

**Herkimer County Legislature
Ways & Means Committee Meeting
Friday, March 5, 2021
Via Zoom**

Follows Public Safety/Emergency Management and Ways & Means

Persons Attending:

Patrick E. Russell (Committee Chairman)
Kurt J. Ackerman (committee member)
Raymond Smith (committee member)
Raymond Johnson (committee member)
Frederick J. Shaw, Jr. (committee member)
Vincent J. Bono, Chairman of the Legislature
Steve Billings, Personnel Officers
Brandy Serow, Secretary to Co. Administrator
Lorraine Lewandrowski, County Attorney
Sheri Ferdula, Budget Officer/Purchasing Agent
Beth Sadlon, Director of Real Property Tax Services
Kim Enea, County Treasurer
Jennifer Casey, County Property Agent
Karin Piseck, Director of Employment & Training
Mark Magele, Superintendent of Highways

(Non-Committee Members Signed In)

Legislator Gregory Malta, Sr.
Legislator Mark Gaworecki
Legislator Robert J. Schrader
Legislator Bob D. Hollum
Legislator William E. Keeler, Sr.
Legislator John L. Brezinski
Legislator Peter F. Manno
Legislator Ray Donley
Legislator Peter Campione
Legislator William Weakley

Absent:

John P. Stephens (committee member)

Mr. Russell called the meeting to order at 11:42 a.m.

Items discussed:

WAYS AND MEANS:

1. Approve Annual Report of Real Property
2. Approve transfer in 2021 budget in Public Health
3. Approve Continuation of Operations Plan during a declared Public Emergency
4. Amend Res. No. 264 of 2020 relating to cancellation of taxes on certain properties acquired by the Mohawk Valley Land Bank
5. Amend Salary Schedule in Employment & Training
6. Ratifying memorandum of agreement between the County of Herkimer and the United Public Service Employees Union (Highway Unit).

7. Other

Committee Vote Record:

WAYS & MEANS:

Mr. Russell: "First thing on the agenda is approve the Annual Report of Real Property."

Item #1 - On motion of Mr. Bono, seconded by Mr. Johnson, Item #1 was voted on, approved and moved for Resolution. Unanimous. Absent: 1.

Mr. Russell: "Second is to approve transfer in 2021 budget in Public Health."

Item #2 – On motion of Mr. Smith, seconded by Mr. Ackerman, Item #2 was voted on, approved and moved for Resolution. Unanimous. Absent: 1.

Mr. Russell: "Number three approve Continuation of Operations Plan during a declared Public Emergency."

Item #3 - On motion of Mr. Shaw, seconded by Mr. Bono, Item #3 was voted on, approved and moved for Resolution. Unanimous. Absent: 1.

Mr. Russell: "Number four amend Resolution Number 264 of 2020 relating to cancellation of taxes on certain properties acquired by the Mohawk Valley Land Bank."

Mr. Smith: "Do we have somebody that can talk about this?"

Mr. Russell: "Lorraine, are you on?"

Lorraine Lewandrowski: "Yes. This is a resolution where we were canceling the tax liens on properties acquired by the Land Bank after the Land Bank took title to be exempt so I typed this resolution myself and I left out the sentence that says Resolved, the enforcing officer is hereby authorized to issue and file a Certificate of Cancellation of the said taxes so just to be more proper I just wanted to make sure Jennifer had a sentence directing her to go ahead and issue the Certificate of Cancellation and then file it. I'm just asking this resolution be amended to include that sentence."

Mr. Smith: "What properties are they? Do you have a list of the properties?"

Lorraine Lewandrowski: "Property in the City of Little Falls that was acquired by the Land Bank in 2019. It is 27 North Ann Street. We are cancelling a County bill that came out after they acquired the property. Another one is City of Little Falls at 59 Glen Avenue. Again, it was cancelling \$52.68 that came out after they purchased this. 81 South Third Avenue in the Village of Ilion. That was a County bill that came out in 2020 but they had already purchased it in 2019 and then 201 Clapson Park in West Winfield, it was a property they acquired in 2018 but then they had been billed. So its \$482.01, \$52.68, \$571.99 and \$289.60. We had done this resolution back in October 2020 but when I typed it I left that sentence off authorizing the Certificate of Cancellation."

Mr. Smith: "Okay."

Mr. Ackerman: “Mr. Chairman, back in 2018...where are these properties today? Are they still off of the tax roll because they are owned by the Land Bank?”

Mr. Russell: “I am not aware of any of them being put on.”

Mr. Ackerman: “I want to go back to my original statement probably seven months ago...there should be a time limit on these properties that they have to be put back on to the tax roll. They can’t take all of these properties and keep taking and sit idle with them. They could be there ten – fifteen years and the properties they are buying are supposed to be rehabbing for their offices, I believe there is an apartment upstairs and that should not be tax exempt if there is going to be an apartment for half of the building so I am a no vote on moving this or anything with the Land Bank until they have some kind of restrictions put on them.”

Mr. Russell: “Well, we have to have Lorraine check into the law. Land Banks have their own set of laws. We will have to find out if we can do that or not but in regards to...”

Mr. Ackerman: “We would not want to give them anymore properties because eventually they could have thousands of properties within the County and all of them sitting idle.”

Mr. Russell: “Well, I don’t think we are giving them properties right now.”

Lorraine Lewandrowski: “No. They are not getting any more properties.”

Mr. Ackerman: “They should not be entitled to accumulate anymore properties if they are sitting idle with you know, fifty properties around the County and they are not moving forward with them.”

Mr. Russell: “We can’t control what they pick up on their own.”

Mr. Ackerman: “They want to be held harmless for these taxes, correct?”

Mr. Russell: “By law they are. She is amending a resolution that we had done before.”

Mr. Smith: “This is just correcting wording in the other resolution, right?”

Lorraine Lewandrowski: “Yes, exactly.”

Item #4 - On motion of Mr. Smith, seconded by Mr. Russell, Item #4 was voted on, approved and moved for Resolution. Yes: Russell, Smith, Johnson, Shaw, Bono (5). No: Ackerman (1). Absent: Stephens (1).

Mr. Russell: “Lorraine, based on what Kurt was saying if you can check into that please on any time restrictions being put on.”

Lorraine Lewandrowski: “Yes. That’s a Not for Profit Corporation law. I will pull that out and take a look.”

Mr. Russell: “Thank you. Number five amend Salary Schedule in Employment & Training. Who is talking about this?”

Karin Piseck: "I can. So this was a position that was Senior Employment Specialist. It's been in the ETA Salary Schedule since day one. In fact, I held the position for quite a few years. I took it out a few years ago because of a personnel issue that I was having with a person that was holding that position but I think that now it's time to bring it back and have it back into the schedule."

Mr. Russell: "Is that a Union position?"

Karin Piseck: "Yes."

Mr. Russell: "Steve, is this something we can just go ahead and do?"

Steve Billings: "Sure. You control positions. It is a Union position. Yup you have the right to do it if you want to."

Mr. Russell: "We have a right to add it? Do we have the right to delete them?"

Steve Billings: "Yes. If I remember right it was a personnel issue and it was dealt with in the proper way back then."

Mr. Russell: "Okay. Thank you. Can I have a motion?"

Item #5 - On motion of Mr. Smith, seconded by Mr. Russell, Item #5 was voted on, approved and moved for Resolution. Unanimous.

Mr. Bono: "I just want to make one comment. I want to thank Karin and her staff for going above and beyond with Remington during COVID. I have been getting some calls on that on how accommodating to over 600 employees that had made calls there. I know the Department of Labor is working from home and she has done a lot of their work for them and her staff have been there so I just want to thank her and there are a lot of other departments too that I think, for the most part, that we don't see as Legislators or maybe we do, that are restructuring and redoing things in a different way that are accommodating to the public so I want to thank everybody, all departments. Thank you Karin and relay that to your staff. Thank you."

Karin Piseck: "Thank you. I will."

Mr. Russell: "It has been a trying year for everybody, that's for sure. We have learned a lot though. We will go to Highway negotiations Steve."

Steve Billings: "I think we need to go into Executive Session for this because it is a contract issue."

Item #6 – On motion of Mr. Bono, seconded by Mr. Ackerman, the Ways & Means committee went into Executive Session at 11:52 a.m., under Public Officer's Law, Section 105 (f). On motion of Mr. Smith, seconded by Mr. Shaw the committee voted to ratify memorandum of agreement between the County of Herkimer and the United Public Service Employees Union (Highway Unit). Item #6 was voted on, approved and moved for Resolution. Unanimous. Absent: 1. On motion of Mr. Russell, seconded by Mr. Johnson, the committee came out of Executive Session at 11:58 a.m.

Mr. Russell: "Is there anything else under other?"

Item #7 – NA.

Mr. Johnson: "I just have a question. I'm not sure if it's Ways and Means. A few months ago we passed a \$28,000, \$29,000 program with Karin to help people that can't cope with being told they are doing a bad job, has that ever moved forward and if it hasn't, where did the money go?"

Mr. Russell: "That might be Kurt's committee but..."

Mr. Johnson: "If it is I will bring it up in Kurt's next meeting."

Mr. Ackerman: "Back in October I think."

Mr. Russell: "Do we have an answer?"

Mr. Bono: "I think I have an answer. I think what happened was we did not expend it, we didn't send that money out because we put it on hold because of COVID was just happening and it didn't really get ramped up until...it was supposed to get ramped up in January but it never did because of the COVID and it's just on hold as far as I know."

Mr. Ackerman: "Well we voted on it in I think October and then it never came back to the committee. I don't know who approved to stop it."

Mr. Bono: "I don't think anybody stopped it. It just didn't get wheels on it or..."

Mr. Ackerman: "We didn't shut down for COVID until March. I don't know what happened actually so I don't want to speak for anybody because...maybe get an update once they..."

Mr. Bono: "Yup. I've got one other thing Pat. Just as a house keeping thing here. Some of these department heads stay at these meetings and here it is noon already. You know, we started at 9:30 a.m. and they just sit in the background. Is it possible we just do these in blocks and call them in when...I mean they are sitting around for...Karin sat around for two and a half hours, so did Mark, so did..."

Mr. Russell: "They don't have to be on here until they are needed."

Mr. Bono: "Just work out something there. I know that they are busy and they have other stuff to do."

Mr. Russell: "I think that is probably fine with all of us. Thank you all. It's hard with COVID. On Zoom sometimes it doesn't work well."

Mr. Bono: "We are going to try and get back when...the numbers are way down. We are below 1% and people are getting vaccinated. They are talking about CDC going to three feet if that is the case we can go live here. It works so much better. I think we all agree with that."

Mr. Ackerman: "Any news on the new vaccine, the single shot coming out. Are we going to get some of those?"

Mr. Bono: “We are going to get some of those and we are going to use those for the home bound right now. We can get up to one hundred. Christina is going to start with fifty once we get those part-time nurses on board. And to be honest we are trying to work out a plan with the ambulances and the EMTs to see if we can get them to do it because as you know you have to stay around for fifteen or twenty minutes in case you have an adverse effect so it makes sense to have an ambulance crew right there. We are trying that with those fifty doses and then we will ask for more as the plan develops. You can get them at other PODs. Oneida County asked for 5,300 doses and I think 1,000 of them are the single shot.”

Mr. Ackerman: “Thank you.”

Mr. Russell: “I need a motion to adjourn.”

On motion of Mr. Shaw, seconded by Mr. Ackerman the Ways & Means committee adjourned at 12:03 p.m.