

STEBEN COUNTY ADHOC MUNICIPAL COORDINATION COMMITTEE

Tuesday, February 24, 2015

10:00 a.m.

*Legislative Committee Room
Steuben County Office Building
Bath, New York*

****MINUTES****

PRESENT: Carol A. Ferratella, Chair
Mark R. Alger, County Manager
Wendy Flaitz, Director, Real Property Tax Service Agency
Wendy Jordan, Assessment Data Supervisor, Real Property Tax Service Agency
Katherine Deal, Assessor, Towns of Corning, Cameron, Hornellsville and Prattsburgh
Connie Luckner, Assessor, Town of Erwin
Katherine Hughes, Supervisor, Town of Caton
Steve Butchko, Supervisor, Town of Wayne

OTHERS: Hal Bailey, Councilman, Town of Bath

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mrs. Ferratella called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ms. Jordan commented that with regard to the discussion about entering into a 1537 agreement with the City of Corning, the Corning City Assessor Clerk is on leave, not the City Assessor.

MOTION: APPROVING THE MINUTES OF THE DECEMBER 2, 2014, MINUTES AS AMENDED MADE BY MS. DEAL, SECONDED BY MS. HUGHES AND DULY CARRIED.

III. NEW BUSINESS

A. **Data Collection Position** – Mrs. Ferratella stated that she would like to take a few moments to review what has been previously discussed. The goal of this committee is to facilitate communication between the County and other municipalities regarding assessing. Are there villages that have single assessing units? Mrs. Flaitz replied no. Mrs. Ferratella stated another area we have discussed is the results of the survey that were sent out. Of those that responded, four municipalities indicated they would be interested in 1537 agreements and eight municipalities indicated they would be interested in data collection. Our focus has been on data collection, however, we have not completed the discussion. Are we looking at a full-time or part-time position?

Mr. Alger replied his impression is that there would be enough work to have a full-time position. The thought is to hire an individual and make them available. The problem with that is the demand will be more than the availability of staff. We would provide this individual on a first-come, first-served basis and try to prioritize the work. Mrs. Flaitz commented we would work with those municipalities that are doing full value projects now. Mr. Alger stated this position would be paid for by the County and we would not charge back the cost to the municipalities. We benefit from this position as well as the municipalities. This is something that we could contribute that would make sense. The other part of that is we never got a formal recommendation from this committee. If the general sense of the committee were that a data collector position makes sense, we would want to get a recommendation from this committee and forward it to the Administration Committee.

MOTION: RECOMMENDING THE COUNTY CREATE A FULL-TIME DATA COLLECTOR POSITION MADE BY MRS. FLAITZ, SECONDED BY MS. HUGHES AND DULY CARRIED.

Mrs. Ferratella asked would this be a tested civil service position, or would we just reclassify a vacant position? Mr. Alger replied this is a tested position. Mrs. Flaitz informed the committee that the exam has been ordered and might be given sometime this summer. We would then hire off that list.

Mr. Alger commented that when a municipality is doing their project planning, we would want to talk about what they would want to use the Data Collector for and what will help the municipality the most in getting the job done. Each project will be different. Mrs. Flaitz asked will we need to enter into contracts with the towns? Mr. Alger replied he does not know. We may want to in order to clarify issues so everyone knows what will be done and we'll be on the same page.

Mr. Ferratella asked could this be used as part of the efficiency plan for the towns? Mr. Alger replied it certainly is beneficial to both the towns and the County.

B. 1537 Agreements – Mrs. Flaitz informed the committee that they do have a 1537 with the City of Corning as their Assessor Clerk is out on medical leave. We are assisting with clerical work.

Mrs. Ferratella asked is it beneficial to encourage the towns to participate in 1537 agreements? Mrs. Flaitz replied we currently have 14 sole assessors that cover 82 percent of the county. Of those, we have 10 that will be looking at retirement in the next 2 – 8 years. The Town of Caton will be going to a sole assessor effective March 2015. They were not included in this tally. The issue is that we are not sure where we are going to get people to replace these individuals. We need younger individuals to be involved in this process. The county could possibly take on some of these duties.

Ms. Hughes asked have you done any educational outreach? Mrs. Flaitz replied no. We have mentored and we are trying to figure out how to get into the schools. Ms. Hughes commented it would be great if you could work with the colleges and have an internship for students to see if that is a career path they would be interested in. Mr. Alger stated we can talk with Corning Community College and see what curriculum that would come out of. Mrs. Flaitz stated the New York State Assessors Association has an internship program for assessors that are just starting out. They might have someone in our area that is looking to get into the field.

Mr. Alger stated there are two issues that we need to talk about. The first is finding a way to encourage the college to let students know these options. The second issue is what we are going to do when this group of assessors retires. The 1537 agreements are inter-municipal agreements where we would work cooperatively with the municipalities.

Ms. Deal asked if Mrs. Flaitz had figured out the cost benefit analysis for doing this? Mrs. Flaitz replied she did not finish that. Mr. Alger commented there may be municipalities that end up not having an assessor anymore and we could put together two or three municipalities that want to employ someone. These agreements are voluntary on the parts of the municipalities. This would be an option that we can put on the table for people to take a look at. Discussion followed.

C. Presentation to Towns – Mrs. Flaitz informed the committee that they continue to work on putting together a presentation. It has been a slow process.

D. Next Meeting – The next meeting will be held Tuesday, April 28, 2015, at 10:00 a.m. in the Legislative Committee Room.

MOTION: TO ADJOURN MADE BY MS. LUCKNER, SECONDED BY MS. HUGHES AND DULY CARRIED.

Respectfully Submitted by

Amanda L. Chapman
Deputy Clerk
Steuben County Legislature

STEBEN COUNTY ADHOC MUNICIPAL COORDINATION COMMITTEE

Tuesday, February 24, 2015

10:00 a.m.

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Bath, New York*

****MINUTES****

PRESENT: Carol A. Ferratella, Chair
Mark R. Alger, County Manager
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OTHERS: Hal Bailey, Councilman, Town of Bath

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II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

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MOTION: APPROVING THE MINUTES OF THE DECEMBER 2, 2014, MINUTES AS AMENDED MADE BY MS. DEAL, SECONDED BY MS. HUGHES AND DULY CARRIED.

III. NEW BUSINESS

A. **Data Collection Position** – Mrs. Ferratella stated that she would like to take a few moments to review what has been previously discussed. The goal of this committee is to facilitate communication between the County and other municipalities regarding assessing. Are there villages that have single assessing units? Mrs. Flaitz replied no. Mrs. Ferratella stated another area we have discussed is the results of the survey that were sent out. Of those that responded, four municipalities indicated they would be interested in 1537 agreements and eight municipalities indicated they would be interested in data collection. Our focus has been on data collection, however, we have not completed the discussion. Are we looking at a full-time or part-time position?

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Ms. Deal asked if Mrs. Flaitz had figured out the cost benefit analysis for doing this? Mrs. Flaitz replied she did not finish that. Mr. Alger commented there may be municipalities that end up not having an assessor anymore and we could put together two or three municipalities that want to employ someone. These agreements are voluntary on the parts of the municipalities. This would be an option that we can put on the table for people to take a look at. Discussion followed.

C. Presentation to Towns – Mrs. Flaitz informed the committee that they continue to work on putting together a presentation. It has been a slow process.

D. Next Meeting – The next meeting will be held Tuesday, April 28, 2015, at 10:00 a.m. in the Legislative Committee Room.

MOTION: TO ADJOURN MADE BY MS. LUCKNER, SECONDED BY MS. HUGHES AND DULY CARRIED.

Respectfully Submitted by

Amanda L. Chapman
Deputy Clerk
Steuben County Legislature

STEBEN COUNTY ADHOC MUNICIPAL COORDINATION COMMITTEE

Tuesday, April 28, 2015

10:00 a.m.

*Legislative Committee Room
Steuben County Office Building
Bath, New York*

****MINUTES****

PRESENT: Carol A. Ferratella, Chair
Robin K. Lattimer, Legislator, District 3
Mark R. Alger, County Manager
Wendy Flaitz, Director, Real Property Tax Service Agency
Wendy Jordan, Assessment Data Supervisor, Real Property Tax Service Agency
Katherine Deal, Assessor, Towns of Corning, Cameron, Hornellsville and Prattsburgh
Connie Luckner, Assessor, Town of Erwin
Gary Calkins, Assessor, Town of Woodhull
Laura Smalt, Assessor, Towns of Canisteo, Dansville, Howard and Wheeler
RaeAnne Engler, Real Property Analyst, New York State Office of Real Property

OTHERS: Hal Bailey, Councilman, Town of Bath

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mrs. Ferratella called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION: APPROVING THE MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 24, 2015, MADE BY MS. DEAL. SECONDED BY MRS. FLAITZ AND DULY CARRIED.

III. NEW BUSINESS

A. *Review* – Mrs. Ferratella provided a review of the minutes from the previous meeting. Last meeting we talked about having a full-time data collector position that would be offered to municipalities on a first-come, first-served basis and would also be based on work prioritization. Mrs. Flaitz clarified the priority will be for sales verification across the County, first. Every municipality would get the use of the data collector. The second priority is to do inventory for projects and the third priority is to split their balance of time on a first-come, first-served basis. Mrs. Ferratella asked will this be included in the presentation to the towns? Mrs. Flaitz replied yes.

Mrs. Ferratella commented another issue addressed at the last meeting is having contracts with the towns. At that time, Mr. Alger thought we may want to do that. Ms. Engler commented Orleans County is forwarding their information to us on their 1537 agreements. That is not yet in presentation form.

Mrs. Ferratella stated that at the last meeting Ms. Deal had asked about doing a cost benefit analysis. Has that been done yet? Mrs. Flaitz replied she has not completed that.

B. *Educational Outreach* – Mrs. Flaitz informed the committee that she contacted Corning Community College about the possibilities for educational outreach. They have said that they will post all civil service exams and job postings. We also talked about the possibility of paid or unpaid internships. The college informed her that college credit for that would need to be part of the student's life experience portfolio. She stated that the college will let them set up an information table during a lunch break and we could talk to students about the position of Assessor. If the college can sponsor an internship, we will send them job duty information and they will then turn that over to one of their department heads to see if credit would be available to students. With regard to an informational table, we would need to do that

before May 8, 2015. Otherwise, we will need to wait until the fall. Mrs. Flaitz asked if someone wants to help her put together some information, we may be able to do the table before May 8th.

Ms. Deal commented that it may be better to do the information table in the fall as May is madness for the assessors. We would then have enough time to put together more comprehensive, college-friendly information.

Ms. Deal and Ms. Smalt volunteered to help Mrs. Flaitz put together information for the college students.

Mrs. Ferratella asked what about the mentor program that was mentioned at the last meeting? Mrs. Flaitz replied that program is offered through our State Association. Ms. Deal commented they pair a more seasoned assessor with someone who is just coming into the field.

C. *1537 Agreements* – Mrs. Flaitz stated that Steve Butchko, Wayne Town Supervisor, has indicated that he would be all for a 1537 agreement and he would like to get one set up. His assessor has extended his date of retirement until April 2016. He also indicated that we could do our presentation any second Tuesday of the month.

Mrs. Flaitz stated that we had a 1537 agreement with the City of Corning for data input. That contract only lasted a little over a month and we put in about 3 hours of work. When we put the agreement together, we did it for a term of five years. The total amount charged was \$107.

D. *Presentation to Towns/Villages* – Mrs. Flaitz stated that she would prefer to do presentations to more than one town at a time. Mrs. Ferratella asked Mrs. Flaitz to check to see if any other towns would be willing to go to Wayne for the presentation. Mrs. Flaitz commented that she could also check about doing the presentation at one of the Town Supervisor meetings. Ms. Engler commented another option would be the Watershed meetings.

Secretary's Note: Mrs. Flaitz was tasked with contacting other towns to see if they would be interested in traveling to the Town of Wayne for a presentation. She also will investigate making presentations at Town Supervisors meetings and Watershed meetings.

Mrs. Flaitz distributed and reviewed the presentation entitled “Assessment Equity and Cyclical Reassessment – What You Should Know”. Ms. Engler stated she had put this together for a presentation they made to the Town of Cohocton in February. Mrs. Flaitz stated they also did a presentation in Bath a couple of weeks ago. She would like to add a section on 1537 agreements. This presentation contains generalized information about the things that the County has available, or what we can do to assist the towns. We also would like to update page 17 to keep that more generic, rather than town specific.

The suggestion was made by the committee to label the headings on the table on page 17 to make it easier to read.

IV. OTHER BUSINESS

A. *General Discussion* – Mr. Bailey asked is the County interested in taking over the entire assessing duties for a town? Mrs. Flaitz replied there would be a chargeback to the Town. Mr. Hailey asked is it possible that the County would totally take it over? Mrs. Flaitz replied the data collector would be a County position. Mr. Alger replied they would work for the Town and be on the County's payroll. Mrs. Flaitz commented regarding the Town of Bath, they will need to look for an outside firm to do the reval project. That is too big a job for one person to do. The assessment job could be taken over. Discussion followed.

V. TASKS

- ❖ Mrs. Flaitz will make updates to the presentation for local officials.
- ❖ Mrs. Flaitz will create a contract for 1537 agreements for assessment and data collection.
- ❖ Mrs. Flaitz will work on a cost analysis.
- ❖ Ms. Deal and Ms. Smalt will work with Mrs. Flaitz on putting together information for college students for an information table to be set up at Corning Community College in the fall.

- ❖ Mrs. Flaitz will look at contacting towns to try to make presentations to multiple towns, rather than doing individually.

VI. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, June 30, 2015, at 10:00 a.m. in the Legislative Committee Room.

MOTION: TO ADJOURN MADE BY MR. CALKINS. SECONDED BY MS. DEAL AND DULY CARRIED.

Respectfully Submitted by

Amanda L. Chapman
Deputy Clerk
Steuben County Legislature

STEBEN COUNTY ADHOC MUNICIPAL COORDINATION COMMITTEE

Tuesday, August 18, 2015

9:00 a.m.

*Legislative Committee Room
Steuben County Office Building
Bath, New York*

****MINUTES****

PRESENT: Carol A. Ferratella, Chair
Jack K. Wheeler, County Manager
Wendy Flaitz, Director, Real Property Tax Service Agency
Wendy Jordan, Assessment Data Supervisor, Real Property Tax Service Agency
Katherine Deal, Assessor, Towns of Corning, Cameron, Hornellsville and Prattsburgh
Connie Luckner, Assessor, Town of Erwin
Gary Calkins, Assessor, Town of Woodhull
Laura Smalt, Assessor, Towns of Canisteo, Dansville, Howard and Wheeler
RaeAnne Engler, Real Property Analyst, New York State Office of Real Property
Katherine Hughes, Supervisor, Town of Caton
Stephen Butchko, Supervisor, Town of Wayne

OTHERS: Hal Bailey, Councilman, Town of Bath

ABSENT: Robin K. Lattimer, Legislator, District 3

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Mrs. Ferratella at 9:00 a.m.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION APPROVING THE MINUTES OF THE APRIL 28, 2015, MEETING MADE BY MS. DEAL, SECONDED BY MS. ENGLER AND DULY CARRIED.

III. NEW BUSINESS

A. Data Collector Position and Exam – Mrs. Flaitz stated the exam has been ordered and it is scheduled to be administered on June 4, 2016. When given, it will be a couple of months before the results come back and we can get somebody hired. She noted that she is nervous about that timeline because she's hoping to retire at the end of October next year. She asked if they should consider contracting it out until then?

Mr. Wheeler stated unfortunately, we are at civil service's mercy. One option would be to do a provisional appointment, but he prefers not doing that. The problem with provisional appointees is, while there is a lot of potential for applicants, if they aren't successful on the test (scoring in the top three) they couldn't be appointed permanently. Ideally, the contract is a possibility but also not a guarantee.

Mrs. Ferratella asked would you contract with an individual or are there companies out there? Mr. Wheeler stated generally we would have to contract with a firm. Only when the scope is narrowly defined and the dollar amount is low can we contract directly with an individual. Mrs. Flaitz stated there are local appraisal companies out there who handle this type of work so we can look into that. Discussion followed.

Mr. Wheeler stated we would need to talk to 3 companies and obtain quotes. Depending on the cost, they may potentially have to do an RFP. Mrs. Ferratella asked is there enough money in the budget for this? Mr. Wheeler stated not in the 2015 budget; in 2016, we have included a vacant funded data collector position, so there would be money in the salary line that could be transferred if needed. Discussion followed.

B. Data Collector Contract with Municipalities – Mrs. Flaitz stated she developed two different contracts. With the first option, the data collector would be doing arms-length sales across the county. The other option would be for the data collector to collect building permits and do collection in municipalities as they had time. These contracts would be between the county and the municipalities to allow the county to collect that data.

Mrs. Ferratella asked do you think the municipalities would have an issue signing these? Mrs. Flaitz stated she's hoping that because it is only sales collection, all municipalities would sign at least the arms-length sales contract. Ms. Engler stated many of the municipalities have a hard time with the data collection so she doesn't think they would have a problem signing. Ms. Smalt stated she believes if the assessors explain to the town board what they are doing, they shouldn't have a problem. Discussion followed. ***Mrs. Flaitz will have the contracts reviewed by the Law Department.***

C. Power Point Presentation to Municipalities – Mrs. Flaitz stated before showing the presentation to the towns, she thinks she should discuss RPT Law 1537 with them. This law is regarding optional county services to show what is available for joint services agreements with the County RPTSA. Mrs. Ferratella stated so part of this would be educating the town boards. Mrs. Flaitz stated yes; she reviewed the draft power point presentation. It really is an education for the town board.

Ms. Hughes stated does this mean that the assessor would give the data to the collector and not have to do collection anymore? Mrs. Flaitz stated not really; the data collector is utilized more for when there is a sale. The updates, as far as additions or property upgrades, would still be done by the assessor. Discussion followed.

Mrs. Flaitz stated they have added a slide regarding the optional services, what each of them is, and what can be provided; also, what isn't offered by the county yet. Mr. Wheeler noted section C in 1537 states that the towns would need to pass a local law subject to permissive referendum before they can even consider pursuing these optional services. Mrs. Flaitz stated she will add a slide to include that information.

Mrs. Ferratella asked is there a timeline available for the towns? Mrs. Flaitz stated it depends on when we can get the data collector on board. Ms. Deal stated if we contract with a firm, they will have more manpower so the information can be collected quicker. We just need to make sure it is being done the same way consistently.

Mr. Calkins asked how many sales occur on average per month? Mrs. Flaitz stated there are about 2,000 sales annually in the county, but not all of them are arms-length. Mr. Calkins asked is one person going to be able to handle all of that? It sounds like a big job and if the town is not at 100 percent, there is a lot of traveling involved with that. Mrs. Flaitz stated you may be able to consolidate towns and handle a group of them in a month.

Ms. Engler stated maybe they could do a protocol for verification forms being sent out. Ms. Hughes asked how much overall cost is this to the county? Is there a savings elsewhere or is this a cost to the taxpayers? Mr. Wheeler stated the position would be about \$70,000 including fringe. Ms. Deal stated if they do an RFP, they might want to include an amount per parcel to stay within the budget. Mr. Wheeler stated that's a good idea. Mrs. Flaitz asked should we start setting up appointments? Mr. Wheeler stated we should get the quotes done first, or get the RFP rolling, before setting up the appointments.

D. County Contracted Assessing – Mrs. Flaitz stated she completed a cost analysis on what we can do with county assessing. She noted the Chairman asked if we could find some municipalities who would be willing to allow us to do the assessing and whether or not it would be cost effective. She spoke with the other counties who do assessing for towns and learned that they include a percentage of the Director's salary and data clerk salary in the total cost. So, using the base salary and fringe of the data collector position, plus the percentage for the Director's salary and the Data Clerk Salary, the expense total is \$73,330. Using the town of Wayne and City of Corning as an example, there are a total of 5,870 parcels, which brings the cost per parcel to \$12.49. The current cost to Wayne is \$15.63 per parcel and for Corning it is \$23.73 per parcel, so it would be a savings. We believe one assessor can handle 6,000 to 7,000 parcels. Then we looked at quadrants and found it was still cost effective. Ms. Deal stated her only concern is finding a qualified assessor to handle that many parcels for that salary.

Mrs. Flaitz stated she's not sure where we will be able to go with this. In talking with the municipalities Bradford might be interested as would Hornby down the road but there is interest out there. Mrs. Ferratella stated it sounds like it would be cost prohibitive if we do under 3 municipalities.

E. Assessor Contract with Municipalities – This still needs to be reviewed by the law department. This would cover a county position of assessor. It would still be the municipality's responsibility if they ended up in court.

F. Corning Community College – Ms. Jordan stated we spoke about doing a quick palm card that they can look at and see what they need to do. This card would direct them to a website where we can develop answers to various questions and show them what the qualifications would be. We are looking for more input as far as what you think would be a good way to present the information to the students. Maybe set up a table in the lobby just to see what kind of interest there is. Also, do we want to create a website? Ms. Deal stated she thinks a website would be good; one that is college kid friendly. The only catch is the prerequisites to become an assessor are still high. Ms. Engler asked if she should look at a statewide internship program? Ms. Deal stated that would be wonderful. Ms. Jordan stated it is still a work in progress.

G. Update on Bath's Revaluation Project – Mrs. Flaitz stated she's been working with them on this project for several months. She reviewed their RFP and made some edits. The town board met on August 10th and approved it, so the RFP has been released. Somewhere around the first part of September they are holding the informational meeting for interested companies and they are scheduled to review the RFPs in November. They still need to come up with the money though. Mrs. Ferratella asked how many companies do this type of work in New York State? Mrs. Flaitz stated there are at least 40 or 50 of them. Discussion followed.

H. Impact of Low Equalization Rates – Ms. Engler stated the short answer to the question of "what impact does low equalization rates have on a municipality" is none. The equalization project is to build uniformity back into the town. In general, low equalization rates imply there is a lot of chaos in the town and bad values. The shifts are dependent on the relative change in other aspects.

IV. OTHER BUSINESS

A. STG – Online Assessment Data – Mrs. Flaitz stated we've had continual problems with this tool and our IT Department had to order a new firewall. Anytime a municipality came into our website, the system would do a port-forwarding. The solution was to order a new firewall for our server and that should also help with the outpost. It is cheaper for the towns if we put the outpost on our server and they can access it from there. That's the update on that.

Mrs. Flaitz stated they are also looking at putting up photos of the properties online. She noted that the Town of Erwin has contacted her in regards to their STG contract and they would like to join with the County, but only if the County will add photos to their site.

Next meeting date – October 6th at 9:00 a.m.

MOTION TO ADJOURN MADE BY MS. DEAL, SECONDED BY MS. HUGHES AND DULY CARRIED.

Respectfully submitted by,
Brenda K. Mori
Clerk of the Legislature