

**STEBEN COUNTY ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE**

*Tuesday, April 9, 2019*

*9:00 a.m.*

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

**\*\*MINUTES\*\***

<b>COMMITTEE:</b>	Brian C. Schu, Chair Hilda T. Lando	Scott J. Van Etten, Vice Chair Robin K. Lattimer	Carol A. Ferratella
<b>STAFF:</b>	Jack K. Wheeler Judy Hunter Wendy Jordan Craig Patrick Tim Marshall	Amy Dlugos Sue Cranmer Cody Ryan Jennifer Prossick	Pat Donnelly Jim Allard Andy Morse Tammy Hurd-Harvey
<b>LEGISLATORS:</b>	Joseph J. Hauryski John V. Malter	Kelly H. Fitzpatrick Robert V. Nichols	K. Michael Hanna Frederick G. Potter
<b>OTHERS:</b>	Alison Hunt		

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Schu called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. and asked Ms. Lattimer to lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

**II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**MOTION: APPROVING THE MINUTES OF THE MARCH 12, 2019, MEETING MADE BY MRS. LANDO. SECONDED BY MRS. FERRATELLA. ALL BEING IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIES 5-0.**

**III. DEPARTMENT REQUESTS**

A. Purchasing

1. **Award Polyethylene Bag Bid** – Mr. Morse recommended awarding the bid for polyethylene bags to the low bidder, Interboro for low-density bags, and Economy for high-density bags.

**MOTION: AWARDING THE BID FOR POLYETHYLENE BAGS TO THE LOW BIDDERS AS FOLLOWS: LOW-DENSITY BAGS TO INTERBORO AND HIGH-DENSITY BAGS TO ECONOMY MADE BY MR. VAN ETTEN. SECONDED BY MS. LATTIMER. ALL BEING IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIES 5-0.**

2. **Award Custodial Paper Products Bid** – Mr. Morse stated that he will present the bids for custodial paper products at the May meeting. They requested samples from the bidders and are still awaiting some samples.

3. **Contract Renewal – Auctioneering Services** – Mr. Morse requested authorization to renew the contract with PIRRUNG Auctioneers for the Annual Surplus Auction. This the final year of a four-year contract. All of the terms and conditions remain the same; with a 10 percent buyer's premium.

**MOTION: AUTHORIZING THE PURCHASING DIRECTOR TO RENEW THE CONTRACT WITH PIRRUNG AUCTIONEERS FOR THE ANNUAL COUNTY SURPLUS AUCTION UNDER THE SAME TERMS AND CONDITIONS MADE BY MS. LATTIMER. SECONDED BY MRS. LANDO. ALL BEING IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIES 5-0.**

B. Commissioner of Finance

1. **Property Tax Foreclosure Abstractor RFP** – Mrs. Hurd-Harvey stated their Title Searcher, Cindy Smith, will be retiring at the end of the year and they put out a request for proposals for a property tax foreclosure abstractor. They received two proposals; Independent Title out of Syracuse and Corning Abstracts out of Horseheads. Both do county foreclosures and both contract with Phillips Lytle. Independent Title's rate is \$110.00 per search and Corning Abstract is \$100 per search. She recommended awarding to both. The plan is to contract with each for one year and they will split the number of parcels between the two and see how it goes.

**MOTION: AWARDING THE RFP FOR PROPERTY TAX FORECLOSURE ABSTRACTOR TO THE FOLLOWING: INDEPENDENT TITLE FOR \$110.00 PER SEARCH AND CORNING ABSTRACT FOR \$100.00 PER SEARCH AND ENTERING INTO A CONTRACT WITH EACH FOR A TERM OF ONE YEAR MADE BY MR. VAN ETTEN. SECONDED BY MRS. FERRATELLA. ALL BEING IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIES 5-0.**

C. Real Property Tax Service Agency

1. **County Assessing** – Mr. Hauryski stated he had put this topic on his to-do list quite some time ago. Back when he first started on the Board, we paid \$25,000 for a study, which was very informational. There was a presentation to the Full Board and then it sat on a shelf and nothing ever came of it. He stated he is not afraid to tackle this issue and it is long overdue to look at it. He has his own recommendation that he will propose, but he will leave the decision to the committee. He formed the Ad Hoc Municipal Coordination Committee, which is chaired by Mrs. Ferratella.

Mrs. Ferratella stated the committee is made up of staff consisting of Mr. Wheeler, Ms. Jordan and Ms. Edwards. We also have assessors; Katherine Gabrielle, Laura Snow and Rhonda Darling, representing various areas of the County. In addition, we also have Rae Ann Engler who represents the NYS Office of Real Property Tax Services.

Mr. Hauryski stated this ad hoc committee has had about four meetings and have really dug into this in great depth. In the materials you were emailed, one of the towns on the list has never even seen a reval and he questions why. All of the towns face this issue. He is asking this committee to take a look at this and move toward getting the County to a fair system and not having so much discrepancy. Mr. Hauryski commented his recommendation would be to do the referendum for countywide assessing. Under our Charter, a referendum now requires the majority of the two cities and the majority of the towns to carry. He will leave this to the committee to decide. His main concern is that he wants this done right.

Mr. Malter asked if we do a referendum and it passes, does that obligate the County to install an assessing department? Mr. Hauryski replied he thinks that the referendum would be designed to give us an effective date down the road as we would not be able to do this in a matter of months. He is talking at least a year out. Mr. Malter stated so the only thing we could do is put in a timeframe? Mr. Wheeler replied yes.

Ms. Jordan explained we did a lot of analysis of the pros and cons of both countywide assessing through a mandatory referendum and shared services with one or more municipalities using 1537 agreements. One of the issues we have is the inequity with assessing and the standardization of how assessing is done. One of the pros of countywide assessing is you would have uniformity in the way it is done. Additionally, an assessor would be available full-time during regular office hours and all of the towns would be at 100 percent equalization. Being at 100 percent equalization would provide a clearer understanding for the property owners. Ms. Jordan stated the cons of a referendum for countywide assessing would be that some of the towns would not buy into it and that could create some divisions. We currently have quite a few qualified assessors, but there would be the potential of losing them.

Ms. Jordan stated the pro of shared services via 1537 agreements is that we do have some towns that would be agreeable to this and would sign on. Mr. Malter asked how many towns would be interested? Ms. Jordan replied we have quite a few. Ms. Lattimer commented when she was reading the minutes, she had a hard time summarizing the survey. She asked Ms. Jordan to give the committee a summary of that survey. Ms. Jordan

stated a lot of the hesitation is not knowing the cost and there are a lot of details that we cannot provide at this time. Mr. Wheeler stated some of the towns said they were not interested, but many indicated they would be interested depending upon the cost. The City of Corning, and Towns of Campbell and Thurston are more willing to discuss, as long as their costs are not increasing. If you opt to do this with shared services, we would have to find the right mix of municipalities and parcel counts so that the County does not absorb a tremendous amount of risk.

Ms. Jordan commented the appointed assessors terms are coming up at the end of September. Mr. Wheeler stated this is a good time to talk about this. If you opted to do a referendum, you could interrupt the terms. If you go with shared services, now is the time to do this with assessor appointments coming up and with a few retirements.

Mrs. Lando asked can you start out doing with shared services and then move toward countywide assessing? Mr. Wheeler replied two counties, Tompkins and Nassau, do full countywide assessing through a referendum. There are a number of other counties that are looking at it. Cattaraugus is doing a little at a time through shared services, however, to Chairman Hauryski's point, this does not solve the revaluation issue. One of the cons of having 1537 agreements is that you cannot force revals, but you can incentivize the towns and make it easier for them to do revals. Without a countywide assessing referendum, you cannot force them to do the revals.

Ms. Lattimer stated with the 1537 agreements, she worries about how easy it would be for the municipalities to jump out after going through the process of adding staff. Mr. Wheeler replied there is risk on both sides as we could also jump out. The agreements are not set in stone and there is risk.

Mr. Malter commented the last time a reval was done countywide was in the 1980's. Mr. Wheeler stated his understanding is that the towns did not have to accept the reval. Mr. Potter replied that is correct; some of the towns did not take the full 100 percent.

Ms. Fitzpatrick asked for those towns that answered no to the survey, did they indicate their reasons? Ms. Jordan replied they are either happy with how things are, or they have elected assessors. Mr. Van Etten commented there is a problem with the elected assessors and we fought that battle in Caton. Many of the towns with three-person assessing boards do not realize that when they cycle out, they will not be able to find anyone to fill the vacancy, and then it will be an issue. Mr. Wheeler stated that is what is happening in Cattaraugus.

Mr. Van Etten stated when he was looking through the presentation materials, he noticed the average cost was \$15 - \$18 per parcel. Why is the cost for Corning \$20 per parcel? Mr. Wheeler replied their assessor is an employee and they also have a lot of commercial properties in Corning.

Mr. Malter asked with regard to the grievance board, there would be one for the entire County? Would that be centrally located or regional? Mrs. Ferratella replied the committee had talked about regional. Mr. Malter asked what would be the makeup of the grievance board? Mr. Wheeler replied assessors and people in the town hall. His concern is with the tax certioraris. Under this, we would be in charge of those and that is a lot of litigation. Mr. Van Etten asked would the towns pay the court costs? Mr. Wheeler replied you could set up a chargeback structure. Mr. Donnelly explained right now the towns pay their own defense costs. They can apply to the County to participate in that.

Ms. Lattimer stated with the initiation of a countywide assessing project and having one grievance board or regional grievance board, for those towns not doing a reval, it would be a real problem. She doesn't know how one grievance board would handle the amount of feedback. Are some of the counties doing revals on a regular basis? Mr. Wheeler replied the objective is to encourage the ones who are very far off to conduct revals and get thosetowns not at full value up to 100 percent equalization.

Mr. Malter asked do we already have a database? Mr. Wheeler replied yes, all of the assessors are using the same software. Mr. Van Etten commented the issue from the beginning was that one town could stop a referendum. Now with the charter, it would be worth floating it as a referendum. If it doesn't pass, then we could certainly do

the 1537 agreements. He stated he found it interesting that Erwin was a no. Ms. Jordan stated Erwin is happy with their assessor and she is in the office every day.

Mr. Malter asked would some of the current assessors be offered positions? Mr. Wheeler replied they would need to take a Civil Service test, but theoretically he would hope for that. Mrs. Lando asked do we really need upwards of eight staff for countywide assessing? Mr. Wheeler replied yes.

Mrs. Ferratella commented one of the challenges is we need to communicate the benefits of this to the residents and the municipalities. Mr. Van Etten stated he agrees, but he has sat through enough meetings where they have been trying to explain something like this and it is difficult.

Mr. Malter asked if we go with the 1537 agreements and start the process, how many staff would we need? Mr. Wheeler stated he modeled out some barebones figures. We would need to find the right municipalities to commit based on parcel counts in order to find a savings to all. Mr. Van Etten commented Option #2 seemed the most likely if we go with the 1537 agreements. Mr. Wheeler stated that is why if you opt to go this route, or the referendum, we need to start the education and start the legal work. With the 1537 agreements, we need to get firm commitments from the interested municipalities by an effective date.

Mr. Malter asked if we do this, do we have room for the additional staff and are we prepared for that? Mr. Wheeler replied we will find a way to make it work. We do not have a lot of space, so it would be an impediment but not insurmountable. Mr. Van Etten commented with the 1537 agreements, the majority of their time would be spent at the municipalities. Ms. Lattimer commented there will be a lot of data collection. Mr. Wheeler stated staff would be on the road a lot. Mr. Jordan stated with the other counties, they do have a presence at the town level.

Mr. Van Etten asked if we do countywide assessing. Does the State provide any funding? Mr. Wheeler replied he has put a little of this in the shared services plan. Ms. Engler has indicated that monetary support for revals is dwindling and he thinks that our expectation should be that there would be no funding. There is money available, but the Governor wants the villages to consolidate with the towns, not a consolidation of one service.

Chairman Hauryski stated that they would hold a Chairmen's Meeting prior to the Legislative Meeting to continue discussion on Countywide assessing.

*Secretary's Note: Chairmen's Meeting to be scheduled for Monday, April 22, 2019, at 8:30 a.m. for continued discussion of Countywide assessing.*

D. Personnel

1. **Sheriff's Office – Reclassification** – Mr. Wheeler stated they are requesting the reclassification of one (1) vacant Deputy Sheriff Sergeant position, Grade XIII to one (1) Senior Criminal Investigator, Grade XIV. This effectuates the settlement the Legislature agreed to.

**MOTION: RECLASSIFYING ONE (1) VACANT DEPUTY SHERIFF SERGEANT POSITION, GRADE XIII TO ONE (1) SENIOR CRIMINAL INVESTIGATOR POSITION, GRADE XIV IN THE SHERIFF'S OFFICE MADE BY MRS. FERRATELLA. SECONDED BY MR. VAN ETTEN. ALL BEING IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIES 5-0.**

E. County Manager

1. **Position Reclassification** – Mr. Wheeler reviewed the spreadsheet showing the position reclassifications that have been done since 2017. Mr. Van Etten commented this is very informative and helpful. Mr. Wheeler stated while we are adding positions and cost, he outlined on the spreadsheet those positions that have been mandated. Mr. Swackhamer asked what is your best guess on the amount of State reimbursement we are getting for positions? Mr. Wheeler replied we average about 55 percent reimbursement for the Social Services

positions. The positions for Raise the Age and Hurrell-Harring are 100 percent reimbursed and we will be billing for those.

2. **Promotional Video** – Mr. Wheeler stated a couple of months ago he had presented a proposal he had received from a company offering to do a free promotional video of the County. He has had a number of meetings with Mrs. Dlugos, Mr. Costello from the Conference & Visitors' Bureau, and Mr. Johnson from the Industrial Development Agency. We are suggesting that if we split the cost, we could do our own video and host it for \$3,000 per participant. We would then be able to control everything and have the content we want. Both Mr. Johnson and Mr. Costello were concerned about a company reaching out to our businesses and tourism partners on our behalf. The recommendation from our group is to pass on the free offer and explore us hosting and controlling our own video. We have a lot of drone footage of the County that we could use. There would be no advertising. Mr. Wheeler stated no action is needed by the committee.

**MOTION: TO ADJOURN REGULAR SESSION AND RECONVENE IN EXECUTIVE SESSION PURSUANT TO PUBLIC OFFICERS' LAW, ARTICLE 7§ 105.1.F. THE MEDICAL, FINANCIAL, CREDIT OR EMPLOYMENT HISTORY OF A PARTICULAR PERSON OR CORPORATION, OR MATTERS LEADING TO THE APPOINTMENT, EMPLOYMENT, PROMOTION, DEMOTION, DISCIPLINE, SUSPENSION, DISMISSAL OR REMOVAL OF A PARTICULAR PERSON OR CORPORATION MADE BY MRS. FERRATELLA. SECONDED BY MR. VAN ETTEN. ALL BEING IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIES 5-0.**

**MOTION: TO ADJOURN EXECUTIVE SESSION AND RECONVENE IN REGULAR SESSION MADE BY MS. LATTIMER. SECONDED BY MRS. FERRATELLA. ALL BEING IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIES 5-0.**  
**MOTION: TO ADJOURN MADE BY MR. VAN ETTEN. SECONDED BY MS. LATTIMER. ALL BEING IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIES 5-0.**

Respectfully Submitted by

Amanda L. Chapman  
Deputy Clerk  
Steuben County Legislature

**\*\*NEXT MEETING SCHEDULED FOR\*\***  
**Tuesday, May 14, 2019**  
**Legislative Committee Room**  
**9:00 a.m.**

**Please send agenda items to the Clerk of the Legislature's Office**  
**NO LATER THAN NOON**  
**Wednesday, May 1, 2019.**