

AGRICULTURE, PLANNING, TOURISM & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT  
COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES – MAY 25, 2021

AGRICULTURE, PLANNING, TOURISM & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEMBERS

PRESENT: Fedler, Campbell, Hicks, Shaw, Skellie, Rozell

AGRICULTURE, PLANNING, TOURISM & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEMBERS

ABSENT: Griffith

SUPERVISORS: Hall, Henke, Ferguson, O'Brien, Clary

Debra Prehoda, Clerk of the Board

Al Nolette, County Treasurer

Laura Oswald, Economic Development Director

Roger Wickes, County Attorney

Melissa Fitch, County Administrator

AGENDA AS PRESENTED IN COMMITTEE NOTICE:

- 1) Call to Order
- 2) Accept Minutes – April 20, 2021
- 3) 21-22 Phase II Snowmobile Trail Grant Application – SEQR
- 4) Septic Program – Participation Prioritization Discussion
- 5) Broadband Mapping Update
- 6) Planning Update
- 7) Tourism Update
- 8) Other Business
- 9) Adjournment

Chairwoman Fedler called the meeting to order at 1:04 P.M.

A motion to accept the minutes of the April 20, 2021 meeting was moved by Mr. Campbell, seconded by Mr. Shaw, and adopted.

21-22 PHASE II SNOWMOBILE TRAIL GRANT APPLICATION – SEQR – Dave Perkins, representing Snowmobile Association, addressed the committee. Requesting the County submit a SEQRA for the new trail application that the clubs are submitting for the bike path from Fort Ann to New Swamp Road and one trail re-route. This is all routine stuff with no new construction. A motion to move forward to the full Board SEQRA process short forms indicating no significant environmental impact was moved by Mr. Campbell, seconded by Mr. Shaw, and adopted.

Laura Oswald, Economic Development Director, addressed the following items:

SEPTIC PROGRAM – PARTICIPATION PRIORITIZATION DISCUSSION – Received an allocation of \$250,000 from DEC to replace failing septic systems on two water bodies, Cossayuna and Lake George. Corrina Aldrich, Executive Director Soil and Water, is going to be administering and managing the program. The awards are a maximum of \$10,000 up to 50% of the cost of the replacement of the septic system. There is a process: first notify all homeowners that are eligible which is within 200 feet of one of those two water bodies, then there is an application process, an inspection of the septic system, then the homeowner goes forward and does the work and then submits for reimbursement. There will be more interest than actual funding. The Soil and Water Director administering the program would like guidance on how to prioritization projects: it could be done by splitting the funding between the two water bodies, first come first served, on an income basis or by the degree of failure. The notification and application process would start this year with any actual replacements or work starting later this year or next. Chairwoman Fedler preference would be first come first serve by having the system inspected and certified to fail; once certified as a problem they would go into the priority list. There are several hundred eligible parcels and it is only

going to be a small number of parcels that will get funding noting that just because the parcel is eligible doesn't mean that they have a failed septic system. The location makes the property eligible and it does not matter if it is a permanent residence or seasonal. The County has to appoint an inspecting body and could appoint our own county code enforcement department, approve an engineering company, a septic replacement system company or anybody who's qualified. The inspection has to be done by a qualified inspector and approved by the County. The homeowner pays all the cost and then is reimbursed per the program directive. The homeowner applies and if the system fails they are eligible to go and get reimbursed including the cost of the inspection but if the system does not fail then the cost of the inspection is on the homeowner. There has to be a certification of failure. Committee consensus was first come, first served on the failures as prioritization. Chairman Hall recommends moving this discussion to Public Safety because Code Enforcement reports to that committee and resolve any issues of an engineering firm doing the design and then our code enforcement saying it doesn't meet the standards or vice versa. The Economic Development Director stated Code Enforcement has been involved in the inspection discussions.

#### PLANNING UPDATE:

- Community Action Group (CAG) Dredging Project - Pursuant to the dredging process there was a Community Action Group formed called the CAG that had participation and representation from the county on committees. Although the project has finished there are still some lingering issues and the CAG continues to meet but not that often. The only appointed representative is Terry Middleton and no resolution to appoint Pam Landi, Junior Planner although she has been serving. The County has three seats on the committee as well as three alternates. Sara Idleman is also willing to serve. They meet a couple of times of year. A motion to appoint Pam Landi to the CAG was moved by Mr. Skellie, seconded by Messrs. Campbell and Rozell and adopted. A motion to appoint Sara Idleman to the CAG was moved by Mr. Campbell, seconded by Mr. Skellie, and adopted.
- Solar – Considerable uptick in solar activity. Information is available on the County website under the Planning web pages for municipalities. They did a pilot program, a briefing on solar issues as they affect municipalities, with the town of Cambridge and the Department of State and they have agreed to do two additional zoom meetings: June 15<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 with the towns of Kingsbury, Hartford, Granville, Fort Ann, Whitehall, Hampton, Dresden and Putnam and June 17<sup>th</sup> at 7 PM with the towns of Fort Edward, Argyle, Hebron, Salem, Greenwich, Jackson, Easton and White Creek. Information has been sent to the town planning boards and recommending to submit questions prior to the meeting dates.

TOURISM UPDATE – Prior to COVID put together a meeting of a grouping of interested tourism-related businesses who wanted more interaction with the tourism programing and wanted to be able to offer input and to be able to network, etc. With the summer season ahead would like to better understand what our businesses need and now that restrictions have been lifted they have scheduled a second event at Hicks Orchard on June 10<sup>th</sup> from 6PM – 9PM. Just a chance to get businesses together to discuss needs and interaction with the tourism program. Supervisors are welcome to attend.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT - CFAs are out and applications are due July 31<sup>st</sup>. The funding streams have mostly not changed but there are a few changes: no arts and culture funding and

comprehensive planning funding in there through the Department of State with the State paying 90% up to \$100,000 for comprehensive planning and applications are due June 30<sup>th</sup>.

WORKFORCE – Have had discussions on COVID and the impact on workforce and unemployment. As of April, our unemployment rate is at about 5.6%, a more standard versus 17% last year. They have come significantly down. Businesses are continuing to experience difficulties in filling open positions. She serves on the Workforce Investment Board and they recently held a career fair with 100 employers participating with 4,000 job openings and received 20 resumes. Every employer in the county is looking to fill positions and it is an ongoing problem.

BROADBAND MAPPING UPDATE – Launched the new website to determine who is underserved. In the State budget relating to broadband was a requirement for larger internet providers to offer low income broadband at \$15 a month to low income individuals (someone who receives some sort of state or federal assistance) but with no funding attached and the Governor's office directed the PSC to map broadband access reliability and availability which dovetails with our project. There is state money in there to do some sort of a study but how detailed it going to be and what data it's going to use is unclear at this time. There are also other federal sources of broadband funding: American Rescue Plan, American Jobs Plan if it passes and some other funding. The survey campaign is available online, paper copies or by phone and will be running for about ten weeks and includes a speed test. Adequate service as measured by the state has been download speeds at 25 megabits per second and federal standards are moving to 100 to 100 and required if you are building out new service. Very few in the county have these services at those speeds.

#### OTHER BUSINESS:

The County Treasurer stated he took deposit of the first \$5.9M of the American Cares Act funding this morning.

The meeting adjourned at 1:45 P.M.

*Debra Prehoda, Clerk*  
*Washington County Board of Supervisors*