

AGRICULTURE, PLANNING, TOURISM & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES – AUGUST 25, 2020

AGRICULTURE, PLANNING, TOURISM & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEMBERS

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

AGRICULTURE, PLANNING, TOURISM & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEMBERS

ABSENT: Rozell

SUPERVISORS: Hall, Henke, Ferguson, Losaw, O'Brien, Haff, Hogan

Debra Prehoda, Clerk of the Board

Al Nolette, County Treasurer

Chris DeBolt, County Administrator

Laura Oswald, Economic Development Director

Roger Wickes, County Attorney

AGENDA AS PRESENTED IN COMMITTEE NOTICE:

- 1) Call to Order
- 2) Accept Minutes – July 21, 2020
- 3) Overview of IDA
- 4) Other Business
- 5) Adjournment

Chairwoman Fedler called the meeting to order at 1:03 P.M.

A motion to accept the minutes of the July 21, 2020 meeting was moved by Mr. Skellie, seconded by Mr. Griffith and adopted.

OVERVIEW OF IDA (Warren Washington Counties Industrial Development Agency) – Kara Lais, IDA Attorney, provided a brief overview. Created under General Municipal Law by the State Legislature. Members serve at the pleasure of both Warren and Washington County Boards of Supervisors. Currently five members from each county and they must have at least six members. Types of projects are fairly broad: manufacturing, warehousing, research, commercial, industrial, recreation, cultural facilities, continuing care/retirement facilities, and anything that would fall into those particular categories. Traditionally when an application is received it is reviewed on a cost benefit analysis. The application requires that the company provide total cost of project, information on employment and number of employees and estimated salaries. Then they review the benefits that the company is bringing to the community versus the benefits that the IDA would potentially be offering to them. Types of abatements: pilots – payment in lieu of taxes, mortgage tax abatement/exemption. The IDA can also do tax exempt bonds. Businesses can also purchase a lot in their industrial park.

The Warren Washington County IDA provides an opportunity for towns to pre-approve the pilot that's coming into their community; it is not required by State law. In response to a question by Mr. Haff about whether or not the IDA could do away with giving the community an opportunity for input on a pilot and Ms. Lais stated yes as far as what general municipal law requires.

Described how the IDA generates revenue. The IDA receives an administrative fee based on the total project cost and if it is a project up to \$10M the administrative fee is three quarters of one percent and then it is a sliding scale after that. Most projects are within the \$10M range.

How the property is handled over the course of the pilot process: the company would lease its property to the IDA and they would lease it back and that satisfies the State requirement for jurisdiction and control over the property which is the legal requirement to allow for any of the pilot programs, sales tax, mortgage tax, etc. During the course of that time the company is required each

year to report annually on job numbers, sales tax exemptions (during time of construction usually 18 months), and the IDA is required to include that information in their annual audit to New York State.

Mr. Hogan stated there has been some discussion about an educational campaign for the Supervisors. The IDA has the authority to decide what projects that they want to take on with input from towns but not necessarily have to have the approval of the town and if the IDA were to change their policy, he believes there are nine or ten towns in Washington County that don't have that input option available to them. He urged towns to look into that. The IDA can take on projects receive an administrative fee on the project and really not take the input of the town, listen but not take their advice and move forward as they choose with the project. He is troubled by what he has learned recently. Towns should all be aware of the authority that the IDA has over some of the towns

Mr. Haff stated Hartford has a concern about future intrusions into the town's right to self-determination. The Town of Hartford adopted a resolution that states there will be no pilots in the Town of Hartford without the Town Board approving and sent a copy to the IDA. The IDA by amending their own policy could act to intrude upon a town's home rule and that is why the people appointed to the Board must listen to us and not intrude upon a town's home rule.

A motion to appoint Mike Grasso to the Warren Washington County IDA (Warren County appointed Mr. Grasso at their September 21st meeting and it is contingent upon a similar resolution being adopted by Washington County) was moved by Mr. Hicks and seconded by Mr. Campbell. Discussion. Mr. Haff had asked that Mr. Grasso be interviewed but the committee Chair did not get the message until just prior to the meeting. Mr. Hogan feels Mr. Campbell's second is inappropriate because he is an IDA member. Mr. Hogan stated Mr. Campbell should withdraw his second and abstain from the vote. Mr. Campbell withdrew his second; no one seconded the motion. Mr. Hicks is opposed to a formal interview and it is not something we have done in the past. Mr. Haff stressed the need to interview and that this is a joint appointment and they represent both counties. Mr. Hall stated he thinks Warren County has the responsibility for the appointment and does not feel we should undermine one of their appointees. Warren County has never asked to interview any of Washington County's appointees and we have never interviewed any of theirs. He plans to go ahead with the process that we have and will put a resolution on the floor for this appointment at the next Board meeting.

Lock 8 Way – EPA has transferred their portion to the IDA and the IDA is in possession of the documents related to the small purchase of some Canal Corp property. The IDA just received subdivision approval and the plan is to file everything together; they have the deeds and are the owner of those properties from the EPA and Canal Corp. They have a draft document regarding the Mary Webb property and are in discussions with WCC on the easement language for the road; no deed yet. Two small triangular parcels at the elbow of the road that are WCC oriented have been subdivided out of the WCC parcel and approved by the Fort Edward Planning Board but the map has not been filed yet; will move forward with transfer of those parcels once subdivision finalized. A little strip about six hundredth of an acre between Lock 8 Way and the FELPDC was part of the subdivision application and Ms. Lais is working with the Town of Fort Edward Attorney on those documents. So, the two small triangular parcels, the little strip and the easement language with WCC all are being worked on and no date when those items will be finalized; unsure of timeframe for

durable access from 196 to the FELPDC property. Mr. Hicks would like the IDA to provide a monthly project update. There has been no change to FELPDC property; ownership remains the same as when the IDA first got involved in this process. The FELPDC parcel was eliminated from the subdivision process because WL Plastics was not coming and did not need the additional space or access and also they have outstanding taxes on the property. The IDA is not involved in any property acquisition from FELPDC. Taxes owed on the FELPDC property are about \$950,000 between town and village; parcel #1 \$495,199.96, parcel #2 \$467,664.95 and \$52,514 village tax. Mr. O'Brien stated for clarification the Canal Corp did lose the deed to the small parcel, little triangle, that he has signed but apparently have found it and it is being sent back here.

OTHER BUSINESS:

PLANNING, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM – Laura Oswald, Economic Development Director, addressed the following items with the committee:

- Census – Accepted the State funding, contracts have been signed and expect funds to be deposited today or tomorrow. She stressed why the census is so important. Participation rates: nationally 64.4%, State 60.3%, and Washington County 58.2%.
- Unemployment – State 15.5% in June and up a little in July and Washington County 9.8% and Warren County 11.6%.
- Broadband – Several years ago there was discussion about using our emergency communication radio towers to deploy broadband equipment and Hudson Valley Wireless contacted her regarding an interest or desire to start discussion on using them as an emergency temporary use and be a way to get additional broadband for the schools and local use where we currently do not have service. Would have to RFP for a vendor to go on towers and Public Safety would need to look at their propagation studies. Will follow up on possibility to move forward with some option.
- Solid Waste Management Plan – In 2011, the Youth Bureau/Alternative Sentencing spearheaded the Solid Waste Management plan that is required by the State, submitted it to NYS DEC and NYS DEC returned it to the County in 2018 stating it was basically incomplete and needed to be reworked because everything had changed. The County is required to have a plan per State Law even though the County is no long operating any solid waste transfer stations/facilities or collecting. Planning has collected as much data as possible from the providers, inserted County historical data from our solid waste information and they did all that they could do to provide as much information as possible. The process from this point is the draft plan which she has provided a link to needs to be discussed in the September Agriculture, Planning, Tourism and Community Development Committee meeting, move it to DEC for final approval and they require a 45 day public comment period and at the end of the comment period a public hearing probably in November, submitted back to NYS DEC and then a final hearing and adoption by the Board. Please review the draft plan for discussion next month.
- Airbnb – Formally executed an agreement with Airbnb and will begin collecting taxes on our behalf as of September 1st. She thanked Andrew Meader for making all this happen. Mr. Meader stated they are now purchasing data, statistics on Airbnb. Highlights: in April nights booked year over year was 1040 that is up 118%, in May 1460 up 43%, June 1897 up 58% and July 2133 up 15% noting occupancy for July was at 88%. Available rooms booked: April 33%, May 38%, June 50% and July 64% and revenue host collected: April \$164,000, May \$258,000, June \$416,000 and July \$570,000. If the County had been collecting the occupancy tax during that time, it would have amounted to an estimated \$56,320. He estimated collecting about \$7,600 in occupancy tax in September. He believes the payments will happen monthly. Census – Mr. Meader is working with

Black Dog through the Tri-County United Way on the census. Asked if any towns have message boards to please post a message urging people to complete the census. They are working on getting that message out to as many public spaces as possible. Mr. Meader stated VRBO is known to be a little more difficult to get an agreement with and recommends that the County pursue changing the County's Occupancy Tax Law to cover everything. He believes that will also make it easier and faster for when the State makes those changes.

- Tourism - Update on I Love NY 2020 funding: agreed to pay first quarter – expenses submitted but not paid yet, second quarter fuzzy on expenses being paid and no specific discussion on the third and fourth quarters.

The meeting adjourned at 2:20 P.M.

Debra Prehoda, Clerk
Washington County Board of Supervisors