Herkimer County Legislature
Ways & Means Committee Meeting
Friday, March 26, 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)
John P. Stephens (committee member)
Vincent J. Bono, Chairman of the Legislature
James W. Wallace, Jr., County Administrator
Lorraine Lewandrowski, County Attorney
Sheri Ferdula, Budget Officer/Purchasing Agent
Steve Billings, Personnel Officers
Karin Piseck, Director of Employment & Training
(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 Peter F. Manno
Legislator Ray Donley
Legislator Peter Campione
Legislator William Weakley

Absent:

Mr. Russell called the meeting to order at 10:45 a.m.

Items discussed:
WAYS AND MEANS:
1. Amend 2021 budget in Employment & Training
2. Other – E911 Personnel Discussion

Committee Vote Record:
WAYS & MEANS:
Mr. Russell: "In Ways and Means, amend 2021 budget in Employment and Training. Who is speaking on this?"

Karin Piseck: "I can speak on that. So this is the Trade It part of my budget and this is the funding that we use to pay for anybody going to school through the Trade It Program and that would include all of the Remington Arms people and I think it's pretty interesting to note that we were expecting maybe about $100,000 to $200,000 in schooling money and we worked really closely and very hard with these workers to get them to take advantage of what they are eligible for and so far we are up to over $900,000 brought in to these people going to school. I think it's really interesting thing to note."

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

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

Mr. Russell: "We are on other."

Mr. Bono: "Pat, I mentioned earlier that you and I and Ray, Jim, Sheri and John are going to have meeting. Is there any quick discussion on any projects that you may want brought up with this COVID Relief money? And Jim, do you just want to give a brief breakdown of what you and Sheri came up with so far?"

Jim Wallace: "What I will present to the group, and I have talked with Jim and Pat about it, about $700,000 in equipment for Highway, $11.6 million for roads and Highway, $4.5 million for bridges and Highway, $2 million for Sheriff's building, $500,000 to knock down the old jail, parking lot at the College, $4.5 million, softball ball fields, baseball fields $3.1 million and $2.9 million. We have been using, and I think Jim has been doing the same thing, we have been using what they had for the last CARES Act and we think between the Sheriffs' Salaries, Public Health Salaries, 911 Salaries and a few others, Office for the Aging and a few other departments. Along with I think over a million, Tim, Sheri and I talked about revenues we didn't get. There is a possibility of sales tax even though we have kind of broke even, there was three or four categories we lost money. That may be eligible. That would bring us to six or seven million dollars that we would be able to get right back into the coffers right away out of the $11.9 million and then you guys would be able to do whatever you wanted to do with that money. Did I confuse you? This is a wish list. You guys make the decision. We are just throwing things out that we have heard talked about over the last couple of years."

Mr. Bono: "There are other projects too. Like the Broadband we talked about. That would go a long way in helping people. It's a possibility of water lines, infrastructure, water, sewer, things like that."

Mr. Ackerman: "Jim Bono, isn't there an initiative now for Broadband going on across the State and County. I see they are putting poles up everywhere. Over on Higby and somewhere else. Who is funding that initiative? Is that Federal or State?"

Mr. Bono: "I am unaware of that. I know it is just maybe on the private sector. I know they are doing it in my town. To be honest with you they are going up the street from me and up in the back hills but I don't think that is State or Federal funding. I think it's just Spectrum or whoever."

Jim Wallace: "I think they are doing that in Manheim as well."

Mr. Ackerman: "There is an initiative but I know they just went up by Deerfield, up north and they put up Broadband out that way too. I thought it was like a State or Federal grant that was out there."

Mr. Bono: "We will find out but this study will give us a better handle on what's out there, what is being proposed, what isn't but to get up in like Ohio, Poland, Webb, in the southern portion, Winfield, Columbia, down in that area, it's not being proposed there then maybe that's where it could be used. Anyway, we will put a list together and then we will get the appropriate committees to entertain on how you want to do this."

Jim Wallace: "And we hope within sixty days guys we will have the regulations."

Mr. Shaw: "Isn't one of the Community Foundations doing a study on Broadband also?"

Jim Wallace: "Yes, that is along with Mr. Bono, Mr. Piseck, Myself and two County Planning. They got money from MVEDD and the Community Foundation. That is the study Jim eluded to earlier. That will actually identify, right Jim, where we are missing."

Mr. Bono: “Strengths, weaknesses. All of that stuff. Where it is, where it isn’t, where it should be but you know with COVID it has created a lot of problems again for education, health and work. A lot of people are working from home now and maybe some from the city or where ever are coming to Herkimer County and are working from their second homes or their primary residence for that matter.”

Mr. Shaw: “They are supposed to be talking Broadband on this new infrastructure bill also.”

Mr. Bono: “Right. There is four trillion dollars that is going to come out with that so I mean those infrastructure projects for water, sewer and Broadband may be able to be used for…come out of that pot instead of this pot so we will delineate that. Thank you.”

Mr. Ackerman: “I have a question. Payment of our taxes when we pay it, money that comes from a grant or it’s a Federal grant that everyone keeps referencing that we are not paying for, so when I pay my taxes at the end of the year I can deduct any new initiative that comes in a grant because we are not paying for it? I keep hearing that from everybody on the call. It’s grant money, we aren’t paying for it.”

Mr. Bono: “Okay, then Herkimer County residence will put those programs together fully…”

Jim Wallace: “We’ll give it to Oneida County. They can do it.”

Mr. Ackerman: “I’m making a point that it is not free money. People need to know.”

Mr. Bono: “No one said it was free money. We said it was grant money.”

Mr. Ackerman: “I wasn’t taking a shot at you Jim. I’m just making a statement.”

Mr. Russell: “This is Ways and Means.”

Mr. Ackerman: “It’s money Pat, it’s money.”

Mr. Schrader: “Can I ask a question just to put a little bird in everybody’s mind here. Maybe with all of that money, maybe we could give each municipality like $100,000, and I am saying each municipality, to clean up some of their bad properties, to maybe get them back on the roll, you know, clean their community up. Maybe do a County wide $100,000 to each community to clean up their bad properties.”

Mr. Russell: “They are going to be getting their own money.”

Jim Wallace: “Herkimer is over a million and so is Ilion. Over a million dollars.”

Mr. Schrader: “But as everyone else had bills everyone else did also. I‘m just thinking outside the box.”

Mr. Russell: “No it’s good.”

Mr. Gaworecki: “This is Gaworecki. I have a question under other if possible. Every time I go into the County Office Building I get asked about why the hours are switching for only a matter of weeks and they feel it will confuse people and make the scheduling difficult. Could you speak on that please?”

Mr. Russell: “We have done it for many years so I don’t know what the issue is but, Jim?”

Jim Wallace: “By contract, Mark, I think you and I have had a brief discussion about this, or email, not really discussion, the fact that the building is open during COVID we had it open 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. and I would talk with Jimmy and Pat and I think it’s time to open. We are hoping DMV will be open soon and our hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and we have an awful lot of people Mark who like 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. and we

also have a lot of moms that like 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. So I think we are back to our normal hours. That's as simple as I can say."

Mr. Gaworecki: "Okay. I just needed an answer to give the people asking and I actually prefer open later for people that work and still need to do County business. I just wanted a little more information to answer their question."

Jim Wallace: "And there are a lot of strong views Mark on both sides that Steve and I get all of the time."

Mr. Gaworecki: "I'm sure there is. Thank you."

Mr. Stephens: "Mr. Chairman, I think you are aware that we need to have a discussion or I need to have a discussion. I believe it's going to be in Executive Session so I just want you to be aware of that before you ask for adjournment."

Mr. Russell: "Okay. I guess make a motion to go into Executive Session."

Jim Wallace: "What is it for?"

Mr. Stephens: "Discussion at 911."

Mr. Russell: "It's collective bargaining apparently."

Jim Wallace: "Okay."

Item #2 – On motion of Mr. Stephens, seconded by Mr. Ackerman, the Ways & Means committee went into Executive Session at 10:57 a.m., under Public Officer's Law, Section 105 (f). Discussion only. No vote taken. On motion of Mr. Stephens, seconded by Mr. Bono, the committee came out of Executive Session at 11:20 a.m.

On motion of Mr. Stephens, seconded by Mr. Johnson the Ways & Means committee adjourned at 11:21 a.m.