

GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
FEBRUARY 23, 2010

GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Henke, Brown, Watkins, Haff

GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT: G. Hall, Lindsay, Sady

SUPERVISORS: Rymph, LaPointe, Campbell

Debra Prehoda, Clerk

Kevin Hayes, County Administrator

Phyllis Cooper, Treasurer

Roger Wickes, County Attorney

Karen Pratt, Director IT

Harrison Steves, Supt. Bldgs. & Grnds.

Dona Crandall, County Clerk

Nick Reisman, Post Star

Donna English, Jeff Curtis – Commissioners Board of Elections

AGENDA AS PRESENTED IN COMMITTEE NOTICE:

- 1) Call to Order
- 2) Approval of Minutes – January 19, 2010
- 3) Department Reports/Requests:
 - A. Real Property
 - a. Continue Discussion of Local Option Exemptions
 - B. Buildings & Grounds
 - a. Monthly Updates
 - b. Lake Lauderdale – Close for Triathlon
 - C. Information Technology
 - a. Department Updates
 - D. Board of Elections
 - a. Discuss Request for Permanent Training Room
 - b. Discuss Changes to Custodian Job Description
 - c. Delivery of BMDs
 - d. Discuss Purchase of EMS (electronic software)
 - E. County Clerk
 - a. DMV – Discuss Advertisements for Retention Fees
 - b. Display Case Update
- 4) Other Business
- 5) Adjournment

Chairman Henke called the meeting to order at 10:00 A.M.

A motion to approve the minutes of the January 19, 2010 meeting was moved by Mr. Watkins, seconded by Mr. Haff and adopted.

REAL PROPERTY: Bill McCarty, Director, addressed the following items with the committee:

- o Continue Discussion of Local Option Exemptions – Bill distributed and explained the following handouts, on file:
 - Washington County Equalization Table 2010
 - Detail of Exemption
 - History of Countywide Equalized Full Assessed/Taxable Value
 - Washington County Exemptions 2009 Final Assessment Roll
 - Senior/Disability with Limited Income – Washington County @\$18,000 base - \$26,5000 max for 2009 AR
 - Senior Citizen Exemption Maximum Income Levels and Exemptions for Persons with Disabilities and Limited Incomes in the County, Towns, Villages

and School Districts

- Alternative Vets Exemption Option & Levels – Washington County @\$200,000 Max 2009 AR
- Cold War Vet Options & Levels – First Applied to 2009 AR – Current Option 10% up to a maximum of \$8,000 and 50% (disability) up to \$40,000

This starts the process for 2012 taxes. March 1, 2011 is the deadline for putting these exemptions in effect. These exemption levels are being provided for information and various scenarios can be developed for any proposed changes in the exemption levels. Kevin Hayes, County Administrator, stated the only factor that could change these projections is the fact that probably there are more seniors with the current interest rates that will qualify for the senior exemption. The deadline for the towns is the same as the County, March 1, 2011. Bill stated the next step is to select some changes to these exemptions and then run the scenarios. Chairman Henke stated he would be interested in exploring raising the Senior/Disability with Limited Income. He noted many of these exemptions have been increased in recent years. Mr. Brown stated as part of our analysis, besides the exemption, what other state and federal options are provided to the seniors to assist them with their expenses. HEAP and food pantries were mentioned. Any change to these exemptions would be a shift to other taxpayers. Kevin Hayes, County Administrator, distributed a handout, full value tax rates, on file. He also suggested asking the Human Services Committee to ask Office for the Aging and Veteran Services on their perspective in relation to any proposed changes in the exemption levels. Chairman Henke suggests running this through the Human Services Committee and then bring this matter back to this committee.

COUNTY ATTORNEY – Roger Wickes, County Attorney, stated he plans to attend a meeting this afternoon at the District Headquarters of the Hudson River Black River (HRBR) Regulating District together with the four other county attorneys to review their data on how they came up with this assessment. The next step is to follow an administrative appeal that will be heard in March. We will probably be denied and then the next step is to file an Article 78. The County Attorneys have discussed hiring outside counsel to assist with this matter, cost split between all the counties involved. He anticipates at the March meeting requesting authorization for the Chairman to sign the challenge, then consider leaving the litigation offers open and hire outside counsel, which would need to be approved by the Board. All five counties have agreed to ban together and not pay. NYSAC to date has not issued an opinion because it does not involve enough counties. Those five counties are not the only ones that benefit from the Hudson River not overflowing. The district had a budget, the FERC decision came down and blew a \$5M hole in the budget so they decided to borrow the money and then the lender asked how will you get the money to pay this loan and that is how the assessment was levied. The FERC decision does not allow them to tax using their past method. He will update the committee/board once he has additional information. Mr. LaPointe stated why should his town or Dresden or Whitehall have to pay when it does not affect them. He stated the towns that benefit should pay. If it is not spread out over the County then a special district would need to be formed. Kevin asked what is the process of forming a district. Roger stated the borders of the district would need to be developed. It would need to be approved by the Comptroller and Attorney General. He stated this is a process. The argument could be that why is the entire County taxed when other counties receive a benefit and they are not being taxed. They are on a fact-finding data-collecting trip. The challenge has to be filed by the 23rd of March so at the Finance Committee, he will have a proposed resolution to consider

authorizing filing the challenge. Bill McCarty, Director of Real Property, will provide maps showing the parcels in the County included in this assessment by HRBR.

BUILDINGS & GROUNDS: Harrison Steves, Superintendent of Buildings & Grounds, addressed the following items with the committee:

- Monthly Updates:
 - Have installed 1/3 of the lights for the Complex lighting project
 - Second third of the lights are here and men have started to install these
 - Replaced two floors and opened up three arches at the Granville Head Start
 - Constructing a wall for the County Attorney
 - Splitting a room into an office and small meeting room for the Public Defender – not to charge rent at this time and if needed at year end then charge them all in relation to maintenance of effort.
 - Anchoring bunks at the Law Center
 - Cleaning out sewer mains at the Law Center
 - First round of lights have sold at auction – made \$500.00
 - Working on second lighting project for the “C” building, Annex 1 and Annex 2 – going out for a grant to complete this lighting project in “C” building, Annex 1 and Annex 2. A and B over five years represents a \$400,000 savings in electricity.
- Lake Lauderdale – Close for Triathlon – Bridget Crossman, Director of a not-for-profit children’s literacy program that services children in Warren, Washington and Saratoga Counties, addressed the committee. This triathlon is their big fundraiser. This event has been very successful. Last year, 184 adults and 57 children, 241 participants in this event. The event is held the first weekend of August. They are seeing a lot more interest in their race. They plan to run a morning race and an afternoon race and hopefully do not have to ask any businesses for donations. By adding the afternoon race, they would need to close the park because they need the waterfront. They pay for the parking for the athletes and \$400 for use of the pavilion. She anticipates possibly paying close to \$800 this year. Participants come from outside the county and state besides the local residents. The participants support the local business establishments. The name of the race is the Fronhofer Tool Triathlon, named after their largest sponsor. All proceeds go back into the community. More information is available on their website Fronhofer Tool Triathlon.com. This is a family event and the park is very busy with not only the racers but also their families/friends. The beach is closed but the park is open. They hire our lifeguards for these events. A motion to close the beach at Lake Lauderdale, make it off limits, for that one Saturday in August (first weekend in August – August 7th) was moved by Mr. Haff, seconded by Mr. Watkins and adopted.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY: Karen Pratt, Director, addressed the following items with the committee:

- Department Updates – Karen distributed and explained the attached handout, Information Technology Departmental Highlights (9/24/09 – 2/19/10) detailing work the department has done on infrastructure, application development, application support, hardware install and support, and communication and training. Discussion. If people are not in compliance with

the computer rules then they should get a letter in their personnel file. CBN Connect is laying the groundwork so the providers will come. The fiber optic needs to be developed. Mr. Campbell noted the presentation could have been better. Mr. Brown added it was a poor presentation, very unconvincing. They needed the Board's support to move to the next level. Mr. Brown stated the Sheriff needed to backfill a Senior Account Clerk due to the complexity of the payroll and he asked if there was any technology to help. Kevin, Phyllis and Karen agreed on the difficulty of payroll. How much personal use of our computers goes on during the day. Karen stated policies are in place so that does not happen and also hardware and software in place to monitor it.

BOARD OF ELECTIONS: Donna English and Jeff Curtis, Commissioners, addressed the following items with the committee:

- Discuss Request for Permanent Training Room – They are moving forward with transition from lever to BMD (ballot marking device) voting machines. This will involve more training for inspectors. They would like to have smaller classes with BMD machines set up. They would like to have a permanent site to leave it all set up with the equipment. They feel the inspectors will retain more information with a smaller class size. They anticipate training classes being held during a two to three month period. The Board's classroom was suggested and allowing others who use the room to work around the machines. Kevin feels the classroom can be adapted to their needs. A motion to direct Kevin to make this happen was moved by Mr. Watkins, seconded by Mr. Brown and adopted.
- Discuss Changes to Custodian Job Description – They are in the process of changing the job description for custodians. It is a work in progress and they will report back to the committee.
- Delivery of BMDs – ballot marking device. - The machines are stored at the Valmet building.
- Discuss Purchase of EMS (electronic software) - They are working with Information Technology on the purchase of the software to transition over to these new machines. Funds are budgeted for this in a Capital Project.

COUNTY CLERK: Dona Crandall, County Clerk, addressed the following items with the committee:

- DMV – Discuss Advertisements for Retention Fees – Dona distributed the attached proposed flyer/handout advising residents that the County receives 12.7% on DMV mail-in renewals at the local office. She has checked on the price to advertise this flyer in the local newspapers, on file. Chairman Henke suggested perhaps issue this as a public service notice. Dona suggested putting the notice on the county website. Kevin stated the flyer needs to be more specific; do not use the envelope provided. He also suggested including that the office is open on Thursday evening. Mr. LaPointe mentioned the importance of sales tax being properly credited to the county, i.e. building supplies purchased in another county but delivered to Washington County.
- Display Case Update – The display case has been completed and labeled, The Hamlets of Washington County.

OTHER BUSINESS: None.

The meeting adjourned at 12:15 P.M.

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