

GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
SEPTEMBER 1, 2021

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

GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT: Ferguson

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 – July 20, 2021
- 3) Department Requests/Reports
- 4) Easement on County Owned Property in the Town of Argyle
- 5) Other Business
- 6) Adjournment

Chairman O'Brien called the meeting to order at 10:00 A.M. in the Supervisors Chambers.

A motion to approve the minutes of the July 20, 2021 meeting was moved by Mr. Rozell, seconded by Mr. Hicks, and adopted.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS/REQUESTS: No agenda items submitted.

EASEMENT ON COUNTY OWNED PROPERTY IN THE TOWN OF ARGYLE:

- Waterline - Last month, the Board passed a resolution to convey our easements that goes over other people's land to Washington Land Associates so now we have to do the easement that goes over County property to them. A motion to convey the easement on county property for zero dollars to Washington Land Associates was moved by Mr. Hicks, seconded by Mr. Haff, and adopted. A resolution will be prepared for consideration at the September Board meeting.
- Property with the wells – There are several easements on this property: an easement for the pipeline to Centers, and others for the village of Argyle. It appears that the village of Argyle has what appears to be a property wide easement on this parcel to allow the village of Argyle to drill wells. Mr. Haff suggested once we do the easement on our own land then send this parcel to auction. Mr. Henke stated the village's lease agreement is prior to any sale and they can drill a well anywhere on that property so if someone comes in and builds a house that would violate that lease. Mr. Shaw stated at a previous meeting the County Attorney was asked to send a letter to the town of Argyle to find out the town's position regarding that property and asked if the letter was ever sent. The County Attorney stated the letter was never sent and he has spoken with the Argyle Supervisor and the position of the town is they are not going to do anything or have any discussions with the County until the easement issue is solved. Mr. Henke stated it is the Argyle Town Board's position that they don't feel like they can do anything until the easement is settled. The town of Argyle working on an easement would not be appropriate. Mr. Shaw stated there is nothing official with this process; the letter was not sent and the Argyle Supervisor verbally responded. Mr. Haff is glad to see there is progress even if it is slow and eventually would like to see the Argyle property with the wells going to auction. Mr. Hicks stated after this easement process is completed a letter should be sent to Argyle. Board Chairman Hall stated Mr. Henke has stated in this meeting that the Argyle Town Board is waiting until the easement issue is resolved before any consideration of the property with the wells. Chairman O'Brien stated no further action until the easement to Washington Land Associates is completed and continued discussion on this agenda item at next month's meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS:

BOARD OF ELECTIONS & SCHOOL/SPECIAL ELECTIONS – The Board of Elections sent out a letter advising the school districts as follows: “to inform you that our services will no longer be available for schools to use for May school or special elections”, letter attached. Several School Superintendents have contacted Supervisors concerned about this change. Also attached is the Education Law that gives the Commissioners the right to withhold use of County machines, attached. Mr. Hicks stated no one was informed of this change; no Supervisors, Chairman of this committee, Chairman of the Board or County Administrator. At least out of courtesy, the Supervisors should have been informed and were blindsided regarding this decision. The County Attorney stated he was contacted to review the letter and if they had the authority to withhold use of the machines but did not know the letter was going to go out without consultation. The Board of Election Commissioners were not available to attend today’s meeting because one was on vacation and another at a conference. Mr. Haff recalls that the Commissioners came to committee to get approval to provide the machines to the schools so shouldn’t they have to come back to committee to discontinue that practice; approval to start but no approval to stop. Mr. Campbell stated there have been changes to the election procedure with early voting and need to ensure the integrity of our municipal elections. Mr. Hall stated the Commissioners should have come to committee with this change. Mr. O’Brien stated we have the capability to charge the schools for the election. If there is a need why not structure something to provide these machines to the schools. Mr. O’Brien stated the Commissioners put the Supervisors in a bad light and we support the schools by printing the tax bills and making them whole and should be able to help them now. Mr. Hicks stated the Commissioners have the right to not provide machines, they handled this extremely poorly and should have provided options and assist the schools with a solution. The Treasurer asked if a project like this would qualify for shared services. The County Administrator stated the school does not have that cost now so it does not qualify. Laura Oswald, Economic Development Director, stated possibly funding through CFA process. Mr. Campbell stated if the timeline is the problem and if extra machines were purchased and available for the school then those extra machines could be a backup for the County if there was a machine issue. Due to the validity of the count, paper ballots are not a viable solution. Mr. Haff does not want to put the expense of buying machines on the county unless there is offsetting revenue. Discussed the appointment process for the Commissioner positions. Mrs. Fedler suggested the schools contact BOCES and have them look into this matter. Mr. Shaw agrees it was handled poorly and suggested the Board of Elections should come to the next committee meeting with an explanation and how they might be able to assist the schools. Mr. Campbell stated maybe the State Legislators should be contacted about these election dates they established and the problem it presents. Mr. Hicks hopes the Commissioner can come to the next meeting and explain the calendar so all the Supervisors can be informed, justify why they did it and perhaps they can offer options for the schools to move forward.

TREASURER – Al Nolette, County Treasurer, addressed the following item:

- Governor Hochul has called the legislature back to extend the foreclosure and eviction moratorium to January 15, 2022 and believes that will be passed. With that decision, it appears the tax foreclosure auction will probably not happen in 2021. He will also be barred from sending out the notices in October on the delinquent 2019 and 2020 taxes.

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

- Safety days for Buildings and Grounds staff will be held at the end of the month at Burgoyne and he budgeted \$500 for food/refreshments/supplies. A motion to approve expenditure of funds for food/refreshments/supplies for Buildings and Grounds Safety Days was moved by Mrs. Fedler, seconded by Mr. Fisher, and adopted.

EXECUTIVE SESSION – A motion to enter an executive session to discuss the proposed acquisition, sale or lease of real property, Middle Falls Highway Barn, Town of Easton, was moved by Mrs. Fedler, seconded by Mr. Fisher, and adopted. The meeting adjourned from executive session. No action was taken in the executive session.

The meeting adjourned at 11:07 A.M.

Debra Prehoda, Clerk
Washington County Board of Supervisors

**WASHINGTON COUNTY
BOARD of ELECTIONS**

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August 18, 2021

To: School Districts of Washington County

Re: School and Special School Elections

The Washington County Board of Elections regrets to inform you that our services will no longer be available for schools to use for May school or special elections.

Due to recent changes in the NYS Political Calendar we lack the staff, time, and equipment to assist schools as we had in the past.

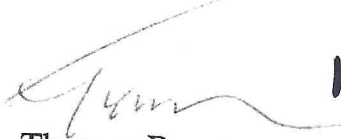
Petitions and Caucus season now runs from March to July.

Prep for the June Primary begins in April and Primary follow-up extends into July.

The November General Election prep starts in August and the November Election follow-up extends into December.

Hopefully this news comes early enough so decisions and budgeting can be done in a timely manner for your school.

If you have questions, please give us a call.


Thomas Rogers
Commissioner

MID - MAY


Jeffrey Curtis
Commissioner

New York Education Law 2035 gives the Commissioners the right to withhold use of County machines: Such trustees or board of education, with district funds available, may purchase the necessary voting machine or machines; or, **if the county board of elections shall consent thereto**, such machines belonging to the county or belonging to the town in which any part of said school district shall be located, may be used at any such meeting, the expense of delivery and returning and setting up, and any other expense connected therewith, to be defrayed by the school district; but such machines belonging to the county shall not be so used at the time or times when they may be required under the election law.