

GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
APRIL 20, 2021

GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: O'Brien, Rozell, Haff, Hicks, Fedler, Ferguson, Losaw

GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT: None.

SUPERVISORS: Hall, Henke, Shaw, Campbell, Skellie, Clary, Griffith

Debra Prehoda, Clerk of the Board

Roger Wickes, County Attorney

Al Nolette, County Treasurer

Melissa Fitch, County Administrator

AGENDA AS PRESENTED IN COMMITTEE NOTICE:

- 1) Call to Order
- 2) Accept Minutes – March 23, 2021
- 3) Department Requests/Reports
 - A. County Clerk/DMV – Updates on Phones & Schedule
 - B. County Administrator
 1. Water Line to Centers Update
 2. Barn Consolidation Response from Towns Update
 - C. Building & Grounds – DPW Barns Update
- 4) Other Business
- 5) Adjournment

Chairman O'Brien called the meeting to order at 10:01 A.M. via teleconference.

A motion to approve the minutes of the March 23, 2021 meeting was moved by Mr. Ferguson, seconded by Mrs. Fedler, and adopted.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS REQUESTS:

COUNTY CLERK – Stephanie Lemery, County Clerk, updated the committee on the following items:

- DMV Update:
 - Phone – Think they figured out the dropped calls and working on adding a message that your call is important to us and currently busy letting them know their call is not being dropped or ignored. They know where they are headed with the phone issues and the calls have doubled.
 - Appointment Schedule – Residents are writing in support of keeping the appointment schedule and complimenting the system. Concern has been expressed that they are losing revenue because of the appointment schedule. People can easily schedule during the week without delays with one hundred fifty appointments per day available. Bringing in more revenue than they have been across the board since 2016. Through March up \$30,000 from last year and for the month of April the revenue is \$37,000 as of yesterday. Right on track with what the month normally brings in. The stress level for customers and staff is cut by 75% with the appointments. She is considering staying with the appointment scheduling as are many of the County Clerk's across the state. The revenue has increased due to the five windows open and also helping the State taking in some of their work which is two to three months behind. The drop box is very popular and the turnaround time on the drop box is less than 48 hours and they have the option to come here and pick it up without an appointment.
- The County Clerk's side is doing great. Received a score of 100 on their passport evaluation. Passports are down from last year but picking up and the appointments are very helpful with this process.
- County Clerks are going to Albany to lobby to get laws enacted to allow them to keep the \$45 fee for signing off on a judgement rather than have it go to the State when they do all the work and to keep more of the DMV revenue as opposed to it going to the State.

COUNTY ADMINISTRATION - Melissa Fitch, County Administrator, addressed the following items:

- Water Line to Centers – Discussions are continuing. Larry Paltrowitz, Attorney, is discussing with Centers this week, confirming they want the easement and discuss arrangements for transferring easement to them. Hopeful that they are coming to a resolution in the near future. Mr. Shaw asked what is the plan for the Argyle wells? The County Attorney stated the well are not the County's responsibility other than they are on our land due to a permanent easement. They are the village of Argyle's wells. He stated the only question is the former village of Argyle water line that comes out of Summit Lake that they are using a little bit because of the emergency water situation. That will need to be worked on as part of divestiture because there is a split there in the pipe and before that it is a joint pipe; one pipe coming out of Summit Lake. The village has the right to the wells and to put more wells on the property. The village had not used the water line in some time but has recently had to use to supplement the wells because of recent problems. Centers will have to negotiate with Argyle on the pipe, who is responsible for the valves before the split needs to be worked out. The Superintendent of Buildings and Grounds stated the State approved the village using the water from Summit Lake as an emergency water source, used it for about six months and now have their system up and running. It is needed for an emergency down the road and stated Centers is working with the village of Argyle Water Commissioner. Mr. Haff stated whoever owns the land owns the easements and there is no benefit to the County, should divest itself of this property, and put it up for sale. The land can be sold to anyone. Mr. Haff suggested setting a deadline of August 1st to receive responses to this water line issue and then we sell it. A motion to set a deadline of August 1st for responses or then we sell the property was moved by Mr. Haff and seconded by Mr. Ferguson. Discussion. The County Attorney stated if the County did not resolve the water pipe issue with Centers by then the County would have to retain the easement for that water pipe as well. A motion to amend to sell in the auction was moved by Mr. Haff and seconded by Mr. Ferguson. Mr. Henke stated let the legal team have time to work this out and not set an arbitrary deadline. The Superintendent of Buildings and Grounds agreed that the property is not the issue it is the water pipe easement that needs to be addressed and resolved. The County Attorney stated the easement would have to be sold separately. The biggest issue is the pipe, get rid of it and then sell the property. Messrs. Haff and Ferguson withdrew their motions.
- Barn Consolidation Response from Towns – Formal proposals were sent to Fort Ann and Easton regarding sharing engineering for the barn consolidated study. Received a formal response that the town of Easton is not interested in participating in the study and received a resolution from the town of Fort Ann stating their intent to participate in study. The Superintendent of Buildings and Grounds stated how the cost of the ME engineering study will be divided between the entities has changed and provided the new breakdown as follows: Fort Ann Barn \$30,000 split County \$15,000 and town of Fort Ann \$15,000 and the Middle Falls Barn \$23,500 County only for a total of \$53,500 = County \$38,500 and town of Fort Ann \$15,000. A motion to move \$53,300 barn engineering study to the Finance Committee, County's share \$38,500 and town of Fort Ann \$15,000, was moved by Mrs. Fedler and seconded by Mr. Losaw. Discussion. The Treasurer stated this will be budgeted in the capital project and funds will not come out of the Buildings and Grounds budget. The Treasurer recommends one resolution which would indicate the two barns, recognizing revenue from Fort Ann and authorizing the Chairman to sign an intermunicipal agreement with Fort Ann. A motion to move Middle Falls Barn engineering project to Finance was moved by Mrs. Fedler, seconded by Mr. Losaw, and adopted. A motion to move Fort Ann Barn engineering study to Finance was moved by Mrs. Fedler, seconded by Mr. Losaw, and adopted.

BUILDINGS & GROUNDS – Matt Jones, Superintendent of Buildings and Grounds, addressed the following items:

- Electric Charging Stations – Received more firm numbers regarding the electric charging stations: four (4) at DPW \$8,202 and after talking to the electrician and rather than run power through the building to the back of the parking lot which was restricted and problems with generator talked about trenching around the building by the GE to the back of the parking lot and after rebates the cost to do that project is \$34,999 for a total of \$43,201. The cost to go through the building was \$22,000 with no future use. Recommendation of both the Superintendent and electrician is to go outside not through building. This charger is on state contract. Mr. Haff stated the chargers for public use should be the rapid chargers. The Superintendent of Buildings and Grounds stated these are Level 2 chargers and not all cars right now accept rapid chargers. These chargers are meant to be outside and shut off when fully charged/done. A one-hour charge equates to 25 miles. The infrastructure/make ready for the chargers is the cost. There will be a total of twelve (12) chargers and the car software will indicate how much power is being used. The public will be charged for the power at the charging station. The gross cost for this project is well over \$100,000 and the Superintendent stated he has firm numbers on the rebates. The Superintendent of Buildings and Grounds recommends going with Plug In under state contract. Really the most cost in this project is getting the electricity to the stations. The Treasurer stated this project would be paid for with fund balance and the project would not cross years and would not be a capital project. A motion to move electric charging stations project to the Finance Committee for consideration was moved by Mr. Hicks, seconded by Mrs. Fedler, and adopted.

OTHER BUSINESS:

REAL PROPERTY – Laura Chadwick, Director, addressed the following items:

- Legislative/Budget Update – Senate 1453B and Assembly 6255A bills passed on a moratorium on re-levy of village water and sewer fees. The bill has not been delivered to the Governor. This bill disallows the villages and county from relevying any water or sewer charges on to the bill. The villages usually have their bills by June 1st. The Treasurer stated that currently the villages relevy onto the village bill and the county makes them whole. The County would make the village whole for their unpaid but the unpaid water and sewer would not be included. This could be a cash flow issue for the village. Sewer District No. 2 would also not be able to relevy and the Treasurer stated for a year they would be fine with cash flow but after that the Sewer District Executive Director would probably come to the County. The villages would not be able to relevy but can continue to collect to get the amount down at the local level. Mr. Campbell asked should we loan them the money? The Treasurer stated the County cannot loan money to towns and villages.
- STAR Change – Going forward in 2022 anyone living in a mobile home park and qualifying for STAR will receive the STAR credit check. Previously, the mobile home owner was receiving the STAR exemptions on their tax bill and then it was up to the mobile home owner to share the savings amongst everyone that applied which was not always being done. This change is better for the mobile home park residents because now they will get a check. A much better program for the mobile home residents. That was mainly the only STAR change.
- Merge transfer forms – Work is being done to merge transfer forms. Troublesome getting all information complete. No time table on when this will be completed.
- Solar projects going forward will be assessed by New York State. NYSERDA, Real Property Directors and Assessors are working to bring together a uniform valuation process for these projects throughout New York State. They have one hundred eighty days to figure that out. They are going to calculate with a discount rate annually. The State has done research in the solar industry and in other states doing this uniform evaluation. This will be mandatory for Assessors to use. This will be a

mandatory number similar to telecommunications, special franchise, and state land. This would apply to systems equal to or greater than 1 megawatt. They have six months to come up with a process.

Policy Review – Chairman O'Brien stated policies have not been reviewed in several years and the County Administrator would like to start with the Procurement Policy. Mr. Haff stated it was previously discussed reviewing the Building Closure policy and asked if that had been forgotten about. The County Administrator stated her understanding was it was being left as is for now. Mr. Haff stated he thought it was to go back to a subcommittee. Chairman Hall stated it was going to go back to Public Safety but since that time several County departments are experiencing COVID-19 outbreaks but it will get back to committee eventually. Mr. Haff stated he is concerned about how long the incident management team has authority. Chairman Hall stated as long as the State of Emergency is in effect will still have the incident management team in effect; that's the purpose, that is what it is for. Mr. Haff stated he will bring this back up in the future.

Mr. Campbell, who was unable to attend Friday's Board meeting, wanted the opportunity to clear a few items up. He sent out electric car information yesterday. He stated his point in bringing all this up is about cost savings. That's his job as Budget Officer to find any kind of cost avoidance, efficiencies even though some have told him that is not his job but rather philosophies and he stated he is all about numbers and he thinks that is what you want him to do. He thanked the Board for the affirmative vote for him as Budget Officer at Friday's meeting, thanking Dan Shaw specifically. Regarding the timeline for the charging stations/electric cars, he heard before the meeting that Supervisors thought this was moving very quickly. He stated this first came up July 13, 2020 with permission to look at the grants so if anything has been fast tracked that is nine months. He does not believe that is fast tracked but zoom meetings have an effect. He stated Mr. O'Brien brought up the issue of the department, DSS, not being included over the last nine months and Mr. Campbell stated he has had several conversations with the DSS Commissioner and a Social Services Division Director test drove an electric car so he knows they were on board. He has provided all the information that he has. Plans to continue to look for efficiencies. He has no agenda and if the committee does not want to move forward he does not mind. This is not about him but about opportunities and there is grant money out there.

A motion to adjourn was moved by Mrs. Fedler, seconded by Mr. Losaw, and adopted. The meeting adjourned at 11:24 A.M.

*Debra Prehoda, Clerk
Washington County Board of Supervisors*