

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: MUNICIPAL SHARED SERVICES

DATE: OCTOBER 2, 2007

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Supervisors O'Connor
Mason
VanNess
Merlino

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

Supervisors Sheehan
Belden
Tessier

OTHERS PRESENT:

Representing the City of Glens Falls
LeRoy Akins, Mayor
Judy Villa-White, Ward II, Common
Council
Tom Donohue, Community Development
Josh Milton, Recreation Superintendent
Hal Payne, Commissioner of Administrative &
Fiscal Services
William H. Thomas, Chairman
Joan Sady, Clerk of the Board
Leonard Fosbrook, President, Economic
Development Corporation
Todd Lunt, Director, Human Resources
Supervisor Girard
Supervisor Kenny
Maury Thompson, *The Post Star*
Debra L. Schreiber, Legislative Office Specialist

Mr. O'Connor called the meeting of the Municipal Shared Services Committee Meeting to order at 12:32 p.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Mason, seconded by Mr. Merlino, and carried unanimously to approve the minutes of the previous Committee Meeting, subject to correction by the Clerk.

Mr. O'Connor apprised that this meeting was scheduled to discuss some proposed commitments to East Field. In conversations with Supervisor Girard, he said, the residents of Ward 1 were anxious for a cooperative venture between the City of Glens Falls and Warren County in terms of renovating East Field. He stated the Committee previously asked Paul Dusek, County Attorney, to research a potential County acquisition of East Field and whether any occupancy tax funds could be utilized to renovate the property. He said he recently was apprised from LeRoy Akins, Mayor, City of Glens Falls, that some grants had become available that would assist the City in their renovations of East Field.

Privilege of the floor was extended to LeRoy Akins, Mayor, City of Glens Falls, who expressed his appreciation for the County contributions it had received over the years for City improvements.

Mayor Akins apprised that the Glens Falls Common Council expressed an interest in expanding the proposed East Field project. Over the years, he stated, this area had become a stadium for the Glens Falls Golden Eagles Baseball Club and the Glens Falls Green Jackets Football Team, in addition to the other entities requesting permission to lease the field for various programs. While the Glens Falls Little League utilized a portion of the field for their use, he said, the local East End residents used a dedicated area for swimming, picnicking and so forth. As in the past, Mayor Akins said, the City of Glens Falls would be open to discussions in developing a partnership with the County to become a part of the Park and Recreational System.

Mayor Akins said he had been informed by Senator Little that enrollment in the 2007-2008 Shared Municipal Services Incentive (SMSI) Grants were now open to Counties, Cities, Towns, Villages and special improvement districts in an effort to share services as well as developing cooperative agreements. According to the information he received, he stated, extra points would be awarded to applicants that met certain prerequisites. Furthermore, he noted, applicants could potentially receive up to \$200,000 per municipality if they each provided a ten percent local share; however, he indicated the funds could not be utilized for recurring expenses. Any municipality that wished to apply must submit their application on or before 4 p.m. on December 14, 2007. Mayor Akins expounded that if an agreement were reached, he said, they had the support of the Ward 1 Common Council and County Supervisor to continue the dialog.

Over the last several years, Mr. Mason apprised that the Warren County Soil & Water Department had offered their assistance in relocating the football practice area off the baseball field, as well as installing a new drainage system. He said soil testings were taken, sketches were drawn and a cost estimate of \$2,000 to \$3,000 was given. While it would have been advantageous to the City to provide the labor and equipment, he said, it never came to fruition. Mr. O'Connor said it was his recollection that the previous City Engineer did not support this project for various reasons. Mr. Mason stated this individual was concerned about potentially disrupting sewer lines on the property; however, he indicated it was never confirmed that these lines even existed. Mr. O'Connor suggested that the new Recreation Director make inquiry with regard to the location of these pipes.

Mr. VanNess apprised that as Chairman of the Fire Prevention & Building Code Enforcement Committee, they authorized the County to apply for this SMSI grant in 2006. In 2007, he said, they coordinated their efforts with Washington County to receive grant funding for the Emergency Services Training Center. Mr. VanNess

stated he did not have a problem with the Committee moving forward with their request; however, he queried whether the County would be prohibited from making application with another partner, such as the City of Glens Falls. While Mr. O'Connor acknowledged that he was not a huge "supporter" of studies, perhaps some research ought to be undertaken to determine the feasibility of the field, as well as the overall project. Mr. Mason commented a complete thorough testing of the soil had been performed when this project was originally contemplated.

Mayor Akins commented the continuous practice by the football team on the baseball center field was both costly and challenging; however, he said, he was hopeful that the new City Engineer would offer his assistance in relocating the football team practice area that would save the City of Glens Falls some money.

Commencing in 2008, Judy Villa-White, representative of Ward 2, City of Glens Falls, informed the Committee the Glens Falls High School baseball team would not be utilizing East Field as their practice location; therefore, she suggested analyzing the longevity of football. In the Spring of 2006, Tom Donohue, City of Glens Falls Community Development, stated he met with Jim Girard and it was concluded that the stress on the baseball turf was caused by the football practice being held on the field in August. Mr. Donohue stated accommodations were made with the Glens Falls Green Jackets to practice offsite and those games whereby they were the host team during the summer season were rescheduled. After their schedule had been adjusted, he noted, the field fared significantly better.

Josh Milton, Director, Glens Falls Recreation Department, stated he recently learned there were potentially some underground pipes that ran from the pond toward the field. According to the contract between the City of Glens Falls and the Glens Falls Green Jackets, he said, the area between the pond and field had been designated as their practice area which caused some problems for the turf.

If the material cost was approximately \$2,000 to \$3,000, Mr. VanNess said he would encourage the City to expend the funds for proper drainage. A few years ago, Mr. Milton stated, the Glens Falls Little League expressed their desire to construct a fifth field for their organization with the anticipation of bringing additional tournaments to the area; however, he said, the field was unavailable due to a conflict with the Green Jackets practice schedule. Mr. Mason offered to be the liaison on this project between David Wick, Director, Soil & Water Conservation and Josh Milton, Director, Glens Falls Recreational Department. He reminded the Committee in the previous discussions the City of Glens Falls agreed to provide the equipment and labor. Mr. Mason added that Mr. Wick and his Department had the schematics and they would oversee the entire project. Mr. O'Connor stated he was hopeful the County would

increase the funds that had been previously earmarked for the City of Glens Falls so additional investments could be made into recreational activities.

Mr. Kenny stated he understood the original project was halted because the previous City Engineer thought there was some underground piping. According to the discussions he heard today, the pond was no longer used; therefore, he said, he did not understand the problem.

Mr. Girard indicated there had been drainage pipes diverting water into the pond; however, he said, there were no sewer pipes. When he toured the field with Mr. Donahue, he said, he was overwhelmed with “where do we begin” and “what do we want to do?” While he did not know where this project fell on the list of priorities, Mr. Girard indicated he became involved when the County expended \$250,000 to redo the infield and entire ball park. Unfortunately, he noted, the bleachers were in disarray; there were issues with the electric supply to the lights; and the dressing rooms and field house were in a bad state of repair. In addition, Mr. Girard commented, there were a litany of ongoing events occurring at the field that included the drum corps, summer jam, fireworks, and an annual East End party that allowed adjacent businesses to prosper.

While it was difficult for the City of Glens Falls to fund a majority of these projects, Mr. Girard stated it was equally important for the residents to see the field being used. He said it was his understanding in discussions with the Mayor and his representatives that the City would provide East Field as a recreational facility for the surrounding areas, but they would like to see the field developed to a better use. Mr. Girard said he recalled Chairman Thomas suggesting the County take over ownership of the field because they (County) encompassed a wider spectrum of taxpayers, meaning all these discussions about improvements were secondary.

With respect to the letter from Paul Dusek, County Attorney, Mr. Girard questioned the legalities of how to proceed, such as whether the County could take ownership of a City Park and were County funds being spent appropriately. Before the County could enter into a successful agreement, he said, he felt they needed the answers to these questions. According to the County Attorney, Mr. O'Connor reiterated, the property constituted parkland that had an implied public trust. Furthermore, he said, the County could potentially take over ownership if the City of Glens Falls agreed to sell the property, which would probably require additional research.

Mr. Girard asked Chairman Thomas if these conversations concurred with his vision of the County assuming ownership of East Field. Chairman Thomas responded that ownership of East Field must be determined first. If either entity intended to apply for grant funds, he indicated that according to Senator Little, it was easier for the County to be the owner rather than the City. As long as the property continued to be operated as parkland, Mr. Kenny said, he did not anticipate any difficulties. Mr.

VanNess asked if the City of Glens Falls sold East Field to the County for \$1, would they manage the property. Mr. Girard stated he advised the representatives of that Ward that if the County took possession of East Field, they would contact their Supervisor relative to any issues they had. If there was no opposition to the County purchasing East Field for \$1, Mr. Girard asked what the next step would be. Chairman Thomas responded it must first be determined whether the County could purchase East Field. He commented the feedback he received from the Supervisors serving northern Warren County supported this endeavor much like the Glens Falls Civic Center, as some of their schools could potentially use East Field for their baseball games.

Mr. Mason exited the meeting at 1:10 p.m.

Once ownership of the field changed hands, Mayor Akins said the County would control the activities being scheduled. He indicated there were various groups that had contacted his office expressing their interest in the property and he suspected the attraction would continue to grow if operations were properly maintained.

While a majority of the supervisors were in agreement with this proposal, Mr. VanNess mentioned the County must ascertain the cost to take over East Field from an operational standpoint, reviewing the revenues and expenses. He recommended that Paul Butler, Director, Parks, Recreation & Railroad, and Mr. Milton schedule a meeting to discuss the prior year maintenance costs, as well as the revenue generated from hosting various events. Upon the compilation of this information, he suggested another meeting be scheduled to discuss their findings.

Chairman Thomas suggested the City of Glens Falls and the County share in the operational costs making it a better attraction. While there were the basic maintenance expenses, Mayor Akins stated there were tremendous revenue opportunities as well. Mr. O'Connor recommended the County Attorney research the legal issues encompassed with the County purchasing East Field from the City of Glens Falls, while at the same time Mr. Butler and Mr. Milton would gather the financial information, and all this information could be presented at a subsequent Municipal Shared Services Committee Meeting. Mr. Kenny asked whether the Glens Falls Common Council had some concerns, such as the amount of property to be sold, the selling price, as well as the revenue and expenses currently undertaken by the City. Mr. Donohue suggested hosting a joint Common Council and Board of Supervisors workshop to discuss the options currently being proposed.

Mr. O'Connor recommended the County Attorney, Mr. Butler and Mr. Milton present their findings at a subsequent Municipal Shared Services Committee Meeting

In response to an inquiry by Mr. O'Connor, Mr. VanNess explained he did not foresee this SMSI grant application filed by these two entities as being a hindrance to the

Emergency Services application. Prior to making this grant application, Mr. Kenny asked whether they should seek the support of the full Board of Supervisors. There would be a ten percent financial commitment by the County, added Mr. VanNess. If the application deadline were December 14, 2007, Hal Payne, Commissioner of Administrative & Fiscal Services, reminded the Committee the County had a shared commitment for the new seats at the Glens Falls Civic Center totaling \$400,000.

A discussion ensued.

While Mr. Merlino offered his support of this project, he said, he queried why they were still asking for these figures from the City of Glens Falls when it was already requested at previous meetings. Mr. Milton responded that the City had been without a Recreational Director for the past nine or ten months and he just accepted the position approximately five weeks ago.

At this time, Mr. VanNess stated it did not matter what entity had title to this parcel so long as it was a shared municipal services grant; therefore, he recommended the City of Glens Falls and Warren County apply for grant funding for the East Field renovations with the understanding they would equally share the ten percent match.

Motion was made by Mr. VanNess, seconded by Mr. Merlino and carried unanimously approving the request to enter into an Intermunicipal agreement to apply for a shared municipal services grant (SMSI) between Warren County and the City of Glens Falls for East Field improvements.

In response to an inquiry by Mr. Kenny, Mr. VanNess confirmed the cost to each entity for the Glens Falls Civic Center seating was \$200,000. Mr. Kenny expounded that Senator Little thought if the County took ownership of East Field, the chance of receiving funding assistance was significantly greater. Mayor Akins said he would seek permission from the Common Council to apply for this grant, as well.

A discussion ensued.

Prior to the grant application being completed, Joan Sady, Clerk of the Board, apprised that the County Attorney would prepare the intermunicipal agreement. At the same time, she said, the Glens Falls Common Council would need to approve a similar agreement.

In response to an inquiry by Mr. O'Connor, the general consensus of the Committee was to ask the County Attorney to determine the feasibility of purchasing East Field from the City of Glens Falls while Mr. Butler and Mr. Milton would report on the financial information they obtained.

There being no further business to come before the Committee, on motion by Mr. VanNess and seconded by Mr. Merlino, Mr. O'Connor adjourned the meeting at 1:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Debra L. Schreiber
Legislative Office Specialist