

Ms. Maki said a message was clearly given to the rural libraries over recent years that efforts should be made to increase support from municipalities and develop a greater level of self-sufficiency. She said many of the libraries have experienced an increase in support from municipalities and have also increased volunteer support and fundraising. She acknowledged that the County has seen difficult economic times over the last several years and while County funding for rural libraries has decreased over the last five years with funding remaining flat for the last two years, the libraries are grateful for the support they have received from the County.

Ms. Mackesey commented on the services rural libraries provide to communities and said stressed how critically important libraries services are for residents.

Mr. Whicher said for the last few years the rural libraries have done a good job and haven't complained about the level of funding they have received from the County in recent years. He said municipalities have contributed to their funding and he sees no reason for the County not to support their 2008 funding request.

In response to Mr. Hattery's question about library budgets on school ballots, Ms. Maki said there are various types of rural public libraries – chartered, association, and school-district libraries; she explained the funding mechanisms for each of the different types of libraries. Groton is a school-district library by charter; the school district collects the money from tax payments and cuts checks as necessary. Trumansburg and Newfield are association libraries; they can put ballot issues on school district ballots, the school district collects the taxes and forwards the total monies to the library.

Mr. Stevenson said in his short time as a Legislator he has come to know how important the Newfield Public Library is to the community and said all funds are very carefully scrutinized before they are spent.

Ms. Maki spoke of the services provided by the Finger Lakes Library System to the rural libraries throughout the five counties they serve.

Ms. Creenan distributed information on the services provided by the Finger Lakes Library System. She said the Finger Lakes Library System is chartered by New York State for the purpose of providing support services to local libraries. They coordinate a lot of cooperative activities, all of which help the libraries to function better. She said 80% of the Finger Lakes Library System funding comes from New York State; however, they do ask each of the five counties they serve for a small amount of supplemental funding. Some of the services provided include: training in computer use, continuing education opportunities, coordination of inter-library loans, maintenance of union catalogs, and consultant services to help local libraries.

RESOLUTION NO. - APPROPRIATION FROM CONTINGENT FUND FOR THE COUNTY HISTORIAN

MOVED by Ms. Mackesey, seconded by Mr. Hattery. Ms. Kippola said Ms. Kammen was appointed as County Historian in 2002 and was allocated an annual budget of \$1,000 but never made a request to use the funds. Last year the funding was removed from the budget and Ms. Kammen was told to request funding in the future if a need arose. Ms. Kippola said a couple of weeks ago Ms. Kammen requested reimbursement of expenses for a conference she attended. Ms. Kippola said only in asking information about the conference did she become aware that Ms. Kammen was presented with a national honor of distinction, the highest honor bestowed by the American Association for State and Local History. Ms. Kippola read the following information about Ms. Kammen:

“Ms. Kammen serves as a senior lecturer at Cornell University where she teaches local history, among other courses. She imparts to her students that local history is not just history of specific communities, but also the problems, joys, ethics, sources, and themes of local history. Kammen has served as guest speaker and consultant to dozens of museum, historical societies, and humanities councils around the country. Along with her teaching, she serves as the Tompkins County Historian and was recently awarded public historian of the year by the State of New York.

Ms. Kippola said funds have been included in the 2008 budget for the Historian program in the amount of \$5,000.

A voice vote resulted as follows: Ayes – 4, Noes – 0, Excused – 1 (Sigler). MOTION CARRIED.

WHEREAS, the County Historian has requested funds for travel reimbursement expenses, and
WHEREAS, the County Historian has been certified by the Director of Finance to have \$1,000 unspent appropriations from 2006, and

WHEREAS, the time to request using those funds in the current year's budget has passed, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, further, That the Director of Finance is hereby authorized to make the following appropriation on his books:

BUDGET APPROPRIATION:

FROM:	Contingent Fund	1990.54400	\$1,000
TO:	County Historian	0202.54400	\$1,000

RESOLVED, further, That pursuant to Fiscal Policy the unspent appropriations available to the County Historian for use in 2008 will be reduced by \$1,000.

SEQR ACTION: TYPE II-20

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History Center

Ms. Kippola said the County has a long history of supporting this organization and said the County has always subsidized their rent or payment for space. She said they have now come to the County and said that the amount allocated to the History Center is not meeting its rent. On average, it will increase annually by \$2,700 per year. Ms. Kippola said this agreement is looked at annually and said the proposed resolution includes a change to authorize a five-year agreement. The Dean Building lease goes to 2010. The resolution includes a payment of \$10,000 to reimburse the Center for prior-year expenses.

Mr. Reinbolt said museums are experiencing a decline in the number of persons who come through the doors as so many people are utilizing the Internet. He said the History Center will utilize the \$10,000 to make technology improvements to further the organization's mission. He said they will be placing collections on the web in addition to start delivering other services to the public through the Internet.

Mr. Whicher expressed support for this resolution and said this represents the best way to preserve the County's artifacts.

**RESOLUTION NO. - AUTHORIZATION TO EXECUTE MULTI-YEAR AGREEMENT -
THE HISTORY CENTER**

It was MOVED by Ms. Mackesey, seconded by Ms. Kiefer. Ms. Kiefer suggested language for an additional Resolved that was accepted by the Committee as friendly; the language is contained in the last Resolved. A voice vote resulted as follows: Ayes – 4, Noes – 0, Excused – 1 (Sigler). RESOLUTION ADOPTED.

WHEREAS, the County wishes to enter into an agreement with The History Center, formally known as the Dewitt Historical Society, to maintain a public museum and procure, store, and preserve the records and artifacts that document the history of the County and the municipalities thereof, and

WHEREAS, the County has maintained a relationship with The History Center, for over fifty years

related to the cost of maintaining space for the aforementioned services, and

WHEREAS, the County first provided space for the agency for the operation of a County Historical Museum in 1939 in the Old Tompkins County Courthouse (County Board Resolution of December 20, 1939), and

WHEREAS, the County continued its commitment to The History Center and its services by compensating the agency for its occupancy costs at the Historic Clinton House in 1973 (County Board Resolution No. 138 of May 29, 1973), and

WHEREAS the agency's move to the Historic Clinton House was prompted by the County as a result of the County's initiative for the adaptive restoration of the Old Court House, and

WHEREAS, the County further continued its commitment to The History Center and its services by compensating the agency for its occupancy costs following the agency's latest move to the Dean Building in 1993, and

WHEREAS, the County wishes to continue its commitment to the agency and enter into a five-year agreement, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, on recommendation of the Government Operations Committee, That beginning January 1, 2008, and expiring December 31, 2012, the County shall compensate The History Center a sum of \$80,200 for 2008, and an increase of \$2,700 for each year after throughout the term of the agreement,

RESOLVED, further, That the County shall also compensate The History Center a one-time payment in 2008 for a sum not to exceed \$10,000 as reimbursement for prior years' occupancy cost shortfalls,

RESOLVED, further, That the County Administrator or his designee is authorized to sign all documents related to this agreement,

RESOLVED, further, That the County and the DeWitt Historical Society shall develop a Memorandum of Understanding detailing the Society's obligation(s) to the County with respect to the County's historical records and artifacts in return for the County's contribution to the cost of maintaining space for The History Center in Tompkins County.

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Executive Session

It was MOVED by Mr. Stevenson, seconded by Ms. Mackesey, and unanimously adopted by voice vote by members present, to enter into an executive session at 2:58 p.m. to discuss a specific personnel matter. The meeting returned to open session at 3:00 p.m.

RESOLUTION NO. - ESTABLISHING COUNTY EQUALIZATION RATES

It was MOVED by Mr. Hattery, seconded by Ms. Kiefer, and unanimously adopted by voice vote by members present, to approve the following resolution as revised and present to the full Legislature.

WHEREAS, pursuant to Article III, Section 4.05, Subdivision (d) of the Tompkins County Charter and Code, the Director of Assessment has submitted and recommended the adoption of equalization rates for all towns in Tompkins County and the City of Ithaca for the assessment rolls filed in 2007, which reflects the third and final year of non-full value-assessment, and for the apportionment of County taxes levied in 2008, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, on recommendation of the Government Operations Committee, That the following equalization rates be and hereby are adopted:

AGGREGATE ASSESSED

AGGREGATE FULL

<u>TOWN</u>	<u>VALUATION OF TAXABLE REAL PROPERTY FOR COUNTY PURPOSES</u>	<u>COUNTY EQUALIZATION RATE</u>	<u>VALUATION OF TAXABLE REAL PROPERTY FOR COUNTY PURPOSES</u>
Town of Caroline	146,416,224	85	172,254,381
Town of Danby	187,524,354	85	220,616,887
Town of Dryden	700,007,494	85	823,538,228
Town of Enfield	133,810,785	85	157,424,453
Town of Groton	203,203,324	85	239,062,734
Town of Ithaca	1,054,608,803	85	1,240,716,239
Town of Lansing	1,049,653,033	85	1,234,885,921
Town of Newfield	195,679,954	85	230,211,711
Town of Ulysses	352,317,341	85	414,490,989
City of Ithaca	1,192,428,806	85	1,402,857,419
TOTALS	\$5,215,650,118		\$6,136,058,962

SEQR ACTION: TYPE II-20

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RESOLUTION NO. - ADOPTION OF REGULAR AND SUPPLEMENTAL REPORTS OF TOTALS (FOOTINGS) OF ASSESSMENT ROLLS

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

WHEREAS, Tompkins County desires to maintain an official record of the 2007 Final Assessment Roll, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, on recommendation of the Government Operations Committee, That the regular and supplemental report of the totals (footings) of assessment rolls be accepted and the figures therein be used as a basis for the taxation in the several tax districts of the County for the year 2008 based upon the July 1, 2007, County of Tompkins Final Assessment Roll.

SEQR ACTION: TYPE II-20

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New Maximum Income Limits for Senior/Disability Exemption

MOVED by Ms. Mackesey, seconded by Mr. Stevenson.

Mr. Franklin presented the Committee with a proposed set of new maximum income limits for the senior/disability exemption. Mr. Franklin said if the Legislature adopted higher income limits it would allow an additional \$2.1 million to be exempt. Ms. Kiefer requested permission to abstain from voting on this exemption and said she would be personally affected.

Mr. Hattery said he would like additional time to review this proposal as well as a summary of all existing exemptions. *Mr. Franklin agreed to provide the Committee with a summary of exemptions.* It was MOVED by Mr. Hattery, seconded by Ms. Mackesey, and unanimously adopted by voice vote by members present, to Table this proposal to the October 12 Committee meeting. MOTION TO TABLE CARRIED.

Veterans Exemption – “Cold War Veteran”

Mr. Franklin presented the Committee with information concerning a new exemption that has been adopted by the New York State Legislature that will allow by local option an exemption for veterans

who served at least one full year during the “Cold War” (1945-1991). This exemption would be available for anyone who served for a minimum of one year in active duty regardless of whether they were in a combat zone.

There was concern expressed that this exemption dilutes the contributions made by those who have fought in a war for this country. The Committee did not wish to pursue this exemption at this time; Mr. Franklin was directed to bring this back at a future date if additional information becomes available.

Image Mate

Mr. Stevenson said there hasn't been any further discussion by this Committee with regard to the Image Mate topic and asked if any member wished to discuss this further.

Ms. Macksey recalled there were suggested changes put forward that included removal of the picture/address and said she would be willing to reconsider this topic. She has spoken with many of her constituents and said there does not seem to be any issues of concern but that there are many people who would like to have access to the information.

Mr. Hattery said he supports bringing this back for discussion with the changes that were suggested for administrative and public access.

Ms. Kiefer said she does not support the proposal that was put before the Committee because of privacy issues and issues of departmental income loss.

Mr. Hattery said he would like to get a sense from other Legislators as to their opinion on this program.

Mr. Whicher suggested bringing a resolution forward containing an active date of January 1, 2008. In response to Ms. Coggin's concern that realtors or users are billed in July, it was suggested that if this were effective on January 1st they could be billed for half of a year instead. *Mr. Stevenson said it appears the majority of the Committee is likely to take action on the Image Mate Program in some form; therefore, he will meet with Ms. Coggin and Ms. Franklin to develop a proposal and will also discuss this with his colleagues on the Legislature.*

Administrative Manual Policy

Ms. Younger said the work group is comprised of herself, Norma Jayne, Doreen Lauper, Marcia Lynch, and Cathy Covert. There have been three planning sessions to date to develop an understanding of the scope of the work as it relates to this Committee's goal, identifying key steps toward reaching the goal, and to brainstorm needs and concerns. She said the first step in the process is to develop and adopt a policy on updating Administrative policies.

She distributed a flow chart showing the proposed route in which amendments to the administrative policy manual should flow. She emphasized the importance of a constant involvement by County Administration to maintain accuracy in changes made to a policy throughout the process and said the current practice does not result in a lot of tracking being done. For example, when a program committee makes a change to a policy it is not always carried through to the next step. Ms. Kiefer said origination sources could also include advisory boards and committee and suggested language be added to reflect this.

There was discussion by the Committee of the flow chart. A question was raised with regard to whether a policy should first be presented to a program committee or the Government Operations

Committee. It was the consensus of the Committee that program committees should have the responsibility for reviewing policies for content and the Government Operations Committee should be responsible for reviewing content with the form and consistency of policies. Ms. Kiefer questioned what would happen if the Government Operations Committee had concerns with a policy.

Ms. Younger reviewed the following areas that the work group would like to receive feedback/guidance from the Committee:

1. Does this flow chart represent your understanding of the process and/or a fairly good approach to what a process should be?
2. What makes a “policy” a policy? Who decides?
3. Would an Editorial Review be a valuable step in the process, and if so, (a) what should the level of effort/timeframe be, and (b) at what point in the process should this review occur?
4. What is the relationship of the review conducted at the Program Committee level to the review conducted at the GO Committee level? Which Committee is actually granting approval to move the policy to the full Legislature?

Ms. Kiefer agreed to meet with members of the team to provide input on this process.

Mr. Hattery was excused at 4 p.m.

Approval of Minutes of August 3 and 21, 2007

Ms. Kiefer said she inadvertently did not bring her copy of the proposed minutes. While she said she had proposed only minor changes, the approval of the August 3 and 21, 2007 minutes were withdrawn from the agenda; it was agreed those minutes will be presented at the next meeting.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:05 p.m.

Government Operations Committee
September 14, 2007

Respectfully submitted by Michelle Pottorff, TC Legislature Office