

GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES  
AUGUST 25, 2020

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

GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT: Rozell

SUPERVISORS: Hall, Henke, Fedler, Ward, Campbell, Hogan, Clary, Griffith

Debra Prehoda, Clerk of the Board

Roger Wickes, County Attorney

Al Nolette, County Treasurer

Chris DeBolt, County Administrator

AGENDA AS PRESENTED IN COMMITTEE NOTICE:

- 1) Call to Order
- 2) Accept Minutes – July 21, 2020
- 3) Department Requests/Reports
  - A. Board of Elections
    1. Overview BOE/2020 General Election/ COVID-19/Poll Sites
  - B. Real Property
    1. 43 Derby St. – Washington County Parcel
    2. RPTL 1138 Write off Taxes Parcel 216.1-2-18.8810
    3. School Taxes – STAR Removal for Delinquent Properties
  - C. County Administration
    1. Discuss County Remote Work Policy
    2. Issue Facing Employees w/School-Aged Children
- 4) Other Business
- 5) Adjournment

Chairman O'Brien called the meeting to order at 10:02 A.M. via teleconference.

A motion to approve the minutes of the July 21, 2020 meeting was moved by Mr. Ferguson, seconded by Mr. Hicks and adopted.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS REQUESTS:

BOARD OF ELECTIONS – Commissioners Leslie Allen and Jeffrey Curtis addressed the following items with the committee:

- Overview BOE/2020 General Election/COVID-19/Poll Sites: They already have over one thousand requests for absentee ballots. Early voting starts ten days prior to election. All twenty six polling sites will be open for the November election from 6AM to 9PM. COVID protocols will be in place at all poll sites: plexiglass barriers, disinfectant cleaners and paper towels to wipe down items between voters, masks, face shields, gloves, hand sanitizers, and blue tape to mark six feet. They are anticipating an increase in applications for absentee ballots. Very busy on the phone with concerns about the mail and getting the ballots in time to be counted. Post cards with voting information will be sent out to all registered voters and unsure if they have to send to about three thousand inactive voters. The County Administrator stated the Governor announced five executive orders yesterday: extends the temporary illness provision – COVID-19 a temporary illness, mandates a county Board of Elections send a mailing to all would be voters notifying them of the deadlines and methods for requesting an absentee ballot, directing Board of Elections to promulgate a new envelope to eliminate confusion about where to sign for a ballot to be counted and we will need to purchase new envelopes, require all Board of Elections to take the necessary steps to expediate the counting of ballots so that all absentee ballots must be counted within 48 hours after election – will need high speed scanner, report staffing plans and any needs for additional staff to ensure a fair and accurate vote by September 20<sup>th</sup> to the State – our submission would include our purchases.
- Option to download the absentee ballot application off website and their early voting hours are on the website.

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

- 43 Derby St. – Washington County Parcel – GA Bove Fuel owns property next door and would like to make an offer on the property at 43 Derby Street in Hudson Falls. The County took ownership of this parcel for back taxes and back in 1995 there was some ground clean up done as this is a former fuel oil site. They have made an offered of \$4000 for this parcel. Regarding any liability concerns, the County is in chain of title. County Administrator recommends moving forward with the sale of the property. A motion to approve sale of County owned property, 43 Derby Street in Hudson Falls and forward to the Finance Committee for consideration was moved by Mr. Losaw, seconded by Mr. Ferguson and adopted.
- RPTL 1138 – Write Off Taxes Parcel 216.1-2-18.8810 which is a trailer in trailer park and the prior owner had a veteran's exemptions. The owner no longer lives in the trailer and the taxes have gone unpaid for one year in the amount of \$2543.14;\$557 is interest. This would have been headed to auction but cannot enforce because it is personal property. A motion to forward request to RPTL 1138 parcel 216.1-2.18.8810 to Finance was moved by Mr. Hicks, seconded by Mr. Ferguson and adopted.
- School Taxes – Star Removal for Delinquent Properties – handout attached. One hundred thirty eight landowners with Star exemptions have delinquent taxes on their property and will lose that exemption if those delinquent taxes are not paid. Property owners received a letter from the State on this change and they will lose the Star exemption if their taxes remain unpaid. If they pay, they will then receive the STAR amount via check.

COUNTY ADMINISTRATION – Chris DeBolt, County Administrator, addressed the following items with the committee:

- Discuss County Remote Work Policy – Requesting to amend employee handbook to insert a remote work policy suggesting the following wording: remote work may be permitted at the sole discretion of the department head. The ability to work remotely is highly variable between departments and what departments it is even feasible for and even within the department is largely dependent upon the nature of the work. In his opinion it does not make sense to try to establish a county-wide policy that is prescriptive and suggesting that the Board consider formally enabling the department heads to allow remote work if they think it works for their operation. Departments would develop their own guidelines. Employee would have a county issued computer/laptop. The County Administrator stated fifty laptops were purchased during the shutdown and should be sufficient to facilitate the remote work that is needed. This policy would be for anytime not just during an emergency. A motion to forward amendment to the employee handbook to insert remote work policy to the Personnel Committee for consideration was moved by Mr. Hicks, seconded by Mr. Losaw and adopted. Mr. Shaw opposed.
- Laptops to Supervisors – IT configured and made available seventeen laptops for the Supervisors. Mr. Haff stated he is not interested in one. There is a need to deploy some more laptops so if other Supervisors are not interest in a laptop, please let the County Administrator or Information Technology CIO know by the end of the week. Mr. O'Brien envisioned the laptops being used for various county programs and files, zoom meeting and not just for email. The laptops cost about \$1,000 each and were purchased during the COVID response and reprioritization to deploy to Supervisors. Mr. Haff does not think in this current climate with our economy and budget that we should be finding new ways to spend money. Mr. Hogan agrees and stated Supervisors should purchase their own devise and set a good example for the rest of the County. Mr. Shaw stated he does not need a laptop. The County Administrator stated the initial goal of the laptops was never the intention to just use them for email and zoom and Mr. O'Brien is correct that there has been discussion about making a drive available where information would be available for Supervisors. Using the laptops for email and zoom

is the immediate need and further discussions on additional utilization. Mr. Griffith mentioned a more economical way to do that with chrome books and a web based platform and it could be reviewed in the Information Technology Committee.

- Electronic signature of documents. The County Administrator following up on the feedback from department heads on the shutdown experienced, interest in electronic signatures of documents was suggested. One low-tech easy solution is amending the purchasing audit and voucher policy that would allow the scanned voucher. We would still be in the paper world but a department head that was working remotely could print out a voucher, sign it, scan it and email it in and it would be sufficient. Right now, those policies call for original signatures, no faxes, no copies or anything like that. To do a full electronic signature of documents we have to change the whole workflow for purchasing and vouchers and we already own a software platform that is capable of doing that and that's the Laserfiche that the County Clerk has. It has an internal electronic documents module that we own and have the rights to. He stated for free the vendor is going to work with his staff and mock up purchasing in an electronic workflow within Laserfiche and then we may trial it not on real purchases but do some trial runs internally and see how it works how cumbersome it is. He is not sure if there is a need or desire to switch to an all-electronic workflow all the time every time and he is not asking the committee today for any amendments to those policies it's more informational to keep the committee and Board informed. They have a lot more due diligence and investigation to do but it is something that they are looking at and if we needed to or got in another shutdown likely the immediate reaction would be to ask to amend the procurement, audit and voucher policy and any other necessary policies. That would allow scan versions of documents and then ultimately the more robust solution would be a complete transition to an electronic workflow. No action needed at this time.
- Issue Facing Employees w/School-Aged Children – From an employer standpoint he is concerned about schools returning because the ideal situation for us as a large employer would be for schools to reopen 100% in person and at this point that is really not going to happen. The issue he sees as an employer is that the way the school reopening plans have developed it places unique challenges on our employees who have school age children. He is bringing this up only for discussion purposes. We were planning to move departments over to Burgoyne but due to COVID that did not happen. BOCES did move out and three quarters of that building is empty. If we needed to and the school reopening plans were causing significant child care issues to our employees is there a solution where we could partner with a non-profit or other entity to operate a child care center in the Burgoyne Avenue property to try to make it so that our employees were able to keep working. A survey was sent to all employees and he has received 192 responses with 406 on the email list. The majority of employees said they were not facing challenges finding reliable child care for the upcoming school year; 28 responded yes with the majority one child and some with two. The County would not pay for this; paid for by the employee. He has spoken with the Governor's office, OCFS, DSS, LEAP and Southern Adirondack Child Care Network. There is a need/demand for child care but not huge and he would envision the next step would be if the Board says this is something we are willing to entertain and investigate he would like to form a planning committee and convene that planning committee later this week to start talking through all the details. Other counties are also considering this and there is discussion at the State level about waiving the licensing requirement for a municipally run dependent child care facility which would expediate out ability to do this. The goal here would be to partner with another entity to actually run the facility. Is this something the Board would like him to pursue or a non-starter. Mr. Haff stated a non-starter and we should not compete with private business. The majority of employees cannot work from home. The child care was basically for school age children because they are the ones that have really been disrupted by COVID; K-8<sup>th</sup> grade. There is not enough capacity in the private industry right now. The goal would be for the employees to pay for it and for it to be a partnership with another organization. Some liability exposure for the child care taking place at our facility. The plan was to put Public Health in Burgoyne but with the pandemic they do not feel they can

be moved anytime soon. Messrs. Hogan and Haff stated they would have liked to have seen this survey prior to it going out. Mr. Henke praised the County Administrator for looking into this and thinking creatively. If the County Administrator was to move forward, the next step would be to convene the planning group consisting of the County Attorney, County Administrator, LEAP, DSS, Public Health and Southern Adirondack Child Care Network working with those stakeholders to figure out what would this look like, who are the potential partners, how do you structure given the age groups of the respondents, physical space needs and if any alterations are needed. Committee consensus was to move forward with planning group. A January 1<sup>st</sup> start date is the absolute best case scenario. Mr. Haff would like a survey to go out to existing day cares in the county and ask how this would impact them if they lose their clientele. Several Supervisors also agreed that a survey should go out to day care providers. The County Administrator was not thinking long term with day care but just during COVID and the disturbed school schedule.

#### OTHER BUSINESS:

**BUILDINGS & GROUNDS** – Matt Jones, Superintendent, addressed the following items with the committee:

- Burgoyne Avenue Roof Engineering Update – Just got back the engineering plans for the structural and mechanical and now the hazmat removal needs to be completed at a cost of \$15,225 and needs an additional \$11,850 to finish up this engineering. This would complete the engineering and it could go out to bid. The \$11,850 would come from the contingency account in capital plan 125. A motion to forward capital project 125 budget amendment in the amount of \$11,850 to the Finance Committee for consideration was moved by Mr. Ferguson, seconded by Mr. Losaw and adopted.
- BOCES has vacated the building and only Board of Elections is at Burgoyne. He stated the plan for the building kind of got put on hold and offered the idea of taking the current Head Start buildings at River Street and move them to Burgoyne and sell the River Street buildings. He would like to explore this further and has spoken to the LEAP Director that oversee the Head Start program. Mr. Shaw stated the original plan was to move Public Health and tear down the Annex and if Head Start gets in there and liquidating those buildings, the plans have totally changed and should there be more discussion on the long-term plan. The County Administrator completely disagrees with this proposal. The idea is to move them out of Head Start eventually but if we move them now because the capital plan got put on pause because of COVID we have given up on the rest of the campus. If the Board wants to pull the plug on getting rid of Annex 1 and 2 and the DPW shop then we could move forward with this but will have significant legacy costs to Annex 1 specifically. His recommendation is not to move forward with this immediately and he would like to get out of St. Paul's and Dix Avenue Head Start buildings both but if you do it now basically committed to staying in Annex 1 and 2 and the current DPW shop for the foreseeable future. Mr. Campbell stated everything is on pause because we do not have \$10M to \$20M for a new DPW building/change campus. Mr. Shaw stated this is a big change in direction. Mr. Hicks would like to see a long term master plan; need to look at whole picture. Mr. Hogan stated with the culture of business changing and more remote work will we need more buildings and he is in favor of looking at trying to divest of some of these assets that we have. The Superintendent stated if Public Health cannot move over yet what are we going to do with that space; having only four people in the entire building is not ideal. LEAP operates under a day care license and renovations would be required. The Treasurer, who is the current LEAP President, will get a group together to meet and report back next month with a more cohesive plan.
- Update on Law Enforcement Center :
  - Generator failed and renting one until it is fixed; approximate cost \$60,000.
  - (2) Roof top units – They had a bid out to replace two rooftops at the Law Center when COVID hit and he pulled and stopped the bid. Have already paid for engineering and asked if

this is something that should go back out to bid or put on hold. The approximate cost to replace the units was \$500,000. This was a capital plan project. He is looking for guidance and does not need to put it out to bid right now because it would be a next year project. Chairman O'Brien stated hold at this point.

The meeting adjourned at 12:17 P.M.

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



**WASHINGTON COUNTY  
REAL PROPERTY TAX SERVICES**

WASHINGTON COUNTY MUNICIPAL CENTER  
383 BROADWAY, FORT EDWARD, NEW YORK 12828  
TELEPHONE: (518) 746-2130  
FAX: (518) 746-2132 TDD: (518) 746-2146  
e-mail : Lchadwick@washingtoncountyny.gov

*Laura B. Chadwick, CCD*  
Director

**MEMO**

TO: Town Supervisors  
FROM: Laura B. Chadwick, Director *Laura*  
Washington County Real Property Tax Services  
DATE: August 19, 2020  
SUBJECT: Star exemption removed based on delinquent taxes (Report 7)

I wanted to pass along some information to all Supervisors. The governor passed legislation this year regarding delinquent taxes. This only applies to parcels with a Basic Star. Any parcel that has delinquent taxes, will have the Basic Star removed.

The owners, once the taxes are paid, may apply with New York State Department of Taxation and Finance for the Star Credit Check in the future. The information that is provided for the delinquent listing is compiled by the Washington County Treasurer. I would like to thank him for his assistance with this process. I do know it is not running as smoothly in other counties.

If you have any constituents going through this process, they are asked to notify New York State Department of Tax and Finance. They are sent letters and given phone numbers to call for assistance.

<u>Towns</u>	<u># of Delinquent Owners</u>
Argyle	11
Cambridge	5
Dresden	5
Easton	1
Fort Ann	8
Fort Edward	17
Granville	22
Greenwich	8
Hampton	6
Hartford	5
Hebron	5
Jackson	1
Kingsbury	15
Putnam	---
Salem	7
White Creek	9
Whitehall	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>138</b>

LBC/jg