

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: **BUDGET**

DATE: August 15, 2007

Committee Members Present:

Supervisors Caimano
Belden
Gabriels
O'Connor
Champagne
Kenny

Committee Member Absent:

Supervisor Monroe

Others Present:

William H. Thomas, Chairman
Representing Administrative & Fiscal Services:
Hal Payne, Commissioner
JoAnn McKinstry, Deputy Commissioner
Paul Dusek, County Attorney
Joan Sady, Clerk of the Board
Representing Adirondack/Saratoga Red Cross:
Brendan Chudy, Attorney/Volunteer
Eileen Reardon, Executive Director
Representing Office of Emergency Services:
Marvin Lemery, Fire Coordinator/Director
Amy Manney, Emergency Management
Services/STOP DWI Coordinator
Representing Soil & Water Conservation District
David Wick, District Manager
Ed Milner, Chairman
Supervisor Mason
Supervisor Tessier
Supervisor Merlino
Supervisor F. Thomas
Debra L. Schreiber, Legislative Office Specialist

Mr. Caimano called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.

Mr. Caimano apprised there were two items on the Budget Agenda, a request from the American Red Cross, as well as information from the Warren County Soil & Water Conservation District.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Brendan Chudy, Attorney with the law firm of Harris Beach & Wilcox in Albany and a volunteer with the American Red Cross (ARC). He briefly explained his experience with the American Red Cross organization, as well as the level of dedication of the volunteers that assisted in disaster reliefs.

Eileen Reardon of the American Red Cross indicated that the services of the American Red Cross were called upon whenever a natural disaster struck. She reminded the Committee about Hurricane Katrina, the broken dam at Hadlock Pond and the Ethan Allen tragedy, which all occurred at approximately the same time and relied upon the emergency services of their (ARC) human resource pool. If their request was approved to be included as a line item in the 2008 Warren County Budget, she said the American Red Cross would be able to respond better to the relief needed should a natural disaster occur within this region.

Mr. Caimano stated the issue was not whether this organization deserved County funding, but whether a governmental agency had the authority to expend funds to a not-for-profit agency, such as the American Red Cross. Paul Dusek, County Attorney, responded that governmental agencies

were not permitted to donate funds to a not-for-profit organization; however, he added, they had authority to enter into contracts for services or programs that had a County value or purpose. He said it was his understanding that Saratoga County had a similar contract with this organization and he recommended the request of the American Red Cross be considered with all the other programs during the 2008 County Budget process. Mr. Caimano asked Amy Manney, Emergency Management Services Coordinator, to present a report at their Department Budget meeting on Thursday, August 23, 2007 at 11:30 a.m. Mr. Gabriels queried whether the American Red Cross had a contract with New York State to receive similar funding. Mrs. Reardon replied that New York State (NYS) did have an appropriation for disaster response; however, she said, she was referring to the readiness level, which comprised of training sessions that would increase the human and capital resources in Warren County. In response to an inquiry by Mr. Champagne, she indicated, it was the desire of the American Red Cross to establish a reserve fund and strategically locate sites around the County as opposed to one centralized location. She further added that simulations needed to be reviewed, such as an earthquake or a breached dam in Lake Luzerne, that could many communities.

Mr. Chudy, Mrs. Reardon and Mr. Dusek exited the meeting at 9:45 a.m.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Dave Wick, District Manager, Warren County Soil & Water Conservation District, who presented a copy of their 2008 Budget Information Packet, *a copy of which is on file with the minutes.*

Mr. Wick apprised that the Warren County Soil & Water Conservation District had never had a meeting before the Budget Committee since he became the District Manager 14 years ago; however, he said, due to a special request, they asked that this meeting be scheduled. Each Budget period, he indicated that he had been successful in maintaining a budget of three percent or less. In 2008, he said, he anticipated a standard operating Budget for Warren County Soil & Water Conservation District of approximately 2.9 percent. Mr. Wick commented the 2007 County allocation to the Soil and Water Conservation Budget was \$219,000 and, he said, they requested \$225,400 for 2008, or a 2.92 percent increase. He briefly explained to the Committee members some of the grants their Department received for projects benefitting the local municipalities, which totaled approximately \$2.5 million compared to the County allocation of \$1 million.

Mr. Wick stated he requested this meeting to discuss a proposed new Soil & Water Conservation Office that they had been contemplating for the past two years. He said they had been located in a building owned by the Town of Warrensburg for the past nine years and a private building subsequent to that. In their efforts to develop a cost-effective building that would maintain their offices and equipment, he indicated that MH Imperial Homes, Inc. estimated a construction cost of \$372,000. These same plans were submitted to a private contractor; however, he noted, their construction costs were approximately \$600,000. According to Wicks Law, he said, modular construction municipal building projects must be divided amongst the HVAC (heating, ventilation and air conditioning) contractors and were limited to \$50,000. According to a recent press release by New York State Governor Eliot Spitzer, Mr. Wicks apprised that the Legislators agreed to reform Wicks Law commencing in the fall of 2007, increasing the upstate limit to a minimum of \$500,000. Upon this amendment being passed and funding procured for this building, he said, construction on a new Soil & Water Conservation building could begin.

Mr. Wick commented he included some schematics of the new building, as well as photographs

depicting the condition of their current facility. While they pride themselves on being a self-sufficient agency, he stated, they were unable to overcome the challenges they were currently experiencing.

Mr. Wick commented he had been involved in numerous discussions with Mr. Tessier and Mr. Geraghty relative to securing a parcel of town land. He noted there were other opportunities available should the option they were pursuing become unsuccessful. Mr. Wick suggested that if the County were interested in this proposal, the construction, land clearing and asphalt costs totaling \$460,000 could be divided over a two-year period. In addition, Mr. Wick recommended the funds be earmarked so the County could obtain the interest. While he hoped to receive Committee approval, he noted the Warren County Soil & Water Conservation District Board of Directors supported this proposal. He introduced members of their Board of Directors that were in attendance, Supervisors Frank Thomas (Vice Chairman) and Richard Mason, as County representatives, and Ed Milner, Town of North Creek.

Mr. Belden asked whether Mr. Wick had sought the services of the Warren County Department of Public Works. Mr. Wick replied that he anticipated the support from many County Departments due to the strong partnerships the Soil & Water Conservation District had formed over the years. Mr. Kenny queried whether the County could fund this building, and if so, could the distribution of funds be extended beyond two years. While Mr. Caimano stated he was unsure the County had an obligation to fund a new building, he surmised there were alternative options as the County did not have the sufficient funds for this proposal. In response to an inquiry by Mr. Belden, Mr. Wick said he had been unsuccessful in obtaining grant opportunities that met these specifications, both on the State and Federal level. Mr. Milner reminded the Committee that without the support of matching funds from the County, their Department would not be the recipient of the \$2.5 million in grant funds they had received over the past five years.

A discussion ensued.

Mr. Dusek re-entered the meeting at 10:07 a.m.

Mr. Tessier apprised the Committee that he had not received a response from the landowners relative to his recent proposal on behalf of the Warren County Soil & Water Conservation District. He asked the County to assist in locating other County-owned property, thereby reducing the cost of this project.

Mr. Dusek explained that the Warren County Soil & Water Conservation District was a separate entity. Mr. Wick added that their Department was created by the Warren County Board of Supervisors in 1956 and considered a part of the County yet operated by a Board of Directors, two members being County Supervisors. Mr. Dusek said he needed to review the various options the Committee must consider prior to making his recommendation.

When constructing this building, Mr. Caimano concurred with Mr. Tessier in locating a County-owned parcel of property; however, he asked Mr. Wick to review the square footage per employee. If the Town of Lake George gave the Warren County Soil & Water Conservation District a parcel of land and the project were banned, Mr. Belden asked whether that land necessitated County ownership. Mr. Merlino commented there was a possibility a building located in the Town of Lake Luzerne would soon be available. If the Soil & Water Conservation District were to disband, Mr. Mason said, the assets of their Department would revert to Warren County. Mr. Champagne

commented he recalled discussions from other Committee meetings wherein it was recommended the maximum square footage per employee work space was 200 square feet.

A discussion ensued.

Mr. Wick referred the Committee to the schematics that depicted a conference room, which comprised a majority of the 500 square foot percentage previously discussed. In addition, he reminded the Committee his Department was 0% budget for 2007 and 1% in 2006.

Mr. Dusek exited the meeting at 10:13 a.m.

In reviewing the budgetary items of some Departments for 2007, Mr. Champagne said he compared the allocated funds to the percentage of funds appropriated for salaries, benefits and contractual items, and, he said, they appeared high.

At a recent Ad Hoc Sales Tax Committee, Mr. Champagne said a chart was distributed that reflected Supervisor Comparisons by County and he queried who compiled the list. Mr. Wm. Thomas stated the Administrative Costs for Warren County appeared higher than other counties because the comparisons were not identical. The Mail Room, Print Shop and Stockroom Departments were all included in the Warren County Administrative Costs of Warren County, added Hal Payne, Commissioner of Administrative & Fiscal Services.

There being no further business to come before the Committee, on motion by Mr. Kenny and seconded by Mr. Champagne, Mr. Caimano adjourned the meeting at 10:16 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Debra L. Schreiber
Legislative Office Specialist