

**STEBEN COUNTY AGRICULTURE, INDUSTRY AND PLANNING COMMITTEE**

*Wednesday, September 2, 2020*

*9:33 a.m.*

*Legislative Chamber, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Annex Building  
Bath, New York*

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

**COMMITTEE:** Robin K. Lattimer, Chair  
Paul E. Van Caesele

Hilda T. Lando  
Scott J. Van Etten

Aaron I. Mullen

**STAFF:** Jack K. Wheeler  
Rob Wolverton  
Emily Simms

Christopher Brewer  
Tammy Hurd-Harvey

Brenda Scotchmer  
Amy Dlugos

**LEGISLATORS:** Carol A. Ferratella  
Steven P. Maio  
Gary D. Swackhamer

Kelly H. Fitzpatrick  
John V. Malter

Jeffrey P. Horton  
Frederick G. Potter

**ABSENT:** K. Michael Hanna

**OTHERS:** Tess McKinley, Executive Director, Cornell Cooperative Extension  
Jeff Parker, District Manager, Steuben County Soil & Water Conservation District  
Mary Perham

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Ms. Lattimer called the meeting to order at 9:33 a.m. and asked Mr. Mullen to lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

**II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**MOTION: APPROVING THE MINUTES OF THE AUGUST 5, 2020, MEETING MADE BY MR. MULLEN. SECONDED BY MR. LANDO. ALL BEING IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIES 5-0. (MR. VAN ETTEN VOTING MEMBER)**

**III. DEPARTMENTAL REQUESTS**

A. Planning

1. **Commencing the Review Period for Agricultural District No. 1** – Mrs. Dlugos requested authorization to commence the review period for Agricultural District No. 1. This is the eight-year review and the district is located in the southwest corner of the county.

**MOTION: COMMENCING THE REVIEW PERIOD FOR AGRICULTURAL DISTRICT NO. 1 MADE BY MR. VAN ETTEN. SECONDED BY MR. MULLEN. ALL BEING IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIES 5-0. (MR. VAN ETTEN VOTING MEMBER) Resolution Required.**

**IV. OUTSIDE AGENCIES**

A. Cornell Cooperative Extension

1. **2021 Budget Presentation** – Ms. McKinley briefly reviewed her PowerPoint presentation with the committee. Steuben County has 1,500 farms; we are the number one producer of hogs and the number three producer of cattle. We have acquired three agriculture teams through Cornell University and now have access to 16 specialists. These specialists are able to provide one-on-one education or classes and are also able to go onsite. Our 4-H Program consists of 17 clubs with 440 total youth. They do a lot of educational classes and the kids make public presentations and participate in community service activities. She stated 4-H is not just about

agriculture. We have STEM education, robotics and sewing. Ms. McKinley stated they have one financial educator who is partly funded by the County and partly funded by United Way. We have other programs that are not funded by County appropriations and those include two nutrition programs; SNAP education and FMAP. Through these programs we were able to support 9,000 people last year.

Ms. McKinley stated during COVID we gave out hand sanitizer and masks that we had received from NYS Agriculture & Markets, to 80 farms. We did everything online and were able to help our farms and agribusinesses with safety support, PPE and Corona Virus food assistance. We still did our farm visits and also did seed giveaways and container garden giveaways.

Ms. McKinley stated I am requesting \$409,000, which represents flat funding for three years in a row. We have a \$1.9 million budget. I appreciate the County's support and that is so important because our other funding is regulated. Your funding helps us support the county with what it needs. This \$409,000 pays for the agriculture teams, our 4-H program as well as our operating expenses. For 2021 we will be receiving decreased funding from other sources and it is very likely that we will be losing 20 percent of our State funding. We will also see decreased funding for our after-school programs. Ms. McKinley stated we want to continue to grow our programs and we will continue working with people online and via Zoom. We would like to expand our 4-H program into more non-agricultural avenues. She stated we will continue to advocate for increased funding and we have received the same funding from the State for the last twenty years.

Mrs. Lando asked how many schools are involved with 4-H? Ms. McKinley replied 4-H is not at the schools, except for the robotics program. Everything else is led at home. We do, however, have three schools with an FFA Program.

Mr. Mullen asked can you explain the direction that you are looking to move 4-H? Ms. McKinley explained we are not moving completely away from agriculture for 4-H. We want to increase the amount of youth that use our program. We serve all youth and are helping them get ready for the real world. Mr. Mullen asked what types of programs would you be looking at? Ms. McKinley stated we have a robotics and STEM program. There is a dog handling club and also a craft/sewing club. Our plan is to do more STEM and robotics.

Mrs. Ferratella asked what is America Saves Week? Ms. McKinley replied that is a week where we encourage Americans to have more savings. Approximately 40 percent of Americans do not have savings.

Mrs. Lando asked is Cornell University helping with financing? Ms. McKinley stated they are having a lot of issues with funding and have let us know to expect the 20 percent cut from the State. So far our funding from Cornell University is level.

Mr. Van Caesele asked what is the return on investment? Is this affecting the growth of the economy? Mrs. Lando replied I don't know how you can quantify that? Ms. Lattimer stated one way is the number of kids that are involved in the 4-H clubs. Ms. McKinley stated it depends on the program. With 4-H, a lot of the 4-Hers are likely to end up with basic skills that a lot of people don't have because we help them to be more independent. With our agricultural programs, we have millions of dollars that we support. We do have to look into how to specifically quantify that.

Mr. Swackhamer asked why didn't you put in a reduction in your budget? The State is reducing our budget. I would have thought you would have reduced your budget. Ms. McKinley replied the reason why is we did ask for a flat budget. Our costs have gone up and we are also getting reductions and our services are very needed. We still need to help children and farmers. Mr. Swackhamer asked what services are we going to cut from the County to support your budget? I would expect that you would come in with a budget that is lower and I would expect that from any outside agency who is presenting a budget request to the County.

Mrs. Lando commented we are very lucky to have 2 skilled specialists that are shared; but two of the 16 specialists are housed here in the county and that is a big benefit for Cornell Cooperative Extension and the

county. Ms. McKinley commented dairy has been a big issue because of the decreased dairy prices and we appreciate having the dairy specialist on site when we get questions.

Mr. Van Etten commented at least Ms. McKinley did not request an increase. I agree that we have an issue with our own internal budget and we will be making decisions. Mr. Swackhamer stated I just want to make people aware that we are in the same situation.

Mr. Horton stated with what I do for my own business I always hear people saying “let’s call Cooperative Extension”. People are always calling them and asking questions.

**V. OTHER BUSINESS**

A. *NYS COVID-19 Emergency Declaration* – Mr. Van Caesele stated I was thinking about it and as the days have passed by it seems to me that we are accepting the status quo and there is no definitive end date in sight. It is hard to pinpoint, but at the same time I worry that political bias will drag this out longer than necessary. It is time to put together a resolution to remind people and let them know that we are still moving forward and trying to get things back to how they were before. We need to keep things in perspective with other viruses and the relationship to that. He thanked Mrs. Scotchmer for her assistance in preparing this. Mr. Van Caesele read the following proposed resolution into the minutes:

**TITLE: URGING THE NEW YORK STATE LEGISLATURE TO TERMINATE THE EMERGENCY DECLARATION ESTABLISHED TO ADDRESS THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC.**

**WHEREAS**, the onset of the COVID-19 crisis in March 2020 demanded an ability for the Governor to respond quickly to a rapidly changing crisis through the issuance of Executive Orders to set restrictions and regulations to help protect the health and welfare of the public; and

**WHEREAS**, these Executive Orders included New York on Pause mandating the closure of all non-essential businesses throughout New York State on March 22, 2020; and

**WHEREAS**, after flattening the curve on new infections, the Governor implemented New York Forward in May 2020, beginning the process of reopening non-essential businesses utilizing a regional, phased-in approach based upon each particular region’s ability to meet and maintain seven key public health metrics; and

**WHEREAS**, Steuben County was assigned to the Southern Tier Region by the Governor which includes the counties of Broome, Chemung, Chenango, Delaware, Schuyler, Tioga and Tompkins; and

**WHEREAS**, New York State has maintained infection rates below 1 percent for over three straight weeks with the Southern Tier Region maintaining an infection rate below 1 percent since May 2020; and

**WHEREAS**, while COVID-19 is still present in New York State, it can no longer be considered a threat to the extent of having to continue under a declaration of a state of emergency; and

**WHEREAS**, the Steuben County Legislature believes its residents can continue maintaining low infection rates in the County through its own governance and oversight, working in conjunction with its local municipalities, without further encroachment on the constitutional rights of Steuben County’s citizens by New York State under the guise of a state of emergency; and

**WHEREAS**, Steuben County residents and businesses would like to get back to their normal lives, not a “new normal” or “reimagined” life yet to be determined through the extension of the New York on Pause Executive Order.

**NOW THEREFORE, BE IT**

**RESOLVED**, the Steuben County Legislature urges the New York State Legislature to reconvene as soon as possible to terminate the Emergency Declaration established to address COVID-19 and, by concurrent resolutions, terminate the Executive Orders issued by the Governor during the Emergency Declaration; and be it further

**RESOLVED**, the Steuben County Legislature urges the Governor and New York State Legislature to restore the rights of local governments and their residents and allow counties to complete the reopening of New York under guidelines set by each individual county rather than through the Governor's Executive Orders; and be it further

**RESOLVED**, certified copies of this resolution shall be forwarded to the Governor, the leadership of the New York State Legislature, and all others deemed necessary and proper.

Mr. Mullen seconded Mr. Van Caesele's proposed resolution.

Ms. Lattimer stated the intention was to advance this resolution to the Full Legislature for consideration so she wanted it to go through committee. She stated she had not seen it prior to this morning, but you did a very good job of being diplomatic while pressing the issue in the interest of representing our constituents so we can govern ourselves. We are not New York City or the North Country and we have demonstrated that we have done a pretty good job of flattening the curve. Our small businesses need the latitude and flexibility to save their livelihoods.

Mr. Van Etten stated this was very well written. I agree basically with what it says to let local municipalities manage it and the Governor needs to take a step back. Ms. Lattimer stated two months ago the State Legislature introduced legislation to rescind the Governor's Executive Orders under the emergency. They wanted to be able to rescind and go back to local control. Nothing has happened and the legislation languished in committee. Mrs. Scotchmer stated Senator O'Mara introduced legislation and there were four bills from assembly representatives and two bills from senators trying to do just that, but the leadership will not allow the bills to reach the floor. There are four watchdog groups that collectively signed a letter requesting the Legislature rescind the Emergency Declaration. That all happened in May so perhaps they should try again.

Ms. Lattimer commented your silence means your acquiescence.

Mr. Mullen stated I would like to add that I agree and I believe this is not only an economical issue, but an issue that is related to our fundamental freedoms.

Mrs. Lando stated I am in favor as we have proven that we can get through this. Political it may be, but this is also Federal. We are much better now as the kids are going back to school and things are opening back up and it is time to do this. Before hundreds of people were dying and I would not have wanted to have been in the Governor's shoes. Now we are at a point where we can say we did it.

Mr. Swackhamer asked will you send this to other counties? Mrs. Scotchmer replied yes.

Mr. Mullen stated I appreciate Mrs. Lando's comments. As to people's decisions, we do know that people in this room did it better as Mr. Wheeler was instrumental in getting the nursing home policy changed. Ms. Lattimer commented the fact is that we, at the local level, could have done better job, but we were stymied by the State. Mr. Wheeler was the one who brought the nursing home issue to a head. Mr. Wheeler stated Mrs. Smith was also instrumental in that.

Ms. Fitzpatrick stated I agree with this resolution and I believe that the economic impact will be felt for such a long time and we will have a difficult time recovering from this virus. Yes, they are working on a vaccine, but the virus will be here forever. We need to move forward and give local people the tools to function in a normal life. Thank you Mr. Van Caesele for putting the effort into this.

Mr. Van Caesele stated at the beginning we did it so we wouldn't have a flood of ER patients, but now we want to eradicate this and that is impossible without a vaccine. We need to get back and take things in perspective with other viruses that are out there.

**VOTE ON PREVIOUS MOTION: ALL BEING IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIES 5-0. (MR. VAN ETTEN VOTING MEMBER) Resolution Required.**

**VI. PRESENTATIONS (Cont.)**

A. Steuben County Soil & Water Conservation District

1. **2021 Budget Presentation** – Mr. Parker stated his two-page budget breakdown and 2021 general operation budget were linked to the agenda. With not knowing what will happen at the State level and because the Federal grant is ending in September and we have had no luck in getting them to renegotiate, we had to cut our budget \$158,869. Currently we have two employee positions that have not been filled and we are planning on not filling them next year. There is one position that I can fill and I am hoping that State funding will help with that. We have not been able to hire anyone due to COVID. We have four staff that are dealing with the operations on a day-to-day basis; myself, Velynda, a communications assistant and a district assistant. A year ago we had six staff members.

Mr. Parker stated some of our grants will cross over from 2020 into 2021. Most of those are construction grants with a little administrative funding attached. We are down to a bare bones budget as much as we can. We are not purchasing any new vehicles or any new equipment. There are no special projects planned without State grant funding. At this point we will sit tight and see what happens. Mr. Parker reviewed the budget breakdown for 2020 and 2021. We cut our general operations budget for 2021 and we left the funding for the District Streambank Program the same. With that program, there are some projects that are not getting done this year. With the District Streambank Program, the budget is \$75,000 and there is a cost share for the individuals. There are no administrative funds that come out of this or any employee salaries. Our Board of Directors is asking the County to keep our budget flat at \$164,676 with the funding for the District Streambank Program remaining at \$75,000. The total County appropriation would be \$239,676. He stated the district came up with \$650,000 to cover our \$817,000 overall budget and we are hoping to be able to do it with some of the cuts we made and with the money that we know we are receiving from the State through the ag program at this point.

Mr. Van Etten stated Mr. Swackhamer had made an earlier comment that when outside agencies come to the County with their 2021 budgets, he expects they will come in with a decrease in their request because we, as a County, are seeing decreases in our revenues. Mr. Parker stated I understand, but without any guidance and without knowing what is going to happen, I was just basically trying to maintain what we had.

Mr. Wheeler commented the Legislature has not provided specific guidance to outside agencies to reduce their budgets by a certain amount, which is why they are submitting a flat budget. Mr. Parker explained we reduced our budget by \$158,000 so we are looking at an overall reduction, but that reduction was not to the County appropriation.

Mr. Van Etten stated my personal opinion is you guys do a heck of a lot of work with a little money and every municipality benefits and I would be more inclined to protect this budget.

Mr. Swackhamer stated I had a hard time hearing a lot of that, could you please summarize? Mr. Mullen stated Mr. Parker was not really sure what the State was going to do, but he has cut his program thinking the State will have less money and without guidance from the County, he held the County appropriation flat. Ms. Lattimer stated Mr. Parker is not cutting positions, but is leaving them vacant until things shake out.

Mr. Mullen asked Mr. Swackhamer, do you think the County should cut the Soil & Water appropriation? Mr. Swackhamer replied we will have to look at the budget and discuss it.

Mr. Potter commented originally there was no guidance from the County on a reduction. If the State and Federal governments come through with more money, since they presented a lower budget, will the County reinstate those funds in Soil and Water's Budget or just leave it?

**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 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 MR. VAN CAESEELE. SECONDED BY MRS. LANDO. ALL BEING IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIES 5-0. (MR. VAN ETTEN VOTING MEMBER)**

**MOTION: PRESENTATION OF NAMES OF PERSONS SELECTED FOR INDUCTION INTO THE STEUBEN COUNTY HALL OF FAME AND CONFIRMATION BY THE STEUBEN COUNTY LEGISLATURE MADE BY MR. VAN ETTEN. SECONDED BY MR. VAN CAESEELE. ALL BEING IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIES 5-0. (MR. VAN ETTEN VOTING MEMBER)**

**MOTION: TO ADJOURN EXECUTIVE SESSION AND RECONVENE IN REGULAR SESSION MADE BY MR. VAN ETTEN. SECONDED BY MR. MULLEN. ALL BEING IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIES 5-0. (MR. VAN ETTEN VOTING MEMBER)**

**MOTION: TO ADJOURN MADE BY MR. MULLEN. SECONDED BY MRS. LANDO. ALL BEING IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIES 5-0. (MR. VAN ETTEN VOTING MEMBER)**

Respectfully Submitted by

Amanda L. Chapman  
Deputy Clerk  
Steuben County Legislature

**\*\*NEXT MEETING SCHEDULED FOR\*\*  
Wednesday, October 7, 2020  
9:30 a.m.**

**Please send agenda items to the Clerk of the Legislature's Office  
NO LATER THAN NOON  
Wednesday, September 30, 2020**