

Tompkins County Council of Governments
 Regular Meeting Minutes - Approved
Thursday, February 26, 2015 3:00 PM
 Scott Heyman Conference Room

Attendance

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Elizabeth Thomas	Member - Town of Ulysses	Present	
Betty Conger	Member, Village of Groton	Present	
Bill Goodman	Member - Alternate, Town of Ithaca	Present	
J.R. Clairborne	Vice Chair, City of Ithaca	Present	
Ann Rider	Co-Chair, Town of Enfield	Present	
Marty Petrovic	Member, Village of Trumansburg	Present	
Jim Zimmer	Member, Village of Dryden	Present	
Kelly Smith	Member, Town of Groton	Present	
Glenn Morey	Tompkins County	Present	
Joe Mareane	Tompkins County Administrator	Present	
Jay Franklin	Director of Assessment	Present	
Marcia Lynch	Public Info. Officer, County Administration	Present	
Don Barber	Member - Alternate, Town of Caroline	Present	
Ruth Hopkins	Alternate, Town of Lansing	Present	
Jason Liefer	Member - Town of Dryden	Late	4:06 PM
Karen Fuller	Minute-Taker, Legislature Office	Present	
Michelle Pottorff	Legislature Office	Present	

Guests: Keri Blakinger, Ithaca Times; Jay Franklin, Tompkins County Assessment Department; Bradley DeFrees, Environmental Finance Center of Syracuse University; Marcia Lynch, Tompkins County Public Information; Marty Hammond, PFM Asset Management; Mark Witmer, Town of Caroline Town Council; Peter Stein Tompkins County Legislature, Jan Stephen Sela, Town of Danby resident

Municipalities not in attendance: Village of Freeville, Cayuga Heights, Lansing, Towns of Danby, Newfield

Call to Order

Mr. Clairborne, Co-Chair, called the meeting to order at 3:05 p.m.

Greeting/Sign In/Review Agenda

There were no changes to the agenda.

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RESULT:	ACCEPTED [11 TO 0]
MOVER:	Ann Rider, Co-Chair, Town of Enfield
SECONDER:	Marty Petrovic, Member, Village of Trumansburg
AYES:	Thomas, Conger, Goodman, Rider, Petrovic, Zimmer, Smith, Morey, Barber, Hopkins, Liefer
ABSTAIN:	J.R. Clairborne

Discussion of Principle Secure Investment of Municipal Funds (ID # 5406)

Mr. Barber spoke of how municipalities needing funding have been losing money due to the rate of inflation. As part of a review of potential shared services he found Article 3A of the General Municipal Law that provides statutory authority of local governments, including school districts to invest funds together. He said a municipal investment agreement under this law would be possible under Article 5G and has eighteen parts required. Mr. Barber reviewed the framework requirements outlined in the Article and asked Mr. Hammond to provide an overview of how these agreements work.

Mr. Hammond distributed copies of slides that outlined the work of PFM Asset Management, LLC, where he has been employed over the past nine years. He explained that pooling funds provides a higher yield than could be obtained individually. The firm has an average daily fixed income volume of between \$1-\$3 billion and a total of \$53 billion of assets under management from public entities or not-for-profit agencies. His firm invests the funds, with forty percent through US Treasury Notes. In addition, funds are invested in a manner that provides liquidity when necessary. Mr. Hammond explained the permitted investments under the New York General Municipal Law Section 11 for municipalities with a population under one million residents. Mr. Hammond also provided information on the Firm's business locations.

Following the presentation it was noted that PFM Asset Management invests funds for New York Municipal Insurance Reciprocal. Mr. Barber said that is why Mr. Hammond was asked to provide information on this type of cooperative investment agreement and how pooling funds would produce a higher yield for participants than has been experienced. He also said that through the agreement a determination would be made regarding fees and return on investment.

Ms. Thomas asked if there are sample agreement templates available if there is interest to continue discussions regarding this potential shared service. Mr. Barber said the State Comptroller's Office should have examples that could be used.

Ms. Ryder asked how many municipalities could join and if it is possible for municipalities to join at a later date. Mr. Barber said the number of municipalities joining could be up to 149 and that the statute does not dictate how and when the appropriate entities can join.

Mr. Petrovic asked if there is a minimum amount that would be needed for a firm to sign an agreement. Mr. Hammond said that his firm normally requires approximately \$15,000 in minimum fees. He thinks that given the potential interest by local municipalities that could be easily met.

Mr. Clairborne asked what the benefits would be and was told by Mr. Barber and Mr. Hammond that given the current depressed interest rates it would be a better return on investments due to pooling funds. Mr. Barber noted a meeting took place with TST-BOCES to hear this information and that they would also be eligible to participate.

Mr. Clairborne asked that further questions be directed to Mr. Barber and for members to indicate if there would like this brought back for further discussion.

Mr. Barber was excused at this time.

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2015 Department of Assessment AEM Program (ID # 5426)

Mr. Franklin, Assessment Director, offered to attend any Town and Village Board meetings to speak to residents and then reviewed the 2015 Program contained in the agenda document. During the presentation he explained the changes since 2000, including the addition of 2,200 parcels and a reduction of staff. Mr. Franklin also spoke of utilizing Google maps as a pilot to determine if the Department's work could be completed in this manner rather than going out in the field. This was successful with only those properties not readily viewable requiring field work. As a result Mr. Franklin is looking into potentially contracting with a firm that does this type of work, which would be more sustainable due to reduced use of vehicles.

Mr. Franklin reported commercial properties are up-to-date and explained how the New York State Electric and Gas Corporation "soft-hook-up" has affected values of properties and is handled on an individual basis. Property located on the Commons has had store-front areas reduced in value by ten percent due to the construction and will be raised back up when it is completed.

The County had contracted with the Town of Covert to complete assessments, however, one week later a fire destroyed all existing records. The Town has contracted with GAR Associates to revalue the properties.

Mr. Franklin said there were 6,246 changes made to assessments this past year with 405 decreasing values and the balance increasing the values \$239,500,000. At this time the not-for-profit and senior exemptions have not been applied to this amount and will affect the total taxable figure.

The Department will be reviewing the City of Ithaca Fall Creek/Belle Sherman area and the Town of Caroline and agricultural properties and the Assessment Review will be taking place in May.

Mr. Franklin said the Governor has made a proposal to move the STAR exemption to a personal income tax credit for anyone that applied since the 2014 assessment roll. Although the New York State Association of County Real Property Tax Directors and the New York State Assessors Association are supportive of this change, they do not feel it should be made retroactive to the 2014 date. This retroactive action will cause tax escrow accounts to be short and cause an increase in monthly payments.

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Report from the Sustainability Committee

Stormwater Management (ID # 5418)

Mr. DeFrees, Program Coordinator of the Environmental Finance Center at Syracuse University, shared information on an upcoming workshop entitled "Long-Term Flood Resiliency for Communities: A Watershed Management Approach" that will be held on April 16th. He called attention to the various topics that will be covered and highlighted the Round Table discussion that will address what planning that should be done prior to a flood.

Mr. Liefer arrived at this time.

In the Fall of 2015 an emergency stream intervention training will be held. It is designed for municipal officials, contractors, and machine operators to know how to respond to flood damage in a manner based on sound, science, and processes.

There will be a one-on-one technical program for municipalities to obtain information on a green infrastructure approach to financing resilience. He asked that anyone interested in receiving technical assistance contact him directly.

Mr. DeFrees then asked what municipalities need relating to flooding issues. Ms. Thomas said her municipality receives complaints relating to areas not draining well and water diversion from one property to another creating flooding of basements. She asked if there is any legislation relating to this problem. In addition she spoke of learning how to slow water going across agricultural fields would also be another area to work on.

Mr. Clairborne asked if there is any information regarding dredging. Mr. DeFrees said he believes that the funds received by Cooperative Extension were related to reducing silt moving downstream.

Ms. Ryder suggested notifying the monthly Highway Supervisor's meeting of the offer since municipal control is limited due to their being elected officials. Mr. DeFrees said there will be representatives from the Cornell University Road Program at the meeting.

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Discussion: Scope and Rationale of TCCOG funding requests

Mr. Clairborne said the conversation started in January with a question about what is to be covered with reserve funds. The last time municipalities were asked to provide funds was in 2012. The total balance is \$9,226 with all but \$4,238 earmarked for special purposes.

Ms. Thomas said the Reserve Fund was put into effect due to gas drilling and the need to fund videotaped public hearings. She believes it was also discussed to use the funds for legal work for the cable group, and assist to offset travel expenses for lobbying on the tax freeze or other issues. She noted that the request she was making last month has been taken care of and is no longer needed.

Discussion continued with Ms. Ryder asking if there are written guidelines for use of the funds and if not should one be developed. Ms. Thomas said when the funds were set up a resolution was passed that outlined the requirements. Mr. Clairborne said he would also suggest a discussion of whether additional reserve funds should be added to the reserve in 2016. Ms. Thomas said having members discuss possible use of the funds for projects should be considered.

Mr. Clairborne said during his time on Council of Governments the funds were used for items related to hydrofracturing and a video for public awareness. He said the cable reserve is \$3,463 and the cell tower reserve is \$1,525. In response to Ms. Ryder's question about where the funds came from she was told each municipality provided funding. Mr. Leifer said the cable reserve was set up when the first attempt of a cable consortium was being developed with one municipality holding the funds for the Council of Governments. Mr. Clairborne said the cable revenue funds were from the Village of Lansing in August 2013. Mr. Leifer said it was the group negotiating with Time Warner approximately ten years ago and was subsequently deposited with the Village of Lansing as trustee.

Ms. Pottorff said the cell tower funds were from specific municipalities (Towns of Dryden, Danby, Ulysses, Enfield and Ithaca; City of Ithaca; and Tompkins County) that each contributed \$325 to the cell tower project. What was not used is earmarked in the Reserve Fund.

Mr. Clairborne read the resolution outlining the contributions and how funds could be used.

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Mr. Goodman said it may be helpful for new members to know the size and distribution of the funds being held.

Information will be provided and further discussion will take place at the next meeting.

Report from Cable Committee

Mr. Engman was not present to provide a report.

Next Meeting Agenda Items

Giftng rules for municipalities (J. Wood to be present);
Overview of where energy ratings process is;
Continued discussion regarding reserve fund use;
Shared Services Discussion - Follow-up to BOCES meeting and Municipal Court information.

Adjournment

On motion the meeting adjourned at 4:30 p.m.